3. We can analyse this Postumus ode best by investigating the movements of the poem through its seven stanzas, taking into account the language, imagery and cultural references. First, we might note the structure: the poem is basically arranged in two groups of three stanzas, with a pivotal middle stanza. What is the point of this arrangement? It seems to show the movement of the poem through ~~move from~~ the general to the particular case of ~~Rot~~ Postumus, with the fourth stanza being the most general of the poem. Horace uses this structure to make subtle shifts in his consideration of the theme that death is inevitable, inescapable, and must be endured by all mortals.

The poem begins with the evocative, emotive 'eheu' and a riveting double vocative, something extremely rare. From the beginning, we have the address in particular to Postumus – it is not delayed as in other Horace poems. Immediately, we are presented with a warning, a warning amplified by an expressive tricolon that

grows in numbers of syllables from 'piet rugis' to 'instanti senectae' to, finally, 'indomitaeque morti'. Resonances are also set off by the 'in ... in' repetition, and particularly the key word 'quietas', which begins to sketch for us the character of Postumus.

The second stanza, beginning with an emphatic 'non', launches us into a startlingly complex simile linking three hundred bulls to be sacrificed to the number of days passing. We have a very long and complex sentence, with the long word 'inlacrimabilem' and 'ter amplum | Geryonen' weighing down the lines. With enjambment continuing into the next stanza, we have the weight of Greek mythology brought to bear here: but if even these giants are under the power of death, then we humans are particularly powerless – we who have only one body. Indeed, against this continuity we have the 'amice', almost hidden in the middle of the stanza: emotive, but diminished in the despair of the poem.

BOARD OF STUDIES
NEW SOUTH WALES

For here, before we reach the climactic fourth stanza, ~~we have~~ Horace piles on the imagery and the language techniques. Everyone is included now: the 'auuice' is forgotten. He stresses inevitability: whether we are kings or farmers, we will die. The slightly sardonic 'scilicet' is now oppressive; resonances are set up in the third stanza with the prominent 'u'-sounds linking 'omnibus ... eriimus', 'numere rescimur', and 'unda'. That 'unda', too, reflects the 'sea of life' that we may recall from earlier odes (eg I.xi).

The fourth stanza contains anaphora (frustra .. frustra), again to emphasise our powerlessness, and emphatic alliteration on 'C'. From the world of myth, we move (in a turn foreshadowed by the reges ... 'inopes colori' juxtaposition, especially with colori recalling the issue of land payments after civil war) to a contextual reference: the war. Yet again this is 'Mars' — austere, cold, with merely the slightest hint of Roman affairs. But still, here the stanza has

BOARD OF STUDIES
NEW SOUTH WALES

expanded to all of us: it sweeps over the common fears of the time in a stanza bound by frustra... frustra (and fractis) – a dead weight that stresses once more the inevitability of death.

Now, we have further mythological imagery. But our attention is captured first by the huge, thick gerundives: & evarigunda, visendus, liquenda. These hammer-blows bind the poem together, stressing necessity, once more harping on the inevitability of death. The imagery Horace uses here is similarly suggestive: the Cocytos is 'black' and 'evans', we see Sisyphus and the daughters of Danaus. But these glimpses of Hell are by no means comforting: they prey on us, they are there and cannot be avoided. And the mythology is used as a stunning contrast: for ~~the black~~ that dismal trio ~~Cocytos~~ sights cannot compete with the pleasures of 'tellus et domus et placens uxor'. The unfaithful daughters of Danaus, who – fifty in all – slew their suitors when they were drunk, are ~~by no m~~ far removed indeed from domestic bliss.

In fact, what we have here is a subtle transition back to the particular case of Postumus. He cultivates trees, he is a friend of Horace's, he keeps his wine (precious and expensive Caecuban wine) behind one hundred locks – a bit of hyperbole, aided by alliteration (parientum ... pontificum potiore), to press home the point. But this Postumous will be followed only by ~~For~~ ~~in a~~ ayvenses, the trees of the dead, found in graveyards Already in the Soracte Ode (I.ix) we ~~say~~ saw ayvenses being calmed as the gods calmed the sea of life: there they, too, represented old age and death. Here, Horace presents us with the chilling image of life ~~being s~~ (wine, here) being squandered being spilt on the pavement for the benefit of an heir: the stuff hoarded up, but not to be enjoyed.

For in this austere, sparse and heavy poem we see something very interesting. Normally, Horace – as in the urgent imperatives of I.ix and I.xi – orders us to seize the day: 'carpe diem'!

But here his will seems to be sapped. The poem is filled instead with heavy gerundives, as we saw, and a constant string of future tenses: adferet, carebimus & metuemus (in that key fourth stanza), sequetur, absumet. The need to pluck the day, the horrific imagery, the cultural references, have removed his ability to do so: there is no mitigating impulse or exhortation here. So in I. xiv all we have is ~~a go~~ the theme that death cannot be avoided, and the language, imagery and cultural references all point to this, and ~~there~~ present no alternative.