

The poetic landscape of Horace's *Odes* is a heavily wooded one, in which the poet frequently mentions trees of all sorts. I will show that Horace's trees are not random, or mere decorative elements, but deliberately configured in a way that has important ramifications for our understanding of the poet's compositional technique and self-representation. The formal aspects of Horace's poetry, accordingly, are not separate from or ancillary to the issue of poetic meaning, but integral to it.

Horace's use of trees over the first fourteen poems of book 1 demonstrates a clear pattern, similar to the pattern of meters in the "Parade Odes". Here, rather than deploying a series of meters, the poet introduces one new type of tree after another, without repetition, beginning with the *palma* at 1.1.3 and ending with *aesculeta* at 1.22.14. Horace's trees, in other words, act as a lexical counterpart to the metrical *variatio* that he displays at the beginning of the book. That Horace introduces these trees in a deliberate pattern is clear if we compare the second and third books of the *Odes*. These poems feature fewer references to trees, with less variety and no clear pattern in the way they appear.

The existence of this lexical arrangement has a number of implications for a reading of the *Odes*. At a minimum, it is another example of *variatio* that highlights Horace's poetic virtuosity and mirrors the diversity of his collection. But a diversity of trees is also significant from a metapoetic standpoint, forming a lyric counterpart to bucolic poetry's use of iconic trees and embodying a literary *silva*, or collection of poems. Thus, by carefully selecting and arranging his literary trees, Horace emphasizes his mastery over the lyric genre.

Horace's power to control literary trees also bolsters his self-identification with Orpheus, the mythological exemplar of a *vates* and the model for Horace's vatic persona. Orpheus in book one of the *Odes* is defined by his ability to coax trees into movement through his magical song. Horace accordingly recreates the feats of his mythical predecessor through the structure of his poetic book.

Finally, the Orphic powers that Horace demonstrates in the first book of the *Odes* are ironically undercut by the descriptions, in the second and third books, of his near-death experience with a falling tree. In these passages, Horace describes himself in passive terms, as one who is at the mercy of his environment and is only saved through divine intervention. Moreover, he describes his arboreal nemesis in vague, generic terms, as an *arbos*, *truncus* or a *triste lignum*. His inability to name the trees around him is linked to his inability to control them, in sharp contrast with his formal and thematic mastery of the *silva* that opens book 1 of the collection.