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CARPE DIEM: HEDONISTIC, SCEPTICAL OR FRIGHTENED?

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Tu ne quaesieris, scire nefas, quem mihi, quem tibi
finem di dederint, Leuconoë, nec Babylonios
tentaris numeros. Ut melius, quidquid erit, pati!
Seu plures hiemes seu tribuit Iuppiter ultimam,
quae nunc oppositis debilitet pumicibus mare
Thyrrenum, sapias, vina liques, et spatio brevi
spem longam reseces. Dum loquimur, fugerit invida
aetas: **carpe diem** quam minimum credula postero.
(Hor. Carmina 1.11)

Don't ask, Leuconoë, the forbidden question, how long
the gods have given to you and me: don't imagine
fortunetellers know. Better to take what is coming,
whether Jove allows us more winters, or this that now
wearies the Etruscan sea as it beats on the cliffs
is the last. Be sensible: strain the wine: in a little life,
take no long looks ahead. As we talk, time spites us
and runs: reap today: save no hopes for tomorrow.
(Transl. Joseph P. Clancy)

Carpe diem is a dictum from the poem of the Roman poet Horace which first occurred in his book of odes or *carmina* written between 30 B.C. and 23 B.C. From the time almost two thousand years ago the *carpe diem* has developed a meaning of its own, sometimes only remotely connected with the original context of Horace's ode 1.11. Further, moving back to its original source as *incunabula*, it has been used in the interpretation of the four books of *Odes* even in the generic meaning – *carpe diem* odes and *carpe diem* rhetoric are discussed in general terms (Davis 1991). The meaning has been discussed from different angles (Grimm 1963:313–318). In the latest discussions, attempts to focus on the erotic allusions of the poem prevail. One of the results of such approach is focusing on the

hedonistic attitude of the poem (Anderson 1993:115–122). According to this, the dictum implies a certain philosophy of life that presupposes 1) the seeking of pleasure, 2) not worrying about the future, 3) living for the present moment, taking what is at hand. The allusions which *carpe diem* is supposed to bring into mind are wine, love, amusement and eroticism.

Whether the poem in which the phrase first occurs supports this interpretation and whether the wider context of other poems of Horace contributes to this meaning, deserves, nevertheless, closer examination. In other words, the question has to be asked: is 1.11 written on the hedonistic grounds with all the characteristic signs of the symposiastic poetry, representing the mood of a drinking party, accompanied with entertainment and frivolous love affairs?

The meaning given to *carpe diem* seems also to depend on the personal attitudes of the reader, i.e. one can have different feelings towards the situation presented in 1.11. The poem is written as an address to a girl – one can expect to find various approaches and expectations there. They can be divided e.g. into feminine or masculine, romantic or rational point of view. One can find, according to this, two kinds of criticism of Horace's love poems: 1) deprecation for the lack of romantic love, and 2) praise for the sober and reasonable way of exposing affection (Ancona 1994:4–15).

The interpretation of the dictum has been influenced by a long tradition during which it has obtained specific connotations. Already in the ancient commentaries written by Porphyrio *carpe diem* has been interpreted metaphorically as *die fruere*, to enjoy the day. An explanation is added there that the metaphor originates from the fruits which we pick in order to enjoy them: *carpimus ut fruamur* (Commentum 1894:18). Enjoyment as the dominating meaning is most often overshadowing the other possible interpretations. Besides, opinions vary according to the degree of enjoyment: it could be moderate (Benneth 1968:170, Nisbet and M. Hubbard 1970:142, Roberts 1995:297, Williams 1968:108) or overtly erotic (Ancona 57, Garrison 1991:219, Porter 1987:237–38, Reckford 1969:92).

One of the possible ways to reach a solution of the problem is to put *carpe diem* in the context of the accompanying motives and to follow these key motives and key words occurring in 1.11. The motives connected to the *carpe diem* are: 1) foretelling the future, 2) description of the changes in nature, 3) mentioning the fluency of time, 4) discussing the relationship between reason and emotions. These themes lead to the modes of consolation: denial of death and taking advantage of the present moment, forgetting rational calculations and injunctions to act according to them (Davis 145–188). All these motives occur in a number of Horace's odes – sometimes all, sometimes some of them. *Carpe diem* has become a principle of avoiding troublesome questions and forgetting the anxiety of life. The escapist quality of the dictum may have different motivations. My aim is to demonstrate in what direction the erotic motives function in 1.11 and what is Horace trying to achieve by his suggestion to 'reap the day'. The point of interest

will be the emotional basis of the phrase – whether Horace expresses hope or rather desperation in his poem. In other words – what could be, according to this, his philosophy of life and how does it find its expression in *carpe diem*.

The way *carpe diem* with all its connotations functions in 1.11 and affects the lexical and semantical context can be better understood, first, by comparing it with the other poems of Horace where similar motives occur, and second, by comparing it with Catullus' poem on similar theme. We find in his *Carmina* 5 similar motives to Horace – an attempt to escape cruel reality and find consolation in enjoyment and love. This connection between Horace and Catullus seems important. Horace was well aware of the works of his predecessor (Martin 1992:30, Newman 1990:153–54, 182). Like Horace's epodes and satires, it would be reasonable to suppose that also his love poems bear some relationship to those of Catullus. These two ways, a comparison of the resembling motives in Horace's own odes and those of Catullus, may shed some light to the meaning of *carpe diem*. The following analysis will move toward the sceptical interpretation of *carpe* and will argue for an escapist attitude of a pessimistic kind laying behind this dictum.

Horace and Catullus – to girls with love

Catullus 5 seems to correspond with Horace's 1.11 in several aspects. It is also written as an address to a girl, Lesbia, and it contains similar motives: it recalls two opposite sides of life, sorrow (death) and joy (love). Catullus begins with an exhortation to love, wishing to forget death and all the envious people. He ends with the playful mood of the endless kissing.

The tone of Horace's 1.11 could appear from a new angle seen against Catullus' Lesbia poem. There exists a certain resemblance in the way these two poets address the girls: 1) they both give orders – to do something or not to do; 2) in both cases these orders are followed by thoughts on the brevity of human life; 3) ephemeral life is compared with the changes in nature; 4) after the description of the natural processes both poets turn again directly to their addressees and continue their injunctions; 5) in the end, they both take a defensive attitude towards the future and the malevolence of their surroundings. The same basic structure is observable in both poems taking the form of injunctions to a girl, going on to the descriptive scene from nature, and ending with an opinion concerning future activities.

The similarity between these two poems has been earlier noted from the point of view of the Epicurean mood (Davis 157, Reckford 92). It relies, first of all, on the juxtaposition of nature and of human life and on the instability of the latter. Catullus, describing how the sun will go down and return again (*occidere...redire*, 5.3) gives a picture of the cyclical process in nature. He compares it with the fate of a man whose brief lifetime (*brevis lux*, 5) will end and an eternal night of sleep

will follow (*nox est perpetua*, 6). Horace measures human life in winters which he associates with the end of life, i.e. death. The imagery of the two poets moves in similar circles: *nox* corresponds to *hiems* as a symbol of death, *brevis* to *ultimam* signifying how short human life is. The similarity of the motives is accompanied by the similar imagery and vocabulary (connected e.g. with knowledge – *scire* in various forms, envy – *invidere* etc.). But the connections between two poems go far deeper than this. The more important conceptual tie lies in the structural principle and in the way the motives of the two poems directly oppose each other.

Already the opening words of these two poems strike us with their morphological and semantical contrast: *vivamus* (Cat.) vs. *tu ne quaesieris* (Hor.). We see from one side the positive injunction to live, from the other – a prohibition to act. Both poets express the opposite emotional background with similar words: the negative forms from *scire* (*ne sciamus*, Cat. and *scire nefas* Hor.) are meant to create the opposing reaction of the two girls whom the poets address. Catullus does not want to know the number of kisses: his aim is to avoid any hindrance in kissing the girl. While Catullus wants to go on, Horace's aim is to hinder the activity concerning the future. Not to know means overflowing joy for Catullus. For Horace, the prohibition to learn the future is connected with the end of life. For him, the present moment is overshadowed by the knowledge of all that will hinder joy. *Dies*, the present day, leaves important things out of reach and denies all that is not possible to grasp. Thus, every moment we are aware of the things we will lose. Exuberant happiness is impossible because we make ourselves cognizant not of the things we have at hand but of the things we can not have and are not able to do. This is the attitude which seems to echo from Horace's prohibition to learn about the future.

Just the opposite is true for Catullus: the moment and the day are perceived from a positive side: they contain pleasant opportunities and the rest does not matter. The occasion is happily grasped and this makes the love-seeking couple forget all that opposes it. Be happy, enjoy yourself and forget all the troubles that can frustrate you – thus sounds the delighted cry of Catullus.

The emotional dynamics can be followed throughout both poems and in the use of the verbs and in expressions indicating activity. Both poems are quite short, they consist of 13 verses in Catullus and 8 in Horace. The number of words is almost the same (10 more in Catullus). This external similarity makes the comparison all the more sensible, even though 1.11 in Horace's odes differs in its metre and general structure from the other poems that precede and follow it. As for the meter, it is written in the Greater Asclepiadean which is rare in Horace. There, Aeolic nucleus brings forth the emphasised parts of the poem – to these belongs also *carpe diem* (Anderson 120). It is also significant that Horace's poem resembles in its stichic form Catullus' 5.

The use of verbs and verbal expressions can be juxtaposed as follows.

Catullus	Horace
let us live (<i>vivamus</i>)	do not ask (<i>tu ne quaesieris</i>)
let us love (<i>amemus</i>)	do not count the numbers (<i>nec tentaris numeros</i>)
let us value at a penny (<i>unius aestimemus assis</i>)	endure all that comes (<i>quidquid erit pati</i>)
the sun will go down (<i>soles occidere</i>)	Jupiter gives many winters (<i>plures hiemes tribuit Iuppiter</i>)
the sun will rise (return) (<i>redire possunt</i>)	Jupiter gives the last (sc. winter) (<i>tribuit Iuppiter ultimam</i>)
the short day (life) fades, it will be eternal night for sleep (<i>occidit brevis lux/nox est perpetua una dormienda</i>)	it weakens the sea (<i>quae...debilitat...mare</i>)
give me thousand kisses, then another hundred, then thousand /etc./ (<i>da mi basia mille deinde centum, dein</i> etc.)	be wise, strain the wine, cut the long hopes (<i>sapias, vina liques, ... spem longam reseces</i>)
we have made many thousands (<i>cum milia multa fecerimus</i>)	until we speak (<i>dum loquimur</i>)
let us mix them up /sc. kisses/ (<i>conturbabimus illa</i>)	seize the day (<i>carpe diem</i>)
not to know, not to be envied for the knowledge of so many kisses (<i>ne sciamus, ne malus invidere possit</i>) –	the envious time passes by, do not trust the future (<i>fugerit invida aetas ... minimum credula postero</i>)

The opposition behind the basic structural similarity of the two poems concerns the emotional background and the activity accompanying the feelings. Both poems begin with injunctions to a girl. Catullus gives his commands in a positive form (to live and to love) while Horace does it in the negative form of prohibition (not to ask, not being allowed to know). Grammatically, in both cases the subjunctive is used. Both are talking of counting, both want to escape from numbers considering them useless to learn or remember. Both poets connect the counting with the negative, threatening side of life which disturbs happiness. Catullus wants to avoid *rumores senum*, rumour of the old men rejoicing at a present moment. Horace advises not to count astrological numbers: it is of no use and the inevitable will come despite everything: one must endure it (*pati*, 3). Kisses are opposed to suffering: what is behind numbers brings joy to Catullus but suffering to Horace. At the beginning of the poems, two attitudes are in contrast: we-will-not-care vs. you-must-endure-all.

From the fourth line both poets continue with the imagery of nature. Each concentrates on the cyclical appearance and fading of a natural phenomenon (Catullus – the sun, Horace – winter). Catullus lets the sun first disappear and then return – the sunny side of life will come after darkness. This imagery insists on

the brightness in nature. Horace's choice is indicative: winter is connected usually with fading and death, with its reappearance it does not offer us cheerful hope but rather fear that it might be the last one (cf. the motives of winter in 1.9 and 4.7 and Edmunds 1992:35, 96-97). Horace continues to use the symbols of measurement giving two extremes: *plures...ultimam*. Thus, he develops the line of thought from the previous verse (*quidquid*) that corresponds to Catullus' *omnes unius*. The order of the changes in nature and the emotional impact of it brings a pessimistic mood to Horace.

Catullus is also aware of the shortness of life while talking of the final eternal sleep. *Nox perpetua* is common to all, the concept of togetherness, of us (*nobis*) prevails also in death as it was at the beginning in living and loving. In Horace, winter brings damage (*debilitat*) to those who are in fact the opposite forces, it weakens both the sea and the rocks. Under the compulsion of superior forces (Jupiter, time), both are weakened and destroyed. Two poets look at mortality from a different angle: for Horace, the eternal threat and damage are forever present when he speaks of time. *We together* is not a comfort for Horace. The things which are together in Horace's verses rather tend to ruin each other like sea and rocks.

Further, Catullus calls in his poem for enjoyment of the sunny side of life. His next command incites, with exuberant repetition, his girl to kiss him until he reaches an exhilarated mood of playful happiness and ecstasy. Horace's answer to this in his poem is the advice to be wise (*sapias*). Straining the wine suitable for an Epicurean, does not mean here forgetting the earlier threat to existence. Thus Horace continues with the next advice to cut off the long hopes (*spem ... reseces*). He speaks again of the limits (*spatio brevi*, 6), all the time aware of things that remain behind these limits. Therefore it would be too optimistic and quite problematic to assume that Horace turns here to the positive state of mind, beginning to look at things cheerfully.

Next, both poets reach the 'we'-area: *fecerimus* (we have made kisses, i.e. kissed) in Catullus and *loquimur* (we speak) in Horace show the difference in what either manages to do in the company of a girl. Here we come to the crucial part of *carpe diem* which in Horace corresponds to the place in Catullus where he advises to mix up the kisses in order not to know their number (*conturbabimus, ne sciamus*). For Catullus, this means an escape from the threat to his happiness (the old men envy). Here Catullus reaches his negative statements (*ne sciamus, ne...invidere possit*) but they carry a positive and optimistic meaning relative to his involvement. Horace also mentions envy at the end of his poem. There it is connected with the envious time (*invida aetas*) while Catullus has forgotten at this point the sinister problem of an ephemeral life. The last chord that gives the final sound to Horace's poem is the advice not to be lightheartedly trustful (*credula*), and it is in accordance with the general tone of the poem by the sceptical and reflective poet. Catullus prefers to end his poem with a longsounding word around which he had concentrated his thoughts – the kisses (*basiorum*).

Give or seize and the seventh commandment

In Catullus' 5 and Horace's 1.11 several orders are given to the girls: Horace makes seven of them, Catullus limits himself to five if we consider *da* – give – as one commandment and do not equate it to the number of kisses. *Carpe diem* by Horace is the 7th commandment.

The two contrasting views on how to look at the problem of the shortness of our lives make the emotions of the two poets move in opposite directions. After remembering the inevitable force that destroys human existence, both poems reach an injunction that becomes the main idea of the text: *da mi* – give (sc. kisses), says Catullus, *carpe* – seize (sc. the moment or the day), says Horace. The opposite movement we have in order to obey these orders, away from or towards yourself, could be looked at as having a conceptual meaning. *Da* in Catullus demonstrates his attitude toward life in a most obvious way: to give, to be generous, to despise and ignore the calculating and practical aspect of life. The old envious men who oppose the cheerful play, are scorned by Catullus. He is ironical about all numbers, money and calculation. The technical terms from finance and trade he uses and the cumulative numbers are given only in order to show his neglect of them. The antithesis of generosity and meanness emphasises the importance of mutual generosity of giving and receiving between the loving couple (Segal 1975:271–72). With this, the passionate lightheartedness of Catullus' attitude is revealed. The lovers will mix up all the elaborate calculation in their joyful play (*conturbabimus*). We love and we live – these words reflect genuine Epicurean feeling. Celebration and excessive erotic liberation are found in this poem of Catullus. The playfulness of Catullus with its carnival arithmetic of love excludes even the moral demands of society with all its gossiping and senile elders (Martin 1992:52–3, 82–3, Newman 1990:153–154).

Horace with his *carpe* refers rather to the opposite meaning: to grasp something before it disappears. This resembles poem 1.9 with its metaphorical *lucrum* (the gain). To gain does not mean not to worry or simply to enjoy. To take each new day as a gain (1.9, 14–15) does not necessarily mean not worrying about the future – loss and gain go hand in hand in Horace (Edmunds 34–35). In such case, *carpe* with its indication to grasp is guided by the awareness of not having something. Next it will lead to the thought of a possible loss in the future. It is insecurity and fear that cause to seize. If we really do not care about the future, we are more ready to give. While Catullus' answer to envy is his generosity, Horace's reaction to the envious time (*invida aetas*) is the advice to take for oneself what one can. Catullus with his injunction to give kisses will really break the biblical seventh commandment. Horace's *carpe* with all its severe allusions does not sound very effective for seducing a girl. Assuming that the goal of the Horatian lover was seduction (Anderson 122), does a philosophical talk about death and being wise (*sapias*) offer the best opportunity to reach this goal?

Trust in Horace and Catullus

The question of how trustworthy the world is, receives different answers from Horace and Catullus. Horace's approach is sceptical to begin with: he does not expect much and does not trust anybody too easily to avoid later disappointment. This idea is a recurrent one in his work and is expressed well e.g. in his *Epistulae* 1.4.12–14: in hope, trouble, fear and anger one must think that every day could be the last.

*inter spem curamque timores inter et iras
omnem crede diem tibi diluxisse supremum:
grata superveniet quae non sperabitur hora.*

Here in the last two lines, Horace refers to himself ironically as an Epicurean swine – self-content and placidly happy. According to this picture, Horace could not have taken the Epicurean teaching too close to his heart. At least, in his later works it is hard to trace an Epicurean author (D'Alton 1962:94–97). He managed neither to remain appeased and satisfied nor to forget troubles about the future. As it appears (*Epistulae* 1.8.7), his state of mind cannot be as tranquil as that of a true Epicurean: he follows the harmful things and escapes from the useful ones.

*sed quia mente minus validus quam corpore toto [...]
quae nocuere sequar, fugiam quae profore credam* (11)

A conflict of motives appears with Horace concerning the needs of mind and body, of satisfaction or rejection of one's needs. The conflict is omnipresent with him, except perhaps the only time when he is speaking of himself as a poet. He has trust in the immortality of his poetry and believes in his greatness as a poet (*Carmina* 4.9.1, 3.30, see also Griffin 1986:74–76). This will not be grasped (*carpere*) by the envious oblivion. The use of the word *carpere* is remarkable in the semantic context of forgetting, disappearance and envy with all their negative connotations. His poetry will help him to avoid the oblivion and become immortal.

To return to his attitude to women and affection, these things are certainly not to be trusted and cannot offer consolation. The fatal trust will lead to desperation, as we see in the case of Europe who trusted the deceitful bull (*dolososo/credidit tauro*, 3.27.25–26). This is again a poem where the word *carpere* is used twice. *Carpere* seems to appear in the context where there is a problem with belief or trust. To Horace, it brings along negative results.

Catullus also knows the dark side of trust, but what he lacks is a reasonable cause to cease trusting in the first place. Catullus moves from one extreme to another. He trusts and is disappointed afterwards, loves and hates – without sensible calculation. Not a bit an Aristotelian, as we could say.

A remarkable contrast between Horace and Catullus appears also in the usage of the word *quaero*, addressing a girl directly in the opening lines of the poem (2nd. person sg.: *quaesieris* Hor. 1.11 and *quaeris* Cat. 7.1). While Leuconoë is

prohibited from investigating the future, Catullus' Lesbia investigates a quantity of kisses that will be satisfying for him (*quot basiationes*). Lesbia gets an elaborate answer from Catullus, while Leuconoë has to be content with a vague philosophising by Horace. As for the kisses, the vocabulary of Horace contains them quite scantily as compared with Catullus. In Horace, *basium*, *suavium* and the diminutives from them (*basiolum*, *suaviolum*) are absent. *Osculum* occurs only three times but not in connection with the happy love (1.36.6 and 3.5.41) – a kiss can accompany a tragical event.

As for counting the numbers, for Catullus it provides a careless and playful entertainment. Horace's avoidance and fear of counting proceeds from his sceptical mind which refuses to believe that it will be of any use. Nobody should be too trustful – it seems to be part of Horace's philosophy. As the poem of Europe indicates, trust will bring along unhappiness and death (3.27). Trustfulness became fatal to her, picking flowers (*carpere*) ended with disaster. So 'gathering the rosebuds' brought to Europe misery and tearful complaints.

The connotations of *credula* have a specific meaning in 1.11. Though it could have been used in a positive and affectionate sense, the addressee of the poem is nevertheless a girl, young and naive, but Horace is opposing his sceptical view to the credulity of the girl. He seems to suggest that there is very little to believe in.

The use of the adjective *credula* is associated by Horace with the infidelity of love affairs, with the vain expectations of mutual affection. In 4.1.30 Horace is speaking about himself and of the absence of the lighthearted hope for mutual love (*nec spes animae credula mutui*). In 3.7.13 Proetus is named *credulus* – he has been deceived by an unfaithful woman. All of the contexts indicate that the diminutive *credula* is used in the negative sense: a person who hopes too much will suffer later from disappointment. It is clear that Horace himself does not want to be such a man. The logical conclusion would be that *credula* at the end of the poem 1.11 expresses the scepticism of the poet, and that does not fit well with the merry convivial mood. From this point of view, *carpe* does not lead to oblivion. All that embarrasses, brings sorrow and uncertainty in the mind of the poet, leading to a strong negative overtone. For a convivial poem, anxiety must better be hidden.

Who is a good woman?

Looking for examples expressing the erotic drives in the poems of Horace, not the most effective approaches for amorous purposes can be found in 1.11. The wish to have a loving relationship may be expressed quite clearly, as is seen in 3.10. Perhaps it would lead to better results.

The example of a seduction poem could be 3.28. Here the introductory question – what to do on the day of the celebration of Neptune – is answered by addressing Lyde: bring out wine (*promē ... Caecubum*) and abandon the neat and sound sense (*munditaeque adhibe vim sapientiae*). After that follows, as in 1.11, the thought of the passing of time (*volucris dies*), when the first part of the day

has already gone (*inclinare meridiem*). The symposiastic nature here is clear from talk about mutual singing (*nos cantabimus invicem*). The end of the celebration adds a melancholic note to the event that at first had seemed quite merry: the night will be greeted with *nenia*. This is the traditional and real *carpe diem* mood. In the poems addressed to girls or women, such a cheerful approach is quite unusual in Horace and occurs more often in the poems written to men, friends of the poet.

An invitation to a close relationship with a woman in order to experience mutual joy is the theme of poem 3.11. It opens with the plea to Mercurius to help with the aid of the lyra to soften Lyde's obstinate ears. She is described as a young mare (*equa trima*) who playfully prances in the fields, frightened, afraid of being touched, she has no experience yet (*expers, cruda*) of the insolent male. To soften the heart of Lyde, an extended comparison from mythology is used for support – the story of a merciful Danaid who, unlike her sisters, refused to kill her husband and did not obey the order of her parents. The Danaid tells her husband to escape and to take refuge knowing that she will be punished for her soft-heartedness (v. 45-46). The poem ends with an emphatical cry to the man to flee wherever he can with the help of the night and love (*dum favet Nox et Venus*, 49). At the end of the poem, the girl asks the man to remember her by the sorrowful inscription on her tomb. The motives of this poem contain curious signs for understanding the attitudes toward love, the erotic and women in Horace. First of all, he senses a female resistance that is opposed to his desires. Love is a battlefield where the enemies are coming against him. This is of course a conventional way of treating love. In the case of Horace it becomes remarkably clear that it is not a playful and commonplace but a more profound emotion (see *Epodes* 8 and 11). The feeling of warm and mutual affection, of being together and thinking in terms of *us* is absent. We see just the opposite - there is an 'I', (*ego*), to whom a 'she' is the adversary. In the poems 'I', meaning the poet, and *you*, meaning the woman, do not have a common aim, they look into opposite directions and are afraid of each other. In 3.11, the image of a frightened young mare is the figurative expression of it. For Horace, this view contains a striking paradox: women or girls are helplessly timid and ready to take refuge (1.23 *vitas inuleo me similis*), to seek protection with their mother. On the other hand, they are dangerous, causing pain, suffering and peril (1.8.2: *mando perdere*). Love is cruel, deceitful and it burns mercilessly (3.19, 1.33). Bringing the mythological example in 3.11, Horace reaches a paradoxical view of how a woman can be merciful to a man. Recalling the myth of Danaids who agreed to kill their husbands during the wedding night, Horace remembers the mercy of one daughter of Danaus. Does it mean that the mercy of a woman is to let a man go? Because to stay with a woman means to be killed. At the end of the poems, it becomes clear that men are those who are really helpless, that danger comes from women's side. Fear and desire appear side by side in Horace, and this prevents the possibility of looking at him as a bold seducer. He wants to possess a woman, or several women, sometimes girls but he does not feel confident enough to do so.

Horace has written much about love: more about love to his friends, less to women. The most cordial love poems describe the feelings of others and not those of his own. Mutual love and a trusting heart (*mutuis fidum pectus amoribus*, 2.12) belong to Maecenas and to his wife. Light feeling of love and merry attachment to each other are looked at by him from a distance (3.9), fidelity belongs to the other's feelings (3.7). Horace's own emotions range from tender admiration from a distance to bitter rage and jealousy concerning heartless women. Where in this scale does Leuconoë from 1.11 belong, and what is the meaning in this context of the advice to seize the day given to her by Horace?

It is important to point out that Horace constantly expresses his remoteness from women. The feeling of alienation does not disappear from his poems. The sense of togetherness is absent, and he does not love or live with a girl as Catullus does (cf. *vivamus, amemus*). He would rather talk (*loquimur*, 1.11) and sing (*cantabimus*, 3.28.9). Horace does not describe the girls as belonging to him as it is in the case of Lesbia and Catullus (*mea Lesbia* is repeatedly echoed in the poems of Catullus). Horace mentions the girls as *his* twice, i.e. belonging to him: in 1.22, *meam canto Lalagen*, where he celebrates Lalage with his song while she is as remote from him as a Muse. Second, it is the girl Glyceria (*Glyceriae...meae*) for whom he feels a burning and torturous love (*me torret*, 3.19.28). The best words he finds for Cinara – and that is after her death (*bonae sub regno Cinarae*, 4.1.3–4; *felix post Cinaram*, 4.13.21). Thus, one conclusion could be drawn: the only good woman is a dead woman or at least one who is safely far away (Lalage in 1.22.10). The importance of this girl lies interestingly enough not in the immediate involvement with her and emotional, let alone physical, contact. She is a source of inspiration for Horace's poem: the song of her makes him immortal and this constitutes the value most important to Horace.

Again, comparison with Catullus demonstrates the difference of attitudes of the two poets. In Catullus, we see a sociable man who is affable with women: *Lesbia...mea* (5.1), and which is referred as *mea* is most often connected with *puella* (36.2; 13.11; 3.17; 11.15; 3.3–4, 2.1).

Horace calls a woman good only once. For him, the most frequent connection of *good* is with men and *vir bonus* is used 8 times in his works when he refers to persons. It is the most frequent phrase in this connection. Masculine connotations are natural to Horace when he calls someone good. In what sense *bonus* is used, appears also from the other adjective attached to it: wise, *sapiens* (*Epistulae* 1.7.22), prudent, *prudens* (ibid. 1.16.32).

It is clear that both Horace and Catullus thought about mortality and about the ephemeral nature of human life. They reacted to it differently and also found a different kind of consolation. The poems of Horace indicate that he did not hope to find relief in women. His love poems (if they may be properly called as such) rather show anxiety and bring out two opposing parties who are fighting with each other. Interpreting *carpe diem* in a hedonistic and symposiastic meaning may not be the happiest guess in the case of Horace.

Accessible and inaccessible things

In literary work, the strongest impression is left by the opening and closing parts. In 1.11, Horace declares in the first verse that knowledge of the future is not accessible.

Specific to the Aeolian verse is that the choriambic part emerges as a nucleus, often carrying an important idea of the poem. These parts in 1.11, the first verse and the last one, contain phrases which form a frame for the emotional impact of the poem: *carpe diem, quam minimum* in the last verse is from this point of view counterbalanced in the opening verse with *quaesieris scire nefas*. With this, Horace is giving the outlines of the limitations of human life at the beginning of the poem.

Nefas in Horace is used in the context of finality and death. These connotations are seen in 1.24.20, where Horace speaks about the death of Quintilius (*quidquid corrigere est nefas*) as an incorrigible necessity. Here *nefas* is connected with *patientia* (cf. *pati* in 1.11), and the general tone of the poem is expressed in the words *dura necessitas* (the cruel necessity, 6), the impossibility to free the soul from fear (*metu*, 7) and the head from the noose of death (*mortis laqueis*, 8).

Nefas appears in connection with the prohibition for women to commit adultery in which case the penalty must be her death (*peccare nefas aut pretium est mori*, 3.24.24). In 1.37, *nefas* is again connected with death: before the death of Cleopatra, it was not allowed to drink precious wine (5). In the epode 1.16, Horace speaks about the perils of the civil war and *nefas* is used there twice: in connection with the scattering of the bones of Romulus (*nefas videri*, horrible to see, 14) and further with omens (*secunda alite*, 23-4) when it is not prohibited to return home (*ne redire sit nefas*, 26). It is worth mentioning that seven lines later, a description of light-hearted cattle occurs (*credula...armenta*, 33) that leads to a lexical and conceptual link with 1.11. In this case, the lexical content of the opening lines of 1.11 is strongly linked with death. The relation of future-death-helplessness of a man leads quite logically to an allusion to nature and to the imagery of winter, i.e. the season most often connected with death in Horace (cf. the opening of the Soracte ode, 1.9). As a whole, the first 5 lines of the poem are far from playful love and affectionate expectation.

Escaping the anxiety of life

In contrast to other exhortations to have a party in order to celebrate some pleasant event, there is no ground for joy and merriment in 1.11. That makes the connotations of *carpe diem* different from the generally accepted meaning that seems to appear in later times. It is also different from the other poems of Horace in symposiastic mood. This becomes evident by the comparison of those odes which contain the invitation to have a party, to enjoy the day by drinking wine.

Ode 3.8, addressed to Maecenas, represents the generally accepted *carpe diem* feeling. That means first of all being careless (*neglegens*, 25), cease to worry too much (*parce nimium cavere*, 26), to grasp happily the gifts of the present moment (*dona praesentis cape laetus horae*, 27), to abandon serious things (*linque severa*, 28). The end of this poem is reached in a light and joyful spirit – which differs from 1.11. In poem 3.8, the hope of being able to forget about the dark side of life has got quite a different way of expression from the poem where the actual *carpe diem* occurs at the end with the suggestion to trust the next day as little as possible (1.11).

Ode 3.29 also contains the thought that it is useless to be anxious about the future. In this ode, Maecenas is again the addressee. Horace repeats his claim that the future remains hidden from man and God will only laugh at anybody who worries too much (29–32). Reality must be taken with a tranquil mind (*quod adest memento componere aequos*, 32–33). To be happy (*laetus*, 42) means to live for the day and not to care about the next one, whatever it might bring along. Fate can change everything (48, 52) – seems to be the leading motive in this poem. The imagery of the flowing river expresses the following idea: a peaceful course can be transformed into a forceful flood (32–40). The present moment is not stable, time hurries by (*fugiens...hora*, 48). The fortune of man is cruel, being subject to the arrogant game of Fate (49–50). Life as a series of unstable moments in the course of permanent changes, the inability to know the future, seems to echo also in the *carpe diem*. It opens with a statement that the future, the Fate remains hidden, attempts of man to foretell it are in vain. But we do not find proof in 1.11 that from an unstable future, Horace tries to seek relief in Epicurean forgetting. What is obvious, resembles more helplessness and even fright. It would be too unsubstantiated to think of Horace as a true follower of Epicurus (Macleod 1979:21–31).

It has become a custom to speak about *carpe diem* odes in general terms which all have certain features of common motives. In this case, the structure of *carpe diem* includes the following components: man's life is unstable and full of unforeseen changes which occur in nature and in fate; the impartial and inevitable character of these changes; a suggestion of how to react to these changes. The latter moment includes the suggestion that one must stay in a tranquil mind, to find the safe middle way between the vicissitudes of fortune and to enjoy what one has at hand. The last advice has a convivial character and exemplifies itself mostly in bringing wine, having a good time and forgetting about the dark and unknown side of life. Where the dictum *carpe diem* fits into this scheme, and, the most important question, whether poem 1.11 itself, where this dictum occurs, has these characteristics, needs further examination.

First of all, if *carpe diem* signifies the mode of consolation in the traditional convivial mood, then how does 1.11 confirm it? The beginning with the assertion that there is no use to make enquiries about the future, fits the convivial mode. It is followed by the advice to take calmly whatever is coming because God only

knows how many winters you will see, whether this is the last one or not. The motive of nature suggests not the changes but rather the other aspect – this sorrowful and severe season of the year leads our thoughts to death. Here we lack the optimistic hope for change, the benevolent action of deities. We only hear the advice that we must endure all as well as possible (*ut melius*). The imagery taken from nature seems to emphasise the sense of hostility and violent opposition where both parties must suffer losses: the stormy sea (*mare Tyrrhenum*) runs into the opposing rocks (*oppositis pumicibus*) and as a result must be stopped by them. At the same time, the sea causes damage (*debilitat*) to the rocks, so the harm is mutual. There is no solace in this picture and if some hope remains, it is a scanty one. The suggestion to cut off a long hope (*spem longam reseces*) is at the right place. Time that hurries by does not offer any consolation, it is envious (*invida*). Thus, all the preceding descriptions seems to lead to the conclusion that there is no external help against sorrow. The moment of consolation in this poem is reached in the following three words in line 6: *sapias, vina liques*. They suggest that reason and wine could provide some help. Grammatically, the subjunctive mood is changed later to an imperative one in the last line and reaches the crucial *carpe* – grasp, catch, seize, reap, pluck (on the translations of *carpe* in 1.11 see Bennett 1914:33, Clancy 1968:37, Kraemer 1936:143, Lonsdale 1923:32, German *genießen* Kiessling 1958:57). The idea of saying this is to suggest: do not wait, do not expect anything from the future. And adding *credula* brings in a warning: do not be too trustful and light-hearted. Horace as the creator of the Roman sympotic tradition in poetry (Murray 1985:39–50) did not resemble his Greek counterparts – his *convivium* is mixed with anxiety that is far from the simple joy of drinking wine and lovely amusements.

Horatian ways of seduction

Determining the poem's goal in 1.11 as seduction (Anderson 121–122), one must admire the means that the author has chosen. In the first five lines he speaks only in authoritative and negative terms. He begins with the prohibitions *ne quaesieris, nec temptaris* adding that knowledge is impossible (*scire nefas*). Being far from the positive approach of encouraging love-making or at least provoking an interest in the speaker, this beginning resembles more a fatherly lesson. The imperative which follows the admonitions to endure whatever will come (*pati*) fits this lesson well. The picture from nature, carrying an idea of opposition that is emphasised by prefixes indicating the adversative directions (*op-*, *de-*: *oppositis, debilitat*) does not promote the feeling of togetherness. Though the injunction to strain wine (*liques*) may not seem quite as fatherly, it's frivolous impact is tempered by *sapias*. It is hard to imagine the last advice – the girl must be as little light-heartedly confiding (*quam minimum credula*) as possible – inviting the girl to the embraces of any man, let alone this philosophising poet. Would a girl hearing 'seize the day' (*carpe diem*) then understand it in such context as an

erotic implication? Although the suggestion to bring wine may lead thoughts in this direction.

The speaker of 1.11 is an interested party as concerns the girl – but so is the speaker in most of the odes that involve personal emotions. The question is, what interests him most? Seduction is far from being the only expression of interest. *Quem mihi* and *quem tibi* can stress, instead of the reciprocity, quite the opposite – it could be antithetical. Fate, the end of life, *finis*, will be different for both parties. It is obvious that placing the description of nature not at the beginning (as in 1.9) but in the middle of the poem has a significance in understanding the idea of this ode. It may as well be the wish to keep the basic structure of Catullus' 5 poem. In that case, it means the opposite and cannot support the view that Horace in this poem is a flawed moralist (Anderson 122). Horace's use of poetic devices and rhetoric carries here rather the flavour of egotistic worries which are brought out by the presence of a young girl. The comparison with the context of the other symposiastic, amatory and philosophical poems of Horace indicates the problems which rise with the attempt to classify 1.11 as an adventurous amatory episode.

Horace's poem 1.11 does not confirm the understanding that he is ready to enjoy the present moment. Nor does it indicate his readiness for erotic pleasure. In the case of Catullus, it is clear for what purpose he needs a girl. It is not evident at all what Horace will do with the girl. He is too detached to express himself directly and too reflective to enjoy the present moment light-heartedly. He remains sceptical, knowing that to seize a moment can not make you forget all the uncertainty and fear for the future. In Horace's *carpe diem* we rather hear a cautious and serious admonition.

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