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Jürgen Paul Schwindt

Ordo and Insanity.

On the Pathogenesis of Horace's Ars poetica

THE enigmas of Horace's work on poetic theory have been an ongoing preoccupation of Horatian scholarship. It was Wieland and Goethe who set the tone for the discussion,¹ and not only in the German tradition.² Usually, much is gained if scholars reach a certain agreement as to the direction in which solutions may be sought. Sometimes, arguments may even arise on what one can actually consider an enigma, and whether some of the things which were considered puzzling at an earlier stage may not be less debatable in the light of modern research. One should not underestimate the influence of the «Poetics of Research» (a beautiful coinage by Isabella Tardin Cardoso) on the genesis, the emergence, the persistence, and the disappearance of the enigma.³

When, where, and how we look at something that we try to understand 'scientifically' bears considerable relevance to the questions and problems that we pose, not only to technique and procedure, but also to the product that emerges at the end of all questions and examinations. A member of the tribe of the Nambikwara⁴ will not make sense of the differentiation of rational and dream worlds, a representative of the conversational culture at court in France of the late eighteenth century will not take offence at the cutting separation of the different social layers and classes, a postgraduate trained in philology who has undergone the purgatory of postmodernism will consider it 'natural' that everything, also in Horace, is a question of perspective.

¹ In the introduction to his translation of Horace's *Epistles*, Wieland wonders «ob die ganze Geschichte der Literatur ein Beispiel von einem so seltsamen Schicksal aufweisen kann, als diese horazische Epistel betroffen hat» (Wieland 1965, p. 789). In offering a more detailed description of the heterogeneous response to the poem, Goethe remarks that «[d]ieses problematische Werk wird dem einen anders vorkommen als dem anderen, und jedem alle zehn Jahre auch wieder anders» (Goethe 1806, p. 264).

² The influence that Wieland's and Goethe's judgments had on Horatian scholarship throughout Europe can still be felt in Aricò 1993, p. 219.

³ Tardin Cardoso 2011, pp. 75 s.

⁴ Cf. Lévi-Strauss 1948.

Once we consider this, it becomes evident that escape from the levelling grasp of the respective dominating discourses is only possible if we position ourselves at a spot that enables us to observe how the text models itself. For a radical philological reading¹ of the *Ars poetica* (from now onwards simply *Ars*) one should envisage the length of Charles O. Brink's voluminous commentary.² In such a reading, one would have to prove word by word, colon by colon, verse by verse, sentence by sentence, and paragraph by paragraph how the text, beginning with *humano*, initiates an operation which word by word creates a space unknown to us and which we recognize, only once the long procession of textualization has started, as the stage of a drama that tells its own story.

It is strange that, while no present-day physicist of elements would compile his calculations without considering the space in which his numerical values are thought to operate, 'scientific' philology works in full confidence that its conclusions, calculations, and equations will add up in a spatial vacuum. I am talking about the resistance that is created against speech during its very construction and continuation: this is based on the fact that, each time, it must make its choices among a vast number of available registers, which means at the same time: has to repress all the other syllables and words that could potentially be inserted. On the other hand, it draws the energy needed to proceed to a not inconsiderable degree from the retained co-presence of the repressed syllables and words, so that – for each syllable and for each word chosen – a stage is erected which consists of all the non-syllables and non-words that will from then on remain unsaid for all eternity and – potentially – reverberate for evermore.³

The harsh beauty of philology lies in its essential connection to a certain type of positivism: it mainly deals with what is explicitly said. In practice, it is linked to hermeneutics, and also to the hermeneutics of things left unsaid.⁴ This inexpressible alliance

¹ For this concept, see Schwindt 2006 and 2009.

² Cf. the second of his three-volume *Horace on Poetry* (Brink 1971): 564 pages.

³ The case for the link between literary theory and the theory of philology, a connection that is also presupposed here, is argued, most recently, in Schwindt 2012, esp. pp. 290-293.

⁴ Heidegger's existential-analytic exegeses of literary and philosophical texts mark only one stage in the history of positivist interpretation, though a particularly important one. See, for example, Löwith 1953. For the epistemological analysis of linguistic relations to the world see now Schwemmer 2011. Even more radically, W. Hamacher in his 48th aphorism calls for a philology that concerns itself with language even –

shields positivism from the illusion of thinking sense could only be illuminated by the things that are said. Usually, it simply means the illumination of the surplus that can be drawn from the thorough contemplation of rhetorical devices.

What I am pleading for in the present article is not a type of a rhetorical deconstructivist reading. I am not trying to elucidate the process of textual self-dissection and self-destruction, which could, by the way, be depicted quite nicely in terms of modern physics. I am dealing with the description of the very space in which textual genesis and development put themselves into epistemic effect. As one can conclude from the unfolding of forces in space that there are force fields, and from certain effects that there are certain causes, texts give evidence of the epistemic fields in which they form themselves. Episteme deals with the kind of knowledge that philology does not have at its command. Or rather, only at the moment and only for as long as it operates in view of the phenomena.¹ Although a weaker term, it would be more useful in practice to speak of the gestic nature of textual elements.

Let us add that the analysis of textual episteme is in no way restricted to technical and non-fictional texts. Every elaborate text operates in its own field of episteme: what literature knows is something that philology has to conquer in its favourable moments.²

Horace's didactic work begins with a distinctive example of how things should not be done. Something is depicted for which the text does not have a name. We have got used to calling it a *monstrum*³

or especially – when it speaks «in Abwesenheit einer Bedeutung» (Hamacher 2010, p. 50).

¹ See J. P. Schwindt, *Über das philologische Erkennen* (talk delivered in January 2013 at the Publishing House *diaphanes*, Berlin, during the presentation of the volume *Parrhesia. Foucault und der Mut zur Wahrheit*, hrsg. von A. Gelhard, P. Gehring, Berlin 2012; a longer English version (*On philological recognition*), presented as a paper during the Workshop *Teoria da Filologia - Theory of Philology II* at the University of Campinas-São Paulo in September 2013, is being prepared for publication.

² What literature knows is not restricted to non-academic or even anti-academic – yet factual or propositional – content, as suggested by Hörisch 2007, but pertains to all elements that point towards the epistemic conditions of the texts.

³ See Gersch 2004. On 'monstrosity' as a phenomenon in Augustan literature see the contributions in the groundbreaking volume *Paradox and the Marvellous in Augustan Literature and Culture* (Hardie 2009b). For the theoretical foundation, Canguilhem 1962 remains inspiring. See also Geisenhanslüke, Mein 2009.

or even an *ineffabile*.¹ However, it is neither of such a kind that it cannot be shown (cf. *spectatum admissi*, v. 5) nor of such a kind that it cannot be expressed. After all, the text gives us a thing to be recognized on the *tabula* of the *pictor* that can be produced (e.g., painted), and thus also described. A name does not exist for this figure. It would have to be a name which expresses the reputed *compositum mixtum* made up of human and horse, fowl and fish. But the nameless state of the depicted creature is yet another consequence of the fact that this thing does not exist beyond the *tabula* of the *pictor*.² The act of naming is further complicated as descriptions are given, right from the beginning, by means of identifications which require approved differentiations of species. The head of the figure is recognized as 'human', the nape as the nape of a 'horse'. Thus, classifying the head as a human head and the nape as a horse nape undermines the connection which may be intended by the painter. The provocative framing of the verse, which puts head and nape into a gross misalignment, emphasizes how the inner fictional interpretation of the picture affects our perception thereof.

Parenthesis I: Who can actually tell us that the act of violence lies at the level of painting the *tabula* and not at the level of the poet's verbalization?³ Does the poet force the question of species on the

¹ For the term and the concept of 'the Unsayable', see Budick, Iser 1989.

² For possible examples from mythological literature see already Immisch 1932, pp. 35 s., and Sinko 1935. See also Meerwaldt 1936-1937 and Gantar 1964, pp. 90-92. The parallels with art history are given by Frischer 1991, pp. 77-85. Even he has to admit, however, that an exact contemporary match to the picture described in the *Ars* does not exist (p. 85). See also Grüner 2004, pp. 253-263, who justifiably challenges the notion that Horace's word painting constitutes a direct reference to the contemporary Roman wall paintings criticised by Vitruvius for their grotesque imagery (see p. 61 n. 3), and yet provides illuminating insights into the poem's relation to contemporary art criticism.

³ Or the speaker's, for that matter. Frischer 1991 rightly insists on maintaining the distinction. However, I do not generally agree with his reading of the *ars* as «the inept ramble of an unreliable narrator» (p. 85). Although many of Frischer's findings could easily be corroborated by observations of the type presented in the present article, his understanding of the entire text of the *Ars* as a *pièce de résistance* of parody is opposed in too many points to my proposition that a text's relations to the world and to reality are far too complex to be described in terms of simple oppositions, such as seriousness vs. playfulness or emphasis vs. irony. Whereas an interpretation determined to prove the work's parodistic intent contents itself with re-evaluating the (outward) signs of the text's credibility, I want to suggest an approach that strives to uncover the deeply rooted, persistent connections between different perspectives which, while forming an integral part of the text's compositional structure, will remain undetected as long as the interpretation of the text is limited to an analysis of its surface.

painter or does the painter, already in the *statu creandi*, attend to the expectations of an audience used to distinguishing species and *genera*? Is the speaker a victim of manipulation in exactly the same way as the *admissi*, who are to join in the poet's laughter?

Paraphrase II: Philology strives to inspect what appears to be immediately evident, to correct it, and if necessary: to revise it. Thus, a caveat: we are residing in the structure of a rhetorical question! And why should the appearance of the human being in the first word, *humano*, be truer than his blood sucking parasite, *hirudo*, in the last word of the *Ars*?

It often goes like this: someone is giving an account of something which only exists in his head. Nobody is able to check and confirm the credibility of this description. As long as we do not interrupt or abandon reading, we are at the mercy of the narrator's every whim. Meanwhile we tend to assume that the narrator, who is in charge of two roles, namely that of the painter and that of his observer, attempts to give us a veritable image of what he pretends to watch. Thus, there is considerable proof indicating that the narrator believes that the painter wanted to connect a human head to the nape of a horse.

What the epistemic reading has drawn our attention to is the barely visible crack that separates both the object-affixed from the genus-affixed and the realistic from the idealistic painter (and interpreter). Even though we may have to admit that it would be useless, not to say foolish, to deny the fantasizing speaker's sole power over his imagination: there exists a language into which the speaker's imagination has been transformed, and which allows us to describe the narrator's fixations and to consider them the result of a decision that excludes what is then nonetheless definitely included in the train of thought through this act of exclusion.

We therefore recognize the following: even if the narrator had looked over a painter's shoulder, a painter who would have wanted to create a figure *sui generis*, and thus would have decidedly not wanted to connect a human head with a horse neck, he still would have had to refer to the generic terms while composing his narrative. Narration is always interpretation of what, in art, is just 'being'. What the painter paints can be put into words, since the narrator refers to categories, and evokes ascriptions, joining them to a roughly reliable impression and reproduction of what the painter has put on his canvas.

In a radical philological reading, the *perhorrescentia* of cross-breeding¹ appears as the first topic in the *Ars*, which – for the time being, imaginary – strives to join human with animal kind. The general suspicion, already aroused in the first verse, is corroborated in the second verse when not another generic term, but the even more subtle *pars pro toto* is employed to refer to the colourful feathers of the bird, and thus to another species. In the third line, the invective litany on *genera* moves even further away from the first gradual pattern inherent to the evocation of precise species (human, horse, fowl) when it interconnects with a conception of eclecticism which, in turn, breeds a monster by throwing together a freakish disarray of limbs.² The black ending of the creature that began as a «beautiful woman» «at the top», is once again named with a mere generic term: as a fish.

Perhorrescentia is not only aroused by cross-breeding, but also, as once again becomes evident in a radical philological reading, by the conception of being able to ‘methodically’ design (and probably also give a narration of) a fantastic creature. First, there is a linguistically irrefutable impression of an experimental arrangement. Then, there is the painter’s wish or will to connect two things, by adding feathers to the body which is gradually taking form, collecting everything he can find and letting the ‘upper’ part end, according to plan, in a ‘lower’ part (*ut ... desinat*, vv. 3 s.). Nothing distinguishes, so it seems, this act of art from any other.³ On the contrary, here, a will takes shape that can be described and de-

¹ Cf. Citroni 2009, pp. 19-22, and Platt 2009, pp. 52 s. Both scholars treat the Horatian *monstrum* as a mirror and reflection of the underlying «principle of the “naturalness of artistic forms”» (Platt 2009, p. 52).

² Gantar 1964 accordingly connects the passage under discussion to the famous passage from the introduction to the second book of Cicero’s *De inventione*: «Es ist interessant, daß in beiden Fällen, sowohl in der Anekdote über Zeuxis als auch in Horazens Karikatur, ein Maler hervortritt, der ein einziges Wesen aus fünf verschiedenen Wesen erschafft. Der Unterschied besteht jedoch darin, daß im ersten Fall aus Bestandteilen mehrerer Wesen derselben Gattung ein Gebilde eben dieser Gattung, ein Idealweib, geschaffen wird, während im zweiten Fall aus Bestandteilen völlig verschiedener Wesensgattungen ein Gebilde einer Mischgattung, ein *monstrum ridiculum*, zusammengesetzt wird» (p. 93). For a discussion of eclecticism as *constituens* of many versions of ‘monstrosity’ from antiquity to the early modern period, see Rudofsky 1974, p. 77; Macho 1998; Holdenried 2008, p. 215.

³ This, however, does not justify the numerous interpretations that take Horace’s introductory picture as an ultimate expression of incongruity. Of those interpretations I name, *exempli gratia*, only Campbell 1924, p. 237: «but a monster overdone, recklessly conglomerated upon no principle, ...is merely ridiculous».

picted peripatetically as a *holon* and *unum* with a beginning (*caput*) and an ending (*desinat*) and in the same way with the terms 'top' and 'bottom'. Admittedly, two things are missing: a middle part, and a hypernym that manages to embrace this hopelessly heterogeneous creation. And yet, the enthrallment of this witty painting is its fathomless similarity with the beautiful building plan of a fair creature.¹

What gives Horace's anathema its sinister streak is its rootedness in the patterns and paradigms of everyday life. The ultimate estrangement does not emerge from a fantastic *creatio ex nihilo*, but from the hideous being extended into a familiar sphere of life.² Even the most grotesquely deformed monster has to betray traces of a normal building plan. Not only does each and every object of beauty harbour the potential of suddenly collapsing into hideousness – it originates – and that is the most appalling message – from the same matrix as beauty does. Put into different words: the grotesqueness of Horace's creature is neither manifested in its head, nor in its nape, nor in its feathers, limbs and tail, but in the actions which the act of generic transgression is composed of. *Iunctura*, *inductio*, *collatio* and the ensemble's well thought out ending in the form of the fish tail. The whimsical fancy of the figure is the result of a structuring activity that not only overlooks the boundaries of creation, but assembles these in an unprecedented *totum*.

Undoubtedly, the secret of Horace's grotesque³ lies in the co-ex-

¹ A similar phenomenon is the non-differentiation between metamorphic acts of punishment and the creative acts of the artist in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Cf. Schwindt forthcoming. It remains for future studies to determine why «the Logic of Imagination», which Roger Caillois developed in his impressive study of the Octopus (Caillois 1973), often seems to be restricted in the 'classical sources' – to such an extent as to oblige artists to adhere as closely as possible to rational principles of composition. Particularly relevant to the questions addressed here are Lorraine Daston's studies in the history of science, of which I mention only Daston 1998, and her collection of essays, Daston 2001.

² Freud 1919 remains influential. See further Hartwich 1998.

³ Unfortunately, ancient art criticism seems to have been incapable of an unbiased analysis of the phenomenon. Vitruvius' verdict (7, 5, 3-8) remained influential until early modern times. Artists themselves, however, seem to have taken little heed of such prescriptions. Already the case of Horace illustrates the tendency of the grotesque to grow rampant, and, defying its propositional stigma, find ever more fanciful expressions, sometimes invoking older poetic or mythological *exempla*. Wolfgang Kayser's seminal study (Kayser 1957) has unfortunately proven detrimental in directing subsequent scholarship. As Bakhtin 1987, p. 82 n. 8 noted, Dieterich 1897 had already explored the astonishing diversity of ancient manifestations of the grotesque – of course without using the term. Unfortunately, the ancient manifestations have largely remained

istence of two different matrices, one operating sensibly while the other is channelled by imagination insensible to the boundaries of *genera*:¹ the plausibility of extending nape to head in the fourth verse is as big as the impossibility of merging fish and female in the first verse. The contrast, however, is not counterbalanced but linguistically sharpened by maximum proximity: *capiti cervicem* (v. 1), *in piscem mulier* (v. 4). By connecting the end of the bizarre painting with a memory in the last verse (*mulier formosa superne*, v. 4), attention is drawn to the delicate problem of the depicted composition: the sequence of the artistic elements is preserved in the narrator's memory. To him, this suggests the grammar of creation which the painter had obviously attempted to annul.

What is also displayed in the style of the first verse is the interpreter's revolt against the artistic act which takes place in front of his very eyes: the hyperbaton between the antagonistic expressions of generic order *humano equinam* in the first verse;² *inducere* as the denunciation of the merely applied, functionless, colourful feathers in the second verse; the unveiled devaluation of the painting in *turpiter ... desinat*; and the oxymoron of the fish woman in the fourth verse prepare for the evaluation given in the fifth verse: *spectatum admissi risum teneatis, amici?*

The preceding contemplation keeps us from reading the verse without reservations. If we question the gestic nature of this verse, different things will catch our eye. First of all, an observer collapsing into the hypothetical scene. On close inspection, we are not dealing with a normal observational point, but with one that is licensed: *admissi* are in fact people who are admitted according to rules (which we are not familiar with) and who are thus permitted to look. *Spectare* allows connecting the depicted event with institutionalized festivals and plays. Thus, a limited public is constituted, one that is allowed to look at the presented spectacle.

The reason why I am lingering over a process that is normally not scrutinized in this way is due to the first verses, which put things

unnoticed. To this day, there seem to be no substantiated contributions toward a more profound understanding of this episode in ancient art history. But see Chao's recent comparative study (Chao 2010). At the beginning of her book, she provides an interesting sketch: *Aegri Somnia: Towards an Aesthetics of the Grotesque*, pp. 24-44.

¹ Thus, the Horatian introduction *en passant* also conforms to one of the basic tenets of fantastic literature: «Le fantastique, c'est l'hésitation éprouvée par un être qui ne connaît que les lois naturelles, face à un événement en apparence surnaturel» (Todorov 1970, p. 29).

² See Rostagni 1930, ad loc., and Steidle 1939, p. 11.

into a striking perspective. What was first experienced as a daring experimental arrangement is – after the first conspicuous signals – entirely put into an unexpected focus. The idiosyncrasy of the presented art is illuminated by the glaring light of a public, however small it might be: a public that has received permission to watch. This is the next big topic that emerges much earlier than otherwise expected: the precarious differentiation between the autonomous artist's existence and the public's homophonous opinion.¹

Even though I may be in danger of straining my readers' attention more than is usual in academic publications, I hope to be permitted the liberty of asking what the *admissi* are actually watching. Are they supposed to watch the painter enacting the depicted steps or will they merely look at the completed masterpiece? I cannot deny you this question, as the intensive, perhaps institutionally sanctioned act of spectating, which *spectatum* accounts for, can best be presented in a scene that is played in front of the spectators' faces or is probably – after the masterpiece has been completed – replayed in their heads. Undoubtedly, the art passed down to us is of a heady nature, as it not only begins at the head (*capiti*), but even then remains at the head when the painter has already begun painting the fish tail which, «at the top» (*superne*), had so beautifully started as a woman. Thus, the licensed spectators are supposed to adopt a heady mode of observation, which the speaker has already embraced. Strictly speaking, he regards his spectators as multiplications of his own observation – which is enforced by the fact that he abstains from being perceived as part of the observational scene. We have not yet realized that in the text, the speaking narrator is merely represented by the distinctive traces of his maliciously-rhetorical accentuations. Nowhere do we perceive him perceiving the depicted. Thus, *he*, without whom the theatre would cease to exist, withdraws himself from the scene, skips and replaces himself with a throng of ideal – and therefore probably licensed – spectators, the only people whom we hear of. They are the ones he escorts to the stage. He creates an audience for his heady theatre that, as he hopes, will be able to see the stage play with the eyes of the speaker. A tell-tale sign is in any case his informal qualification of the addressees as *amici* (v. 5). Admittedly, it seems unusual that he defers the poem's actual address to the Pi-

¹ For the link to *Ars* 112 s. see Suárez 1998, p. 164 n. 7. For an analysis of the socio-poetic conditions of that passage see Möller 2004, pp. 274-277.

sones and prefixes an address¹ that, similar to an experimental arrangement, strives to constitute a like-minded community which is knowledgeable of rational art and is thus epitomized as the text's ideal addressee.

Let us briefly summarize what can be said about the *condicio* of the *Ars* at the beginning of its performance. Similar to the good old Sanskrit theatre of Kalidasa beginning with a prelude which in turn ends with the theatre director's *alamvistarena* («Enough with the excursus!»), Horace gives a prelude that – whether done voluntarily or involuntarily is a decision other philologists may make – deals with the core of the proposed theory of art on a smaller stage and scale. The painter is not yet the poet, he only forestalls him (at least they are both mentioned in v. 9), the picture is not yet the *littérateur's* text, but the method already reveals the well-planned handling of matter and material. The voice of the inner fictional poet follows the reader throughout the entire *Ars*; the licensed audience is the kind of audience the poet would wish for: affirmative and ready to follow the interpreting painter's and poet's affective magic wherever it may lead them.

The beginning of the *Ars* draws us into a prelude which is presented as a lesson on affective control.² The didactic poet first makes use of the doorman's mask and thus gets to decide on the spectators' in- or exclusion. Or rather, he moderates the throng of admitted people as an entrepreneur of leisure activities in a way that attempts to control their diffuse attitudes and emotions. Admittedly, we cannot rule out that it is the painter himself who controls the admissions. This would fit the subsequent scenes which deal with dilettante poets and the preposterous *hybris* they display in making a huge fuss about their creation, and who are consequently not spared the ridicule of the audience on the streets.³ But even if it is the artist himself who controls the admission, the speaker still maintains his position as the second of the extremely ridiculous *sottise*. Thus, the account would not end with the description of the picture, but would conclude with the comment that whoever created something like that would have to judge his

¹ I take *amici* as vocative. Cf. Klingner 1964, p. 356 n. 1. For an account of the controversial interpretations see Brink 1971, ad loc.

² An affective control and emotional manipulation that starts, contrary to what most interpretations of the poem assume, well before ll. 102 ss. On the topic of affective control see, for example, Roselt 2009.

³ See *Ars* 295 ss., 382-384 and 453 ss. Cf. also Häußler 1986.

audience according to his own standard. Only after the penthimeres does the target tension of the scenario dissolve into loud laughter.

By now, it should have become clear that, in the first verses, the author creates an audience of his own. It is not a coincidence that he calls those who are barely able to control their ridicule at the weird artist his friends, *amici*. The drop height of the painter and the pride he feels towards his own art is considerably increased if his masterpiece not only were not to attract new admirers and followers by means of admission but if this rather drove them into the arms of the poet, who cunningly remains in the position of a background observer.

Notwithstanding the importance of the addressees' constitution, the inauguration of a reading and interpreting manner seems to be of even greater relevance to me. After all, the beginning of the *Ars* offers the first sample of an art description and interpretation. We have already talked about the description. Let us add that it was a description that was not guided by the complete product but by its gradual development. That is why we called it a 'narrative'. The narrator differentiated the artistic act according to its stages and identified the painting according to its parts, which he failed to collect under a hypernym. To him, the depicted remained an action of different parts which, after they had been 'recognized' as a pawn borrowed from other entities, could no longer be arranged into a new *totum*. Even memory plays a trick on the interpreter; at the moment he identifies the fish tail, he is led back to the starting point ('at the top'), respectively to the beginning (*caput*). This very memory enables the interpreter to check his 'narrative' by means of and according to its process, and to correct or complement it in a not inconsiderable point. The gender of the depicted creature only discloses itself when he retrospects on the things seen and related. Now he can identify the human, whom he had thought to have recognized right at the beginning, as female.¹ It is not said if the specification of the initial statement comes about due to the knowledge of the 'whole' or if the speaker is merely catching up on by-passed knowledge. The following is clear: the deformity of the painted object becomes all the more repelling due to the painting's beautiful top. Thus, also a particular sentimentality is displayed in the interpretation of the invisible painter as he notices the beauty's

¹ See already Steidle 1939, p. 11.

downward disintegration and degeneracy with the expert's pain who seems to know of the sorrows of things lost, of undiminished womanhood, and unmarred beauty.

We realize that the speaker does not leave us in the dark with regard to his artistic preoccupations. This already will not fail to affect the interpreting manner of a considerable number of readers. But something is added that, I hope, only few poetical adepts will make use of. Let me put it as follows: from a radical philological point of view, the problem posed by the beginning of the poem lies in the antagonism of two readings that continually get into each other's way, I do not want to speak in terms of proper deconstructivism by saying they are denying each other. Even before the analysis is able to get down to work as the leading method of investigation, the 'human' is constructed right at the beginning. Once man, if only as a 'transcendental significant' of the initiating *caput*, has made his appearance, the interpreting painter cannot simply get rid of him any more. To be sure, both *capiti* and *cervicem* are identifications as they try to link the painting to a corporeal entity. Yet, they should rather be seen in relation to the standards given by the analysis, instead of being linked to the initiating word in the text. In *humano* a syntheton is evoked that the narration cannot redeem but is only able to maintain as a memory trace. The human concern is too hard to grasp. With it, any hope that the project is of any value is bound to disappear. The place where the 'new' (if we are to use this difficult term for once) could possibly make sense is disposed of with the very first word, since it is blocked. The analysis distorted by synthesis is misleading as it is not open to the idiorhythm of the new opus. Nearly every single word at the beginning of the *Ars* is contaminated by logical argumentation. Human nature does not constitute anything human, but anticipates a description whose attractiveness may lie in an openness of meaning that is, however, never seriously considered as an option. Instead, it becomes evident that the narration will never be able to reach the human standard. Thus, we would never consider a human's pate (*Haupt*) to be the same as a horse's head (*Kopf*) in German. The connection between these parts is an assumption that the philological decoding of the picture takes as a criterion in judging the painter's opus. The same can be said about describing the feathers as a mere application. Last but not least, the collection of limbs 'from all quarters' paints a picture of randomness that together with the picture's ugly finality brings matters to an absurd

head by contorting it into its opposite, namely the unquestionable unambiguity of the black tail.

Do you know how Philistines talk about works of art? They are not able to perceive anything in the paintings of art. *Our* interpreter perceives too much. The exorbitance of what he sees in the fanciful pictures drives him to desperation and the *admissi* into breaking out in laughter. He is so dedicated to matching the perceived picture with the inner image of what should rather 'be' that he destroys the analytical part with the sudden intervention of the synthesis, and the synthesis with the disintegrating elements of the analysis. Not only does the interpreter tell us how we should rather not paint, but probably also, even if this may not have been the author's intention, which principles we are to apply when interpreting artwork.

If we reach agreement that Horace, whatever the reasons, planned to begin his *ars* with an anti-*Ars*,¹ then we will have to ask if the caricature of an artwork also extends to its interpretation. However, there is evidence to suggest that the interpretation, regardless of how much it may tend to exaggeration, does not operate on the same irrational level.² Can we therefore take it as a paradigm? In my opinion, a text of the epistemic stature of the *Ars* should be able to bear the examination. Then, it will become apparent that it operates with thought patterns that can be condensed to the simplest formulae in terms of the history of ideas. To put it into brief but provocative words one could say: «First the total and then the parts!» – «Please do not cross-breed!». With less confidence we could add: «Top before bottom!»³ and «Beauty before ugliness!».

¹ This term seems not to have been applied to the relevant passage of the *Ars* before. Jähnig 1969, p. 146, however, uses it, overtly referring to Horace's poem, in order to describe the general reception of Schelling's aesthetics: «Nach der herrschenden Ansicht von Schellings Konzeption der Kunst ist seine Ästhetik ein Anti-ars-poetica». Cf. Steidle 1939: «Wenn in den vv. 1 ff ein verkehrtes Verhalten zum Gegenstand der Betrachtung gemacht und erst mit Hilfe der Kritik die Erkenntnis des Richtigen allmählich gewonnen wird, so ist das die Form, in der im Sermo auch sonst die Unterweisung und das Lernern sich zu vollziehen pflegen» (p. 10 with reference to Hor. *sat.* 1, 4, 103 ss.). See also Becker 1963, p. 68: he connects this passage to other beginnings of Horatian poems where «die gefährlichen Extreme gezeigt werden und nach und nach die eigentliche Aufgabe in den Blick gebracht wird», i.e., *sat.* 1, 2, and *ep.* 1, 18.

² On Frischer's interpretation see p. 58 n. 2 above.

³ Hardie 1993, p. 120 n. 3 makes a link between *superne* in l. 4 and Hor. *Carm.* 2, 20, 11. He sees the expression as a means «to point up to the hybrid nature of the forms described».

Well, there we have it! Already the anti-Ars gives us *in nuce* the guiding principle of the system. As a satyr play. As a satyr play turned upside down. The cheerful finale of the tragic trilogy is turned into the first bitter-sweet-sober glimpse behind the stage curtain, defining art according to its exact opposite.

It is a brilliant idea of the didactic poet to begin his *Kunstbrief* with a flash of wit. And it is an even more brilliant idea to begin the text with a scene that in terms of form and content is akin to the genre which is given by far the most time in the explanation, namely drama. This is the 'stage setting' one can work with. It looms as a gigantic «Don't» in front of the Pisones, who are brought into our focus only after the prelude has reached its end.

The prelude may have finished but the tone remains unaltered when the obedience of the definite addressees is demanded with emphatic *credite* (v. 6) prepended. The prelude's notional image is immediately followed by a second one that is more closely linked to the theme of the text: *isti tabulae fore librum / persimilem* (vv. 6 s.). The strange beginning turns out to be a comparison, the *Wahn-Bild* (a fanciful picture) becomes a *Warn-Bild* (an admonishing sign). A didactic construction that strives to draw its lesson from the notice of what has been recognized as 'false'.

But still the lesson is not presented as a *positivum*. The clarification of the introduction at first remains in the sphere of «how it should not be done». To the fanciful image at the beginning, the *vanae species* (vv. 7 s.) of a book appear, which refuse to be merged into 'one *forma*'. The fanciful book obviously reprises the fanciful picture: even the book has a foot and a head and has to realize that they cannot be joined. To be exact: that neither foot nor head can return to the place from where they were mentally, or to put it into Plato's words, anamnesticly extracted.¹ The reprise in the second picture goes so far as to continue the picture that is in the spectator's memory (*mulier formosa superne*), and to translate it into the terms of venerable (art) epistemology. As you are no doubt aware, comparisons never merely repeat the proposition of the beginning in their second part. They almost always add an idea that opens up new perspectives.

The striking thing about the comparison at hand is that in terms of their status, *comparatum* and *comparandum* are both random insertions. Two hypotheta are compared, and as if this was not pre-

¹ A detailed analysis of the topos of the anthropomorphic book in Augustan literature is still a desideratum of research.

carious enough, the fictitious *comparandum* is put into another comparison that links the world of the presented book with the dreams of a delirious person: *veluti aegri somnia* (v. 7).¹ A book that, like the feverish dreamer, can use neither foot nor head to create an entity could only be compared to a painter whose masterpiece, that had begun so spectacularly, turned into the contorted image of a beauty!

Let us recapitulate that our treatise initiates an examination in three pictures and three fields that can simply be understood as the contrafacts of what the author may consider as 'right'. The poetic instruction begins with the introduction and exclusion of those examples that may lead adepts of art astray. By the time the beginning is illuminated as part of a big comparison, the example is transformed into a 'case', the painter's and poet's *vanae species* into «cases». Cases that do not lead to good painting and good poetry but into the hands of a doctor. We can observe how the speaker develops a mechanism of seclusion that arranges what has been considered 'false' as a *fascinosum* that has the power of catching an invited audience's attention just as effectively as a doctor's. And for which he even finds a stage on which it may display and, once confronted with the crowd's judgment, must assert itself. The first audience of Horace's poetry is like one of its last, the bully who teases the fancy poet (v. 456),² one that congenially integrates itself into the didactic poet's exclusionary rituals. The failed artist is ridiculed with scornful laughter by the properly trained. The erring author however is, like the sick man's feverish dream, a case for a doctor.³ Or put more 'scientifically': the failure of the anamnesis directed at the synthesis is a case for 'pathology'.⁴

Yet, it is strange that precisely these pictures last and take hold of our heads. It would be interesting to investigate if and when they dissipate again in the reading process, and if and how the author of the *Ars* in the following develops a method which enables him to deal with the accumulated or already released energy of violence, differentiation, and exclusion. It seems to be a thin line that separates him at the beginning of his treatise from the directorate

¹ On *pathopoesis* as a mode of artistic creation in the Roman Modernism of the late Republican and early imperial Latin literature see Schwindt 2002 and 2005, pp. 1-6.

² The affinity between the beginning and the ending of the *Ars* has often been noted; see, most recently, Laird 2007, pp. 137-139.

³ Cf. already Steidle 1939, pp. 15 s. On Horace's perspective on the *poetae insani* see, for example, Russell 1981, pp. 72, 80.

⁴ See G. Scharbert's inspiring book (Scharbert 2010), esp. his discussion of nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature.

of art theory. Already in the following sentence, he will indeed make space for the contradiction of an interlocutor, who is a *fictus* himself. But he will probably develop new methods of elimination that will not remove, but corroborate the first impression. Radical philology does not ask if and how evidence in the text interrelates with our expectations and reading habits. It only tells us that when dealing with the big differentiation of 'good' and 'evil', 'good' and 'bad', 'wrong' and 'right' even after all the long-standing efforts of the philological tradition to give a proper explanation, one can still perceive cracks in the textual structure (and I would love to say: the reflections of external tensions) that seem to warn us against hastily assessing texts as 'good' and 'evil', 'good' and 'bad', 'wrong' and 'right'. Thus, we may become aware that the concept of order in the *Ars* is wrested from a chaotic, contrary reflection.¹ This chaos in turn contains the trace of a reasonable order. Thus, the language of alogy is presumably something we are only able to describe and grasp as words dancing at the brink of an abyss, at the brink of fancy and reason, insanity and sanity, dream and reality.² Like Wittgenstein's and Gombrich's ambiguous figures that, according to your point of view, either sport a rabbit or a duck head,³ it depends on us readers if we let the story of the *Ars* tell of the establishment of *ordo* in a fanciful world or of the relapse of reason behind its most dissoluble boundary. My philological conscience dissuades me from choosing any one of these two attractive options. Until the opposite has been proven, I abstain from providing the philological demonstration at this point, and maintain the opinion that the beginning of the *Ars* deals first and foremost with the following: with the adventurous story of the pathogenesis of poetic judgment.⁴

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¹ It remains yet to be determined to what extent the process described by Rolf Grimminger as the intentional merging of rational and irrational procedures, which appears to have been practised at least since Gottsched, can be applied to ancient classical representatives of self-reflective art. See Grimminger 1990.

² It should be evident that any study analysing the relation between *ordo* and insanity in literary texts also needs to account for the problem of contingency. See Waldenfels 2000.

³ See Gombrich 1978, p. 21, and Wittgenstein 1969, p. 504 (references from Schirren 2005, p. 291). For background information on perceptual psychology see Flaßpöhler, Rausch, Wald 1997, p. 8.

⁴ I would like to thank my discerning – and patient – translators, Lavinia Jungheim, Anne Schelzig, and Tobias S. Allendorf.