

Exit Pursued by Horace: Bears, Shakespeare, and the Classical Tradition

‘Either this man rages or he is making poetry’ (‘aut insanit homo aut uersus facit’, Horatius Flaccus 1985: *Sat.* 2.7.116)

So Horace’s slave Davus describes his master, distinguishing madness from poetic genius even as he makes them indistinguishable. In this concatenation, Horace’s Davus reflects a claim perhaps made by Aristotle’s *Poetics*, that ‘poetry is the product of a genius or a maniac: of these, the former are ductile, the latter ecstatic’.¹ One says ‘perhaps’ because this line’s permission of madness to the poet seems somehow un-Aristotelian, whence the favour frequently shown to alternate textual traditions in Greek and in Arabic translation that read not ‘a genius or [ἢ] a maniac’ but ‘a genius rather than [‘μᾶλλον ἢ’] a maniac’.² To understand how Davus’ neo- or non-Aristotelian formulation reflects what could be called the rules of classical misrule in the history of poetics, we must turn from Aristotle, though, to the end of Horace’s own *Poetics*, his *Ars Poetica*, where the poet once again combines form and formlessness, poetry and madness, in the figure of a poet turned bear turned leech, a metamorphosis that ends that poem (and perhaps a life’s work) and that will be this paper’s point of departure (*Ars P.* 472-476):

Surely he rages, and like a bear—
if he prove strong enough to break the opposing bars of his cage—
he puts to flight unlearned and learned alike, a savage reciter!
And truly, whom he catches, he holds and kills with reading,
not releasing the skin until sated with blood—a leech!³

Horace’s bear, like Aristotle’s line, has long divided opinions. So, although both Nicolas Boileau’s *L’art poétique* (1674) and Marco Girolamo Vida’s *De arte poetica* (1527) closely adapted Horace’s *Ars Poetica* (c. 10’s BCE), both eschewed the mad-cap poet turned bear turned leech with which Horace’s poem, its fourth wall broken, ends. Horace’s *Ars Poetica* ends in chaos, their classicizing *artes poeticae* in polite aspiration. No wonder, then, that Julius Caesar Scaliger found it necessary to defang this ending’s implications by citing it only once: in order to show how skilled Oppian was at dilating upon small creatures.⁴ Modern classical scholarship has often shared Boileau, Vida, and Scaliger’s neo-classical reticence. Bernard Kytzler 2006, for example, can call the *Ars Poetica* ‘not a versified manual but a humane conversation with friends on a common theme’, but what ‘humane conversation’ ever ended with this poem’s shockingly violent conclusion?

This paper puts the bear back in Horace, demonstrating the role bears have played from antiquity through the Renaissance as the great disruptor of the classical literary artifact, *simplex et unum*. The paper’s first section treats bear’s place in ancient poetics. The second exposes its

¹ ‘διὸ εὐφροδὺς ἢ ποιητικὴ ἐστὶν ἢ μανικοῦ· τούτων γὰρ οἱ μὲν εὐπλαστοὶ οἱ δὲ ἐκστατικοὶ εἰσιν’, Arist. *Poet.* 2012: 1455a32.

² Tarán and Gutas 2012 *ad loc.*

³ ‘certe furit, ac uelut ursus, / obiectos caueae ualuit si frangere elatros, / indoctum doctumque fugat recitator acerbus; / quem uero arripuit, tenet occiditque legendo, / non missura cutem nisi plena cruoris hirudo’, Hor, *Ars P.* 472-476.

⁴ Scaliger 1994: IV.32.

role in Horace's corpus. The third and final section finds Horace's bear stalking Renaissance *artes poeticae* and starring as the unstable genre-crossing center of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* (1611). An addition to the play's primary source (Robert Greene's 1588 novella, *Pandosto*), Shakespeare's bear has been subjected to 'centuries of critical speculation in which the bear's folkloric, theological, ethical, judicial, ecological, theatrical, and symbolic possibilities have been analyzed' (Loomis 2016: 172). This paper shows that Shakespeare's bear has as much to do with the history of poetics (and the War of the Poets) as with the material history of stagecraft, which has often been the intriguing focus of scholarship on the bear. In addition to heightening our sense of the monstrous qualities of Augustan literature, and to troubling our notions about the classicism of classical literature, this paper clarifies how classical poetics could function, in its own time and thereafter, as both analytic field and a literary genre *sui generis*.

Bears before Horace

Bears' use as creative emblems within classical poetics emerged from their foundational place in classical mythology. Zeus was nursed by bears (or nurses-turned-bears) on Cyzicus or Crete (*Schol. Ap. Rhod.* 1.936); had his sinews excised and wrapped in bear's skin (Plut. *De Is. et Os.* 21); turned bear to mate with Amaltheia (Clem. Rom. *Hom.* 5.13); and consorted with Arcadian Kallisto, then turned her into a bear (Ov. *Met.* 2:401-507; *Fasti* 153-192).⁵ Bears stalked our Zeus-ruled Anthropocene's beginnings; they were present, too, at human history's inauguration, the Trojan War.⁶ Abandoned by his mother after bad dreams, Paris, legend had it, (Apoll. *Bibl.* 3.12.5), was raised by a bear; having returned to civilization an adolescent, he showed himself the lascivious bear, stealing Helen from Menelaus' home. Paris' *gynomania* thus builds on the bear's notorious promiscuity (Pastoureau 2011: 71-76); perhaps misreading Aristotle's note about the she-bear's prone (i.e. face-down) mating (*HA* 539b33-541a3), Pliny (*HN* 8.1261-2) has bears mating like bipeds, lasciviously face-to-face. It may relate, too, to Paris' name, perhaps derived from Sanskrit **par* ('brown,' 'brilliant'), inspiring ursine legends in the way of King Arthur, whose name has also been related to various ursine roots.⁷ Following the Matter of Troy's trail, the Trojan War's most celebrated survivor, Odysseus, has ursine ancestry: 'Cronion made our line a solitary one', explains Telemachus, 'Arkeisios fathered an only son, Laertes, who in turn was father to only son Odysseus, who then fathered me, an only son...' (*Od.* 16.117-119; cf. 4.755, 14.182) This Arkeisios was said, no doubt on the basis of his name (supposing Arkeisios < 'ἄρκτος', Eng. 'bear'), to have been the child of Kephalos and a she-bear (Aristotle fr. 504 Rose), linking the figure of the bear to Odysseus' lineage, and, it has been argued, making the bear central to the whole structure of his poem's plot.⁸

The Augustan period made bears literary emblems, symbolizing, schizophrenically, poetic craft and madness. Virgil, writing his *Georgics* (29 BCE), supposedly explained his writing process thus: mornings he spent writing down a large number verses ('plurimos uersus'), the rest of the day whittling that raw material down, 'Saying, not incongruously ['non

⁵ Cook 1914: II.227-231; Bachofen 1863; Pastoureau 2011: 27-28.

⁶ Feeney 2007: 125.

⁷ Pastoureau 2011: 259 n. 52; Walter 2002: 86.

⁸ Carpenter 1946: 112-56.

absurde’], that he gave birth to his poem in the manner of a she-bear [‘ursae’], and fashioned it [‘effingere’], thereafter, by licking [‘lambendo’] (Donatus 1997: *Vit. Verg.* 22). This story may play on the apparent closeness of ‘versus’ (‘poetry’=‘carmen’) to ‘ursa’ (‘bear’), with an anagrammatic *figura etymologica* possibly laying behind its claim that such a claim need not be ‘absurd’. Behind this tail lies the widespread ancient belief that bears bore their young unformed; following birth, ‘They fashion them gradually by licking’ (‘hanc lambendo paulatim figurant’, Plin. *HN* 8.126). Virgil himself would calque on this ursine practice to suggest that Romulus’ and Remus’ lupine foster-mother similarly sought ‘to fashion their bodies with her tongue’ (‘corpora fingere lingua’ Vergilius Maro 2009: *Aen.* 8.634).⁹ In this sense, ‘licking’ became part of how Virgil and the Virgilian tradition figured poetic composition, whether by the bear or other mammals that stalk in similar ways at the boundaries of civilized settlement.

The legend of the bear’s licking would, in turn, give rise to Isidore of Seville’s ingenious etymology: ‘The bear [‘ursus’] is so called because it shapes its offspring with its own mouth [‘ore’], as it if were ‘birth’ [‘orsus’]’ (Isid. *Etym.* 20.22). While the verb used for the bear’s main action—‘(ef)fingo’ (whence English ‘fiction’)—does have a (rarely) attested use as ‘to rub gently, stroke’ (*TLL* 6.1.772.41-772.51), it primarily denotes, in Virgil and throughout the Latin corpus, plastic or verbal artistic fashioning (*TLL* 6.1.770.60-771.70; of books and verses, 6.1.773.80-774.13). That they do so with their tongues (‘by licking,’ (‘lambendo’)), makes them close kin to poets, who slowly and skillfully work linguistic material into verse. Ovid’s Pythagoras will go so far as to give to bears the key creative terms of the *Metamorphoses* as a whole: ‘By licking the mother[-bear] forms it into limbs [‘artus’], and reduces it into the form that she has herself’.¹⁰ In addition to picking up key-words of the poem’s proem—‘reducit’ from ‘deductum’, 1.4; ‘formam’ from ‘formas’, 1.1—this image picks up on the most Ovidian theme of all: representation as self-representation, ‘from the beginning of the world until my own time’ (1.3–4).

Augustan bears as self-fashioners keep their neo-natal formlessness. ‘All creatures rush into fury and fire, for love is the same for all’ (‘in furias ignemque ruunt: amor omnibus idem’), writes Virgil in his *Georgics* (Vergilius Maro 2013: 3.244-5), of that time when the frightening lioness roams, but, more dangerous still, ‘the unformed bears [‘informes ursi’] freely spread so much death and slaughter throughout the woods’ (*G.* 3.246-8). Bears, though, being the only creatures that ‘form’ themselves by art, are also susceptible to remaining somehow ‘unformed,’ in the monstrous sense that word bears in description such as that of Virgil’s Polyphemus, ‘monstrous, bristling, unformed [‘informe’], and giant’ (3.658). In Virgil’s poetic world, bears were uniquely Italian: when Aeneas’ Trojans pass by Circe’s shore (a polemical literary gesture in its own right), Circe’s Homeric menagerie (*Od.* 10.433) is supplemented by bears, whom Virgil may have added the better to reflect Circe’s now definitively Italian setting, bears in Virgil’s day might still frequently be found.¹¹ Significantly, Virgil has Circe’s Homeric animals roam free, but confines native bears to cages (‘atque in praesepibus ursi’, *Aen.* 7.17), reflecting their malevolence while flagging their innovatory presence. The cumulative effect suggests

⁹ Hardie 1986: 349.

¹⁰ ‘lambendo mater in artus / fingit et in formam, quantam capit ipse, reducit’, Ovidius Naso 2004: *Met.* 15.380-1.

¹¹ *EV* V.404; Boas 1938: 47–48; Keller 1909: 175. Thomas 1999: 108 connects Circe’s bears in Virgil with the mini-ekphrasis of Achilles’ belt at Hom. *Od.* 11.611.

interlingual poetic anxiety: Virgil, a Homer for Roman Italy (cf. Prop. *Eleg.* 2.32.66), adds Italian bears to Circe's Homeric menagerie, but keeps them immured. This Italian supplement to Greek poetry thus confesses its ursine monstrosity, echoing criticism leveled against Virgil by Favorinus in the pages of Aulus Gellius' *Attic Nights*: pointing to Virgil's anatomical personification of Aetna—like bears, it 'licks the stars' ('sidera lambit', *Aen.* 3.574)—this neo-classical critic *avant la lettre* called this particular figure of speech 'the most monstrous thing of all things known as monstrous' ('omnium, quae monstra dicuntur, monstruossissimum', Gellius 1968: *NA* 17.10.19). Monstrous, but Virgilian to the core.

Velut Ursus: Bears and Horace's Ars Poetica

Bears—one part genius, one part inspired figure of rage—proved poetologically useful for describing Virgil's creative process, and would prove equally important to Horace's *Ars Poetica*, a work permeated with Virgil's influence.¹² Virgil's *Aeneid*, vulgated in 19 BCE, ended not with the classical closure that earlier epics would have led the poet's readers to expect, but with violent anger's eruption.¹³ Homer's poems closed with reconciliation, Apollonius' *Argonautica* with safe arrival.¹⁴ Not so Virgil's *Aeneid*, which aimed to imprison *Furor* (*Aen.* 1.291-6) and subdue Juno's rage (*Aen.* 1.11), but ended with Aeneas embodying those same forces: 'Incensed by his rages, and terrifying in his anger' ('furiis accensus et ira / terribilis, *Aen.* 12.946'), Aeneas kills Turnus, whose soul, in the poem's last line, 'fled with a groan, indignant, under shadows' ('uitaque cum gemitu fugit indignata sub umbras', 12.952). Playful commentators in late antiquity saw an intimation of such rage already at Aeneas' arrival in Italy: about to slaughter a sow and her thirty piglets (8.81-5) contrary to the instructions of the prophet Helenus (3.388-295), these commentators read not 'a sow was seen' ('conspicitur sus') but, by redivision, 'a bear looks on' ('conspicit ursus').¹⁵ At its close, the *Aeneid* seems to bring together both piety and rage, thoughtful consideration and madness; exit, then, pursued by Aeneas.

Post-Virgilian epics like Statius' *Thebaid* and Silius Italicus' *Punica* evaded Virgil's provocative ending, while neo-classical epics like Maffeo Vegio's *Supplementum* (1428) smoothed it out; only Horace made Virgil's ending his own, and, as ever, about himself. With the *Ars Poetica*, Horace exits, pursued by Virgil, and himself: what the bear fashions, one might say, is always another bear. Although the *Ars Poetica* aims to give rules to art—limits to artistic license (*Ars P.* 9-13), lessons regarding the doctrines of poetic unity, generic purity, rules about the poet's rational self-control of his craft—its frame, voice, and politics can turn decidedly unruly.¹⁶ 'As is painting, so is poetry' ('ut pictura poesis', *Ars P.* 361); in both arts, one must guard against hybrids: the beginning must correspond with the middle, the middle with the end, the end with the beginning. Why, then, does Horace's treatise about the importance of form and structural unity end in a metamorphic fit of furor?

¹² Brink 1963-1985: II.xx.

¹³ Hardie 1997.

¹⁴ *Il.* 24.803-4 and *Od.* 24.803-4; Ap. Rhod. 4.1781 (ἄσπασίως) adapts these and Aristarchus and Aristophanes of Byzantium's location (*Schol. ad Od.* 23.296) of the *Odyssey*'s 'end' (πέρας) or 'completion' (τέλος) upon the same note (ἄσπαστοι).

¹⁵ Isid. *Etym.* 1.18.6; Ahl 1985: 304.

¹⁶ Brink 1963-1985; Oliensis 1998: 198-223; Geue 2014; see also Hetherington in this issue (XX).

In another poem, Horace had complained of Roman audiences that ‘in the middle of a play demand a bear or boxers; in these the populace takes pleasure’;¹⁷ his *Ars Poetica* leaves its bear, decorously, for its end. Still, doing so flouts Horace’s law that endings should match their works: ‘An amphora sets out to be made; why, the wheel spun, does it come out [‘exit’] a pitcher?’ (‘amphora coepit / institui; currente rota cur urceus exit’, *Ars P.* 21-2). Linguistic metamorphosis points up the transition: ‘amphora’ is a Greek word related to the verb ἀμφιφέρομαι (‘to turn round’, *Quint. Smyrn.* 5.9-10), thus glossed by Horace’s word ‘current’; as Frederick Ahl usefully renders Horace’s Latin, ‘The Greek ‘amphora’, when put on the Roman potter’s wheel, ‘turns into’ a Latin urn’.¹⁸ Perhaps this linguistic exchange helps express a broader, if too linguistically clever, question: why should Horace’s *Ars Poetica*, begun a Greek ἀμφορεύς, end a Latin ‘urceus’? an ‘ursus’/ἄρκος? a ‘bear’?

As if ursine metamorphosis were not bad enough an ending to Horace’s well-wrought urn, the *Ars* in fact ends with not only a bear but with an animal-anthropoid hybrid, a ‘poet-bear-leech’, hence repeating, whether as tragedy or farce, the opening’s *bête noire*: human head, horse’s neck, feathers, female body, piscine tale, ‘Just like the dreams of a fevered man [‘uelut aegri somnia’]—empty forms present themselves to him—so that neither head nor food corresponds to the form’ (*Ars P.* 7-9). As the word ‘like’ (‘velut’) denotes, the opening image is a ‘simile’, hence like the beginning of the closing image (‘uelut ursus’, *Ars P.* 472); the ending, however, presents a rhetorical hybrid, by morphing from simile into metaphor, just as the stage turns bear-cage (‘cauea’), the poet bear.¹⁹ The difficulty one encounters in deciding when, if ever, the metaphor ends, is an essential part of the closing image’s metamorphic slide. Horace had earlier interdicted metamorphosis as part of drama (*Ars P.* 187-8), but where the opening only hints at metamorphosis, the closing is itself metamorphic: as the simile unfolds, the poet who was only *like* a bear, seems to *become* a bear before our eyes, only to transform, in the closing apposition, into the leech. Horace thus re-concretizes leech’s paradigmatic proverbial force: as the title character of Plautus’ *Epidicus* puts it, ‘I shall turn leech, and suck out their blood’ (‘ego me conuortam in hirudinem atque exsugebo sanguinem’, Maccus Plautus 1903: *Ep.* 187).

Although Horace’s ‘mad poet’ is the writer one is meant *not* to be—one who fails to solicit criticism, edit, know when to recite—it is clearly, too, a form of transfigured self-portraiture. To stage the poet who breaks all the rules of moral and literary civility, Horace himself must break his own rules: Horace broadens the mad poet’s suicidal tendency to the rest of humanity in a line with a fifth-foot spondee (‘facit occidenti’, *Ars P.* 467), the only such occurrence within all of the poet’s hexameter poetry. Though some editors (i.e. Ribbeck, Mueller) have excised this line on account of its singularity (and on questions of argumentative flow), Charles Brink is surely right that it is precisely this line’s affected exceptionality that makes it appropriate to the passage’s ‘mocking sentimentality’.²⁰ In a further reflexive revenge, Horace’s mad poet, who ‘burps out, sublime, his lofty poetry and wanders here and there’ (‘sublimis uersus ructatur et errat’, *Ars P.* 457), all the while lost in his own thoughts, resembles Horace as lyricist, from his first *Ode* on: ‘If you include me among the lyric bards, I will strike

¹⁷ ‘media inter carmina poscunt / aut ursum aut pugiles; his nam plebecula gaudet’, Hor. *Epist.* 2.1.185-6.

¹⁸ Ahl 1985: 37.

¹⁹ On ‘simile’ (‘εἰκών’) and ‘metaphor’ (‘μεταφορά’), see Arist. *Rhet.* 1406b.

²⁰ Brink 1963-1985: II.428.

the stars with my sublime head' ('Quod si me lyricis uatibus inseres, / sublimi feriam sidera uertice', Hor. *Carm.* 1.1.35-6).²¹ Horace's *Ars Poetica* mocks the poet's lyric aspirations: his wandering, height, and eructation recall Virgil's cyclopes, who 'wonder about the high mountains' round Aetna ('altis montibus errant', *Aen.* 3.644) and Polyphemus, who, as in Homer's *Odyssey*, is seen grotesquely 'burping up gore ['eructans' <*Od.* 9.374 'ἐρεύγετο'] as he slept, and bits mixed with wine' (*Aen.* 3.631-3).²² As self-portrait, the ending paints Horace with twinned identities familiar from Aristotle's *Poetics*: he protects against poetic furor, while being mad himself, a servant to what he elsewhere calls his 'inhuman Muse' (*Epist.* 18.47). At the end of Horace's poem on the art of poetry, the one who sets out to 'make poetry' ('uersus factitet') ends up, through a single letter's disappearance, 'raging like a bear' ('furit ac uelut ursus', *Ars P.* 472).

The bear that brings Horace's *Ars Poetica* to a furious close seems to recall bears that litter Horace's poetic corpus. In fact, bears grace the earliest view that Horace gives us of his childhood (*Carm.* 3.4.9-20): the locals wondered at me, he dreams, 'that, with body safe from black serpents, I should sleep, safe, too, from bears' ('ut tuto ab atris corpore uiperis / dormire et ursis', *Carm.* 3.4.17-18). Horace's close-call with the bears trills with *r*'s—the *littera canina* (*Pers. Sat.* 1.109)—that may evoke the bear's growl. Horace might have heard such sounds first-hand: his possible birthplaces, Apulia or Lucania (Hor. *Sat.* 2.1.34), were famous in antiquity as Italy's bear capital. Lucania's ursine fame is noted not only by poets (Ovid, *Hal.* 58; Mart. *De spect.* 8), but also by Varro, who thought the Latin word for 'bear' ('ursus') owed its origins to the Lucanians.²³ Might Horace have recollected something of the local upset over L. Domitius Ahenobarbus' *munus* of 61 BCE, which per Pliny (*HN* 8.131) featured 100 imported Numidian bears and 100 Ethiopian *uenatores* rather than home-grown bears?²⁴ Any which way, in the make-believe paradise land Horace imagines in his sixteenth *Epode*, 'No twilight bear growls round the sheep' ('nec uespertinus circumgemit ursus ouile', Hor. *Iam.* 16.51). In his *Lalage* ode (*Carm.* 1.22), he faces a monstrous lupine portent even worse than the beasts with which he grew up, the kinds that 'the militant land of the Daunus does not bring up' (*neque militaris / Daunias . . . alit*, 13-14), an apparent allusion to Pythagoras' pet, the 'Daunian [i.e. Apulian] bear' ('τὴν μὲν γὰρ Δαυνίαν ἄρκτον . . . κατασχών', *Iamb. Vit. Pyth.* 60; cf. *Proph. Pyth.* 23). Finally, Horace, born in December (bears' birthing month) and in bear country, seems to have seen in himself something of the bear, comparing himself to a certain Maenius, 'a vagrant who kept no fixed enclosure' ('uagus non qui certum praesepe teneret', Hor. *Epist.* 1.15.28), and who, in keeping with his aversion to the cage that held the Virgilian Circe's bears (*Aen.* 7.17), 'eats enough for three bears' ('tribus ursis quod satis esset', Hor. *Epist.* 1.15.34): 'This is me, of course,' ('nimirum hic ego sum', *Epist.* 1.15.42).²⁵

Nomen omen: Horace's persona in his *Satires*, *Epodes*, and *Epistles*—fat, libidinous, lazy, irascible, and solitary—gives off a strong bear scent, as does his birthplace and name. Horace's predecessors, he writes, were sent to colonize Apulia or Lucania, in order to protect Rome from provincial aggression (*Sat.* 2.1.35-39). On the one hand, his namesake Horatius

²¹ Kachuck 2015: 144–204.

²² *Aen.* 3.572–6 (on *Aetna*).

²³ Varro *Ling.* 5.20.100; cf. 7.3.40.

²⁴ Plin. *HN* 8.64; Jennison (1937: 47).

²⁵ On Horace's interest in and creative engagements with his own birthday, cf. Kachuck 2019.

Cocles (i.e. ‘one-eyed’) famously put his monstrous strength to work protecting the *pons sublicius* against Lars Porsenna and his army, only to throw himself, like Horace’s mad poet, to his death (Poly. 6.54; *pace* Livy 2.10.2–11); Lord Macaulay, for one, compares those who saw Horatius Cocles come forth to his stand to boy who gingerly approach a cave ‘Where, growling low, a fierce old bear / Lies amidst the bones and blood.’²⁶ On the other, an equally famous namesake Publius Horatius, having dueled the men of Alba Longa on behalf of Tullius Hostilius, applies his sword-edge to the murder of his own sister, whose ‘lamentation incited the spirit of this ferocious youth’ (‘mouet feroci iuueni animum’, Livius 1974: 1.26), thus initiating an annual ritual purification by the *gens Horatia* (the so-called *tigillum sororium*), and crystalizing the myth of Horatius as ‘avenger, furious, criminal, and purified’ (Dumézil 1969: 37). Likewise, that Horace who cleans Rome in *Satires I*, menaces it, satiric sword drawn, in *Satires II*, which ends, with a rushing crash (2.8).

Bears are as much an aspect of Horace’s lyric as satiric persona. Though Horace’s first ode aspires to the stars (*Carm.* 1.1.36), and his second book’s last poem to a flight ‘already faster than Daedalean Icarus’ (‘iam Daedaleo ocior Icaro’, *Carm.* 2.20.13), his third book of lyrics sees him eschew ‘Daedalean production’ (‘ope Daedalea’, *Carm.* 3.2.2); like the Mantinean bee, he claims, ‘I fashion highly produced songs, small creature that I am’ (‘operosa paruus / carmina fingo’, *Carm.* 3.2.31–2). The *Ars Poetica*’s turn away from Daedalean *topoi* of poetic flight puts the bear to use in a way that recalls an imperial *uenatio* immortalized by Martial: ‘Daedalus, while you were being thus torn by a Lucanian bear, how must you have desired to have those wings of yours’.²⁷ Ovid, similarly, has Daedalus warn his son against flying too close to *Ursa Maior* (*Met.* 8.207), and Virgil alludes to this same danger when, at the center of his *Aeneid*, he has Daedalus ‘navigate on an unaccustomed path towards the frozen *Arctos*’ (‘insuetum per iter gelidas enauit ad Arctos’, 6.16), which is to say, towards the North, here represented by the two circumpolar celestial bears, *Ursa Maior* and *Ursa Minor*. If Daedalus represents the flight of the mind and lyric, then the heavy, ferocious bear represents flight’s antithesis. In this light, Horace’s dreamed pursuit of his beloved Ligurinus at the end of the fourth book’s first ode takes on a new, less figurative, more concrete, form (Hor. *Carm.* 4.37–40): ‘In nocturnal dreams [‘somnis’] now I hold you, captured [‘iam captum teneo’]...’ Complicated by the *hysteron-proteron* construction, Horace the lover’s wishfully-dreamt hold on his already-captured beloved seems close kin to the nightmarish hold of the *Ars Poetica*’s bear-poet (‘tenet’, 475), who puts his listeners to flight.

At the same time, ending his *Ars Poetica* with a bear puts Horace in league with Augustus, upon whose chest and stomach were birthmarks ‘corresponding in arrangement, order, and number with the stars of the celestial Bear [‘caelestis ursae’]’.²⁸ This mark helped his claim to be ‘diui filius’, ‘the son of a god,’ as his own words upon the Julian comet, the ‘sidus Iulium’, attest (Plin. *HN* 2.94). Insofar as they do not set, the twin bears as home to the ‘sidus Iulium’ well represent the immortality of Julius Caesar’s soul, and put him, as well as

²⁶ Macaulay 1844: 544; cf. Varro *Lingua* 7.71; Dion. Hal. 5.23.2; Plin. *HN* 11.150; Servius *ad Aen.* 8.649; Isid. *Orig.* 10.163.

²⁷ ‘Daedale, Lucano cum sic lacereris ab urso, / quam cuperes pinnae nunc habuisse tuas’, Valerius Martialis 2007: *De spec.* 8.

²⁸ Suet. *Aug.* 80; for Sulla’s fate similarly foretold, see Vell. Pat. 2.24. On animal symbolism between poetics and politics in the late Republic and early Principate, see Kachuck 2019b.

his descendent, Augustus, at the axis around which the cosmos turns. Similarly, Virgil (*Aen.* 6.791–7) will place Augustus at the cosmic axis.²⁹ Horace, in turning bear, thus joins the good company of these bears of the pole, who do not so much fly as circle, and who have been with Horace from his lyric beginning: his first ode's last line—'I shall strike the stars with sublime head' ('sublimi feriam sidera uertice', Hor. *Carm.* 1.1.36)—points towards the 'uertex caeli', i.e. 'the pole,'³⁰ around which bears perpetually spin, never dipping to drink of the ocean's water.³¹

In the *Ars Poetica*, Horace plays sane man and lunatic, protector against bears and the bear itself or, in astrological terms, both Boötes (or Orion) and the adverse *Ursa*;³² in his penultimate satire (2.7), after his slave Davus concludes that Horace 'is either mad, or making verses' ('aut insanit homo aut uersus facit', Sat. 2.7.116), the poet confirms the diagnosis by threatening murder. Aristotle's *Poetics* thought nothing united Homer and Empedocles other than their meter (*Poetics* 1447b); the conclusion of Horace's *Ars Poetica* shows that what unites all poets is a touch of insanity. We have seen Virgil call bears 'unformed' ('informes'), seen too how their 'plastic education' made bears unique mirrors for poetic art. In this light, Aristotle's description of the two different kinds of poet can bring us even closer to the image of the bear: as 'unformed creatures', bears resemble nothing more than the 'maniac' (μανικοῦ) type of poet as compared to the 'genius' (εὐφροῦς), the first of whom are 'ecstatic' ('ἐκστατικοί'), the latter of whom, we are told, are 'ductile' ('εὐπλαστοί'). Bears that bring form to their unformed young, but that maintain their unruliness even in maturity, are thus ideal emblem for Horace's portrait of the poet.

Renaissance *Artes Poeticae* and Shakespeare's Horatian Bear

We have seen the bear serve Horace, and Augustan poetics more generally, as emblem of both self-fashioning and of havoc. Although Horace's *Ars Poetica* does not discuss metaphor, it enacts metaphor at its close, in much the same way as the rapid slides of his *Odes*. This metamorphic Horace, however, was an image that fit neither Horace in his role as a symbol of happy balance, nor Augustan literature as guarantor of neo-classical generic order. Hence, Horace's bear was often kept out of sight in otherwise 'Horatian' treatments of poetics by humanist and neo-classical scholars and scholar-poets. Still, although Horace's bear went into periodic hibernations, it poked out its head at regular intervals, at few times more forcefully than in the age of Shakespeare, when Horace's bear was enrolled as a classical emblem of classical rule-breaking. Following a brief survey of *Artes Poeticae* that took up this more bivalent Horace, we will look in depth at the case of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*, and at the Greek text upon which both it and Horace may jointly have relied.

Horace's *Ars Poetica*, says one scholar, was 'the only major text [of classical poetics] that was in no sense rediscovered in the Renaissance'.³³ A recent article by Micha Lazarus (2016a) on the critical figure of the centaur in Sidney's *Defence of Poesie* has made clear Renaissance poetics' creative use of the total structure of the *Ars Poetica*, especially its equine

²⁹ Rehak 2006: 72.

³⁰ For *vertex* as 'pole', see Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.105; *Rep.* 6.21; Vir. *G.* 1.242 'hic uertex nobis semper sublimis'.

³¹ On circularity and poetic immortality in Latin literature, cf. Kachuck 2020b.

³² *Scholia Vetera ad Il.* 18.488; cf. Hor. *Epod.* 4 and 6.

³³ Alexander 2015: 89.

opening. One might add to his exemplary discussion one further link between the beginning and end of the poem, of which only English poets might avail themselves: the English translation of *hirudo*, exemplified by Thomas Drant's 1567 translation of Horace's *Ars Poetica*, was 'horseleach'. With horses begun, with horseleeches ended; onomastic play is likely. Sidney was not the only English poet to imitate the conclusion of Horace's *Ars Poetica* as a model for how to end an *ars poetica*, with Thomas Drant's 1567 translation a harbinger of interests to come, including the work's 1598 translation by Queen Elizabeth I (Mueller and Scodel 2009: 451–84). The first book of Roger Ascham's *The Scholemaster* (begun 1563, published posthumously 1570) ends with an attack on the dangerously confused religious and political loyalties of young Englishman who travel to Italy, and return with 'a busie head, a factious hart, a talkative tongue, fed with discoursing of factions' (Ascham 1904: 236); the second book picks up on the theme of internal contradiction, and, after praising Julius Caesar as an orator and man, notes that, excellent as he may seem, our view of him is still incomplete, 'like the halfe face of *Venus*...so excellently done by *Apelles*', whereas true excellence in eloquence requires us to follow that 'which hath a perfite head, a whole bodie, forward and backward, armes and legges and all' (301–2). Although supposedly incomplete, its present ending is perfectly Horatian; the specific connection between Caesar and Anadyomene, meanwhile, may build on Pliny's notice of Augustus' dedication of *Apelles*' *Anadyomene*, 'conquered by time, but brilliant in fame' (*HN* 35.91) to Julius Caesar. Samuel Daniel's *A Defence of Ryme* (1603) resembles Sidney's *Defence* in wearing its Horatian conclusion rather more heavily. Although the opening of the work avoids Horace's hybrid, its end attacks Sidneian 'self-love, whereunto we versifiers are ever noted to be specially subject,' first citing Horace's *Odes* ('caecus amor sui' 1.18.14), then Catullus (22.17), as preparation for its final classical quotation, of Horace's ursine attack ('quem uero arripuit, tenet, occiditque legendo', *Ars P.* 475), a 'deformity,' he concludes, connected to our being 'unkind and unnatural to our own native language in disguising or forging strange or unusual words,' the which affectation will, ultimately, 'make all that for which we now contend *Nothing*'.³⁴

In the years leading up to Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* (1611), Horace's bear entered the Elizabethan stage by way of the *Poetomachia*, the so-called 'War of the Poets,' that between 1599 and 1602 pit Ben Jonson against John Marston, Thomas Dekker, and possibly Shakespeare himself, resulting in, as Guildenstern puts it to Hamlet, 'much throwing about of brains' (Shakespeare 2005: *Hamlet* 2.2.340). In this fight, Jonson was the champion of what we would call neo-classicism, in both a literary and social sense: respect for the so-called 'classical' unities of time, place, and action; opposition to the fantastical drolleries that pleased the crowds; and obedience to the rules of genre.³⁵ Horace was Jonson's alter-ego, authority, and cudgel.³⁶ Jonson twice translated Horace's *Ars Poetica*, and claims in his 'Execration upon Vulcan' that the Aristotelian commentary he wrote on it was burnt in the fire that consumed his library and papers. Jonson's final salvo in this poets' war was the *Poetaster* of 1601, and in that play, he put himself on stage in the person of Horace himself, responsible for fighting off threats to order and respectability in Augustus' Rome. This play involved direct adaptation of

³⁴ Vickers 1999: 453.

³⁵ Bednarz 2001; for Jonson's own experimentations with classical rule-breaking, cf. Kachuck 2020.

³⁶ Moul 2010.

numerous Horatian poems—notably, the attack of the chatterbox in *Satire* 1.9—but it selected its Horace carefully in order to present an image of Horace very much like Boileau's: *classicus adsiduusque*, 'of the elite tax-paying class', as Aulus Gellius might say (*Noct. Att.* 19.8.15), 'best master both of virtue and wisdom,' as Jonson did (*Discoveries* 3204).

Jonson's enemies in the *Poetomachia*, however, had read their Horace, as well as the latest *artes poeticae*, and didn't miss the possibility of making use of Horace's bear to tar Jonson withal. In his *Satiromastix*, or 'Scourge of the Satirist' (played 1601, pub. 1602), Thomas Dekker satirized Jonson as '*Asper, Criticus, Quintus, Horatius, Flaccus*' (Dekker 1953-1961: 1.2.313-4), as 'mad *Horostratus*' who 'must eate men aliue', an 'Anthropophagite' (4.2.61-63). This 'self-creating Horace' (5.2.137) who, at play's end, is clearly identified with Horace's metamorphic bear: Sir Vaughn asks of this 'Beare-whelp' dressed as badly as the real-life Ben Jonson, 'why you goe thus Ouids Morter-Morphesis and strange fashions of apparrell' (5.2.188-90). As Tucca, Horace's enemy puts it, 'you did it Ningle to play the Bug-beare Satyre, and make a Campe royall of fashion-mongers quake at your paper Bullets' (5.2.199-200); 'it shall not,' he resumes the theme 'be the *Whipping a'the Satyre*, nor the Whipping of the blinde-Beare, but of a counterfeit juglr, that steales the name of *Horace*' (5.2.243-5). As the King commands by way of conclusion, whatever the castigated Horace may do in the future, 'let him not rave' (5.2.345). Shakespeare seems to have taken up the theme in his classical cum Chaucerian *Troilus and Cressida*, satirizing Jonson in the person of Ajax, 'valiant as the lion, churlish as the bear', as Paris describes him, 'a man into whom nature hath so crowded humours that his valour is crushed into folly, his folly farced with discretion' (Shakespeare 2005: 1.2.22-24).³⁷ Our Horace to a tee, and Jonson seems to have noted the ursine aspect of this attack on his own Horatian image, and to have taken it up in the 'Apologetical Dialogue' that he added to a singular but landmark performance of the *Poetaster* in 1602: in this apology, he presented himself as an ameliorated instauration of Horace's bear, baited by 'the barking students of Bears' College...whilst myself sit by / pleased and yet tortured with their beastly feeding. 'Tis a sweet madness runs along with them'.³⁸

After this performance, Jonson would go on to swear off comedy, and turn towards his first of two neo-classical tragedies, *Sejanus his Fall* (1603), whose quarto edition (1605) monumentalized traditionalism by filling its margins with classical and scholarly citations. Jonson would, however, return to ursine motifs in *Volpone, or the Fox* (1607), the dedicatory epistle for which, addressed to Oxford and Cambridge, cites Horace thick and fast, ending with an execration of the slothful in ursine terms (Jonson 2012: 32):

'She [sc. 'Poetry'] shall out of just rage incite her seruants (who are *genus irritabile*) to spout ink in their faces, that shall eat farther then their marrow, into their fames; and not Cinnamus the barber with his art shall be able to take out the brands, but they shall live, and be read, till the wretches die, as things worst deserving of themselves in chief, and then of all mankind.'³⁹

³⁷ Bednarz 2001: 19-55.

³⁸ Jackson 2012: 171.

³⁹ Jonson 2012: 32.

Jonson, here, seems to reflect upon his having been chased off the comic stage by Elizabethan attention to Horace's two halves: the one, Jonson's guarantor of order, the other, Dekker's creature of ursine chaos, which Jonson here makes his own.

Because Shakespearians (and classicists) have been inattentive to Horace's bear, though, they've missed that one of Shakespeare's most marked Horatian moments, and one of his most direct attacks against Jonson and the neo-classical order, comes in *The Winter's Tale* of 1611. Horace's genre-bursting bear is at this play's turning center. As we've noted, Horace's *Ars Poetica* was the main source for the neo-classical prohibition against mixed genres that Jonson, Dryden, Boileau and others would set to impose on poetry. Tragicomedy, from Plautus to Horace, was the mixed genre's worst form: 'A comedy,' writes Horace, 'does not want to be expounded in tragic verse' ('uersibus exponi tragicis res comica non uult', Hor. *Ars P.* 89). Comedy should be comedy, tragedy should be tragedy, and Plato be damned, never the two shall meet. Unity and symmetry, however, are what Horace's *Ars Poetica* says, but not what it does; in *The Winter's Tale*, one half tragedy, one half comedy, Shakespeare followed the latter rather than the former, and in the poetological footsteps of the bear.⁴⁰

The bear of *The Winter's Tale* comes, as Horace might say of the Roman people's love of boxers and bears, 'in the midst of the poems' ('media inter carmina', Hor. *Epist.* 2.1.185), thus breaking its play in half: seven scenes precede, and seven follow, its entry. The bear marks, as well, Shakespeare's most egregious disruption, all at once, of the three so-called classical unities: 1) Place: we move from Sicily to Bohemia (with a return to Sicily in 5.1), 2) Time: we are about to jump, with the help of personified Time, sixteen years in the future, and 3) Action: the family romance sparked by Leontes' jealousy gives way to the fable of the lost princess (with a return to, and resolution, of the Sicilian family romance in 5.1).⁴¹ Finally, the bear marks the generic joint of this strange play—what Sidney might have called a 'mongrel tragicomedy' (*Defense of Poesie* 46)⁴²—with the courtly tragedy of the play's first half giving way to the pastoral comedy that dominates its second half and that resolves the tragic contradictions of the first.

The first half of the play takes place in Sicily, whose king, Leontes, having hosted his friend, Polixenes, King of Bohemia, for nine months, transforms abruptly into a figure of baited (ursine) rage (2.3.90-2) over the suspicion of his pregnant wife Hermione's affair with Polixenes, whom Leontes imagines to have fathered the child Hermione is soon to deliver, while wondering whether his child Mamilius in fact looks like himself.⁴³ Very quickly, Hermione gives birth, and then, on trial for her life, seems to die, which causes the death of Leontes' and Hermiones' first-born, Mamillus, who'd earlier noted, self-prophetically, that 'a sad tale's best for winter' (*The Winter's Tale* 2010: 2.1.25). In what follows, 'bear' language swirls as what critics have often called a 'presiding word' of the play: the (presumed) dead Hermiones' bairn has been entrusted to Antigonus (from Greek Ἀντίγονος='anti+birth', with a play perhaps on English noun (for animal) and verb (for 'birthing') becoming 'Anti-Bear'),

⁴⁰ The bear has been widely interpreted in recent years (Pitcher 1994; Randall 1985; Ravelhofer 2002; Loomis 2016), but its Horatian antecedents remain unexplored.

⁴¹ On debates over the unities in Italy (with Castelvetro, *Poetica d'Aristotele vulgarizzata e sposta*, 1570, playing starring role), see Weinberg 1961: I.502–580; on such debates in England, see Lazarus 2016b.

⁴² Alexander 2004.

⁴³ Biggins 1962: 13.

who bears it in a 'bearing-cloth' (3.3.112) to the the shores of Bohemia, only for Antigonus, in the play's celebrated stage direction, to 'Exit, pursued by a bear'—and the remainder of a play that has, with its bear, suffered a sea-change.⁴⁴ It does not appear to have been noted that this direction itself contains an interlingual ursine pun (*pURSUed*) that points us towards the Latin for bear (*ursus*). Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night, or What You Will* onomastically uses a similar pun to begin that play's last speech—preceding the Clown's 'With hey, ho, the wind and the rain' gig (V.i.379–398)—by Duke Orsino (i.e. Duke 'Bear'): 'Pursue him, and entreat him to a peace' (Shakespeare 2005: V.i.370). 'Pursuit' is just what Shakespeare's bears do, and in Horatian terms: 'I would you did but see how it chafes, how it rages', says the Clown of the bear's attack to the Shepherd, echoing Thomas Drant's translation, 'Mad hee is, and like a bear most ragingly he straynes...'

When the bear tears across the stage of *The Winter's Tale*, we, like the Clown, are left confused by what we have seen, unsettled by scenes that 'seem designed to perplex a theatre audience, at least momentarily, as to the existential status of what it sees'.⁴⁵ *The Winter's Tale*'s bear is a provocative generic hinge in the absolute sense: it is a truly tragic end for a good man and the tragedy in which he played a part, while also being (as productions of the play have often struggled to articulate) a truly comic beginning, with Antigonus no sooner chased off stage than a softly satiric shepherd and Clown enter and inaugurate, with Father Time's help, the play's second, pastoral, comic half. In the bear meet tragic climax and comic conceit. Shakespeare's bear resembles Horace's in the boldness of its act of generic disruption, but differs in coming at the poem's center. In this sense, though, the bear's position in Shakespeare's play is highly traditional, embodying what Horace derided as the proclivities of those who, 'In midst of all the plaie, to bear baytinges or pricke playings, our Rudesbies must awaye' (*Epist.* 2.1.182-6, trans. Drant). Shakespeare has taken Horace literally: there is a bear at his play's mid-point, just before the entry of the play's rustic 'Rudesbies'.⁴⁶ Whatever the nature or extent of Shakespeare's Horatian studies—he seems to have favoured the *Epistles*—Ben Jonson seems to have dwelt on precisely this verse in the months following *The Winter's Tale*.⁴⁷ The epigraph of his *Catiline* (1611) features verses following Horace's 'bears in the middle': 'in these the populace delights' (Hor. *Epist.* 2.1.186), i.e. in bears. Although Jonson's *Oberon* (1610/11) featured bears, once Shakespeare borrows that masque's bear or bear-suit, Jonson suddenly finds these creatures beneath his dignity, whence the prologue to *Bartholomew Fair* (1614), where the poet is loath 'to make Nature afraid in his Playes, like those that beget *Tales*, *Tempests*, and such like *Drolleries*.'

'Though authority be a stubborn bear, yet he is oft led by the nose with gold,' says the Clown who recounts Antigonus' pursuit. Horace, I have suggested, is this play's 'authority'.⁴⁸ What closer approximation of Horace's persona could there be than one who, though stubborn, can be swayed with blandishments? The first scene ends with dialogue on dying contentedly (1.1.42-6) that echoes the frame of Horace's first *Satire* (1.1.1-3; 117-121). At the play's centre, the bear's rôle seems drawn directly from the tradition of Horatian *artes poeticae*, followed

⁴⁴ Pitcher 2010: 132–35, 1994.

⁴⁵ Barton 1994: 202.

⁴⁶ Cf. Randall 1985: 90.

⁴⁷ Gesner 1970: 83; Drandl 1903; Baldwin 1944: II.519.

⁴⁸ Barkan 2001: 46; cf. Shakespeare, *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* 3.2.33.

immediately by a pastoral-comic half that opens with the Shepherd's gentle lament about all that is wrong with youth and society, in a tone wholly appropriate to Horatian satire. One could, indeed, have read Horace in precisely this way in Shakespeare's day: although many editions placed the *Ars Poetica* last in the corpus, a fair number, and Aldine editions among them, placed it after the *Odes*, *Epodes*, and *Epistles*, just prior to the *Satires*.

More bears, though, stalk *The Winter's Tale* than is often recognized. Pointing back to a source older than Horace, the ghostly apparition of the living-dead Hermione appears to Antigonus (3.3.18-26):

To me comes a creature,
Sometimes her head on one side, some another;
I never saw a vessel of like sorrow,
So filled and so becoming. In pure white robes,
Like very sanctity, she did approach
My cabin where I lay, thrice bowed before me,
And, gasping to begin some speech, her eyes
Became two spouts; the fury spent, anon
Did this break from her...

Having said her piece, 'with shrieks, she melted into air' (3.3.35-6). If the bear that chases Antigonus off the stage is, as has been suggested, a polar bear or polar bear pelt, this white spectre would seem to foreshadow its arrival, tilting head, rage, and all.⁴⁹ Her tears are a 'fury' not only in their vigor, but also in the 'furor' that they anticipate: the bear's annihilation of Antigonus, charitable, but doomed, bearer of the queen's child. Antigonus exits, pursued by a bear and by the ambiguous figure of the ghostly Hermione.

Seeing the ghost of white-clad Hermione as an anticipatory double, and mystical source, of Antigonus' white bear, allows us, in conclusion, to suggest that the bears that stalk Horace's corpus and Shakespeare's play may both have drawn in part, and in different ways, from a common source: the mad flight of Orestes from the Erinyes at the end of what we know as the *Choephoroi*, or *Libation Bearers* of 'thund'ring Aeschylus'. That play ended with Orestes chased off the stage by his vision of Furies sent by the ghost of the mother he'd murdered: 'I do not know in what way it will end, for I believe myself to be as the charioteer driving his chariot far off the course, for my ungoverned mind [*φρένες δύσαρκτοι*] carries me off, who am overmastered, and in my heart, fear is ready to sing and dance with wrath' (Aeschylus 1972: *Cho.* 1023-5). Orestes' madness has been seen as central to Virgil's depiction of madness (Dido's, Turnus', Aeneas') in the *Aeneid*;⁵⁰ if Horace is looking to Aeschylus' *Orestes*, it is through Virgil's window. Bears run in Orestes' family: at Aulis, the Atthidographer Phanodemus has sister Iphigeneia replaced not by a deer, but a bear, and Iphigeneia seems to have presided over Attic maidens 'playing he bear' for Artemis at Brauron. Hence, too, the 'fanatical error and angry Diana' ('*fanaticus error et iracunda Diana*', Hor. *Ars P.* 454) that touches Horace's mad poet means 'lunatics' (*σελήνιακοι*), but also points to

⁴⁹ Ravelhofer 2002.

⁵⁰ Rebeggiani 2016.

Artemis, guardian of bears, at her ‘most alien and savage and terrifying’.⁵¹ The bear thus accompanied Horace’s Mad Poet’s very entrance.

In Greek tragedy, Orestes’ bear lurks in the details: the Greek word describing Orestes’ senses (‘φρένες’) just translated as ‘ungoverned’ (‘δύσαρκτοι’) is odd, and, before the time of Josephus, only found here and in Aeschylus’ now-fragmentary ‘*Dikē* Play’. That play concerned an unruly son of Zeus and Hera from whose hands ‘dripped blood’ (‘στάζοι φόνος’) of innocent people.⁵² Orestes, meanwhile, is chased by ‘wrathful dogs of his mother’ (‘μητρὸς ἔγκοτοι κύνες’, Aesch. *Cho.* 1054), making it all the more tempting to see in δύσαρκτοι, not only ‘badly governed [senses]’, thus formed by δύσ- (‘bad’) and -ἄρχω (‘rule’)—but also ‘the sense of a wicked bear’, thus formed by δύσ- (‘bad’) and -ἄρκτος (‘a bear’), as in the insulting nickname for Paris of Troy, Δύσπαρις (Hom. *Il.* 3.39, 13.769; Alc. Fr. 77). It is perhaps no accident that the last line of Aeschylus’ *Persians*, the only other Aeschylan play (with *Prometheus Bound*) to end in unresolved catastrophe, uses this same prefix: ‘I will escort you with ill-sounding laments’ (‘πέμψω τοί σε δυσθρόοις γόοις’, 1076). Horace likely had Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* in mind when he praised that poet who, ‘like a mage, places me now in Thebes, and now in Athens’ (*Epist.* 2.1.213); as much as at the end of the *Ars Poetica* itself, Horace’s ‘me’ here could just as easily imply the poet *spectator* as the poet as crazed Orestes.

Could Shakespeare have been following Aeschylus? Since Jonson, we’ve spoken of Shakespeare’s ‘small Latine and lesse Greek,’ but there is increasing scholarly attention at Shakespeare’s acquaintance with the tragedies of Euripides, and, though far less securely, with even so difficult a poet as Aeschylus, at the very least through Latin translation and adaptation.⁵³ Shakespeare likely saw Henry Chettle and Thomas Dekker’s (perhaps Aeschylean) *Agamemnon* and *Orestes’ Furies* (staged in 1599 at the Rose Theater).⁵⁴ If he read Aeschylus at all, he might have done so in the translation of Joannes Sanravius (Basel, 1555).⁵⁵ This text may not look like much like our *Oresteia*, but its layout bears uncanny resemblance to the structure of *The Winter’s Tale*. Sanravius based his text on the Aldine *editio princeps* (Venice, 1518), in which our *Agamemnon* (ending at Ag. 1159) and *Choephoroi* were combined into one single hybrid *Agamemnon*, ending with Orestes’ flight, preceding resolution by *Eumenides*.⁵⁶ Sanravius’ Aeschylus was a diptych, the first half a tragedy ending in Orestes’ mad flight, the second half a play that transports us from dark and horrible Argos to happy Athens, where the black-clad Furies are transformed into white-robed spirits of benignity and joy, leading to the restoration, as well, of peace (for the moment) to benighted Argos. Sanravius’ *Oresteia*, that is, took the form of a tragicomedy, with mad rage at its pivot. In its form, then, it looks a great deal like Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale*, which exemplifies what Dryden later called ‘our own [English] invention...[wherein] Our Poets present you the Play and the farce together; and our Stages still retain somewhat of the Original civility of the Red Bull. *Atque ursum & pugiles media inter carmina poscunt*’.⁵⁷ Dryden’s attack has *The Winter’s*

⁵¹ Parker 2005: 248.

⁵² Sommerstein 2008: III.285.

⁵³ Schleiner (1990); Silk (2004); on Shakespeare and Euripides, see Pollard (2017). See, too, Showerman (2011), for whom Greek learning and alternative Shakespearian authorship theories may dovetail.

⁵⁴ Schleiner (1990: 29–35).

⁵⁵ Mund-Dopchie (1984: 84).

⁵⁶ Lachman and Cranz (1971).

⁵⁷ Dryden 1964: 65.

Tale dead to rights when he claims that it derived from ‘some ridiculous incoherent story’ (‘Defense of the Epilogue’); what Dryden could not see, what the whole spirit of neo-classical poetics from Dryden to Boileau’s bearless *Ars Poetica*, was that this ‘story’ was one that went back at least as far as the raging bears of Horace, Virgil, and, quite possibly, ‘thund’ring Aeschylus’ himself. Whether or not Shakespeare came across Sanravius’ translation of Aeschylus, its form represents a striking parallel to that of Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale*, with both inspired, at least in part, by Horace’s not-so-‘classical’ classicism.

Part of what we call ‘classical reception’ must, I have hoped to demonstrate, involve re-reading classical literature, and what we *mean* when we speak of classical literature, through the eyes of other literary worlds. Shakespeare’s bear represents the invasion of Poetics—as genre, as literary form, as historical system of critique—onto the stage itself. As emblem, the bear was a rule-breaking creature that Elizabethan poetics had inherited from Horace’s own attempts to embody, at the end of his own revolutionary *Ars Poetica*, what he felt to be, and rightly, the revolution in poetic form that was Virgil’s *Aeneid*, which since antiquity has seemed to suspend closure amid a sudden outbreak of unruly passion at its end. Finally, and most importantly, I have shown the bear to have been a privileged vehicle for poetic debates in antiquity, and one especially well-suited to Horace’s self-reflections upon his own split *personae*. As Charles Brink put it on the last page of his magisterial commentary on the *Ars Poetica*: ‘When *imitatio Horatiana* can only proclaim correctness, or reason, or *esprit*, Horace is far away. Boileau’s famous work is what many who misunderstood their Horace thought the *Ars P.* was like’.⁵⁸ Or, as Ernst Robert Curtius put it more sharply, ‘Those who love Antiquity in all its periods and styles...are precisely those who will feel its apotheosis as the ‘classical’ to be empty and misleading pedantry’.⁵⁹ On this view, Boileau’s omission of Horace’s bear marks the distance between the two works, and eras, while simultaneously pointing up Shakespeare’s own use of the bear as symbol for his mixed style and its crossing of the genres.

In the tradition this paper has unearthed, bears do not play by the rules of classicism or of class. Conquering an anxiety that went back to Terence, whose audience’s calls for boxers and tight-rope walkers led to the too-early departure of the stage-actor (Ter. *Hec.* 36), Horace taught Shakespeare, if not exactly Ben Jonson, that, if the populace prefers bears (or boxers, or acrobats) to plays, the poet can turn bear himself, but only if he is willing, in so doing, to put to flight both learned and unlettered alike, Aulus Gellius’ ‘both rich and poor’, is willing, like the young women of Attica, to ‘play the bear’. At the very least, what I hope to have achieved in this paper can be best expressed through the natural history of Pliny the Elder who said, of bears, that ‘In no other animal is stupidity found more ingenious at making mischief’ (*HN* 8.131). What self-respecting Roman, we might ask, would deny precisely such a paradox to their poets?

⁵⁸ Brink 1963-1985: II.523.

⁵⁹ Curtius 1973: 250.

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