TWO BEGINNINGS: ACROSTIC COMMENCEMENTS IN HORACE (*EPOD.* 1.1–2) AND OVID (*MET.* 1.1–3)*

ABSTRACT

This article proposes that Horace's Epodes *and Ovid's* Metamorphoses *open with significant acrostics that comprise the first two letters, in some cases forming syllables, of successive lines:* IB-AM/IAMB *(*Epod. *1.1–2) and* IN-CO-(H)AS *(*Met. *1.1–3). Each acrostic, it will be argued, tees up programmatic concerns vital to the work it opens: generic identity and the interrelation of form and content (*Epodes*), etymology and monumentality (*Metamorphoses*). Moreover, as befits their placement at the head of collections, both acrostics negotiate the challenge of literary commencement. The introduction reviews recent developments in acrostic studies and discusses important predecessors and parallels for Horace's and Ovid's 'two-letter' and syllabic acrostics. Two subsequent sections examine the acrostics singly, and a conclusion compares the dialogues that these acrostics open between author and reader, underscoring the welcome challenge which Ovid's acrostic offers to the prevailing scholarly view that this form of wordplay is a strictly visual affair.*

Keywords: acrostics; syllables; vision; voice; synaesthetic; Ovid; Horace

I. INTRODUCTION

Much has changed since Fowler ended his discussion of the now widely accepted acrostic *MARS* at *Aen.* 7.601–4 with the infamous dictum 'I await the men in white coats'.[1] Indeed, one scholar has recently declared an 'Acrostic Revolution'.[2] This change in attitude is owed to two important developments. Foundational studies have since securely established the flourishing of acrostics in the Hellenistic period and their continuation among Latin poets.[3] The current zeal in acrostic studies, however, is owed more to the renewed appreciation that ancient readers themselves hunted for them.[4] It is worth repeating some evidence: Diogenes Laertius (5.92–3) reports that

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[1] D.P. Fowler, 'An acrostic in Vergil (*Aeneid* 7.601–4)?', *CQ* 33 (1983), 298. The acrostic was earlier noted as accidental by I. Hilberg, 'Ist die *Ilias Latina* von einem Italicus verfasst oder einem Italicus gewidmet?', *WS* 21 (1899), 264–305.

[2] J.D. Hejduk, 'Was Vergil reading the Bible? Original sin and an astonishing acrostic in the *Orpheus and Eurydice*', *Vergilius* 64 (2018), 71–102, at 73.

[3] E. Vogt, 'Das Akrostichon in der griechischen Literatur', *A&A* 13 (1967), 80–95 and E. Courtney, 'Greek and Latin acrostichs', *Philologus* 134 (1990), 3–13 remain essential. For Greek acrostics, see now C. Luz, *Technopaignia: Formspiele in der griechischen Dichtung* (Berlin and Boston, 2010), 1–77; for Latin, G. Damschen, 'Das lateinische Akrostichon: neue Funde bei Ovid sowie Vergil, Grattius, Manilius und Silius Italicus', *Philologus* 148 (2004), 88–115 and J.T. Katz, 'The Muse at play: an introduction', in J. Kwapisz, D. Petrain and M. Szymański (edd.), *The Muse at Play* (Berlin and Boston, 2013), 1–30, at 4–10.

[4] See Katz (n. 3); J. Hilton, 'The hunt for acrostics by some ancient readers of Homer', *Hermes* 141 (2013), 88–95; M. Robinson, 'Arms and a mouse: approaching acrostics in Ovid and Vergil', *MD* 82 (2019)(a), 23–73, at 24–42; M. Robinson, 'Looking edgeways: pursuing acrostics in Ovid and Virgil', *CQ* 69 (2019)(b), 290–308, at 291; Hejduk (n. 2), 73–6; M. Hanses, '*Naso deus*: Ovid's hidden signature in the *Metamorphoses*', in A. Sharrock, D. Möller and M. Malm (edd.), *Metamorphic*

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in the fourth century a certain Heracleides claimed authorship of a tragedy attributed to Sophocles by pointing out an acrostic therein of the name of his *erōmenos* ΠΑΝΚΑΛΟΣ; Cicero (*Diu.* 2.111) notes that there was 'in certain Ennian verses' (*in quibusdam Ennianis*)[5] an acrostic Q ENNIVS FECIT ('Quintus Ennius made [me]') and then (2.112) mentions the omnipresence of acrostics in the Sibylline books; Aulus Gellius (*NA* 14.6) describes a book devoted to identifying apparent acrostics and other plays on words in Homer. This reading practice did not emerge in the Hellenistic period *ab ouo*, but had roots in earlier sympotic culture. Athenaeus (*Deipn.* 10.457e–459b), drawing on Clearchus of Soli's work on riddles, reports that symposiasts in the Classical period would compete in such games as reciting Homeric verses which began and ended with the same letter, or those whose first and last syllables formed proper names or the names of dining paraphernalia. Modern readers looking for acrostics are thus playing an ancient game, indeed.

    The passage of Athenaeus just cited demonstrates an important point: ancient readers attended not only to verses' first and last letters but to their syllables as well.[6] It comes as no surprise, then, that we observe acrostics comprising the first two letters and/or syllables of successive lines. The most famous acrostic of all, Aratus' ΛΕΠΤΗ (*Phaen.* 783–6),[7] is followed by a passage which displays two such acrostics, first identified by Haslam.[8] Here Aratus describes how weather signs are given at different points of the month (*Phaen.* 805–10):

> **σήμ**ατα δ' οὐτὰρ πᾶσιν ἐπ' ἤμασι πάντα τέτυκται·
> **ἀλλ**' ὅσα μὲν τριτάτη τε τεταρταίη τε πέλονται
> **μέσ**φα διχαιομένης, διχάδος γε μὲν ἄχρις ἐπ' αὐτὴν
> **σημ**αίνει διχόμηνον, ἀτὰρ πάλιν ἐκ διχομήνου
> **ἐς** διχάδα φθιμένην· ἔχεται δέ οἱ αὐτίκα τετρὰς
> **μη**νὸς ἀποιχομένου, τῇ δὲ τριτάτη ἐπιόντος.

But the signs are not all furnished for all the days [*sc.* of the month]; rather, those which occur on the third and fourth days hold until the half-moon, and then those from the half-moon hold up until mid month, but then from mid month to the waning half-moon; and the fourth day from the departing month follows after that; and the third day of the coming month after that.[9]

Readings: Transformation, Language, and Gender in the Interpretation of Ovid's Metamorphoses (Oxford, 2020), 126–41, at 126–7.

    [5] Which ones we do not know: J. Vahlen (ed.), *Ennianae poesis reliquiae* (Leipzig, 1903) placed the acrostic among Ennius' *incerta* (fr. 53); see also A.S. Pease (ed.), *M. Tulli Ciceronis De diuinatione liber secundus* (Urbana, 1923), 529 ad loc.

    [6] On ancient syllabic etymologies, see F. Ahl, *Metaformations: Soundplay and Wordplay in Ovid and Other Classical Poets* (Ithaca and London, 1985), 35–40, 54–60.

    [7] Ancient admiration is suggested by Callimachus (27 Pfeiffer), Leonidas (*Anth. Pal.* 9.25) and 'King Ptolemy' (*Supplementum Hellenisticum* 712 Lloyd-Jones–Parsons). Since its rediscovery by J.-M. Jacques, 'Sur un acrostiche d'Aratos (*Phén.*, 783–787)', *REA* 62 (1960), 48–61, the acrostic's formal and thematic elements have been discussed extensively: see W. Levitan, 'Plexed artistry: Aratean acrostics', *Glyph* 5 (1979), 55–68; P. Bing, 'A pun on Aratus' name in verse 2 of the *Phaenomena*', *HSPh* 93 (1990), 281–5, at 281 n. 1; M. Haslam, 'Hidden signs: Aratus *Diosemeiai* 46ff., Vergil *Georgics* 1.424ff.', *HSPh* 94 (1992), 199–204, at 199–200; D. Feeney and D. Nelis, 'Two Virgilian acrostics: *certissima signa*?', *CQ* 55 (2005), 644–6, at 645; M. Hanses, 'The pun and the moon in the sky: Aratus' ΛΕΠΤΗ acrostic', *CQ* 64 (2014), 609–14, at 610, 612–13; J. Danielewicz, 'One sign after another: the fifth ΛΕΠΤΗ in Aratus' *Phaen.* 783–4?', *CQ* 65 (2015), 387–90.

    [8] Haslam (n. 7), 201.

    [9] All translations are mine.

Line-initial σήματα ('signs', 805) and σημαίνει ('it signifies', 808) act as 'signposts' for acrostics to come.[10] A reader intent on single-letter acrostics such as they have already encountered in the *Phaenomena* will note two incomplete ones immediately: **σήματα** (805) begins an acrostic ΣΑΜ- (that is, Doric ΣΗΜ-) spanning lines 805–7;[11] then, with σημαίνει (808) begins another acrostic ΣΕΜ- echoing the first.[12] Aratus, however, has not yet finished his 'signs'. As Haslam has demonstrated, Aratus figures the weather signs' progression from half-moon (διχαιομένης, 807) to mid month (διχόμηνον, 808) with a first syllabic acrostic ΜΕ-ΣΗ ('middle') whose second syllable is provided by the signpost σημαίνει. Then, as the month recedes from the fading half-moon (διχάδα φθιμένην, 809) to its end (μηνὸς ἀποιχομένου, 810), the letters of ΜΕ-ΣΗ seem themselves to fade, transposed as they are into ΕΣ-ΜΗ.[13] Aratus' fivefold repetition of the prefix διχ- seems to signal the play of these syllabic acrostics with halves. I therefore suggest that the other numbers in this passage play similar roles. The double appearance of the number four (τεταρταίη, 806; τετράς, 809) may indicate that the two syllabic acrostics span four lines and play with the four-letter word μέση; the two-fold use of the number three (τριτάτη, 806; τριτάτῃ, 810) may likewise point to the two single-letter acrostics ΣΑΜ- and ΣΕΜ- which comprise three letters each over a total of six lines. Single-letter and syllabic acrostics are thus skilfully interwoven into a coherent whole.[14]

Aratus' syllabic acrostics appear to have caught his Latin emulators' eyes. Recently, Kronenberg has identified a syllabic acrostic in Lucretius' description of eclipses, whereby *luna* ('moon') 'hides' (cf. *latebras*, 5.751) in the reversed acrostic *NA-LV* (5.753–4; cf. *luna*, 5.753).[15] Aratus' syllabic acrostic may also have inspired Virgil's famous reversed skipped-line signature *MA-VE-PV* (*G.* 1.429–33).[16]

Syllabic and 'two-letter' acrostics were not confined, however, to Aratean contexts. Two have recently been identified in Virgil's fourth *Eclogue*.[17] A more striking example is found in a Greek verse inscription from Egypt dated to 7 B.C. (*IPhilae* 143) boasting an elaborate 'double acrostic': the first syllable of each line as well as each line's first and last letters taken together produce the poet's name and alias in the genitive case

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[10] On 'signposts', see J.J. O'Hara, *True Names: Vergil and the Alexandrian Tradition of Etymological Wordplay* (Ann Arbor, 2017²), 75–9.

[11] I owe this observation to Tony Woodman.

[12] Levitan (n. 7), 58 suggests that the acrostic continues until line 812 (ΣΕΜΕΑ ~ σημεῖα).

[13] Haslam (n. 7).

[14] Haslam (n. 7), 201 also suggests that ΜΕ-ΣΗ and ΕΣ-ΜΗ evoke ΣΗ-ΜΕ, and thence σημεῖον.

[15] L. Kronenberg, 'The light side of the moon: a Lucretian acrostic (*LUCE*, 4.712–15) and its relationship to acrostics in Homer (*LEUKĒ*, *Il.* 24.1–5) and Aratus (*LEPTĒ*, *Phaen.* 783–87)', *CPh* 114 (2019), 278–92, at 280; she also discusses *LV-MEN* (5.763–4) at 281. On Lucretius' 'atomization' of language, see P. Friedländer, 'Pattern of sound and atomic theory in Lucretius', *AJPh* 62 (1941), 16–34; J.M. Snyder, *Puns and Poetry in Lucretius' De rerum natura* (Amsterdam, 1980), 31–51; and D. Armstrong, 'The impossibility of metathesis: Philodemus and Lucretius on form and content in poetry', in D. Obbink (ed.), *Philodemus & Poetry: Poetic Theory & Practice in Philodemus, Lucretius, & Horace* (Oxford, 1995), 210–32.

[16] As argued by T. Somerville, 'Note on a reversed acrostic in Vergil *Georgics* 1.429–33', *CPh* 105 (2010), 202–9, at 205. On the *MA-VE-PV* acrostic, first identified by E.L. Brown, *Numeri Vergiliani: Studies in «Eclogues» and «Georgics»* (Brussels, 1963), 102–5, see Haslam (n. 7), 202–4; Feeney and Nelis (n. 7), 645–6; J.T. Katz, 'Vergil translates Aratus: *Phaenomena* 1–2 and *Georgics* 1.1–2', *MD* 60 (2008), 105–23, at 108–10; Somerville (this note), 205–9; J. Danielewicz, 'Vergil's *certissima signa* reinterpreted: the Aratean *LEPTE*-acrostic in *Georgics* I', *Eos* 100 (2013), 287–95.

[17] *DE-CA-TE* ('tenth', Verg. *Ecl.* 4.9–11), identified by L. Kronenberg, 'The tenth of age of Apollo and a new acrostic in *Eclogue* 4', *Philologus* 161 (2017), 337–9; and *AS*(*pice*)-*TER*(*rAS*)-*AS*(*pice*) (*Ecl.* 4.50–2), a triple ἀστήρ ('star') identified by J. Danielewicz, '*ASTER, ASTER, ASTER*: a triple transliterated Greek acrostic in *Eclogue* 4', *Philologus* 163 (2019), 361–6.

(Κατιλίου τοῦ καὶ Νικάνορος, 'of Catilius, also [called] Nicanor').[18] Read linearly, the text withholds Catilius' name, referring to him only as a 'talented man' (εὐτέχνου φωτός); the reader who perceives his acrostics discovers both his name and proof of his τέχνη. This same Catilius composed a verse inscription in praise of Augustus (*IPhilae* 142), and Mairs argues that he may have belonged to the emperor's literary entourage.[19] Be that as it may, his poem demonstrates that there existed in the late first century B.C. a taste for syllabic and two-letter acrostics strong enough that a poet would stake his claim to talent upon them.

The opening of a poetry book is a conspicuous place for acrostics and related forms of wordplay. The acrostic *IANE*, for instance, opening Ov. *Fast.* 2.1–4 (a 'gamma' acrostic, the poem's first word being *Ianus*) invokes the god of thresholds at the boundary between books.[20] The syllabic acrotelestich *terRAM | VERtere* ('to turn the earth') at Verg. *G.* 1.1–2 has been identified by Katz as a Virgilian signature (that is, *MARo VERgilius*) enjambed precisely where Aratus had punned on his own name (ἄρρητον, 'unspoken', *Phaen.* 2).[21] The beginning of the *Aeneid* has proved a popular hunting ground, albeit yielding finds less widely persuasive.[22] In what follows, I bring two new instances of acrostic commencement into the discussion.

II. ACTIAN IAMBS: HOR. *EPOD.* 1.1–2

In the *Ars poetica* Horace declares the power of a word's placement to make it 'new': *dixeris egregie, si notum callida uerbum | reddiderit iunctura nouum* ('You will speak excellently, if a clever collocation renders a familiar word new', 47–8). While Horace is generally understood here to refer to reinvigorating a word by using it in an unexpected semantic context,[23] the vertical juxtaposition of *notum* ('familiar') and *nouum* ('new') is iconic of the effect that a word's physical placement on the scroll has on its meaning: *notum* seems visually to become *nouum*. Recent intriguing acrostics and telestichs have been identified in the *Satires* and the *Odes*.[24] Yet Horace's *callida iunctura*, I argue, can be observed at the opening of his earliest book, the *Epodes*.

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[18] For this translation, see F. Kayser, 'Egypte et Nubie', *Bullétin Epigraphique* (2012), 684–7, at 687. On this acrostic, see R. Mairs, 'Acrostich inscriptions at Kalabsha: cultural identities and literary games', *CE* 86 (2011), 281–97; V. Garulli, 'Greek acrostic verse inscriptions', in J. Kwapisz, D. Petrain and M. Szymański (edd.), *The Muse at Play: Riddles and Wordplay in Greek and Latin Poetry* (Berlin and Boston, 2013), 246–76, at 267, 270.

[19] Mairs (n. 18).

[20] S. La Barbera, 'Divinità occulte: acrostici nei proemi di Ovidio e Claudiano', *MD* 56 (2006), 181–4.

[21] Katz (n. 16), 112–15; J.T. Katz, 'Another Vergilian signature in the *Georgics*?', in P. Mitsis and I. Ziogas (edd.), *Wordplay and Powerplay in Latin Poetry* (Berlin and Boston, 2016), 69–85, at 70 n. 5. On Aratus' pun on ἄρρητον, see Bing (n. 7).

[22] Robinson (n. 4 [2019(a)]), 44–9 catalogues the attempts. The most exceptional is that of C. Castelletti, 'Following Aratus' plow: Vergil's signature in the *Aeneid*', *MH* 69 (2012), 83–95, noting that the *Aeneid*'s first four lines' first and last letters, when read boustrophedon, yield *A STILO M. V.* ('from the pen of V[ergilius] M[aro]').

[23] C.O. Brink (ed.), *Horace on Poetry: The 'Ars Poetica'* (Cambridge, 1971), 139 ad loc.; N. Rudd (ed.), *Horace Epistles Book II and Epistle to the Pisones ('Ars Poetica')* (Cambridge, 1989), 157 ad loc.

[24] Acrostics: *DISCE* (*Carm.* 1.18.11–15) noted by G. Morgan, '*Nullum, Vare* ... chance or choice in *Odes* 1.18?', *Philologus* 137 (1993), 142–5; *PINN-* (*Carm.* 4.2.1–4; cf. *Pindarum*, 1; *pinnis*, 3)

Horace later summarized his achievement in the *Epodes* as bringing the aggressive iambic poetry of Archilochus to Italy. Thus in *Epist.* 1.19 he writes (1.19.23–5):

> Parios ego primus iambos
> ostendi Latio, numeros animosque secutus
> Archilochi, non res et agentia uerba Lycamben.

I was the first to show Parian iambs to Latium, having followed Archilochus' metres and spirit, but not his subject, namely[25] words attacking Lycambes.

We are probably to understand *animos* (24) more precisely as 'anger', as is idiomatic in the plural (*OLD* s.v. 11), for in the *Ars poetica* Horace identifies *iambus* as the metre of rage: *Archilochum proprio rabies armauit iambo* ('Rage armed Archilochus with the iamb proper to it [that is, *rabies*]', *Ars P.* 79).[26] So it comes as something of a surprise that Horace's *Epodes* begin not with rage but with a solemn declaration of friendship.

Epode 1 is a *propemptikon* addressed to Maecenas setting off for Actium.[27] Horace opens by predicting the danger his friend will find there in Octavian's service (1.1–4):

> Ibis Liburnis inter alta nauium,
> amice, propugnacula,
> paratus omne Caesaris periculum
> subire, Maecenas, tuo.[28]

You will go with the Liburnians, friend, among the ships' tall towers, prepared, Maecenas, to support Caesar's every risk with your own.

Scholars seeking to locate the iambic quality of these lines have focussed primarily on their subject-matter, as seafaring, battle and friendship are recurrent Archilochean themes.[29] Heyworth, on the other hand, has noted that the first word *ibis* echoes the

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discussed by Armstrong (n. 15), 229–30 and R.F. Thomas (ed.), *Horace Odes Book 4 and Carmen Saeculare* (Cambridge, 2011), 104 ad loc.; and *AMICO* (*Sat.* 1.9.24–8) and *OTIA* (*Sat.* 2.1.7–10) discussed by T. Kearey, 'Two acrostics in Horace's *Satires* (1.9.24–8, 2.1.7–10), *CQ* 69 (2020), 734–44. Telestichs: *SATIS* (*Sat.* 1.4.14–18) observed by E. Frederickson, 'When enough is enough: an unnoticed telestich in Horace (*Satires* 1.4.14–18)', *CQ* 68 (2018), 716–20; and those in K. Mitchell, 'Acrostics and telestichs in Augustan poetry: Ovid's edgy and subversive sideswipes', *CCJ* 66 (2020), 165–81, at 170–1.

[25] I take *et* as explanatory (*OLD* s.v. 11) with A.J. Woodman, 'Horace, *Epistles* 1, 19, 23–40', *MH* 40 (1983), 75–81, at 77 n. 5, observing that Horace does include Archilochean *res*—just not the feud with Lycambes.

[26] For construing *proprio* with *rabies*, see Brink (n. 23), 168 ad loc.

[27] For Horace's manipulation of the conventions of the *propemptikon*, see F. Cairns, *Generic Composition in Greek and Latin Poetry* (Edinburgh, 1972), 141; I.M.Le M. Du Quesnay, '*Amicus certus in re incerta cernitur*: Epode I', in T. Woodman and D. Feeney (edd.), *Traditions & Contexts in the Poetry of Horace* (Cambridge, 2002), 17–37, at 20.

[28] I print the text of D.R. Shackleton Bailey, *Q. Horatius Flaccus opera* (Berlin and New York, 2008⁴).

[29] A. Cavarzere (ed.), *Orazio: Il libro degli Epodi* (Venice, 1992), 118–19; D. Mankin (ed.), *Horace Epodes* (Cambridge, 1995), 49; A. Barchiesi, 'Horace and iambos: the poet as literary historian', in A. Cavarzere, A. Aloni and A. Barchiesi (edd.), *Iambic Ideas: Essays on a Poetic Tradition from Archaic Greece to the Late Roman Empire* (Lanham, MD, 2001), 141–64, at 155; S.J. Harrison, 'Some generic problems in Horace's *Epodes*: Or, on (not) being Archilochus', in A. Cavarzere, A. Aloni and A. Barchiesi (edd.), *Iambic Ideas: Essays on a Poetic Tradition from Archaic Greece to the Late Roman Empire* (Lanham, MD, 2001), 165–86, at 168.

title of a lost curse poem by Callimachus, thereby setting the *Epodes* in dialogue with Callimachus' third-century revivification of archaic *iambus*.[30]

Yet we have just seen that Horace prided himself on being the first to bring not only Archilochean *res* to Italy but also Archilochean *numeros*. Little attention has yet been paid to how insistently Horace underscores his metrical innovation in the first lines of *Epode* 1.[31] It has, for example, often been noted[32] that the opening couplet revolves around a contrast between the proverbially light Liburnians (*Liburnis*, 1)[33] on Octavian's side and the towering warships on Antony's (*alta nauium* | ... *propugnacula*, 1–2).[34] Barchiesi and Harrison have sought an Archilochean pedigree for the image in Archil. fr. 24.1–2 West, which describes a voyager's safe return home (νηΐ σὺν σ[μ]ικρῇ μέγαν | [πόντον περήσ]ας ἦλθεν ἐκ Γορτυνίης, 'He arrived from Gortyn after crossing the **great** sea with a **small** ship').[35] The supposed echo, however, is faint, and Woodman has now demonstrated its dubious relevance to *Epode* 1.[36] Far more palpably 'iambic' is how the contrast of light Liburnians and towering enemy ships mirrors the conflict of short and long syllables that creates the *iambus* itself. Horace describes the iamb in the *Ars poetica* as follows: *syllaba longa breui subiecta uocatur iambus,* | *pes citus* ('A long syllable placed next to a short is called the iamb, a swift foot', 251–2). The participle *subiecta* denotes not only the long syllable's placement after the short (*OLD* s.v. *subicio* 8) but also its metaphorical submission to the short syllable's power (*OLD* s.v. 5) resulting in a 'swift foot' (*pes citus*). In Horace's hands *iambus* has become iconic of the disparate naval forces gathering at Actium, and for his audience reading after the battle had been won the metre's speed suggests the Liburnians' coming victory. The same analogy obtains, too, at Horace's

[30] S.J. Heyworth, 'Horace's *ibis*: on the titles, unity, and contents of the *Epodes*', *PLLS* 7 (1993), 85–96, at 85–6; T.S. Johnson, *Horace's Iambic Criticism: Casting Blame (*Iambikē Poiēsis*)* (Leiden and Boston, 2012), 79. While Mankin (n. 29), 6 n. 28 rejected any supposed Horatian engagement with Callimachus, most scholars now agree that the *Epodes* must be read in dialogue with Callimachus' *Iambi*, since central to both poets' works are evocations of archaic predecessors: see A. Barchiesi, 'Palingenre: death, rebirth and Horatian iambos', in M. Paschalis and M.C.J. Putnam (edd.), *Horace and Greek Lyric Poetry* (Rethymnon, 2002), 47–70. Further allusions to Callimachus' *Iambi* in the *Epodes* are now discussed in A.D. Morrison, '*Lycambae spretus infido gener | aut acer hostis Bupalo*: Horace's *Epodes* and the Greek iambic tradition', in P. Bather and C. Stocks (edd.), *Horace's Epodes: Contexts, Intertexts, and Reception* (Oxford, 2016), 31–62, at 57–62.

[31] C.L. Babcock, '*Omne militabitur bellum*: the language of commitment in *Epode* 1', *CJ* 70 (1974), 14–31, at 15 notes Horace's mastery of the iambic metre without elaboration.

[32] See e.g. Barchiesi (n. 29), 155; Harrison (n. 29), 168; Du Quesnay (n. 27), 20.

[33] For the proverbial swiftness of the Liburnians, see App. *Ill.* 7.4 cited by Du Quesnay (n. 27), 20 n. 23; cf. L.C. Watson (ed.), *A Commentary on Horace's* Epodes (Cambridge, 2003), 57–8 on *Epod.* 1.1–2.

[34] E. Kraggerud, *Horaz und Actium: Studien zu den politischen Epoden* (Oslo, 1984), 24–5 and R.G.M. Nisbet, 'Horace's *Epodes* and history', in T. Woodman and D. West (edd.), *Poetry and Politics in the Age of Augustus* (Cambridge, 1984), 1–18, at 10 have understood the *alta nauium propugnacula* as Octavian's, since he, too, used large warships at Actium (Cass. Dio 50.19.3). Yet it is far more plausible that they belong to Antony, since the battle of Actium was *ex euentu* celebrated as the triumph of Octavian's light ships against Antony's larger warships: so Cavarzere (n. 29), 119–20 ad loc.; Du Quesnay (n. 27), 20 n. 27; Watson (n. 33), 57–8 ad loc., who notes the archaeological evidence that Octavian mounted large rams from Antony's ships in Nicopolis soon after the battle (see W.M. Murray and P.M. Petsas, *Octavian's Campsite Memorial for the Actian War* [Philadelphia, 1989], 85–94, 143–51).

[35] Barchiesi (n. 29), 155; Harrison (n. 29), 168.

[36] A.J. Woodman, 'Horatiana: *Satires* 1.10.20–35; *Epodes* 1.1–14, 5.11–16; *Odes* 4.5.17–18', *PLLS* 18 (2020), 1–25, at 5–6.

larger unit of iambic composition, the epodic couplet, which was widely considered Archilochus' invention.[37] Here again we witness the alternation of short and long lines, and the perpetual yielding of a larger line (here the iambic trimeter) to a smaller, faster one (the iambic dimeter). Horace's first epodic couplet, then, presents an artful *mise-en-abyme*: iambic metron, epodic couplet and Actian forces all repeat each other in a perfect marriage of form and content.

Nor are these the only ways in which *iambus* asserts its formal qualities at the beginning of the *Epodes*. Holzberg has argued that *ibis* suggests, metaphorically, the reader's commencement on a journey through the poetry book as if it were a ship being launched.[38] Let us pursue this idea more rigorously. *ibis* does not stand alone but is construed with *inter*, and, as Du Quesnay reminds us, *ire inter* is idiomatic for charging into the midst of the enemy.[39] This use of *ire inter* draws tantalizingly close to the semantic range of the Greek verb ἰάπτειν ('to launch oneself, burst, inveigh', *BDAG* s.v. 1a; 'to strike, beat, damage, ruin', *BDAG* s.v. 1b), which was apparently connected in ancient thought to verbal invective and the ἴαμβος.[40] This possible etymological play lends more force to Holzberg's argument: *ibis inter* suggests that a specifically *iambic* journey lies ahead of the *Epodes*' reader.

What is more, if we do pursue Holzberg's interpretative tack, taking *ire inter* as metaphorical for the act of reading, we may be surprised when we find an *IAMB* 'between' (*inter*) the first two lines (*Epod.* 1.1–4):

> **IB**is Liburnis **inter** alta nauium,
>   **AM**ice, **pro**pugnacula,
>   paratus omne Caesaris periculum
>   **subire**, Maecenas, tuo.

The first two letters of each line taken together yield *IB-AM*, an anagram of *IA-MB*; taking the third letter of either line, we get *IAMBI*.[41] Readers intent on confirmatory signposts may appreciate that ***pro**pugnacula* (2) could draw attention to the 'fore' of the lines, and *subire* (4) suggests that we attend to vertical motion. That the letters of *IBis … AMice* require rearrangement need not be an impediment to recognition. We have already seen such an 'anagrammatic' acrostic, namely Aratus' ΕΣ-ΜΗ (*Phaen.* 809–10) following ΜΕ-ΣΗ (807–8), offering a formal precedent for Horace's *IAMB*. Moreover, no Latin word begins with the letters *mb-*, making an acrostic *IA-MB* impossible. But why, one might wonder, would Horace have preferred this anagrammatic *IB(i)-AM(i)/IAMBi* to an acrostic of single letters, viz. *I-A-M-B-I*? By fashioning an acrostic out of the beginnings of two lines, and two lines only, Horace

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embroiders the generic name *IAMBI* on his first epodic couplet, underscoring the epode as his Archilochean innovation in Latin verse.

   If the reader finds significance in the first two lines' letters rearranged into *IAMBI*, it is reasonable to assume that they will also have pondered the acrostic as it actually appears, *IB-AM*, that is, *ibam* ('I was going'). This reader immediately will be struck by the harmony of *IB-AM* with the poem's first word, *ibis* ('you will go'). But what significance could inhere in the contrasting statements 'You will go (*ibis*); I was going (*IB-AM*)'? Here it seems important to keep two things in mind: first, Horace's declaration at *Epod.* 1.23–4 that he will accompany Maecenas to Actium, whose truth there is no cogent reason to doubt;[42] second, the passage of time between the epode's dramatic setting before Actium and the publication of the collected *Epodes* after the battle.[43] Read from this vantage point, *IB(is)-AM* admits interpretation as the statement of the author looking back on his journey to Actium ('I was going'). At the moment of reading, however, the reader's journey to Actium, like Maecenas' journey in 31 B.C., lies ever ahead in the future, so that the paired statements seem to say: 'You will go where I was going …'

   Having observed such an intricate and meaningful acrostic at the opening of *Epodes* 1, the reader will with reason continue to seek similar plays 'between the lines' in the collection to follow. Cowan has already, for instance, pointed out a bilingual wordplay on Io's name facilitated by the vertical juxtaposition of *Inachia* and *heu* at the beginnings of lines 6–7 in *Epode* 11.[44] As it happens, the reader does not have long to wait for another effect of *callida iunctura* to appear. Later on in *Epode* 1, Horace declares his intent to follow Maecenas not for material enrichment but to earn his friend and patron's pleasure, as follows (1.23–30):

> **libe**nter hoc et omne militabitur
>   **bellum** in tuae spem gratiae,
> non ut iuuencis illigata pluribus
>   aratra nitantur mea
> pecusue Calabris ante sidus feruidum
>   Lucana mutet pascuis,
> neque ut superne uilla candens Tusculi
>   Circaea tangat moenia.

Gladly shall I fight this and every war in hopes of your favour, not so that my ploughs may be yoked to many bulls and struggle onwards, nor so that my flock may move from Lucanian to Calabrian pastures before the burning Dog Star, nor so that a villa of Tusculum shining from on high may touch the Circean walls.

Harrison has observed that all the rewards which Horace denies motivate his service (bulls, flocks, a splendid villa) may be read as symbols of grand poetry, especially

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[42] For the scholarly debate over the truth of Horace's claim, see Du Quesnay (n. 27), 19 n. 17. I agree with Du Quesnay (n. 27), 19 and Watson (n. 33), 56–7 that it is nearly impossible to imagine Horace publishing *Epodes* 1 and 9 if he was known not to have gone to Actium.

[43] The collection's *terminus post quem* is provided by *Epode* 9, a sympotic conversation taking place on board ship during the battle itself, as persuasively argued by A.J. Woodman, 'Vinous voices: Horace's ninth *Epode*', in A.J. Woodman and J. Wisse (edd.), *Word and Context in Latin Poetry: Studies in Memory of David West* (Cambridge, 2017), 43–60.

[44] R. Cowan, 'Alas, poor Io! Bilingual wordplay in Horace *Epode* 11', *Mnemosyne* 65 (2012), 753–63.

epic. The passage thus serves as a *recusatio*.[45] How fittingly, then, does the couplet preceding this *recusatio* begin with the initial words *LIBEnter* and *BELLVM*, suggesting a *libellus*! This *callida iunctura* adds substantial point to Horace's claim in these lines to 'gladly fight this and every war'. The fruits of Horace's soldiering with Maecenas and Octavian will not be military successes but poetry, and poetry of a particular kind: not military epic but *libelli* like the *Epodes* for 'this and every war' in a promise of perpetual gifts of verse.

III. 'YOU BEGIN': THE PROEM TO OVID'S *METAMORPHOSES*

We turn now to an epic whose ending begins, enigmatically, with an acrostic about beginning. It was Barchiesi who first observed that Ovid's *sphragis* in the *Metamorphoses* starts with the acrostic *INCIP-* (that is, 'BEGIN-', 15.871–5), whose incompletion he takes as emblematic of the epic's concern with closure.[46] *INCIP-* also begs the question whether we might find a similar play at the beginning of the *Metamorphoses*. While one scholar has recently called off the search,[47] acrostics and telestichs continue to be identified later in the epic's first book, some more satisfying than others: the acrostics *MVS* ('mouse', 1.14–16)[48] and *DEVS* ('god', 1.29–32);[49] and the telestichs *NESO* (1.10–13, nearly an Ovidian signature),[50] *ERATO* (1.14–18, possibly hinting at the theme of *amor*?)[51] and *NASO[S]SIM* ('might I be Naso', 1.452–9, interpreted as a signature at the start of the Daphne episode).[52] *INCIP-*, however, still beckons to the proem; let us take another look.

It is well known that the proem stages the epic's theme of transformation at the level of language itself. Following Tarrant's edition we read (*Met.* 1.1–4):[53]

> In noua fert animus mutatas dicere formas
> corpora: di, coeptis (nam uos mutastis et illa[54])
> aspirate meis primaque ab origine mundi
> ad mea perpetuum deducite tempora carmen.

My spirit bears [*sc.* me] to speak of shapes changed into new bodies: gods, breathe favourably upon my beginnings (for even these you have changed), and spin out a continuous song from the first origin of the universe to my times.

[45] Harrison (n. 29), 172.

[46] A. Barchiesi, 'Endgames: Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 15 and *Fasti* 6', in D.H. Roberts, F.M. Dunn and D. Fowler (edd.), *Classical Closure: Reading the End in Greek and Latin Literature* (Princeton, 1999), 181–208, at 195.

[47] Mitchell (n. 24), 173.

[48] Robinson (n. 4 [2019(a)]), 51–2, arguing that *MVS* alludes to Horace's *ridiculus mus* ('laughable mouse') at *Ars P.* 139.

[49] Resurrected by Damschen (n. 3), 97 n. 30.

[50] Discussed by Robinson (n. 4 [2019(a)]), 52 n. 2; Mitchell (n. 24), 173.

[51] Mitchell (n. 24), 173.

[52] Robinson (n. 4 [2019(b)]), 293–4; Mitchell (n. 24), 173; Hanses (n. 4), 134–5, considering *NASO* in conjunction with *DEVS* (*Met.* 1.29–32) as the claim of an authorial demiurge.

[53] R.J. Tarrant (ed.), *P. Ouidi Nasonis Metamorphoses* (Oxford, 2004).

[54] *illa* Lejay (but also a medieval variant, as noted by R.J. Tarrant, 'Editing Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: problems and possibilities', *CPh* 77 [1982], 342–60, at 350–1) for the manuscripts' reading *illas* is now generally accepted, thanks especially to E.J. Kenney, 'Ovidius prooemians', *PCPhS* 22 (1976), 46–53.

The poem's first metamorphosis is one of syntax. The reader is liable to take *in noua fert animus* initially as 'My spirit bears [me] into new things', but upon reading the enjambed *corpora* ('bodies', 2) they must revise and construe *in noua* with *corpora*.[55] Following on this change's heels is the hint of a metrical and generic transformation from elegy to epic, for the parenthesis *nam uos mutastis et illa* ('for even these you have changed') occurs at the metrical *sedes* where the metre reveals itself as dactylic hexameter.[56] Still another transformation of language, this time translation, is suggested in the first line by *mutatas … formas*. Ahl noted that this collocation echoes the epic's Greek title *Metamorphōseis* (or *Libri metamorphōseōn*);[57] his argument may be strengthened when we recall that *muto* as early as the elder Seneca (*Controu.* 10 *praef.* 11) refers to the act of translation (*OLD* s.v. 12c; *TLL* 8.1724.79–84), so that *mutatas … formas* suggests the translation of Greek material into Latin.

It is fair to say, then, that this proem demands that its readers watch for evolutions of meaning resulting from the careful placement of words. It is worth noting, therefore, that Ovid draws insistent attention to beginnings (cf. *coeptis*, 2; *prima … origine*, 3), and that the beginning of each line is emphatically marked. The preposition *in*, of course, is a striking first word which suggests the affiliation of the *Metamorphoses* with didactic 'scientific' epic, including Aratus' *Phaenomena*;[58] then in the following lines both *corpora* (2) and *aspirate* (3) are enjambed.[59] When we focus on the beginnings of these lines together, an acrostic begins to come into view:

> **IN** noua fert animus mutatas dicere formas
> **CO**rpora: di, coeptis (nam uos mutastis et illa)
> **ASpirate** meis primaque ab origine mundi
> ad mea perpetuum deducite tempora carmen.

IN-CO-AS: one letter away from *incohas*, 'you begin'. The missing letter, however, needs accounting for. Although intervocalic [h] seems not to have been pronounced by speakers from lower social strata, the letter's correct observation was prized by elites, as so famously documented in Catullus' abuse of *(H)Arrius* in poem 84.[60] If, however, we return to the proem, we will find that the absent letter *h* is hinted at by the very word which provides the syllable where it seems to be lacking, *ASpirate* ('breathe upon!'); for

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[55] Kenney (n. 54), 46–7.

[56] Noted by Tarrant (n. 54), 351 n. 35; S.J. Heyworth, 'Some allusions to Callimachus in Latin poetry', *MD* 33 (1994), 51–79, at 75 argues persuasively for an allusion to Cupid's theft of a foot in *Amores* 1.1. This metrical observation strengthens the argument of G. Luck, 'Zum Prooemium vons Ovids *Metamorphosen*', *Hermes* 86 (1958), 499–500 that Ovid here refers to his transformation from elegiac to epic poet and not, as Kenney (n. 54), 51–2 argues, from writing grand to 'Callimachean' epic.

[57] Ahl (n. 6), 59. *forma* is also a near-anagram of μορφή: so A. Barchiesi (ed.), *Ovidio. Metamorfosi. Volume I. Libri I–II. Traduzione di Ludovica Koch* (Milan, 2005), 136 ad loc.

[58] See K.S. Myers, *Ovid's Causes: Cosmogony and Aetiology in the* Metamorphoses (Ann Arbor, 1994), 5–15, noting at 6 n. 14 parallels for Ovid's opening *in noua*, including Aratus' ἐκ Διός (*Phaen.* 1), Cicero's *ab Ioue* (*Aratea* fr. 1), and Manilius' and the *Aetna*'s *in noua* (Manil. 3.1; *Aetna* 7).

[59] Noted by Kenney (n. 54), 50.

[60] M. Leumann, *Lateinische Grammatik. Erster Band: Lateinische Laut- und Formenlehre* (Munich, 1977), 173 §178.II; W.S. Allen, *Vox Latina: A Guide to the Pronunciation of Classical Latin* (Cambridge, 1978²), 43–5; M. Weiss, *Outline of the Historical and Comparative Grammar of Latin* (Ann Arbor and New York, 2009), 152–4. Recently J.N. Adams, *Social Variation and the Latin Language* (Cambridge, 2013), 192, however, cautions against drawing hard-and-fast divisions between elite and non-elite pronunciation in such cases as word-initial [h].

as early as Varro and Nigidius Figulus *aspiro* was a technical term used by grammarians meaning 'to aspirate', that is, pronounce the letter *h*,[61] which was itself called *aspiratio*.[62] Thus Ovid's imperative *aspirate*, especially when taken with the dative *coeptis … meis*, may serve as a signpost to 'pronounce the *h*' upon 'my beginnings', that is, the beginning of the verse. When we do, we pronounce *IN-CO-(H)AS*, 'you begin'.

At this point a possible orthographic objection must be addressed. While I have followed Tarrant in printing *aspirate*, other recent editors[63] have preferred the analogical spelling *adspirate*, begging the question: would a reader have detected *IN-CO-(H)AS* if what they saw was *IN-CO-ADS*? In this case, I argue that phonology trumps orthography. Even if Ovid wrote *adspirate*, in pronunciation [d] would have been assimilated to the following [s]. A Plautine joke (*Poen.* 279), for example, exploits the equivalence in pronunciation of *adsum* ('I am here') and *assum* ('roasted'); and Lucilius (375 Marx) wonders whether *accurrere* should be spelt with a *d* or with a *c*, ultimately concluding that it does not matter.[64] Whatever the spelling, it appears that a reader would have heard, either read aloud or silently, *IN-CO-AS* at the beginnings of the lines, thus permitting the acrostic's recognition.

The significance of *IN-CO-(H)AS*, 'you begin', starts to come into view when we consider the identities of its subject and its speaker. *incoho* often denotes the commencing of literary composition, as at Cic. *Arch.* 28 *quas res … gessimus, attigit hic uersibus atque incohauit; quibus auditis … hunc ad perficiendum adhortatus sum* ('And he [Archias] undertook and began to treat in verses the deeds which we accomplished; and when I heard them I exhorted him to complete them').[65] The subject of the acrostic *IN-CO-(H)AS* would seem thus to be none other than Ovid himself, setting out to write his *Metamorphoses*.[66] But who is the acrostic's speaker addressing the poet? On the most immediate level, of course, it is the reader, whose voice pronounces the acrostic. Yet we have seen that the final syllable of *IN-CO-(H)AS* is provided by the imperative *aspirate*, which Ovid addresses to the gods. By a marvellous coincidence, then, in the same breath as Ovid implores the gods to 'breathe favourably' upon his work, the reader completes the acrostic utterance *IN-CO-(H)AS*, 'you are beginning [your poem]'. I mentioned in the first section Cicero's claim that the oracles of the Sibylline books were famous for their acrostics.[67] In this light, I suggest that

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[61] For Varro, see Charisius, *Gramm.* page 93.3–4 Barwick; for Nigidius Figulus, see Gell. *NA* 13.6.3; further examples in *TLL* 2.840.53–80; cf. *OLD* s.v. 2b.

[62] *TLL* 2.838.61–839.58; cf. *OLD* s.v. 2.

[63] W.S. Anderson, *Ovidius Metamorphoses* (Leipzig, 1977); Barchiesi (n. 57).

[64] Allen (n. 60), 22; cf. Weiss (n. 60), 181 on the phonological development *-TsT > -sT-. A. Cser, 'The phonology of classical Latin', *TPhS* 118 (2020), 1–218, at 171 reports that the assimilated spelling *aspirare* is adopted in over thirty per cent of cases reported in the Brepols Library of Latin Texts, a rate higher than average for words beginning with *ad* + *s*-, which he calculates to be twenty-six per cent.

[65] See *OLD* s.v. *incoho* 2b ('to begin to deal with [a topic]').

[66] *OLD* suggests that *incoho* has another literary meaning, 'to make a first draft or sketch' (s.v. 1b), but the grounds for this distinction are not clear. Take, for example, Catull. 35.13–14 cited under *OLD* s.v. 1b: *nam quo tempore legit incohatam | Dindymi dominam …* ('for since the time she read the unfinished "Mistress of Dindymon" …'). There is no way to know that here Catullus means specifically a 'first draft' of an entire poem rather than a work that the poet has started but not finished, as C.J. Fordyce, *Catullus* (Oxford, 1961), 178 ad loc. understands it. *TLL* 7.1.968.9–14 does not make the fine distinction of the *OLD*, and I thus think it reasonable to interpret *IN-CO-(H)AS* as 'you are beginning [*sc.* to compose]', not 'you are writing a first draft'.

[67] Varro (*apud* Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 4.62.6) viewed the acrostics as proof of the oracle's genuine divine origin, while Cicero (*Diu.* 2.112) considered them evidence of careful human forgery. For the

IN-CO-(H)AS might be understood as the favourable breath of the gods' reply to Ovid as he begins his epic.

This divine message might seem at first anti-climactic: of course Ovid 'is beginning'. Yet if we examine *IN-CO-(H)AS* more closely, both in the immediate context of the proem and in dialogue with *INCIP-* at the end of the *Metamorphoses*, it will be seen to hold programmatic significance for the epic it introduces. One of Ovid's persistent interests in the *Metamorphoses* is etymology as a form of aetiology,[68] and so it is noteworthy that two rival etymologies given for *incoho* by Ovid's contemporaries are embedded in the beginning of the *Metamorphoses*. According to the fourth-century grammarian Diomedes (*Gramm. Lat.* 1.365.16–20), Julius Modestus, the freedman of C. Julius Hyginus (the latter a friend of Ovid's, to believe Suet. *Gram. et rhet.* 20), endorsed the spelling and pronunciation *inchoo*, deriving the verb from *chaos*. On the other hand, M. Verrius Flaccus, a leading grammarian after Varro and author of the *De significatu uerborum* ('On the meaning of words') in forty books, preferred *incoho* on the basis of a derivation from the archaic gloss *cohum* (cf., for example, Enn. *Ann.* 558 Skutsch), which he understood to mean *mundum* ('universe'). It is intriguing, then, that just after *IN-CO-(H)AS* concludes, Ovid's prayer continues *primaque ab* **origine mundi** | *ad mea perpetuum* **deducite** *tempora carmen* (*Met.* 1.3–4). These lines are teeming with etymological terminology: *origo* refers to a word's 'derivation' (*OLD* s.v. 4b), and *deduco* can mean 'to derive' etymologically (*OLD* s.v. 13). We seem here to witness a game of etymological 'suppression'.[69] Ovid alludes to the derivation of *incoho* from the suppressed term *cohum* via *mundum*; indeed, *deducite* might be taken as a signpost to 'make a derivation'.

And yet, as so often in the *Metamorphoses*, words and their meanings refuse to stand still. For no sooner has the reader perceived an etymological link between *IN-CO-(H)AS* and *mundum/cohum* than they are led headlong to Julius Modestus' derivation of *incoho* (or, in his spelling, *inchoo*) from *chaos* (*Met.* 1.5–7):

> ante mare et terras et quod tegit omnia **caelum**
> unus erat toto naturae uultus in orbe,
> quem dixere **Chaos**.

Before the sea and the earth and the **sky** which covers everything there was a single face of nature on the entire globe, which they called **Chaos**.

At this point, the acrostic *IN-CO-(H)AS* seems itself to be a signpost for the direction Ovid's epic is heading: *in Chaos*. The first etymology of *incoho* from *cohum/mundum* now appears to have been a false start. It is worth noting that Varro derived *cohum* ultimately from *chaos* (*Ling.* 5.19), as he did *caelum* (5.20) which makes an appearance in line 5.[70] The game that *IN-CO-(H)AS* kicks off thus offers a taste of the etymological predilections of the epic to come.

Sibylline books' acrostics, see recently Luz (n. 3), 29–33; J. Gore and A. Kershaw, 'An unnoticed acrostic in Apuleius *Metamorphoses* and Cicero *De Diuinatione* 2.111–12', *CQ* 58 (2008), 393–4; J.L. Lightfoot (ed.), *The Sibylline Oracles: With Introduction, Translation, and Commentary on the First and Second Books* (Oxford, 2007), 17.
    [68] See Myers (n. 58), 37–9; J.J. O'Hara, 'Vergil's best reader? Ovidian commentary on Vergilian etymological wordplay', *CJ* 91 (1996), 255–76.
    [69] For the term, see O'Hara (n. 10), 79–82.
    [70] So Ahl (n. 6), 24–5.

If *IN-CO-(H)AS* bespeaks the interest of the *Metamorphoses* in etymology, it also suggests the epic's aspirations to monumentality made fully apparent in the poem's *sphragis*. At the end of fifteen books, Ovid's conclusion, beginning with the words *iamque opus exegi …* ('Now I have completed a work …', 15.871), alludes extensively to Hor. *Carm.* 3.30 (*exegi monumentum*, 'I have completed a monument').[71] In that poem Horace harnessed the language of epitaphs to frame his three books of *Odes* as an indestructible funerary monument securing his immortality.[72] Ovid's allusion to Horace frames the *Metamorphoses* also a monument, but with a significant difference in kind implied by his substitution of *opus* for Horace's *monumentum*. When referring to physical structures, *opus* often signifies a public building (*OLD* s.v. 10); Hardie has argued that Ovid hereby 'invites comparison' between his *opus* and those of Augustus, since Ovid has just completed prayers (*Met.* 15.861–70) to a series of divinities for whom the emperor had erected significant temples and shrines.[73] If we now follow the unfinished acrostic *INCIP-* in the *sphragis* back to the proem, a new valence of *IN-CO-(H)AS* comes into view. When *incoho* refers to the act of commencing physical construction (*OLD* s.v. 1), its object is often monumental public building, as in Augustus' celebration of his commencement of reconstruction of a basilica (*Res gestae* 20.3).[74] From the very beginning of the *Metamorphoses*, then, *IN-CO-(H)AS* lays the foundation of a monumental epic that will take Ovid from Chaos at its beginning to 'above the lofty stars' (*super alta … | astra*, 15.875–6) by its *INCIP-*ient conclusion.

It makes intuitive sense for a poet to begin with an acrostic about beginning; why, then, does Ovid end his poem with a second acrostic beginning, namely *INCIP-*? As was mentioned above, Barchiesi suggests that *INCIP-* is non-closural and along with the poem's final word *uiuam* ('I shall live', 15.879) returns us to the first words of the *Metamorphoses*, *in noua fert animus*, effectively 'closing the poem in a circularity of glorious rebirth'.[75] At the same time, however, Barchiesi has shown that Ovid's proem looks beyond the end of the *Metamorphoses* to the *Fasti*. His prayer that the gods spin out his song *ad mea **tempora*** ('to my **times**', 1.4) glances to the first word of the *Fasti*, *tempora*; moreover, Ovid fashions a clever segue to his calendar poem by winding down *Metamorphoses* Book 15 with the *aetion* of Asclepius' arrival in Rome and the dedication of his temple, which was celebrated on 1 January.[76] It is fair to ask, then, whether *INCIP-* points towards the new commencement of the *Fasti* as much as it returns us to the start of the *Metamorphoses*. A closer look at the start of *INCIP-* might reveal a clue (*Met.* 15.871–2):

> **IA**mque opus exegi, quod nec Iouis ira nec ignis
> **NE**c poterit ferrum nec edax abolere uetustas.

I have now completed a work which neither Jove's anger nor fire, nor the sword, nor rapacious old age will be able to destroy.

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[71] For verbal parallels and discussion, see P. Hardie (ed.), *Ovidio Metamorfosi. Volume VI. Libri XIII–XV. Traduzione di Gioachino Chiarini* (Milan, 2015), 617–22.

[72] T. Woodman, '*Exegi monumentum*: Horace, *Odes* 3.30', in T. Woodman and D. West (edd.), *Quality and Pleasure in Latin Poetry* (Cambridge, 1974), 115–28.

[73] Hardie (n. 71), 622 ad *Met.* 15.871.

[74] *TLL* 7.1.967.62–968.5 furnishes examples of monumental construction begun with *incoho*.

[75] Barchiesi (n. 46), 195.

[76] Barchiesi (n. 46), 188.

It was noted in Section I that Ovid opens *Fasti* Book 2 with the acrostic *IANE*. Is it a coincidence that the two-faced god of January seems likewise to appear at the end of the *Metamorphoses*? This acrostic nexus of *INCIP-/IA-NE* seems to close the *Metamorphoses* by invoking Janus and commencing the *Fasti*. Quite fittingly, it is precisely at the junction of these two works that Ovid stakes his claim to poetic immortality.

IV. CONCLUSION: ACROSTIC DIALOGUES BETWEEN AUTHOR AND READER

In her study of acrostics on stone, Garulli notes several cases in which 'the acrostic is used as a communication channel distinct from—and parallel to—the poem: it can give voice to a viewpoint different from the dead person's or the dedicator's, and to some extent "external"'.[77] The notion of the acrostic as a 'communication channel' is a fruitful one that can be usefully applied to the acrostics considered here. This brief conclusion will consider how both acrostics open dialogues between the author and the reader in the present moment of reading, including the manipulation of the reader's voice in Ovid's *IN-CO-(H)AS*.

The second section of this article argued that Horace's acrostic *IB-AM*, conjoined as it is with the first word of *Epode* 1 *IBis*, indicates the temporal rift between the poem's dramatic present, in which Actium looms in the future (*ibis*), and the time of its reception after Actium, when Horace has already gone to Actium (*IB-AM*). With this acrostic nexus of second-person future and first-person imperfect verbs, Horace sends his reader off on a journey he himself has already made, thereby bringing his own past (*IB-AM*) emphatically into the reader's present. And what could be more present, more in the 'now' (*iam*), than Horace's *IAMBI*? It seems that a final trick of this Horatian acrostic is precisely this triangulation of the present moment of reading (*IAM*) between the author's past (*IB-AM*) and the reader's future (*IBis*).

If Horace's acrostic beginning the *Epodes* makes the past present, Ovid's acrostic makes the beginning of the *Metamorphoses* always a new beginning. Every time we lend our voice to *IN-CO-(H)AS*, we proclaim the commencement of Ovid's epic undertaking. I use the terms 'voice' and 'proclaim' deliberately, for the acrostic's signpost is the emphatically vocal *aspirate*. This leads me to a final point. *Communis opinio* holds that acrostics are a 'purely visual phenomenon',[78] a view that is, to be sure, bolstered by several ancient practitioners of the device: Aratus signals his ΛΕΠΤΗ with the repeated imperative σκέπτεο ('look', *Phaen.* 778, 799),[79] and Virgil in apparent imitation signals *MA-VE-PV* with *respicies* ('you will look again', *G.* 1.425). But must acrostics only be visual? In his commentary on the Greek figure poems Kwapisz notes the insistent aurality of works including Simas' *Egg* and the ps.-Theocritean *Syrinx*, and he remarks in his introduction: 'I find it thought-provoking

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[77] Garulli (n. 18), 266.

[78] So e.g. P. Bing, *The Well-Read Muse: Present and Past in Callimachus and the Hellenistic Poets* (Göttingen, 1988), 15.

[79] K. Volk, 'Manilius' cosmos of the senses', in S. Butler and A. Purves (edd.), *Synaesthesia and the Ancient Senses* (London and New York, 2013), 103–14, at 109 suggests that the ΛΕΠΤΗ acrostic is 'programmatic for the visual paradigm of the *Phaenomena* as a whole', on which see K. Volk, 'Letters in the sky: reading the signs in Aratus' *Phaenomena*', *AJPh* 133 (2012), 209–40.

to consider what it would mean to *hear* a figure poem'.[80] Ovid's *IN-CO-(H)AS* relies not only on the reader's eyes for its recognition but also on the reader's voice and ears, as we 'breathe upon' (*aspirate*) its syllables. One might say we hear this acrostic before we see it.

Such a synaesthetic acrostic is fully in keeping with Ovid's exploration of the materiality of the voice in the *Metamorphoses*, most famously in the episode of Echo and Narcissus.[81] It also anticipates in yet another way the close of Ovid's epic: ***ore legar populi**, perque omnia saecula **fama**, | siquid habent ueri uatum praesagia, uiuam* ('**I shall be read by the mouth of the people**, and if the forewarnings of prophets contain any truth, throughout all the ages I shall live **by means of my reputation**', *Met.* 15.878–9). It is not the text of the *Metamorphoses* but the *os populi* that Ovid claims will grant him immortality by means of his spoken reputation (*fama*).[82] This privileging of the reader's voice squares with Ovid's poetic autobiography written from exile (*Tr.* 4.10.41–60), where, as Wiseman reminds us, Ovid emphasizes oral delivery as the primary mode of receiving his contemporaries' poetry and recalls his own first public recitation.[83] What better way, then, to start his monumental *Metamorphoses* than by putting in the reader's mouth the proclamation of his commencement: *incohas*!

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[80] J. Kwapisz, *The Greek Figure Poems* (Leuven / Paris / Walpole, MA, 2013), 19 (emphasis his).

[81] J. Brenkman, 'Narcissus in the text', *Georgia Review* 30 (1976), 293–327, at 316–21 analyses the oppositions *uox–imago* and speech–writing in the Narcissus and Echo episode; see also I. Männlein-Robert, *Stimme, Schrift und Bild: Zum Verhältnis der Künste in der hellenistischen Dichtung* (Heidelberg, 2007), 320–32. On Ovid's use in that scene of Lucretian physics of the voice, see P. Hardie, *Ovid's Poetics of Illusion* (Cambridge, 2002), 143–72. Recent Ovidian scholarship attends to the voice's expressive potential beyond or before language: see especially S. Butler, *The Ancient Phonograph* (New York, 2015), 59–87; V. Rimell, 'After Ovid, after theory', *IJCT* 26 (2019), 446–69.

[82] So J. Farrell, 'The Ovidian *corpus*: poetic body and poetic text', in P. Hardie, A. Barchiesi and S. Hinds (edd.), *Ovidian Transformations: Essays on Ovid's* Metamorphoses *and its Reception* (Cambridge, 1999), 127–41, at 128–33.

[83] T.P. Wiseman, *The Roman Audience: Classical Literature as Social History* (Oxford, 2015), 150–1.