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**HORACE, *ROMANAE FIDICEN LYRAE*?  
ANALYSIS OF SOME MUSICAL METAPHORS  
FOUND IN HORACE'S *CARMINA*.**

*Poetry and music were firmly bound in Classical Greece. Despite numerous allusions to music found in later poetry, the practice of singing verse was probably abandoned in Hellenistic Era and the musical metaphors were the only reminders of the long bygone tradition. However, the discussion over the original mode of performance of Horace's Carmina has now been going on for over a century. Did Horace really sing his odes to the accompaniment of a stringed instrument in front of an audience or his manifold references to musical execution are merely a metaphor drawing on Alcaeus' and Sappho's poetry? It seems that both alternatives gained equal number of supporters, who invoke diverse evidence to prove their point. One often adopted approach is searching for the solution in the internal evidence found in the odes, accepting Horace's own testimony as compliant with reality. In my paper I am going to analyse by juxtaposition and comparison the references to musical performance Horace makes in his odes in order to assess the purpose and function of these allusions, then I am going to judge whether the references provide relevant evidence in the dispute over the mode of performance of the Horatian Odes.*

**Keywords:** Latin literature, Horatian lyric, music, performance

The objective of the article will be to analyse musical motifs found in Horace's *Odes* in order to determine the purpose of their employment. It will be argued that the impression of musical performance was intentionally created by Horace as means of establishing his poetic *persona*—a musical poet in an analogy to the Early Greek lyricists, rather than to evidence the actual circumstances surrounding the performance of the *Odes*.

It would certainly be enticing to dismiss the musical imagery of Horace's *Odes* as figurative, accepting that the lyre or any stringed instrument mentioned therein functions as a synecdoche of the genre reinvented by the poet.

In truth, such a stand can be easily supported and would not require profound argumentation, since many scholars take it for granted. However, the question of Horace's fictionising his poetry as song and providing his reader with an illusion of performance seems to demand some inquiry into his motivation. First of all, it is worth considering whether the line differentiating the literal from the figurative is always distinct enough to allow us to classify Horace's musical references under one of the two categories.<sup>1</sup> Sparing the superfluous details, I will respond to this question, stating that it is not. This fact lies at the root of the problem. But instead of venturing yet another reflection on the degree of figurativeness in Horace's musical images, I would like to adopt a different approach which will focus on their provenance and aim. My chief means of achieving this will be to confront Horace's treatment of musical semantic with the actual possibilities of performance in the context of Horace's objectives in the creation of his own lyric persona. Obviously, most of the musical figuration belongs to the self-referential and programmatic statements, thus rooting Horace firmly in the tradition of Early Lyric poets, but the mode of his deployment of these motifs is quite creative and therefore worth examining. If I ever dared add my voice to the debate over the enactment of Horatian lyric, I would point to the preconception and consistence of the poet's envisioning himself as a lyric *vates*, coupled with the minimal correspondence between his depictions of music and the musical practice in his day. Although not my primary concern, the quandary will always lurk in the background of any attempt to analyse the musical context in the lyric of Horace, being firmly attached to the issues of performance, figurativeness and referentiality. In my case the analysis of the "internal evidence", often invoked with regard to the diverse possibilities of performing Horatian *Odes*, will serve to disclose the patterns of thought Horace employed when constructing his musical imagery.

Presumably, the profound entanglement in the diverse poetic traditions of the Classical and Hellenistic eras can be claimed responsible for the abundance of references to music in the *Odes* which are unparalleled by any other poetic work.<sup>2</sup> The wide range of themes treated by Horatian lyric allows us to trace the ones most preferred for the association with musical sounds. We shall begin our reflection with musical context most skillfully

<sup>1</sup> Lowrie can be credited for a remarkable delineation of the problem with reference to the execution of Horatian *Odes*, LOWRIE (2009: 63–97).

<sup>2</sup> Only Ovid's *Metamorphoses* almost match them in number cf. WILLE (1967: 763–764), which they owe largely to the popularity of musical myths. On the other hand, Catullus mentions music only in five of his *Carmina* cf. WILLE (1967: 746). At the same time I would like to stress that I am going to refer to a selection of passages which best suit my line of argument.

used by Horace to one prevailing end—to establish himself as the *vates* in the likeness of Alcaeus.<sup>3</sup> This yearning is signaled at the very beginning of the collection of the *Odes* along with Horace’s poetical program (1.1.29–36):

*Me doctarum hederæ præmia frontium  
dis miscent superis, me gelidum nemus  
Nympharumque leues cum Satyris chori  
secernunt populo, si neque tibiās  
Euterpe cohibet nec Polyhymnia  
Lesboum refugit tendere barbiton.  
Quod si me lyricis uatibus inseres,  
sublimi feriam sidera uertice.*

In this appeal to Maecenas, which crowns the first *Ode*, Horace sets out to elevate his profile by adept reference to Greek lyric tradition. He asks permission to be allowed into the circle of lyricists,<sup>4</sup> although he considers himself already distinguished by gods and high above the common crowd. Despite being ostensibly Greek in character, the reference to lyric poetry contains a Latin note aimed at promoting Horace as a Latin successor of lyric heritage. This note, in the shape of *uatibus*, as it is noticed by the Nisbet–Hubbard commentary, resounds as an indirect opposition to *lyricis*, since its origin and meaning apparently derive from Old Latin.<sup>5</sup> Hence, it could be concluded that Horace endeavours to establish himself as a Latin lyricist by introducing recognised Latin accents into the traditional lyric form.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, the musical allusions are distinctly Greek in their nature, providing a Roman recipient with less familiar expressions associated rath-

<sup>3</sup> On Horace’s claim concerning the imitation of Alcaeus, see NISBET–HUBBARD (1999: xii). Other scholars also name Sappho as Horace’s object of equally frequent *imitatio*, cf. WOODMAN (2002: 53). On Horace’s models of Lesbos see PASCHALIS (2002).

<sup>4</sup> As Woodman observes, the Greek canon of lyricists comprised of nine poets and if Horace wanted to be included, he would either need to replace one poet or have the canon extended for him, WOODMAN (2002: 53–54). Cf. NISBET–HUBBARD (1999: 15). Feeney presents such a possibility only to dismiss it as a “desperately serious joke”, since Horace must have been well aware of the fact that his ambition was merely a self-styled initiative, cf. FEENEY (2009: 203–204).

<sup>5</sup> NISBET–HUBBARD (1999: 3). At the same time Lyons suggests that *vates* could be linked with Greek προφητής, cf. LYONS (2010: 13).

<sup>6</sup> Commager notes that, before Horace and Vergil, *vates* was not used in Latin with regard to poets. Their rendition was bore strongly on the Greek concept of poeta-prophet, cf. COMMAGER (1962: 14).

er with Greek poetic legacy than the experience of everyday music.<sup>7</sup> This observation is especially relevant with regard to *lesbous barbitos*, which constitutes a direct reference to Lesbian lyric, and, as some scholars claim, Sapphic poetry in particular.<sup>8</sup> Whereas *barbitos* can be instantly identified as a symbol of Lesbian melic poetry, the role of the other instrument mentioned in the passage, *tibiae*,<sup>9</sup> cannot be equally easily determined. In fact, both instruments appear frequently in the *Odes* in connection with Muses, but it seems that Horace refrains from the clear differentiation of their function, since at times he allows the Muse to choose between them.<sup>10</sup> It is also worth noting that the assignment of an attribute and a province to each Muse occurred much later, thus all efforts to associate an instrument with a particular Muse appear vain in this circumstance.<sup>11</sup> Accordingly, since the *tibia* was not commonly linked with lyric poetry, its role in the Horatian musical references remains certainly more obscure than that of any stringed instrument he mentions. However, its repeated occurrence in the company

<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, it is not entirely certain that Sappho and Alcaeus actually played the *barbitoi*, since, as West observes, they used a different word to denote their instruments and the famous visual depictions presenting them with *barbitoi* were made at least a century later, WEST (1992: 58). Anderson notes that both Alcaeus' and Sappho's poetry is almost free from any mention of *barbitos*, ANDERSON (1994: 73); nevertheless Jacobson is certain that the word was present in the unpreserved poetry of Sappho, JACOBSON (1974: 283). For the famous depiction of the pair of lyric poets with *barbitoi* see BUNDRIK (2005: 100). The *barbitos* was apparently out of use in the Hellenistic Era, although Dionysius of Halicarnassus records its presents during religious rites at Rome, WEST (1992: 59). On *barbitos* in Horace see also Milanese in MARIOTTI (1997: 924). On the etymology and use of *barbitos* in the Classical period see SNYDER (1972).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. WOODMAN (2002: 53); LYONS (2010: 13).

<sup>9</sup> It should be observed that Horace is quite careless about the number of *tibiae* involved and uses the singular interchangeably with the plural, cf. *C.* 1.12.2; 3.4.1; *versus* 4.15.30; 4.9.5. Such a disregard towards details could mean that the instrument is not the center of attention and not necessarily that Horace at one time means a single, at the other a double pipe. Besides, the metonymic use of a single *tibia* to denote a double is quite a common practice in poetry.

<sup>10</sup> As Nisbet–Hubbard point out, the grouping of *tibia* and *lyra* also occurs in Pindar, although a choice is never offered, NISBET–HUBBARD (1999: 146).

<sup>11</sup> Despite the fact that Euterpe was actually associated with auletics and audoly, her representation with *tibia* in this passage may not be altogether deliberate, especially as the instrument also appears in a configuration with other Muses, cf. 1.12.2. Although in the *Odes* Muses are frequently accompanied by instruments, Nisbet–Hubbard teach not to search too deeply for associations between them, NISBET–HUBBARD (1999: 283); cf. JUREWICZ (1986: 62). Feeney also points out Horace's inconsistency concerning the choice of instruments for Muses, FEENEY (2009: 205); cf. COMMAGER (1962: 329).

of *lyra* or *cithara* may suggest that while the stringed instrument represents monody, the wind instrument stands for choral lyric, and as such may allude to Pindaric odes.<sup>12</sup> It is definitely interesting to observe that Horace's musical imagery, although intended as an allusion to the Greek poetry of Archaic and Classical periods, draws strongly on the Hellenistic idea of a musical poet, suffice it to recall as a parallel Theocritus' wording which he chose to credit Simonides in the *Idyll* 16. 45–46.<sup>13</sup> As it has already been noted in the footnotes, the allusions to *barbitos* in the earlier poets are scarce and at least obscure, while later poetry eagerly cherishes the instrument, despite the fact that for Theocritus as well as for Horace it was certainly obsolete.<sup>14</sup> A prominent feature of the majority of Horace's musical references is the portrayal of the archaic lyric poetry mediated by its Hellenistic reception.

Horace's efforts to establish himself as a Roman *vates* reach their peak in the third *Ode* of the fourth book. This time he applies musical motifs which usually accompanied the depiction of Muses to himself in order to strengthen the construction of his image as the principal Roman lyricist. While in the previous passage his superiority was only hinted at, now Horace does not hesitate to claim primacy in the lyric genre. Since he maintains to prevail in song and lead with song, his domain of preeminence is distinctly musical. Obviously, to institute himself in these roles he has to employ musical motifs, which may actually be presenting music as a metaphor of poetry. If we assumed that Horace indeed sang his verse, the metaphoric tenor of his claims would have to be abandoned.<sup>15</sup> Can his words be taken literally? At this point I would like to ask roughly the same question as Lyons when he was trying to detach himself from the tradition of interpreting Horace only from a literary perspective.<sup>16</sup> The question is: why did

<sup>12</sup> Cf. FEENEY (2009: 205), LOWRIE (1997: 41). However, we have to note that the role of *tibia* as an instrument accompanying verse is still rather ambiguous. For instance, Anderson quoting West ascribes *auloi* accompaniment to elegy, ANDERSON 1994: 58. On the employment of *auloi* as an accompaniment for elegy see also CAMPBELL 1964. We cannot be entirely certain whether Greek *auloi* can always be identified with Latin *tibiae*. West suggests that Horace refers to the poets of Lesbos with *barbitos* while to Pindar with *tibiae*, WEST (1995: 6).

<sup>13</sup> This conclusion is reached on the basis of the text by Prauscello, which however, does not mention Horace, Prauscello in ACOSTA–HUGHES (2011: 292).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. BUNDRICK (2005: 24).

<sup>15</sup> It has been assumed that Horace's musical allusions are metaphorical, which does not exclude the possibility of their originally being intended for musical execution. However, it has to be stressed that certain parallels between the references, the lack of details and the general conventional treatment may suggest that Horace is employing metaphors rather than referring to the actual performance of his *Odes*.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. LYONS (2010: 16).

Horace wish to be perceived as a musical poet? Yet, I am afraid that my conclusions are going to be quite independent from Lyons'. In order to answer the question, a thorough analysis of the motifs would be required. In *Ode* 4.3, which resounds with gratitude for the given talent, overtly musical references can be found in the two last stanzas, whereas other allusions in the shape of both *carmine* (4.3.12) and *choros* (4.3.15) do not carry explicit musical denotement (4.3.17–24):

*O testudinis aureae  
dulcem quae strepitum, Pieri, temperas,  
o mutis quoque piscibus  
donatura cycni, si libeat, sonum,  
totum muneris hoc tui est,  
quod monstror digito praetereuntium  
Romanae fidicen lyrae;  
quod spiro et placeo, si placeo, tuum est.*

The finale quoted above corresponds with the conclusion of the very first ode. While at the beginning of his lyric quest Horace asked for a place among *lyrici vates*, now he expresses his thanks for having secured it.<sup>17</sup> However, his self-referential remarks are at the very least obscure. It cannot be determined whether Horace was appointed this distinguished position by his audience, or fashioned himself in this way.<sup>18</sup> Certainly, the poet creates an impression that the title of *Romanae fidicen lyrae* was awarded him by his recipients. Then again, his dissatisfaction with the critical reception of his three first books of the *Odes*<sup>19</sup> might indicate that his present boast about his popularity does not altogether reflect the actual situation. Usurpation or not, we have to admit, that Horace's image as the Roman vates is very systematically built, perhaps a little bit too systematically to echo the spontaneous acclamation of his readers, and this could imply a certain degree of premeditation. Subsequent constituents of this image give the impression of being thoroughly considered and skillfully composed. In this

<sup>17</sup> Cf. FRAENKEL (1957: 408); COMMAGER (1962: 20); WILLE (1967: 252); SYNDIKUS (2001: 295); WOODMAN (2002: 53); LYONS (2010: 11).

<sup>18</sup> This question again draws attention to the reliability of Horace's own testimony. In this very ode, Horace implies that both talent and recognition were granted him rather than earned by him (*inter uatum ponere me choros; totum muneris hoc tui est*) and Fraenkel is ready to give him credit, judging the mixture of pride (*Romanae fidicen lyrae*) and humbleness (*si placeo*) so characteristic of Horace as proof of his genuineness, cf. FRAENKEL (1957: 408–410).

<sup>19</sup> FRAENKEL (1957: 339).

*Ode* Horace employs *fidicen* in the sense of *vates*, enhancing in this way the meaning of the word, which in the more ordinary context denotes a *cithara* or *lyra* player.<sup>20</sup>

In *Ode* 4.6, which contains a more direct allusion to the performance of the *Carmen Saeculare* than 4.3.<sup>21</sup> Horace extends his position of national *vates* by adding the function of *chorodidaskalos*. The leader of the chorus, which might have been regarded as an ordinary musical occupation, acquires in Horace's rendition a didactic quality. Horace is far from being satisfied with conducting a choir of girls and boys during public festivities, he wants to be perceived as their spiritual and moral leader instead.<sup>22</sup> Besides, the metaphor allowing Horace to present himself as combining the roles of *vates* and χοροδιδάσκαλος, poet and leader, perfectly accords with the Augustan policy of moral regeneration.<sup>23</sup> In the final stanzas of *Ode* 4.6, the versatile role of Roman *vates* is presented in its extensiveness (4.6.25–44):

*Doctor argutae fidicen Thaliae,  
Phoebe, qui Xantho lauis amne crinis,  
Dauniae defende decus Camenae, leuis  
Agyieiu.*

*Spiritum Phoebus mihi, Phoebus artem  
carminis nomenque dedit poetae.  
Virginum primae puerique claris  
patribus orti,*

*Deliae tutela deae, fugacis lyncas  
et ceruos cohibentis arcu,  
Lesbium seruate pedem meique  
pollicis ictum,*

<sup>20</sup> The Greek counterpart of the Latin *fidicen* could perhaps be κιθαρώδης, although *fidicen* is more capacious, since it does not specify a stringed instrument. Also the suffix *-cen* does not imply the vocal aspect as strongly as it is suggested in κιθαρώδης, cf. Liddle–Scott *s.v.*; *cano* could mean *to play* and not necessarily *to play and sing*. On the meaning of *fidicen* see LEWIS–SHORT, *s.v.*

<sup>21</sup> On the circumstance and evidence of performance of the *Carmen Saeculare* see PUTNAM (2000: 1–8); LOWRIE (2009: 127–135).

<sup>22</sup> Cf. LYONS (2010: 79).

<sup>23</sup> Commager notes that the didactic and sacerdotal function of a poet suggested in the term *vates* well answered the requirements of Augustus' program of reforms, COMMAGER (1962: 14). See also LYONS (2010: 79).

*Nupta iam dices: 'Ego dis amicam,  
saeculo festas referente luces,  
reddidi carmen docilis modorum  
uatis Horati.'*

In each of the quoted stanzas Horace adopts a different role, embodying respectively, though in the first case indirectly, *fidicen*, *poeta*, *χοροδιδάσκαλος* and *vates*. Before continuing the discussion on the musical connotations of subsequent roles, it is necessary to examine the connection Horace forms between himself and Apollo. The first of the quoted stanzas captures the god, and not the poet, in the musical function. However, *fidicen* could be also extended to the poet himself, since the parallel between him and Apollo is quite apparent.<sup>24</sup> First of all, Apollo plays all the roles Horace is just about to ascribe to himself: of a poet, leader of the chorus (of Muses) and *vates*. Furthermore, the parallel seems to be emphasised by the reference to the didactic role of both: *doctor*—Apollo the teacher, and *docilis*—taught plausibly by Horace.<sup>25</sup> There seems to be a good reason why the poet decided to relate *fidicen* to Apollo instead of himself. It should be remembered that the performance of the *Carmen Saeculare* took place in front of the temple dedicated to Apollo *kitharodos*<sup>26</sup> which might be why Horace is especially keen to put a stress on the god's province.<sup>27</sup> When Horace transfers the reader's attention to himself, he gradually replaces the god in the oncoming functions. At first he is careful to acknowledge that

<sup>24</sup> At the same time, we should bear in mind all the places in which Horace applies *fidicen* to himself. The best example could be found in the previously quoted passage.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. WILLE (1967: 246, 252). Lowrie observes that Horace's role in the process of teaching, whose effect is *docilis*, is at the least ambiguous and should not be taken for granted, LOWIRE (2009: 87).

<sup>26</sup> Cf. FRAENKEL (1957: 402).

<sup>27</sup> In this place we should be careful to pay attention again to the differences between Latin *fidicen* and Greek *κιθαρώδης*. The more exact rendition of the Greek term is *citharoedus*, which implies not only playing a stringed instrument but also accompanying the instrumental melody with the voice, while *fidicen* is usually devoid of vocal connotations. Only in poetry, and by Horace especially, just as in this instance, does the denotement of *fidicen* approach the meaning of *citharoedus*, cf. FRAENKEL (1957: 409); OLD s.v. *fidicen* and *citharoedos*. There are two possible ways of interpreting the meaning of *fidicen* in this context. Either it simply denotes a *cithara*-player or *vates*. In the latter case, *fidicen* and *vates* from the last stanza would frame the allusions to the performance of the *Carmen Saeculare*, enabling identification between Horace and Apollo *κιθαρώδης* (however not with Apollo embodying Augustus). On a similar interpretation of Apollo's role in Horatian lyric see Miller in PASCHALIS (2002: 125).



Apollo secured him the name of a poet,<sup>28</sup> but at the very end he retains the title of *vates* entirely for himself by attaching it to his own name.<sup>29</sup> And although the functions intersect with each other, since *vates* customarily encompassed the roles of *fidicen* and *poeta*, we can detect a certain gradation formed by sequencing the functions according to their significance and capacity. It seems that *vates* stands above the other functions, bringing them together, because Horace apparently is most proud of having acquired this role,<sup>30</sup> while *fidicen* occupies the lowest position in the hierarchy. *Poeta*, placed one level higher, as in the Greek tradition, accompanies his verse on *lyra*.<sup>31</sup> On the next level we encounter χοροδιδάσκαλος whose work is performed by the choir and he himself directs the performance *sui pollicis ictu*. With this reference, Horace places himself next to Greek choral lyric poets such as Alcman or Pindar.<sup>32</sup> Finally, *vates* crowns the gradual ascent, combining all the roles. It should be noted that Horace furnishes *vates* with strongly musical connotations in the shape of *carmen modorum*, in which *modi* are usually interpreted as a reference to musical modes rather than metre.<sup>33</sup> Some scholars who follow this interpretation take Horace's words literally, insisting that he composed the music to the *Carmen Saeculare* himself and was personally involved in its performance.<sup>34</sup> Such an assertion is seemingly supported by the fact that the situation portrayed here by Horace appears to be the most abundant in details referring to the circumstances of performance to be found in the *Odes*. This pertains particularly to the *pollicis ictus*—conducting the chorus with the strokes of the thumb against the strings of the instrument.<sup>35</sup> On the other hand, it could

28 Apollo in this passage is often identified with Augustus; cf. COMMAGER (1962: 18).

29 As Fraenkel observes, this is the only case in the *Odes* where Horace invokes his own name, FRAENKEL (1957: 406–407); cf. COMMAGER (1962: 18).

30 Cf. SYNDIKUS (2001: 329).

31 On commenting on this passage, Lyons notes that we should take *poeta* in the Greek sense of the word, a composer of both verse and music, cf. LYONS (2010: 11). On the other hand, Syndikus considers the denotement of *poeta* in this context as synonymous with *vates*, since *poeta* like *vates* received the divine inspiration, cf. SYNDIKUS (2001: 337).

32 Cf. SYNDIKUS (2001: 329). We should treat the distinction into “choral” and “monodic” poets with caution; cf. LEFKOWITZ (1988: 2).

33 Lyons asserts, that in the *Odes*, *modi* should usually be taken as musical modes, and he invokes *quaere modos levioere plectro* (2.1.40) as the most evident example, cf. LYONS (2010: 89).

34 Cf. LYONS (2010: 90).

35 Quite a vivid envisagement of the activity can be found in FRAENKEL (1957: 403). On conducting with thumb strokes and its various interpretations see WILLE (1967: 239).

also be suspected that the musical connotations of *vates* were employed purposefully in order to create an image of Horace in the likeness of the mythological Greek *vates* Orpheus and Amphion, who's remarkable singing skills earned them their fame. Finally, it should be emphasised that acknowledging Horace's powerful urge to promote his own image as a musical poet does not eliminate the possibility of the musical performance of his verse.<sup>36</sup> In fact, the two things have little in common. Horace styles himself as a Greek lyric poet, at times, as in this case, choral, at times monodic.<sup>37</sup> Still this tells us nothing about the character of the music, provided it existed, that could have accompanied his poetry. It also hardly furnishes us with any arguments against its existence, except for perhaps the obvious fact that if his verse was indeed sung, Horace's self-creation would lose much of its metaphoric strength.

Before we proceed to analyse the characteristics of music provided in the verses of the *Odes*, there still is one aspect of Horace's self-portrayal as *vates* which is worthy of our attention. As was already mentioned with regard to the passages cited above, Horace frequently wishes to be perceived as a leader or at least someone who stood out, if not above, the common crowd.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, he would like to take pride in himself for the primacy of his literary achievement, which is now usually identified as a "reinvention" of the lyric genre, and to this end he introduces the motif of *novitas*, securing for himself the attribute of *princeps*.<sup>39</sup> It has to be stressed that his professed innovation can not only be viewed as strictly adhering to the literary field, but that Horace also seems to adorn it with musical connotations, which again probably serve to form a connection between himself and Greek lyric poets. The most renowned pronouncement of Horace's poetical achievement included in *Ode* 3.30 also displays the most characteristic features of its musical aspects (3.30.10–14):

*Dicar, qua uiolens obstrepit Aufidus  
et qua pauper aquae Daunus agrestium  
regnauit populorum, ex humili potens*

- <sup>36</sup> Lowrie explores different possibilities of interpretation of *Ode* 4.6. with regard to the performance of the *Carmen Saeculare*, LOWRIE (2009: 86–87).
- <sup>37</sup> SYNDIKUS (2001 II: 89); Barchiesi even detects the binding of the two attitudes in *Ode* 4.6, cf. BARCHIESI (1996: 9).
- <sup>38</sup> Hence χοροδιδάσκαλος, *secernunt populo*, etc. Cf. NISBET–RUDD (2004: 375); COM-MAGER (1962: 308). On the so called "*primus*-Motiv" in other Roman authors see WIMMEL (1960: 177).
- <sup>39</sup> *Princeps* with regard to the imitation of Aeolian poetry is an exaggeration, since Catullus imitated Sappho beforehand, cf. WOODMAN (2002: 56).

*princeps Aeolium carmen ad Italos  
deduxisse modos.*

Obviously the key word is *princeps*, as Horace expresses his pride on being the first one to achieve success. The subject of his achievement proves quite ambiguous in interpretation. Scholarly reflection indicate *modos* as an especially obscure element of Horace's declaration.<sup>40</sup> Some of the earlier commentators saw *modi* as a reference to measures,<sup>41</sup> however such a rendition fails on the level of logic, since Horace employs overtly Greek metres and there is no explanation why he would claim otherwise. Unless we assume that Horace conceived a most inexplicable double hypallage, where *carmen* would be *Italum* and *modi*–*Aeolii*, we have to search for other meanings of *modi Itali*. Most of the more recent commentaries assert that *modi* refer to the melodic rather than rhythmic aspect of Horatian verse.<sup>42</sup> Nonetheless, the precise intention behind both *carmen* and *modi* cannot be easily guessed. Horace may be credited with introducing Greek lyric models to the Latin language and Roman themes, which he presumably has in mind while speaking of *Aeolium carmen* and *modi Itali*, but does he also allude to their actual musical execution, as it is often suggested,<sup>43</sup> or does he merely employ metaphors adorned with musical motifs, following the example of the Greek?<sup>44</sup> Since there is no other mention of the *modi Itali* with regard to the *Odes*, we have to leave our speculations to the numerous interpretations. However, there is one original interpretation which may cast some light on the employment of musical motifs in this particular case. The interpretation, contrived by Hungarian scholars, suggest taking the phrase *princeps Aeolium carmen ad Italos deduxisse modos* as an allusion to *Aqua Iulia*, built before the publication of the first three books of the *Odes*.<sup>45</sup> The abundant references to water found in the preceding verses induce the scholars to discern in the *carmen Aeolium* a metaphor of water, rooted in the frequently occurring *topos* of poetry represented as a spring

<sup>40</sup> Cf. LYONS (2010: 87); SYNDIKUS (2001 II: 264); WEST (2002: 264–265).

<sup>41</sup> WILLIAMS (1969: 151). Even West, although he admits that the metre in the *Odes* is Greek, chooses to render *modi* as measures and allows their melodic interpretation under the condition that they were truly performed to music, WEST (2002: 265).

<sup>42</sup> Cf. NISBET–RUDD (2004: 375); SYNDIKUS (2001 II: 264).

<sup>43</sup> Cf. LYONS (2010: 79).

<sup>44</sup> Taking Horace's words literally, some suggest that Horace set his *odes* to already existing Italian melodies, cf. NISBET–RUDD *ad. loc.*; LYONS (2010: 16).

<sup>45</sup> For the interpretation I am indebted to professor Takács László who suggested it to me and shared his article including the interpretation, TAKÁCS (2010).

or fountain.<sup>46</sup> Horace leads the water of poetry, just like an aqueduct, from Greece to Italy. Now, according to Takács' rendition, *modi* can be perceived as land, as in *modus agri*— a measure of land.<sup>47</sup> Despite some apparent limitations of such an interpretation (for instance, *modi* seen as land fail to convince), this approach to the ambiguous expression imparts a significant truth: Horace may actually focus much more on constructing the double-entendre than on the precision of his musical terminology.

Having analysed the selected passages from the *Odes*, I reach an entirely different conclusion to that which Lyons draws after presenting his interpretation.<sup>48</sup> The parallels between the passages as well as the entanglement of the musical and poetical semantic field along with their consequential abstraction from the reality of any musical practice persuades me to regard the musical ambiance of the *Odes* as an intellectual concept contrived as a poetical device to serve a particular purpose. It appears that Horace's chief aim in employing the motifs is to distinguish himself from his Latin predecessors and possible epigones by constructing his own lyric character as a musical poet. Certainly, he was aware that such a poetic *persona* would be a novelty or at least an exception in the "post-performative" Roman culture, allowing him to enfold himself with an aura of much craved remarkableness and precedence. Not only did Horace wish to be perceived as a first Latin lyricist, he also desired to strengthen the association between himself and the poets of Lesbos by introducing himself as a musical poet in their likeness. At this point we have to observe that his musical references to Pindar and Callimachus are far less personal, while they participate in the conventional characteristic of the genre. The effectiveness of this self-portrayal can be evaluated on the basis of the testimony of Ovid<sup>49</sup> as well as the fact

<sup>46</sup> On water as a metaphor of poetry see COMMAGER (1962: 11, 60). Following the interpretation of *Exegi monumentum* through the perspective of water-oriented metaphors, one could detect in *imber edax* an allusion to the envious critics of Horatian lyric, perhaps the elegists or other contemporary poets.

<sup>47</sup> On the meaning of *modus* in this context see *OLD s.v.*

<sup>48</sup> I would reverse the meaning of the opening two sentences of Lyons' conclusion, stating that "all the references are generalised or conventional rather than specific statements. They *do not* identify Horace, his instruments, his musical inspiration and his music." (LYONS (2010: 92)) Although conditionally, this may be closer to the truth than claiming that with his musical images Horace let on anything about the performance of his *Odes*.

<sup>49</sup> Ovid appears to be the most reliable source of testimony concerning the practice of poetic performances of his day. In *Tristia* 4.10 Horace is named among other poets performing their compositions in the circle of their friends. Only his performance is presented in musical terms (*Tr.* 4.10.49–50): *et tenuit nostras numerosus Horatius aures, / dum ferit Ausonia carmina culta lyra*. Undoubtedly, Horace would have liked

that the debate over the musical practice alluded to in the *Odes* has been thriving but with so far inconclusive results. With respect to the nature and source of the musical references, many of the motifs plainly derive from the two preceding eras of Greek poetry, evidencing the role of convention in forging them. And although Horace creatively interacts with the tradition by employing the motifs in constructing his own lyric identity, it appears as if he did not aspire to elaborate on them, since he bases his writing to a large extent on the imagery and terminology customary for his Greek models. The most striking innovation in this respect—the opposition of *Latinum* and *Aeolium*—which pertains to Horace’s reinvention of the lyric genre and its transplantation to Latin ground, uses of the musical context quite instrumentally, so to speak, with the emphasis clearly on the toponyms.

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to be perceived in such terms, and Ovid’s testimony provides proof of the success of Horatian self-creation.

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