

MARILYN B. SKINNER : **Lesbia as Procuress in Horace's *Epode* 12.**

Recent innovative readings have shown that Horace's *Epodes* is an experimental contribution to the iambic tradition using impotence as a structuring trope. 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 felt. When composing iambs Horace apparently employs Catullus' unorthodox generic practices as foils. Contextually distorted echoes may therefore call attention to neoteric conventions from which Horace dissociates himself. This paper tests that premise by attempting to clarify one hitherto unexplained detail of *Epode* 12: its mention of a go-between named "Lesbia", who in the reported words of the speaker's mistress is blamed for making the match. It argues that the epode mocks Cornelius Gallus' and perhaps Propertius' elegiac constructs of masculinity by tracing them back, through a network of allusions, to their Catullan origins and so exposing the absurdity at their core.

Mots-clés :

Catullus – elegy – epodes – gender – Horace – iambs