

The Fluttering Swan of Dirce: Horace's Play of Archaic Models in Carm. 4.1 and 4.2

It is customary to take Horace's *Odes* 4.1 and 4.2 as programmatic. With 4.1, Horace announces a new, ambivalent attitude to the erotic themes that made up a good part of books 1-3. With 4.2, Horace flirts with a new, Pindaric style for the praise poetry of the new book. Thus, as a program for the new book, 4.1 and 4.2 are often understood to announce an ambivalent turn from the Aeolic poetics of books 1-3 towards a more Pindaric poetics. In this paper, I explore the depth of this ambivalence by arguing that Horace reaffirms his aesthetic commitments to his Aeolic forebears in these two poems by his deployment of four key words that he often uses in a literary-critical sense. Specifically, his use of *durus* ("hard," 4.1.7, 4.1.30), *mollis* ("soft," 4.1.6), *volubilis* ("fat," 4.1.40), and *rarus* ("thin," 4.1.34) at four key moments of 4.1 introduces the language of literary criticism to thematize those commitments in Horace's programmatic statement. Furthermore, Horace's explicitly literary-critical use of "fat" and "thin" vocabulary in 4.2 suggests that the *rara lacrima* ("thin tears," Carm. 4.1.34) and *aquas...volubilis* ("surging waters," Carm. 4.1.40) of 4.1 should be read that way, as well. When viewed through this lens, 4.1 reveals Horace's ambivalence about his models in new ways. In light of his apparent *aporia* about his new direction, the swan that appears in both 4.1 and 4.2 emerges as a figure not only for Pindaric poetics, as it is generally taken, but also for Horace's systematic mingling of his Archaic models. In this way, Horace announces that, whatever else may have changed in this new book, his allegiance to the aesthetic values he inherited from his Aeolic forebears is still intact.