

PAULUS MAXIMUS AND OVID IN HORACE *CARM.* IV 1

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of the paper is to argue that some inconsistencies in the portrayal of the main character from the Horatian ode IV 1 may be seen as deliberate and can be explained by assuming that the poet created some kind of “dual portrait”, which consists of features representative of both Paulus Maximus and Ovid.

The first ode in the fourth book of Horace’s poems (*Intermissa, Venus, diu...*) is one which, in the words of one of its interpreters, while “deceptively simple”¹ amazes with the ambiguity and multiplicity of the subjects raised. Pomponius Porphyrio and Pseudo-Acro², Horace’s ancient commentators, observed that ode IV 1 is “allegorical”. In other words, it must be read “indirectly”, as the key terms and names have their double meanings. Porphyrio’s allegorising is a simple observation that the “war” mentioned in the second line of the ode refers to “love” (“In superiore libro ostendimus allegoricos bella et militiam Veneris Horatium pro amoribus dicere”), while Pseudo-Acro went a bit further, observing that the phrase *rursus bella moves* means “I am again forced to write, even if I renounced this work earlier” (“Iterum scribere cogor, cum iam desierim”), and thus the subject matter of the first phrase of the ode is the resumption of writing love poems.

The ambiguity from the beginning of the work, i.e. the interpretation of the word *bella* as synonymous with both love and literary endeavours, encourages the reader to apply a similar double reading to the other words of the poem. The entire text of ode IV 1 may then be seen as a construct composed of two closely interrelated strata: a thematic and a metatextual one. They are interrelated in that

¹ Cf. BRADSHAW 1970: 142. We need to admit, however, that nearly a quarter of a century later Horace’s work was openly classified as “a complex poem” (NAGY 1994: 420, n. 16).

² Quotations from the scholia to *Carm.* IV 1 after: *Scholia Horatiana quae feruntur Acronis et Porphyriionis*, ed. F. PAULY, vol. I: *Scholia in quattuor carminum libros et carmen saeculare continens*, Praegae 1858.