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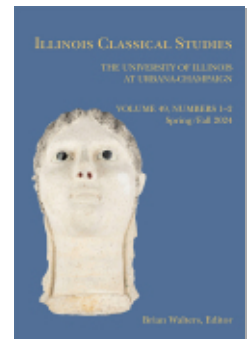
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2.11

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The Poetics of Lyde's Bacchic Hairstyle in Horace's *Odes* 2.11

LUCREZIA SPERINDIO

This article examines the figure of Lyde in Horace's *Odes* 2.11. She is one of the less-studied courtesans often found in Horatian sympotic and erotic poems. In the last thirty years, scholarship has emphasised how Horace's own male gaze and desire shape these female figures and turn them into objects of his own poetic agency. As such, they can be considered on par with Horace's poetic *materia*. In this article, I argue that the variant readings of the last stanza of *Odes* 2.11 add to Horace's characterisation of Lyde as geographically, poetically, and aesthetically elusive. I suggest, in light of this elusiveness, that Lyde can be interpreted as participating in Horace's "Bacchic Poetics," something which complicates her gendered interpretation as "fetishized" object for Horace and his implied Roman male audience. Lyde's elusiveness and inaccessibility, while being triggers for male desire, are also features that draw her close to a Bacchant and, at the same time, to Horace's own characterisation as a Bacchant in *Odes* 3.25. In this way, Lyde can be seen to embody the complex Bacchic tensions that, in Horace's poetry, liberate poetic energy: Horace represents Lyde as bacchic and thus ambivalent, both an object and an agent of his poetry.

Introduction

This article offers a brief analysis of the figure of Lyde in Horace's *Odes* 2.11. The ode is considered a sympotic love poem, in which Horace invites his friend, Quinctius, to join him for a relaxed drinking party in a remote corner of countryside, away from military, political, and quotidian cares.¹ Lyde, an otherwise unknown prostitute, is summoned by the poem's speaker in the last stanza (21–24). Scholars have traditionally interpreted her as little more than a poetic trope: one of those fictional female characters that populate Horatian sympotic and love poetry.² She is called a *scortum* (21), a "prostitute," a term usually found in more

1. See Lyne (1980) 201–38 for Horace's "Love Odes" and their salient features. The edition of Horace's text is the one edited by Garrod (1901), unless otherwise specified.

2. Lyne (1980) 192–200; Ancona (2010) 185–86.

colloquial and comedic contexts.³ R. O. A. M. Lyne points to the derogatory connotation that *scortum* would have had in Cicero's times, suggesting that Horace uses it here for "humorous realism," and that we should translate it with "tart," rather than "whore."⁴ Similarly, Robin Nisbet and Margaret Hubbard define her "an exclusive whore of exquisite simplicity."⁵ I would like to suggest that, while these translations may work within a traditional understanding of Horace's stock female figures, they run the risk of simplifying and flattening Lyde as a character, or rather as a set of characters, obstructing the possibility of reading her description as a more complex poetic construction.

Horatian symposia are said to feature fictional women whose existence is limited to the specific poem in which they are mentioned.⁶ They usually have a Greek name and could be identified as hired entertainers, offering their skills and services from lyre-singing to sex.⁷ While based on Greek-derived social practices of the time,⁸ in Horace's odes they are fictive and literary characters with an ephemeral existence, closely bound to the poem in which they are summoned to life. Ronnie Ancona was the first scholar to build on feminist critical theory in examining these Horatian characters. She argues that the concern of Horatian poetry with temporality determines a refusal to "recognise the temporality, and therefore humanity of the beloved."⁹ The beloved exists only in relation to the poet/lover's desire: the woman's immediate and limited availability in the space of a single poem realizes Horace's ethico-philosophical imperative to enjoy what is at hand and only lasts in function of this poetic concept.

More recent interpretations, by drawing on feminist studies on Roman love elegy, examine these Horatian women as a site for gendered and poetic tensions and desires. Elizabeth Sutherland draws on feminist readings of elegiac women

3. *OLD* 2; Harrison (2017) 143.

4. Lyne (1980) 197-98. The *OLD* defines *scortum* as "prostitute."

5. Nisbet and Hubbard (1978) 167.

6. Consider, for instance, Pyrrha of *Odes* 1.5 and the Leuconoe of *Odes* 1.11. In book 2, we find Phyllis (*Odes* 2.4); Lalage, Pholoe, and Chloris (*Odes* 2.5); Barine (*Odes* 2.7), and Licymnia (*Odes* 2.12). See further Ancona (2010) 186-92 for a more recent survey of these types and an updated bibliography on them.

7. Lyne (1980) 198-200.

8. Lyne (1980) 192-200 connects the literary motif of Horatian women to the society and culture of Rome in the 1st century BCE.

9. Fitzgerald (1996) 388. Ancona (1994) offers a new focus on Horace's temporal ethics through the conceptualization of his lyric female figures. On the ethics of *carpe diem*: Rohland (2022) discusses the ethics of *carpe diem* in relation to wines and wine-drinking in Horatian lyric. Traina (1985) is still the most relevant discussion of the metaphors involved in this expression and its connections to Horatian ethics and poetics.

and, specifically, examines Horace's Licymnia (*Odes* 2.12) and Lyde (2.11) as possible embodiments of Horace's lyric *materia*.¹⁰ In their being objectified and fetishized by the male poet,¹¹ they embody the poem itself and how it navigates the complex negotiations between poet, addressee, and public.¹² Lauren Curtis has also contributed recently to this debate by re-evaluating these female figures in light of their representation as lyric performers.¹³ Lyde belongs to the category that Curtis terms "Horace's lyric women": she is not just an erotic interest of the poet and an object of his poetry, but also a skilled lyric performer (*eburna . . . cum lyra*, 22).¹⁴ Curtis argues that the Horatian women who are figured as singers and dancers embody Horace's lyric experience and its infinite performativity.¹⁵ I wish to draw on this poetic interpretation of Horatian women with a specific focus on Lyde in *Odes* 2.11, whom seems to have been somehow neglected.¹⁶ Sutherland, in her study on *Odes* 2.12, considers her briefly and defines her characterization as "elusive": Lyde is described in the act of preparing herself to join the symposium as she is tying her hair, and yet, we never get to know whether she is going to make it to the party.¹⁷ Sutherland argues that Lyde, like the Licymnia of *Odes* 2.12, because of this *in fieri* description, is "fetishized for the onlookers" and becomes a double for Horace's poem: a poetic, graceful object to be looked at.¹⁸ In this last capacity, Lyde's elusiveness is particularly apt to embody the position of this poem as the penultimate in the opening sequence of this book.¹⁹ In Sutherland's view, Lyde's unfinished vignette is completed by the closing image of *Odes* 2.12 and Licymnia's presence at the symposium.

10. Sutherland (2005) 193, 1. For a survey of the scholarly discussions on elegiac women and their poetic agency, see Greene (2012). On the elegiac *puella* as "written" and as a poetic *materia*, see Wyke (1989) 25–47 and Sharrock (1991) 36–49. Feminist readings of Horace's female figures can be found in Ancona (1989) 49–57; Sutherland (1997) 23–43 and (2003) 57–80.

11. Sutherland (2005) 193–94; Wyke (1994) 134–51.

12. Sutherland (2005) 193–210 examines *Odes* 2.11 and 2.12 from this point of view.

13. The characterization of Horace's female figures seems to be a secondary strand within Horatian studies. Curtis's recent contribution highlights how a more extended engagement with this topic could push further the overarching scholarly debate on Horatian poetics.

14. Curtis (2017) 110–14: Lyde is included amongst these lyric women (cf. Tyndaris in *Odes* 1.17; Licymnia in *Odes* 2.12; Chloë in *Odes* 3.9) but not discussed.

15. Curtis (2017) 111.

16. It is noticeable that Lyde is either not analyzed by scholars – note her absence from Ancona's (1994) index, still a seminal study on Horace's female figures—or mentioned only briefly, like in the studies cited in this article.

17. Sutherland (2005) 207–10 discusses especially the elusiveness of Lyde.

18. Sutherland (2005) 209.

19. Sutherland (2005) 194. However, she does not discuss (what looks like) her choice of grouping the first twelve poems of book 2.

Here, I will suggest that Sutherland's interpretation of Lyde's characterization as a "fetishized female figure" does not take into account that her "elusive" quality, which makes her highly desirable as a woman and as a poetic artifact,²⁰ is also what grants her a poetic agency not dissimilar to that of the poet himself. The continuous deferral of her appearance at the symposium, as we shall see below, determines her inaccessibility and elusiveness, which are triggers of erotic and poetic desire. In other words, male desire, which, according to the above-mentioned feminist readings of poetic female figures, would favor an objectification of Lyde, can actually be interpreted as generating poetic agency in Lyde. Her elusiveness, I believe, can be read as part of what Alessandro Schiesaro defined as Horace's "Bacchic Poetics:"²¹ within Horatian lyric, Bacchus/Dionysus features not just as the patron of wine, but also as one of the deities that presides over Horace's poetic inspiration.²² He is consistently addressed throughout all three of Horace's books of *Odes* in a total of four poems.²³ Schiesaro argues that Bacchus, understood as an ambivalent, metamorphic, and gender-fluid god that can be both lenient and dangerous, is, in virtue of the oppositions that he himself embodies and performs in Greco-Roman myth,²⁴ a source of poetic energy and inspiration within Horace's lyric, and makes possible the coexistence of those poetic tensions often spotted by Horatian scholars. Through the boundless powers of this deity, Horace's lyric is energized and becomes able to perform complex negotiations, such as between Callimachean and Pindaric poetics, or between the light themes of lyric poetry and the grander material of panegyric and epic.

Gender is also involved in these negotiations.²⁵ The poet himself, in *Odes* 3.25, turns into a Bacchant possessed by Dionysus, and this ecstatic experience generates an incredibly powerful poetic inspiration that will help Horace tackle more challenging poetic genres. In relation to Lyde, I argue that her "elusive" characterization, specifically in her hairstyle, can be described as Bacchic and, as such, it draws her closer to Horace's own representation as an inspired poet.

20. See Sutherland (1997) 33-34 on the inaccessibility of Lalage in *Odes* 2.5.

21. Schiesaro (2009) 61 n.1. Fowler (2002) 148 credits Schiesaro with the term "Bacchic Poetics."

22. The poetic importance of Bacchus/Dionysus in Horace's odes is discussed by Silk (1969) 193-212; Batinsky (1991) 361-78. Other famous inspirational deities are Apollo and Mercury within Horace's lyric.

23. Silk (1969) 198. Bacchus is addressed at *Odes* 1.18, 2.19, 3.3, and 3.25. There are also occasional mentions, like the one in *Odes* 1.1.30-32.

24. Seaford (2006) is an excellent introduction to the Greek Dionysus. For his Roman counterpart, see Mac Góráin (2020).

25. Fowler (2002) 150-51 discusses gender in relation to Horace's self-representation as a bacchant in *Odes* 3.25. Schiesaro (2009) 63 also comments on the same passage.

Horace may present her as inaccessible and, thus, highly desirable to a male audience/readership,²⁶ but she also shares some of Horace's own feminized poetic agency, as characterized under Bacchic influence. Lyde's Bacchic ambivalence ultimately allows her to both enact lyric agency and to act as an object of the poet's gaze and a product of his creativity.

Lyde, the Bacchant

Lyde and, specifically, her contested hairstyle,²⁷ have been interpreted as a meta-poetic element, figuring the closural, or non-closural, stances of *Odes* 2.11. Ellen Oliensis argues that Lyde and her well-tied hair knot, aptly placed at the end of poem, embody poetic and moral restraint.²⁸ Sutherland draws on Oliensis's argument and expands the metapoetic interpretation of Lyde's hairstyle to her entire representation: Lyde's elusiveness and resistance to joining the drinking party only anticipate closure, which happens eventually in *Odes* 2.12. In *Odes* 2.12, Licymnia's tangible presence in the symposium embodies this first group of twelve poems and symbolizes their readiness to be shared with the wider Roman public and Maecenas, the addressee (and lover) of the poem (and of Licymnia).²⁹ In the close reading that follows I will highlight how the text of the closural stanza of *Odes* 2.11 (lines 21–24) and the different scholarly readings of lines 23–24 perform a set of tensions, between inside and outside and domestic and wild spaces, ultimately expressing a creative and ambiguously powerful Bacchic energy.

Bacchus or Dionysus, originally a Greek deity but, by Horace's time, well integrated in Roman culture and literature,³⁰ is an important source of poetic inspiration for Horace,³¹ and also presides over symposia. In his dynamic and transgressive nature, the god, and his sympotic provinces, become a site for the negotiation of ethical, poetical, and political tensions between containment and liberation. In *Odes* 2.11 Bacchus is evoked with his epithet *Euhius* (17), which hints at his wilder and liberating role:³² he is in fact mentioned for his

26. For an examination of the concept of male gaze and male desire and the conjuncture between feminist theory and Horace's love poetry, see Sutherland (1997) 23–43 and Ancona (1989) 49–57. Gold (1993) 75–101 surveys the engagement of scholarship on Roman poetry with feminist critical theory.

27. Harrison (2017) 144 discusses the scholarly debate on Horace's text.

28. Oliensis (1998) 123–24 and (2002) 93–106.

29. Sutherland (2005) 193–210.

30. On this topic see Mac Góráin (2020) and Bernabé et al. (2013).

31. Schiesaro (2009) 61–79.

32. This title of Bacchus derives from the cries of the Bacchantes, and therefore suggests the ecstatic and dangerous powers of the god. Harrison (2017) 142–43 discusses the etymology of the term. See further Mayer (2012) 155 on *Carm.* 1.18.9, which is the only other occurrence of this term in Horace.

powers to free Horace and Quintius from biting cares (*dissipat . . . curas edacis*, 17–18). As Nisbet and Hubbard notice,³³ the connection of the term *Euhius* with the wilder side of Bacchus and its juxtaposition to the verb *dissipo* suggest a violent scattering of cares, reminiscent of the older and fiercer maenadic rites that included the dismembering and scattering of sacrificial offerings with bare hands (σπαραγμός) and the eating of their raw flesh (ὠμοφαγία).³⁴ This less restrained aspect of the god is reinforced by the references to the luxury of this drinking party,³⁵ marked by the use of perfumes and oriental anointments (*canos odorati capillos*, 15 and *Assyriaque nardo . . . uncti*, 16–17) and by uncontrolled drinking, signalled by the verb *potare* (*potamus*, 17).³⁶ The release from cares that this symposium seems to be about has the potential to turn into a violent Bacchic rite.

This tensive and dangerous atmosphere is reperformed and left unresolved in the figure of Lyde:

quis deuium scortum eliciet domo
Lyden? eburna dic age cum lyra
maturet in comptum Lacaenae
more comas religata nodum.³⁷

Who will lure Lyde out, the prostitute remote
from her house? Come and tell her, with her white lyre
to be ready, her hair tied in a tidy, Spartan knot.³⁸

Lyde's name is revealed only at line 22, whereas what Horace first tells us about her is that she is quite difficult to find. The adjective *deuius*, emphatically placed in a proleptic position,³⁹ already creates a sense of uncertainty with regards to Lyde. Commentators understand *deuius* as "remote,"⁴⁰ in relation to Lyde's dis-

33. Nisbet and Hubbard (1978) 175–76.

34. Dodds (1963) xvi–xx discusses these phases of Bacchic rites.

35. Nisbet and Hubbard (1978) 175 argue that the Eastern origin of the oil "increases the impression of luxury." A similarly luxurious drinking party in *Odes* 2.7 has been argued to be a symbol of excessive licentiousness by Moles (1987) 59–72.

36. Nisbet and Hubbard (1978) 175 discuss the "deep-drinking" implied by the use of *potare*.

37. This is the text printed by Garrod (1901). See below for a specific discussion on the variant readings of lines 23–24.

38. Translation is mine. I have chosen to translate *matureo* according *OLD* 1b "to mature," used of fruit and wine. In the same sense, it is used of people growing old, see *TLL* 495.78–81. Horace uses the derived adjective *maturus* at *Carm.* 3.6.22 (*matura uirgo*), to qualify a woman ready for marriage.

39. Harrison (2017) 143.

40. *OLD* 1.

tance from the sympotic location.⁴¹ Nisbet and Hubbard suggest that the pairing of *deuius* with *scortum* forms an oxymoron in relation to the “access” that Lyde provides: as a prostitute she is both “cheap” and “publicly” accessible, while her “remote” location makes her inaccessible.⁴² The different meanings of *deuius* add to her inaccessibility. Is she simply “out of the way” (*OLD* 1)? Or does she “wander off” easily (*OLD* 2)? *Deuius* in Horatian lyric is usually found in the latter meaning and in Bacchic contexts:⁴³ in *Odes* 3.25 the poet compares himself to a Bacchant wandering off the beaten path (*mihi deuio*, 12).⁴⁴ Similarly, in *Odes* 1.17, the adjective qualifies a herd of goats wandering in the countryside,⁴⁵ protected by the god Faunus, who, together with his satyrs, is often integrated within the Roman adaptation of Bacchic cults.⁴⁶

Deuius, at *Odes*. 2.11.21, combines both the alleged distance of Lyde’s house, or usual streets, from the location of Horace’s parties (according to *OLD* 1b) and the walking about that her profession requires (*OLD* 2), emphasising her public and yet inaccessible nature. From this perspective, line 21 offers a striking opposition between open and out-of-bounds places, or journeys, and the domestic space of Lyde’s house (*domo*, 21), emphatically mentioned at the end of the line, and even the drinking party’s secluded location. This also prompts us readers to wonder where Lyde is: is she roaming the streets or comfortably at home? It turns out that the poet imagines her still at home doing her hair (23–24), and yet the manner of her introduction suggests something dynamic about her that is out of the poet’s control.

This dangerous and liminal quality of Lyde is also enacted in the words *scortum* and *elicet* (“to summon,” *OLD* 2), which are found next to each other, in between

41. *OLD* 1b. Harrison (2017) 143 explains the different options. Porphyrio read this as referring to Lyde’s exclusivity, but it might just refer to Lyde practicing in areas distant from where the symposium takes place. See further *TLL* 867.1–5.

42. Nisbet and Hubbard (1978) 177. See above for a discussion of the term *scortum*.

43. These are the only three occurrences of the term in Horace’s lyric, cf. *deuius* in Bo (1965/66) 122.

44. *OLD* 2: “wandering off the road, straying.” See Commager (1962) 337–52 for the parallel between the solitary and wild places, where the Bacchants are usually found, and the landscape of poetic inspiration in *Odes* 2.19 and 3.25. See also Pöschl (1973) 208–30 on *Odes* 2.19. For the Bacchic association see also Rimell (2015) 100 on *deuius* in *Odes* 3.25.

45. . . . *impune tutum per nemus arbutus / quaerunt latentis et thyma deuiae / olentis uxores mariti* . . . (*Carm.* 1.17.5–7). The adjective *deuius* seems to have a specific use in relation to the countryside or mountain areas, see *TLL* 867.3–5 and the occurrences in *Liv. Epit.* 34.16.8 (*ad deuios montanos*) and 34.20.2 (*deuiam et siluestrem gentem*). Cf. the Bacchic ritual of wandering on mountains, or ὄρειπασία, in Dodds (1963) xi–xvii.

46. The Greek Bacchus was initially absorbed in the Italic deity Liber and associated with the rural deity Pan/Faunus. Fantham (2009) 3–33 discusses the connection between these Italic deities and Dionysus. See also Mac Góráin (2020).

deuium and *domo*, at line 21. The etymology of *scortum* as “skin/hide”⁴⁷ evokes an animal quality in Lyde’s characterization, which is further energized by the verb *elicere*, used not just for humans but for beasts too, with the meaning of “to lure out.”⁴⁸ Lyde seemingly starts embodying a tension between animal and human, which is enhanced by her potential association with the Bacchantes, once again, as they are traditionally represented as being “fetched” from distant and wild places⁴⁹ and wearing animal skins.⁵⁰ Further, the formulation of lines 21–22 as a question in the future tense (*quis . . . eliciet . . . ?*) emphasizes the unknown outcome of this luring out, and the ultimate erratic and erring quality of Lyde (*deuium scortum*, 21).⁵¹ Will she come along, or not?

Her name forces us further out of the confines of the poem, to the region of Lydia, which is not only at the exotic margins of the Roman empire,⁵² but is also the professed origin of the foreigner, that is, Dionysus, who comes to Thebes in Euripides’s *Bacchae*.⁵³ At a closer look, Lyde could be construed as a wild creature, Bacchic in her liminality between human and animal, domestic and yet wandering, based in Rome and yet imagined to be from the outer parts of the empire. She is positioned at the very end of this ode, about to enter the sympotic corner, and not quite there yet: in this sense, she could be said to perform “the

47. De Vaan (2008) 546. The word *scortum* originally identified goatskins.

48. TLL 366.53. The same verb is found at Hor. *Carm.* 4.12.17. In a similarly sympotic context, a jar of wine is lured out of Sulpicius’s cellar (*nardi paruus onyx eliciet cadum, / qui nunc Sulpicii accubet horreis*, 17–18). Pavlock (1982) 90 argues that the jar symbolises Horace’s poem, as a gift to Virgil. Fedeli (2008) 521 argues that the gifts are almost anthropomorphised in this ode. The use of *elicere* in *Odes* 2.11 would draw a parallel between Lyde and the wine-jar as “objects” of /in the symposium.

49. Cf. IMagn. 215(a) 24–30, a Roman copy of a Hellenistic inscription from Magnesia (Ionia) citing a Delphic oracle, according to which the Magnesians should fetch (λάβητε) three Maenads to establish a Dionysiac cult in the city, as cited in Henrichs (1978) 123. In general, Dionysiac cults and their practitioners belong outside the city boundaries and need to be “imported.”

50. Eur. *Bacch.* 24, 111, 241 for Bacchantes wearing animal skins (usually fawnskins); *Bacch.* 150, 241 for the Bacchantes wearing loose hair. At Eur. *Bacch.* 136–38 for Dionysus wearing animal hides too. According to the *Suda*, Dionysus is also represented wearing a black goatskin, see Santamaría (2013) 52 n. 92. See Fernández (2013) 186–93 for Roman representations of Bacchantes, and their inspiration from dramatic scenes. See further Henrichs (1978) 121–60. Roman Dionysism is characterized by a similar Bacchic aesthetic: women wearing animal hides and loose hair: Liv. *Epit.* 39.13.12 (*matronas Baccharum habitu crinibus passis*) and Virgil at *Aen.* 7.394–6 (*deseruere domos, uentis dant colla comasque / [. . .] incinctae pellibus*) and 403 (*solute crinalis uittas . . .*). Cf. also Tac. *Ann.* 11.31.10.

51. OLD 3 for *deuius* as “erring.”

52. Fitzgerald (2018) 158 suggests the geographical reference to Lydia and, therefore, to the remote boundaries of the empire.

53. See Eur. *Bacch.* 13–14, where Dionysus presents himself as a foreigner from Lydia. Just as the Cantaber and Scythian warriors have been excluded from the poem, in the same way pleasant foreign elements are brought in.

dialectic between outside and inside” that, as Victoria Rimell argues, *anguli*, or corners, instantiate in Horatian poetry.⁵⁴

These qualities are performed especially by her hair knot (*nodum*, 24). Roman female aesthetics and, specifically, hairstyles have been studied as the sites of gendered and social tensions: loose, unadorned hair is a symbol of men’s unrestrained activity and archaic virtue.⁵⁵ Conversely, women were expected to wear more or less elaborate hairstyles, in which the hair would be firmly and neatly tied. Elizabeth Bartman argues that in Roman society, like in other ancient societies, the tying of the hair, whether in knots, braids, or other forms, symbolized the acceptance of social norms and civilization while providing cultural control over a woman’s dangerous sexuality.⁵⁶ Specifically, the *nodus*, a hair knot, established itself as a relatively simple hairdo in the course of the 1st century B.C.E., perhaps in “response to distant Greek models,”⁵⁷ and it soon became a symbol of Roman-ness and simplicity, contrasting with the more elaborate Eastern hairstyles.⁵⁸ This cultural meaning of the hair knot engages with the larger conceptualization of female aesthetics in Roman times. As Maria Wyke suggests, the “regulation of the adorned female body is bound with the recognition of its otherness and its power to disrupt.”⁵⁹ Lyde’s characterization, to return to Horace’s poem, embodies this tension within social and cultural boundaries. Her liminal social status as a prostitute, of, perhaps, Eastern origin, together with her Bacchic features, disrupts the attempts of the poet to summon her to a civilized part of town, out of the wild.

Lyde’s hair knot, or *nodus*, has been interpreted as a metapoetic symbol by Oliensis and Sutherland. Oliensis compares Lyde’s hair knot to the “garlands” of poetry. In her view, this neat coil of hair has closural qualities, and it both figures and embodies the textualization of a “fugitive lyric performance.”⁶⁰ In becoming an image for Horatian poetry, the *nodus*, in its neatness and containment, performs the kind of moral limitation central to Horatian ethics. Kenneth Reckford already linked the *decorum* of this hairstyle to the “decorous relaxation”

54. Rimell (2015) 84.

55. Bartman (2001) 3 discusses the hair aesthetic and the gender and sexual opposition active vs passive. See also the shaggy hair of Manius Curius Dentatus in Hor. *Carm.* 1.12.41–42 (*hunc et incompitis Curium capillis / utilem bello tulit . . .*), or of Cato in *Carm.* 2.15.11 (*intonsi Catonis*).

56. Bartman (2001) 5.

57. Bartman (1999) 37. She does not discuss Horace’s mention of *nodus* here at *Carm.* 2.11.23–4, which seems to imply that the hairstyle may have Spartan origins (*Lacaenae / more comae*). Harrison (2017) 144–45 discusses Spartan hairstyles.

58. Bartman (1999) 36–38.

59. Wyke (1994) 148.

60. Oliensis (2002) 94.

of Horace's drinking party in *Odes* 2.11.⁶¹ Conversely, Sutherland suggests that Horace introduces Lyde in the act of tying her hair, i.e. making herself presentable, and tamed enough, for a lyric gathering.⁶² And yet, in her view, the fact that she appears "in the act of" getting ready implies a certain unfinished quality of the poem. While the *comptum nodum* (23-24) certainly embodies a closural desire and tension of the poem, we never witness Lyde's actual presence at Horace's symposium.

These opposing interpretations, I believe, play out the tensions that the hair bun embodies. Oliensis's reading emphasizes the neatness of Lyde's hairstyle:⁶³ the *comptum nodum* (23-24) "pictures closure by gathering up something multiple and linear into a circular unity."⁶⁴ However, the word *nodus* also expresses the idea of intricacy and complexity, which, I believe, may disrupt the unity and linearity in favor of which Oliensis argues.⁶⁵ As I have suggested above, the drinking party is threatened by the presence of a wilder Bacchus. In a similar way, this "closural" stanza can be said to perform unity and neatness, as well as disunity and blurred boundaries. As I am going to show, the multiple, all philologically viable, readings of lines 23-24 embody the metapoetical tension between containment and transgression that this last stanza, and the entire poem, thematizes: at any given moment the syntactical structure of these lines threatens to come apart as the different threads of this knot pull in opposite directions.

Scholars have widely discussed the syntactical arrangement of this stanza and, specifically, whether the *nodum* should be considered as *incomptum* or *incomptum*. I print here lines 23-24, following William Garrod's edition:⁶⁶

maturet in comptum Lacaenae
more comas religata nodum.

23-24 incomptum (in comptum B) codd. comam β: comae B incomptam
. . . comam . . . *nodo* Bentley

The text, as printed by Garrod, separates *in* from *comptum*, as *comas* (24) becomes the object of *religata* and *in* connects *religata* and *nodum*. Stephen Harrison prints a similar version, preferring the variant *comam* to *comas*, on the basis of previous Horatian uses.⁶⁷ In this reading, as Harrison argues, "the grammar of the

61. Reckford (1969) 96-97.

62. Sutherland (2005) 209.

63. *Nodus* as a tightly tied mass of hair, combining OLD 3 and 4.

64. Oliensis (1998) 94.

65. OLD 5 for *nodus* as a "knotty problem." See discussion on *nodus* below.

66. Garrod (1901).

67. Harrison (2017) 144.

sentence is easier” and neat, just like Lyde’s Spartan and simple bun.⁶⁸ Conversely, Nisbet and Hubbard do not separate *in* and *comptum*, arguing for a “Graecising syntax,”⁶⁹ where either *incomptum nodum* acts as an internal accusative of *religo* or *religata* acquires a middle voice. Both these possibilities construct a syntactical order that, while making sense, is also looser than the one with which Latin language would be more comfortable. Syntax, too, could then be said to push, not just towards less tight ties, but also towards the Greek and Eastern parts of the empire. While within this syntactical context, the use of *Lacaenae* for the Spartan hairstyle of Lyde is fittingly evoking Sparta and Greece, its reference to “simple” hairstyles problematizes the intricate and (geographically and syntactically) far-fetched solution.⁷⁰

Because I am interested in the pairing of *nodum* and *in comptum*, I have not discussed the reading by Bentley, who follows Torrentius and turns *nodum* into an ablative of manner (*nodo*), while printing *incomptam . . . comam*. While a similar construction is found in *Odes* 3.14 (*dic et argutae properet Neaerae / mur-reum nodo cohibere crinem*, 3.14.21), Nisbet and Hubbard, followed by Harrison, are cautious about this alternative: *nodo* would remain isolated at the end of the ode, creating a lack of symmetry in the Latin.⁷¹ However, for the purpose of the present argument, *incomptam . . . comam . . . nodo* would express the dynamic and elusive quality of Lyde’s hair: tied in a knot (*nodo*) and yet still somehow loose (*incomptam*). The position of *nodo* would also gesture further towards a loose end, while rendering, in its syntactical isolation, the asymmetrical nature of knots. Bentley’s reading creates a syntactical asymmetry that contrasts Harrison’s pursuit of a simpler reading, which engages with the unpretentiousness of the Spartan hairstyle.⁷²

The simplicity of this Spartan-inspired hairstyle, however, is only an appearance: the word *nodus* is also used for “knotty problems,”⁷³ or difficulties. Horace himself in the *Ars Poetica* refers to knots, or impasses, in dramatic plots (*nec deus intersit, nisi dignus vindice nodus / inciderit*, 191–92).⁷⁴ Seneca, in *Epistles* 82, uses it of rhetorical tricks (*ego non redigo ista ad legem dialecticam et ad illos artificii ueternosissimi nodos*, 19). Is Lyde a poetic Gordian knot, ultimately

68. Harrison (2017) 144–45 connects his “easier” reading (with *comam* and *in comptum*) with the simplicity of Spartan hair arrangements.

69. Nisbet and Hubbard (1978) 178.

70. Nisbet and Hubbard (1978) 179 discuss the simplicity of the Spartan hairstyles. See also Harrison (2017) 144, who compares Prop. 3.14.28.

71. Nisbet and Hubbard (1978) 178–79; Harrison (2017) 144–45.

72. Harrison (2017) 144–45.

73. OLD 5.

74. Rudd (1989) 182 discusses the legal meaning of *uindex*.

unsolvable? The difficulties of the syntax and the variant readings, which perform the tensions that she embodies, would suggest so. Nisbet and Hubbard already noticed the complexity of this figure, when they claim that “her simple hairstyle is elaborated with exquisite involutions.”⁷⁵ Ultimately, *incomptum* is just a way of reading *in comptum*. The final stanza sustains this open possibility of transformation, precisely in the gap between, or potential to join up, *in* and *comptum*. The dangerous disruption and the wi(l)der wanderings of Lyde are both in and out of the poem and of this last line, in this last stanza.

Sutherland focuses on the control exerted by the poet and male, fetishizing, gaze over Lyde:⁷⁶ she is still tying her hair and getting ready to be accepted into a civilized gathering. And yet at the same time we do not see the result of this process. While the poet retains aesthetic control over Lyde, we as readers do not have it yet.⁷⁷ In my reading, as much as Lyde can be read as the object of Horace’s gaze and poetic control, she is also dangerously similar to the poet himself and his out-of-bounds, Bacchic creativity. Lyde’s intricate hairstyle and the different scholarly readings of it recall the Bacchant’s dishevelled hair, whether loosely tied in a knot or left flowing.⁷⁸ Horace himself in *Odes* 2.19 sees them wearing unkempt buns, interlaced with snakes (*nodo coerces uiperino / Bistonidum sine fraudis crinis* 19–20).⁷⁹ The Bacchic witch Canidia, in *Epodes* 5, is characterized by similarly loose hair, entangled with snakes: *Canidia, breuibus illigata uiperis / crinis et incomptum caput* (15–16).⁸⁰ Juxtaposed to these texts, Lyde’s *nodum* loosens its poetic neatness and may be said to embody a disruptive Bacchic energy.

In order to understand how this Bacchic Lyde can be compared with Horace himself, I wish to suggest that Lyde’s Bacchic characterization can be read within the remit of Schiesaro’s definition of “Bacchic poetics.”⁸¹ Within his analysis, the adjective *incomptus*, as found in Horace’s *Ars Poetica* and Virgil’s *Georgics* 2, has a metapoetic meaning that feeds into Bacchic (meta)poetics.⁸² In the *Ars*,

75. Nisbet and Hubbard (1978) 169.

76. Sutherland (2005) 207–10.

77. Sutherland (2005) 209.

78. Eur. *Bacch.* 100–103 for the Bacchant’s using snakes to wreath their hair. The rejection of proper hair ties is explicative of the refusal of civilization and its practices. See Fernández (2013) 186–93 for Roman representations of Bacchant’s and their inspiration from dramatic scenes. For further examples, see footnote 37.

79. *Carm.* 2.11.24 and 2.19.19 are the only two occurrences of the word *nodus* in *Odes* 2.

80. Labate (2016) 74–94 for the Bacchic and tragic characterization of Canidia. See also Degl’Innocenti Pierini (2013) 257–66 for the parallels between Canidia and Medea.

81. Schiesaro (2009) 61–79. See also the brief discussion in the introduction above.

82. Schiesaro (2009) 79 and see further TLL 997.55–7 for the metaphorical and poetic sense of *incomptus* as unrefined lines.

incomptus qualifies lines in need of polishing (*incomptis adlinet atrum / tran-suerso calamo signum*, 446). Similarly, in the second Georgic, Virgil defines the early dramatic compositions in rustic Bacchic festivals as “unrefined” (. . . *coloni / uersibus incomptis ludunt risuque soluto . . . et te, Bacche, uocant per carmina laeta*, 385–88). The lack of stylistic refinement, in Schiesaro’s view, indicates the boundless, “primitive” energy of Bacchus. In the final stanza of *Odes* 2.11, Lyde’s *incomptum nodum*, if we were to follow Nisbet and Hubbard and their Graecizing syntax,⁸³ just like the Bacchant’s serpentine hairdo in *Odes* 2.19 and Canidia’s dishevelled hair in *Epodes* 5, could be seen to embody the unchecked powers of Bacchus’s unresisting energy. The messy hair bun, and its paradoxical status of loosely tying the hair, becomes a symbol of the simultaneously controlling and yet uncontrolled Bacchic and poetic energy.

Another famous dishevelled hairstyle that has to do with poetics and with the gendering of creative inspiration is the one worn by the Sibyl possessed by Apollo in the sixth book of Virgil’s *Aeneid*.⁸⁴ Specifically, at *Aen.* 6.48, her hair is defined as *non compta*, as she is turned into something closer to a god when Apollo sexually possesses and mantically inspires her. Don Fowler suggests that the episode figures Virgil’s own poetic inspiration in singing the future of Aeneas and celebrating Rome.⁸⁵ Identifying Virgil with the Sibyl would make Virgil a rape victim of Apollo, implying his feminization. A similar process seems to happen to Horace in *Odes* 3.25, as the poet turns himself into an all-powerful and inspired (or possessed) Bacchant in order to access a more daring poetics. Poetic activity seems to be the site of dangerous and sexualizing, or desexualizing, practices. From this angle, Lyde, as a powerful and dangerous quasi-Bacchant, performs the poetic tensions of the sympotic space and seemingly threatens Horace’s male gathering. At the same time, she could be anticipating Horace’s own transformation into a creative and inspired Bacchant. Moreover, Lyde is summoned with her white lyre (*eburna . . . lyra*, 22), Horace’s beloved instrument.⁸⁶

In Conclusion?

I have argued that, as much as Lyde can be seen as the object of Horace’s poetry, in Sutherland’s reading, and, eventually as Horatian poetry itself, she may also

83. See analysis above.

84. . . . *ante fores subito non uultus, non color unus, / non compta mansere comae; sed pectus anhelum, / et rabie fera corda tument, maiorque uideri / nec mortale sonans, adflata est numine quando / iam propiore dei.* (Virg. *Aen.* 6.47–51).

85. Fowler (2002) 149. On the identification between Virgil and the Sibyl see further Miller (2003) 38–41.

86. Cf. Horace’s *Odes* 1.1 and 1.32.

represent the poet himself and the gendered creative tensions that are explored across the *Odes*. The elusiveness that characterizes Lyde's presentation in the last stanza of *Odes* 2.11, and that amplifies her sexual and social liminality, can be read as Bacchic. Her hair bun, in its paradoxical status of being untied (*in comptum*, 23), adds a metapoetic figuration to this Bacchic poetic energy about to be liberated. This final stanza can be argued to close the poem neatly, but also to leave it open, through a figure, Lyde, that is both remotely inaccessible and wandering off boundlessly (*deuium scortum*, 21). This sympotic and poetic space appears thus removed and secluded, but also without a proper boundary that can isolate it from the outside, and from the war-like beginning of the next poem (*Nolis longa ferae bella Numantiae, Carm.* 2.12.1).

As this article draws to its necessary end, I would like to leave a loose thread. In my interpretation I focused on the Lyde of *Odes* 2.11, and yet, I hope that readers will be stimulated to stretch out of the boundaries that I established for this investigation and, like Lyde, deviously seek for expanding this Bacchic reading of a Horatian female figure to others. Horace's lyric poetry counts numerous women that have been construed as objects of male and Horace's desire, embodiments of his poetic *materia* as well as ephemeral mirrors to his own poetic and erotic endeavors. Bacchic inspiration blurs genders and can be used to re-evaluate how male, poetic desire is to be considered within Horatian poetics and its figuration of female characters.

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