Seeing Virgil's *Aeneid* in Horace's *Ars Poetica*

Horace's *Ars Poetica* opens with a word-picture of a hybrid human-animal creature. The creature's resemblance to Virgil's Scylla (*Aen*. 3.424-28) has long been noted: both descriptions progress downward from head (Horace: *humano capiti*; Virgil: *prima hominis facies*) to fish-tail (*turpiter atrum / desinat in piscem*; *postrema immani corpore pistrix / delphinum caudas*), and in each case the detail that the head belongs to a woman, and a beautiful one at that, is delayed (*mulier formosa superne*; *pulchro pectore virgo*). Yet the resonances of the *Aeneid* in the *Ars Poetica* go further, extending even the length of the poem. I discuss several additional instances where Virgil's presence may be seen in Horace's poem, and venture some suggestions as to what this means for reading the *Ars Poetica*.

Most striking are lines 136-52, where Horace instructs a "cyclic writer" (*scriptor cyclicus*) how not to begin a poem. In place of "I shall sing the fortune of Priam and the noble war" (*fortunam Priami cantabo et nobile bellum*, 137), he suggests "tell me, Muse, (of) the man who, after the times of captured Troy, saw the customs and cities of many men" (*dic mihi, Musa, virum, captae post tempora Troiae / qui mores hominum multorum vidit et urbes*, 141-42). Horace is almost universally claimed to have the *Odyssey* in mind (e.g., Brink 1971: 217, Rudd 1989: 174), but 141-42 far more closely resemble the opening of the *Aeneid* (cf. Laird 2007: 141), through the placement of events after the Trojan war, Aeneas' encounters with numerous peoples, the echo in *virum* of *Arma virumque* (*Aen*. 1.1), and the delayed relative pronoun *qui* which, coming directly after *Troiae*, exactly parallels that of *Aen*. 1.1, *Troiae qui primus ab oris*. Moreover, Horace goes on to explain that, if one begins in the fashion he recommends, *speciosa miracula* ("brilliant fantasies," but also "spectacular freaks") will result, such as Antiphates,

Scylla, the Cyclops, and Charybdis—all figures who make an appearance in the *Aeneid*, and often together (e.g., 1.200-1, 7.302, 9.696, and repeatedly throughout books 3 and 8).

Beyond this and a number of small-scale textual resonances of the *Aeneid* throughout the *Ars Poetica* that I will elaborate upon in my paper, Laird 2007: 141-42 has suggested that *famam* at *AP* 119 implies *Famam*, that is, the character of *Fama* as described at *Aeneid* 4.188-90, itself a Lucretian figure (Hardie 2009: 67-135). Also notable is the fact that in the *AP* Horace names Virgil alongside Varius (55) and later presents a vignette of one Quintilius nudging and prodding an otherwise-unidentified student-figure towards writing better verses (438-52). Quintilius (Varus), Vergil, Varius, and Plotius Tucca were the dedicatees, in one configuration or another, of several works by Philodemus—often taken as evidence that they comprised an intellectual set centered about the Villa dei Papiri associated with the Piso family in Herculaneum (Armstrong 1993: 197).

Geue 2014: 172 is right to note that despite occupying "the same early Augustan space as the *Aeneid* and *Odes* 1-3," the *Ars Poetica* has not been treated "confidently in that milieu." Although Geue's focus is political, the same can be said of the poem in its literary-historical context. But if the presence of Virgil and his *Aeneid* as residing within the *Ars Poetica* can be established more firmly, what would be the effect? Through the vignette of Quintilius and through the friends of the painter summoned to view the hybrid creature he has produced at the poem's outset, Horace emphasizes the importance of constructive criticism to any artistic process, as he indeed does throughout the poem. Yet the numerous adumbrations toward the *Aeneid* suggest we may have in mind one particular literary relationship as we read the *Ars Poetica*—that between Horace and Virgil. I suggest not that Horace set out to communicate any specific historical incident of co-operation (though the opening Scylla-like figure suggests

Horace being invited to view a rather monstrous *Aeneid*, if she acts as synecdoche for the whole epic), but rather that he suggests that these two poems arose in the same intellectual milieu and time-period, and thus necessarily exist in a state of communication with each another.

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