

Lesbia as Procuress in Horace's *Epode* 12

MARILYN B. SKINNER
University of Arizona
[mskinner@email.arizona.edu](mailto:m Skinner@email.arizona.edu)

Recent innovative readings of Horace's *Epodes* approach the collection as an experimental contribution to the iambic tradition employing impotence, both literal and metaphoric, as a unifying trope¹. In the light of those analyses, one corollary problem demanding re-examination is the Augustan poet's relationship to his "suppressed precursor" Catullus, who in the *Epodes* as in the *Odes* goes unacknowledged although his presence is constantly felt². On this issue Barchiesi offers a promising observation: when composing iambics Horace "uses Catullan *libertas* as a foil", following Archilochean metrical schemes and championing political and

1 — For an overview of current work on the *Epodes*, consult Bather and Stocks (2016). Representative studies include Fitzgerald (1988), Heyworth (1993), Oliensis (1991 and 1998), Barchiesi (2001), Harrison (2007), Johnson (2012), and Dozier (2015).

2 — Hierche (1974: 155) decries the *Epodes* the most neoteric work of Horace, bristling with allusions to Catullus. Yet discussions of Horace's Catullan borrowings concentrate upon the *Odes*; there is no extensive scholarly treatment of their purpose in the *Epodes*, a circumstance that both Dozier (2015: 317 n. 12) and Bather and Stocks (2016: 21) find strange. Hubbard, from whom I borrow the epithet "suppressed precursor", labels the *Odes*' agonistic treatment of Catullan originals "strategies of self-positioning" (2000: 37). Putnam (2006: 2-3) cites Quintilian's classification of Catullus as an iambographer (*Inst.* 10.1.96) as a technical justification for Horace's disallowing his priority in lyric; nevertheless, Putnam adds, Catullus' underlying influence on Horatian lyric is all-pervasive. Independently of Putnam, McNeill (2007: 374-75) argues that Horace's adaptations of Catullus are themselves the greatest form of positive recognition he could give.

patronage hierarchies in opposition to Catullus' unorthodox handling of iambic forms and his political irreverence (2001: 159-60). If Barchiesi's suggestion is correct, reminiscences of Catullus, especially when contextually distorted, may call attention to neoteric poetic practices from which Horace dissociates himself. In this essay, I will test that premise by using it to explicate one peculiar detail of *Epode* 12: its mention of a go-between named "Lesbia", who in the reported words of the speaker's dissatisfied female sexual partner bears the blame for introducing them to each other. I argue that the epode mocks Cornelius Gallus' and possibly also Propertius' elegiac construct of masculinity by tracing it back, through a network of allusions, to its Catullan origins and thereby exposing the presumptive absurdity at its core.

For all its potential interest at a time of increased attention to ancient gender constructions, critical studies of *Epode* 12 have not properly uncovered its operations at this specific point in the book. It is still viewed as a pendant to *Epode* 8, that is, as the second of two exercises in abuse of old women (*uetulae*)³ and, in its nastier obscenity⁴, ostensibly a mere expansion and elaboration of the first⁵. Yet in scoptic tactics as well as structure there are patent differences between the two. In *Epode* 8 the iambic speaker, here designated for convenience as "Horace", ferociously derides his victim, taunting her for her decrepitude. He caps the attack by neatly assimilating his audience to the *uetula*: through its sound-patterning and rhythm the final line tricks someone reading it aloud into a simulated performance of *fellatio* (Henderson 1987, 1998: 93-113). In *Epode* 12, conversely, the audience becomes an onlooker for what has been characterized as a "skit" (Henderson 1999: 12). Although he again starts off by denouncing the *uetula* face-to-face, this time for her repugnant odor (1-6), Horace switches into the third person, as if summoning readers to witness, when rehearsing her vain attempts at sexual climax (7-12); and he finally enunciates her indictment of his supposed lack of manhood in withering direct discourse (14-26). These shifts in perspective produce a jarring and distancing effect. In the eighth epode, then, readers are implicated in the indecent action, while in the twelfth they remain safely detached. But that is not the only dissimilarity between the two texts, nor even the most salient one. The metrical scheme of *Epode* 12, completely dactylic throughout, formally dissociates it from the earlier iambic series

3 — Gowers' idea (2016: 121-28) that the targets of *Epodes* 8 and 12 are ageing *cinaedi* is ingenious but hardly likely.

4 — On the gross vehemence of its language, see Grassmann (1966: 70-86).

5 — Generic components of these two invectives are explored in Richlin's groundbreaking analysis (1992 [1983]: 109-13). Classic instances of dealing with *Epodes* 8 and 12 as a pair include Carrubba (1965) and Clayman (1975); for more recent opinion, see Glinatsis (2013: 164-67) and Hallett (2015: 415-17), who situates them within a tradition of literature on erectile dysfunction.

to which *Epode* 8 belongs and confirms its place within the marked-off group of “elegiac” epodes 11 through 16.

Beginning with Leo’s seminal perception of its elegiac qualities (1900: 9-16), critical opinion has recognized that *Epode* 11 initiates a new trajectory. The first ten epodes site the collection firmly within the tradition of Archilochean iambs: they follow a uniform metrical system, iambic trimeter alternating with iambic dimeter⁶, and are preoccupied with several recognizably “Archilochean” concerns, among them politics, war, and seafaring (1, 7, 9), and vituperation of Canidia and other nameless or pseudonymous targets (3-6, 8, 10)⁷. In adopting the metrical scheme of the *First Cologne Epode* (fr. 196a West) and echoing the language of its probable second line⁸, *Epode* 11, to be sure, reflects its own encounter with Archilochus, but it also signals an obvious departure from what has preceded. In the second line of that scheme, insertion of a dactylic unit, the hemiepes, before the iambic dimeter is paralleled thematically by the introduction of a hitherto unwonted subject, frustration in love, which has occasioned a loss of interest in poetry:

Petti, nihil me, sicut antea, iuuat
 scribere uersiculos amore percussum graui,
 amore, qui me praeter omnis expetit
 mollibus in pueris aut in puellis urere.

Pettius, it no longer helps/pleases me, as it did before,
 to write verses, smitten by heavy love,
 love, which before all others seeks me out
 to burn me because of delicate boys or girls (1-4).

The kind of writing envisioned has likewise changed. What the speaker is disinclined to compose are not iambs but *uersiculi*, Catullus’ own term for his polymetric pieces; indeed, *scribere uersiculos* echoes *scribens*

6 — Because the opening poem (fr. 172-81 West) in the Hellenistic edition of Archilochus’ epodes, which constituted probably the best known of a series of attacks on Lycambes and his daughters, was likewise composed in iambic trimeter followed by iambic dimeter, Morgan (2010: 159-60) believes metrical homogeneity in this initial run of poems serves to establish Horace’s dominant paradigm.

7 — On Horace’s general employment of literary models in the *Epodes*, ranging from imitation of archaic Greek prototypes including lyric and elegiac poets, through Callimachus’ modifications of Hipponax and the cross-generic iambic experimentation of Hellenistic writers such as Herodas, see Morrison (2016).

8 — Commentaries note the resemblance to Archilochus’ emotional state (*alla m’ho lusimelēs... damnatai pothos*, “but limb-loosening desire subdues me”, fr. 196 West) in Horace’s *me... amore percussum graui*: see Cavarzere (1992: 188-89) and Mankin (1995: 193); but cf. the reservations of Watson (2003: 361-62). For other specific verbal reminiscences of the *First Cologne Epode*, see Henrichs (1980: 16-18); on its broader service as model text for *Epode* 11, consult Morrison (2016: 52-53).

uersiculos, the latter's capsule description of his playful inventive competition with Licinius Calvus (Catul. 50.4). Since Horace's expression comprises the first hemiepes in the epode, its programmatic character as a marker of poetry associated with dactylic measures is established by the rhythm as well as by the elegiac content that follows⁹. This reminiscence prepares readers for a series of Catullan echoes deployed in *Epode* 12, where parody of the elegiac lover-mistress scenario is the main objective.

In the body of the poem (5-22), Horace abashedly recalls his infatuated folly over a previous girlfriend, Inachia, in language that borrows a whole nexus of motifs from the inventor of elegy, Cornelius Gallus – as suggested by parallels found in both Vergil's bucolic transcription of Gallus' laments (*Ecl.* 10.31-69) and the work of Gallus' imitators Tibullus, Propertius, and Ovid (Luck 1976). These include the overall representation of the lover as mad (*nostris... furoris*, Verg. *Ecl.* 10.60, cf. *Inachia furere*, 6) and such traits as being the subject of widespread gossip; being ousted by a rich rival; seeking sympathy from friends, who disapprove of the affair; venting under the influence of wine; and a compulsion to seek out the house of the beloved. Luck concludes that Horace is drawing a sharp contrast with the iambs he formerly produced: the word *uersiculi* itself is a likely hint that he has shifted into the elegiac mode (1976: 123-24). Through a generic metamorphosis, triggered by the Catullan intertext, the fecklessness of the elegiac poet-lover appears to have superseded the rancor of the iambicist.

Yet the speaker's apologetic confession of writer's block fails to square with the poet-lover's characterization as an artist. The "back story" to be inferred at the outset of *Epode* 11 is familiar from Catullus 65 and 68a, where a friend, in this case Pettius, has asked for verse that the poet is at a loss to provide. In addition to its pirated motifs, then, the epode's point of departure has its own elegiac antecedents. But Catullus' inability to compose stems from bereavement, and the same is true for Archilochus in a fragment of a poem that Catullus may be imitating¹⁰. In declining his addressee's request, the excuse Horace offers – that passion has diminished his poetic gift – is not only less compelling but also runs counter to the basic premise of elegy, which, as a means of amatory persuasion, presupposes erotic desire as its generative force. Far from constraining the lover's artistic skill, his mistress, as muse, energizes it: *ingenium nobis*

9 — Barchiesi (1994: 130). Woodman (2015: 678) objects that allusion to a hendecasyllabic poem disqualifies this phrase from acting as an indicator of elegy. The present study, however, seeks to show that placement of Catullan citations in inappropriate contexts, including anomalous metrical situations, is part and parcel of Horace's undermining of neoteric conceits.

10 — In fr. 215 West, Archilochus proclaims that he has "no interest in iambs or amusements". The Byzantine grammarian Tzetzes, who quotes the passage, explains that he was grief-stricken at the loss of his sister's husband, drowned at sea.

ipsa puella facit ("the girl herself creates my genius", Prop. 2.1.4). The poet's disclaimer also poses a complex exegetic dilemma. The uncertainty created by the ellipsis of the verb governing *sicut antea*, the indefinite specification of the adverb, the equivocal meaning of *iuuat*, which can mean "help" (*OLD* 3) or "please" (*OLD* 5), and the ambiguous syntactical application of *amore percussum gravi* together leave somewhat undecided the circumstances under which Horace can or cannot compose¹¹. That an artist so precise should accidentally leave such gaps for interpretive dispute is strange; this crux may instead be intentional, a way of underscoring the confusion inherent in the elegiac lover's protests.

Whatever the reason for Horace's lack of poetic facility, the two meanings of *iuuat* may be in play simultaneously: the act of writing *uersiculi* does not help by relieving pain nor does it thereby bring pleasure. That twofold expectation of what poetry should accomplish appears to underlie another difficult passage in the epode. In lines 11 through 14, the speaker recalls how, tongue loosened by wine, he tearfully (*applorans*) confessed to Pettius his secret indignity, that Inachia had preferred a rich lover. Still bending Pettius' ear, he segues into contemplating a hypothetical remedy for his condition (15-18):

"quodsi meis inaestuet praecordiis
libera bilis, ut haec ingrata uentis diuidat
fomenta uolnus nil malum leuantia,
desinet imparibus certare summotus pudor".

"But if unchecked anger should seethe in my vitals,
so as to scatter to the winds these useless poultices
that do nothing to lighten the sore wound,
self-respect, supplanted¹², would cease to strive with unequals".

Mankin (1995: *ad loc.*) astutely suggests that the language imitates "drunken babble". Since a literal reading produces nonsense, we must take these medical terms figuratively, the mixed metaphor of "scattering to the winds" (properly used of words, not compresses) hinting at their

11 — Most scholars understand Horace to say that "heavy love" *always* robs him of his pleasure in writing verse. Watson takes *amore percussum gravi* as temporal rather than causal and paraphrases "it does not please me as before to write verses when smitten [now] with a heavy love" (1983: 230; 2003: 358-60). He did, in other words, produce poetry during the affair with Inachia – poetry whose gist is encapsulated in the next lines – but under the spell of his new flame Lyciscus is no longer able to do so. Woodman (2015: 674-78) mounts a case against Watson's interpretation based on the assumption that Horace is alluding, through the device of *oppositio in imitatione* (inverted imitation), to passages in which Vergil and Lucretius profess their enthusiasm for making verse.

12 — Here I follow Woodman's explanation of *summotus pudor*, which makes the most sense in this context (2015: 681). On the difficulties in translating *pudor* as "sense of shame" or "cause of shame", see Parker (2000).

latent significance. *Bilis*, the humor that causes anger, is a trenchant metonymy for iambic verse, and its opposite, the poultices, must be another kind of poetry, one that fails at either curing love or winning the beloved's affection (Watson 1993: 237-38; 2003: *ad loc.*). As a vehicle for *libera bilis*, iambs are a more efficacious treatment than the unwelcome palliatives applied to the wound by elegiac verse. The gulf between the results brought about through applications of iamb and elegy, respectively, is now clearly stated. One affords release, the other does not (Barchiesi 1994: 131-32).

Once the epode has formulated that opposition, further indices of generic self-consciousness surface. Mention of the speaker's inebriated stagger, *incerto pede* ("with uncertain foot", 20), can be taken as a sly acknowledgment of metrical deviation (Heyworth 1993: 88; Barchiesi 1994: 134-35). Inachia, the name of his onetime beloved, recalls Io, the mythic daughter of Inachus, and his remorseful exclamations *heu... heu... heu* (7, 21) as he reflects on his embarrassing conduct may pun bilingually on the Greek form of her name (Cowan 2012). Acceptance of that proposition increases the plausibility of Townshend's related notion (2016) that "Inachia" refers to the heroine of Calvus' neoteric epyllion *Io*, and that the rivalry between her and the woman attacked in *Epode 12* allegorizes yet another clash, this one between neoteric and iambic poetic styles. Taken together, such metapoetic pointers hint that *Epode 12* might possess its own set of literary ramifications.

The latter epode meanwhile extends the metrical innovation begun in the preceding poem. While the colometric scheme of *Epode 11* admits just one non-iambic measure, the hemiepes, into each couplet, *Epode 12* employs an alternate system combining a dactylic hexameter with a dactylic tetrameter catalectic. It is the only piece in the epode collection containing no iambs at all¹³. As such, it commits a metrical solecism, for the graphic slanging match in which the partners indulge violates the solemn propriety of a dactylic measure otherwise employed by Horace in *Carm.* 1.7 and 1.28 for quasi-heroic or funereal subject matter. Composed in a meter closely resembling that of Roman love elegy, their acerbic exchange may milk such similarity for ironic effect (Morgan 2010: 164-65). One wonders, then, whether the generic decorum of elegy, playfully burlesqued in *Epode 11*, is now being subjected to much harsher scrutiny.

As noted above, the elegiac formulae in *Epode 11* are commonly thought to derive from the *Amores* of Cornelius Gallus circulating in

13 — This scheme, the "First Archilochean", is attributed to the Parian poet based on one line in dactylic tetrameter catalectic (fr. 195 West). Since the line is assigned by the metrist Hephaestion, who quotes it, to an epode (*Ench.* 7.2, p. 21 Consbruch), the previous line was presumably a dactylic hexameter.

the 40s BCE. Because so little of Gallus' verse survives, we cannot determine whether all the eleventh epode's conceits can be traced back to him¹⁴. Recently some scholars have posited a debt to Propertius as well¹⁵. Critical opinion assigns the elegist's *Monobiblos* a publication date of 29 or early 28 BCE (Richardson 1976: 7-8)¹⁶. Precisely when the *Epodes* were released in book form cannot be determined. Actium, the background for the ninth epode, establishes September 2, 31 BCE, as a *terminus post quem*, but the volume might not have appeared immediately thereafter; some of its content, furthermore, may have originated as early as 42 BCE (Mankin 1995: 10). Given such chronological uncertainties, reciprocal impact is conceivable. Newman (1997: 191-93) finds in *Epode* 11 "certain key Propertian terms and topoi" resembling those in the programmatic first elegy of the *Monobiblos*. Heslin reads the same epode as one sally in an ongoing poetic dispute with Propertius, who perhaps was reciting his elegies publicly while Horace was readying his own collection for publication (2011: 61-66)¹⁷. Extending Heslin's thesis of polemic engagement, Damer (2016) in turn takes *Epode* 12 (together, of course, with *Epode* 8) as a metapoetic challenge to the view of masculinity embodied in the effete (*mollis*) elegiac lover. While Propertius' influence on the *Epodes* is, admittedly, only conjectural, positing some notional awareness of the power dynamics operating in the relations of the Propertian poet-lover and his Cynthia can arguably enrich a reading of *Epode* 12.

Horace's preoccupation with elegy carries over from *Epode* 11 into the next poem. Cucchiarelli (2007: 92-95) argues that the eleventh and twelfth epodes are interconnected as antithetical responses to the problem of the author's control over his work. If the first poem re-orientes the epode book by presenting erotic desire as an interruption of its artistic agenda, the second supplies an iambic-style corrective, drawn, Cucchiarelli believes, from Lucretius' analysis of sexual passion in *De rerum natura* 4.1037-1287 and Horace's own quasi-Epicurean harangue on safe sex in *Satires* 1.2. Both contributing accounts, we may note, condemn the

14 — See, though, Fabre-Serris (2010), who discusses lexical associations between *Epode* 11 and Gallus' language (including the resemblance of the name "Lyciscus" to that of Gallus' beloved "Lycoris") and finds situational correspondences to the Horatian lover in Vergil's bucolic version of "Gallus".

15 — Older investigations of Horace's indebtedness to Propertius, such as Dornseiff (1951: 91-96) and Flach (1967) focus on presumed connections between the *Odes* and Books 2 and 3 of Propertius' elegies.

16 — Heslin (2010) maintains, however, that the internal evidence in Prop. 1.6.19-20 for the eastern mission of Tullus, on which the conventional dating is grounded, better fits a period shortly before, rather than after, the battle of Actium. Acceptance of an earlier date for the *Monobiblos* would naturally strengthen the hypothesis of a literary quarrel set forth in Heslin (2011).

17 — Batstone (1992: 287) believes that in works appearing between 35 and 25 BCE Horace comments on Propertius, Vergil's *Bucolics*, and Tibullus, and Propertius on the *Bucolics* and *Georgics*, Tibullus, and Horace.

lover's subservience to his mistress' tyranny. In terms of story-line, the two epodes are linked through their respective references to Inachia: although they take place at different times, the first when the affair is a distant memory and the second while it is still going on, they presuppose the same scenario. Consequently, it seems reasonable to posit that *Epode* 12 continues the confrontation with elegy launched in *Epode* 11. Now, if we approach this epode with Propertius in mind, we readily perceive a structural and topical parallel with the third elegy in the *Monobiblos*. At its conclusion Cynthia speaks for the first time in the *libellus*, disrupting her lover's sensual and sadistic fantasies with a querulous tirade against his supposed duplicity. While she was yet asleep, Propertius had hesitated to arouse her, "fearing the reproaches of a harshness already experienced", *expertae metuens iurgia saevitiae*, 1.3.18; the *uetula* displays a comparable harshness when castigating her partner's sexual squeamishness (*uel mea cum saeuis agitat fastidia uerbis*, 13). Once awakened, Cynthia arbitrarily finds Propertius guilty of infidelity, the same assumption Horace's companion makes. When the latter woman berates his greater potency with Inachia (*Inachia langues minus ac me*, 14), her accusation recalls the way in which Cynthia attributes Propertius' evident torpor (*languidus*, 38) to an erstwhile assignation. Lastly, the *mulier* asserts a claim upon Horace grounded upon her gift of an expensive double-dyed robe (*muricibus Tyriis iteratae uellera lanaelcui properabantur? tibi nempe*, 21-22), just as Cynthia declares her factitious title to Propertius' attentions (*nostro... iniuria lecto*, "insult to our bed," 35; *longa meae... tempora noctis*, "the long hours of my night," 37; *externo longas saepe in amore moras*, "your frequent long delays for an illicit affair", 44)¹⁸. In allowing his ventriloquized female to have the last word, Horace gestures toward Cynthia's dominant role in the ongoing Propertian elegiac plot. I submit, then, that *Epode* 12, as lewd parody, lays bare the sexual tension and potential violence underlying the romantic pretensions of Propertius 1.3.

Chronologically, however, progression from *Epode* 11 to *Epode* 12 seems anomalous. In the first poem we are told that the Inachia affair is already long over: "this is the third December from when I ceased being mad over Inachia" (*hic tertius December, ex quo destiti/Inachia furere*, 5-6). *Epode* 12 is, accordingly, a flashback to when it was still going on (Watson 1995: 191). Ordinarily juxtaposition or close placement of paired poems in a collection locates the action of the second at a subsequent moment in time¹⁹. When chronology is reversed, as in the notorious positio-

18 — Richardson (1977: *ad loc.* comments: "This seems to indicate that she regarded him as virtually her husband, at least a well-established lover".

19 — See Catul. 2 and 3, 70 and 72 (*dicit*, 70.1 and 3; *dicebas quondam*, 72.1); Prop. 1.8 and 8a; Ov. *Am.* 2.7 and 8).

ning of Propertius 4.7, where a dead Cynthia speaks to Propertius in a dream, before 4.8, in which, alive and well, she brutalizes him and her unfortunate rivals, the narrative incongruity is meant to be unsettling. As elsewhere in Horace's volume (most notably the placement of *Epode* 16 well after *Epode* 9), temporal disruption forces reassessment: the mutual recriminations in which he and the *uetula* indulge are now separated from us by an interval of over two years and revealed as an unwholesome memory. Placed after an inverse blame poem that incorporates the tropes of love elegy to sketch a damaging picture of its speaker, *Epode* 12, as we will see, allusively enlists Catullus, a recognized elegiac forebear, to serve as its whipping boy. Flashback to an earlier period of literary history transfers the culpability for elegy's excesses, as manifest in *Epode* 11, to a prior poetic generation.

That mindfulness of earlier tradition induced by temporal regression is reinforced by reiterated imagery. Animal metaphors are a standard constituent of iambic verse, but the array of comparisons with the animal world found in this epode, and especially in lines 1-12, is striking (Watson 2003: 385). The *mulier* is associated with elephants, sows, crocodiles, wolves, and lions, and the male speaker himself with dogs, bulls, lambs, and deer. Among this volley of descriptions is a reference to the goatish odor "having its lair" in the woman's hairy armpits (*an gravis hirsutis cubet hircus in alis*, 5) that replicates allegations Catullus makes against his erotic competitors ("a harsh goat is said to dwell under the hollow of your armpits", *tibi fertur/valle sub alarum trux habitare caper*, 69.5-6; "the accursed goat of the armpits", *sacer alarum... hircus*, 71.1)²⁰. Physical offensiveness is the primary reason Catullus' foils are sexually unattractive; reassigning that charge to a woman doubles down on insinuations of slovenliness while adding the caprine trait of lechery, wholly inappropriate to her gender. When the speaker proceeds to describe her unlovely efforts to reach sexual climax without him, exuding sweat and pong and gooey cosmetics while damaging the bed in her writhings, we are primed by the preceding Catullan allusion to hear in *tenta cubilia tectaque rumpit* ("she ruptures the stretched mattress and the canopy", 12) the echo of a second, *ilia... rumpens* ("rupturing the loins", Catul. 11.20; first proposed by Townshend 2016). Inversion of Lesbia's grotesque triumph exhausting multiple lovers adds an absurd bathos to the old woman's disappointment while simultaneously tracking elegy, as a genre,

20 — While jokes about goatish armpits go back to Aristophanes (*Ach.* 852-53, *Pax* 813), Watson (2003: *ad loc.*) observes that Horace, by employing *cubet* to convey that the odor "dwells" or "resides", wittily varies Catullus' metaphor in 69.8, where the stench is described as a "beast" (*bestia*) with which a pretty girl "would not go to bed" (*nec quicum bella puella cubet*).

through the submissiveness of Gallus' poet-lover back to its neoteric roots in Catullus' portrayal of female as sexual predator.

After this foreshadowing, it is natural that Lesbia herself should enter the picture, though her purported occupation as bawd requires closer lexical enquiry. On Lesbia's advice, the *mulier* fumes, she had abandoned a steadfast lover for Horace, earmarked as a potent stud but, as it turned out, incapable: *pereat male, quae te/Lesbia quaerenti taurum monstravit inertem*, "to hell with Lesbia, who, to me on the lookout, pronounced you a bull – an indolent one" (16-17). The trope is rather dense. At face value, the verb *monstravit* appears to mean "designated", and lexicographers take it in that sense²¹. By extension, however, *monstrare* is also used of someone "teaching by example or demonstrating" (*OLD* s.v. 2; e.g. Catul. 78.6, *qui patruus patrum monstrat adulterium*, "who, being an uncle, teaches an uncle adultery"). So construed, it would connote "teaches how to be a bull, but an indolent one". Such wordplay would have, in this context, a poetological flavor. As the addressee of Catullus' epigrammatic professions of injured devotion, Lesbia trains his female readers, who in taking that subject position identify with her, to find his poetic persona manly and captivating. That Horace's consort imposes a Catullan coloring upon their liaison is evident from the language she uses when justifying her gift of the aforementioned robe: *ne foret aequalis inter conviva, magis quem/diligeret mulier sua quam te* ("so there would not be a guest among your company whom his woman loved more than [I loved] you", 23-24). This conflation of Catullus' *mulier mea* ("my woman", 70.1), *dilexi... te* ("I loved you", 72.3), and *nulla potest mulier tantum se dicere amatam... quantum* ("no woman is able to say she was loved so much as...", 87.1-2) shows how deeply she has steeped herself in the elegiac epigrams that gave rise to love elegy.

Placement in a woman's mouth, however, underscores the lack of virility in Catullus' remonstrations: this consort is no real bull, but a gender-deviant one. By assuming the male lover's position in their exchange, the *mulier* meanwhile feminizes her partner. As he points out, it is her acrimonious words (*saevis... uerbis*, 13), that produce his queasiness (*fastidia*) and so render him a *taurum... inertem*. The *uetula* seems to recognize her responsibility for his emasculation in her closing animal simile: *o ego non felix*²², *quam tu fugis ut pauet acris/lagna lupos capreaeque leones*, "o unlucky me, whom you flee as the lamb fears keen wolves and the she-goats lions", 25-26). Not only does the man take on the female role as terrified victim

21 — ThLL vol. VIII 1444.28-29; cf. Verg. *A.* 4.483, *hinc mihi Massylae gentis monstrata sacerdos*.

22 — Townshend (2016) provocatively detects an echo of Calvus' *a uirgo infelix* (fr. 9 Courtney = 20 Hollis).

of potential aggression; there is also a suggestion of the maidenly diffidence about sex found in *Carm.* 1.23.1, *uitas inuleo me similis, Chloe* ("like a fawn you avoid me, Chloe")²³. What dubious satisfaction each of the pair achieves through casting blame on the other stems from participation in a vicious cycle of co-dependency.

Cynthia's outburst in Propertius 1.3 efficiently rounds off the poem by articulating the very suspicions of infidelity her drunken paramour had subliminally harbored about her, thereby turning the tables on him²⁴. What had been an amusing vignette in Propertius becomes in *Epode* 12 a no-holds-barred battle with the elegiac *mentalité*. By appropriating that comic scenario and amplifying its piquant hints of sadism, malice and resentment, Horace's text mocks the egotistic bluster of both lover-poet and *puella*. Upon its iambic rendition of the poetic mistress, the sexually available but wholly undesirable hag, it proceeds to map Catullan self-righteousness and injured pride. The resulting pastiche exposes the elegiac male's erotic abjection, his *mollitia*, as neoteric posturing run amok. If Horace is unwilling to grant Catullus primacy in iambic, one further reason in addition to those already considered may be informing his choice: as the documented inventor of the elegiac complaint, the Republican poet's eligibility to speak in the traditional "aggressively male, even phallic" (Gowers 2016: 105) voice of the iambicist had already been compromised beyond repair²⁵.

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23 — Grassmann (1966: 85).

24 — For the several clues to this (possibly) irrational fear at the back of the speaker's mind, see Harrison (1994).

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