

**ROMAN PEDERASTIC POETRY: THE PROBLEM OF THE *PUER DELICATUS***

by

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## Dedication

To the memory of my parents.

*nobis meminisse relictum* (Statius, *Silvae* 2.1.55).

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## Abstract

This thesis examines the poetry of Catullus, Catullus, Horace, Tibullus, and Statius in an attempt to trace the development of a Roman pederastic poetics. This project aims to demonstrate how the status of the *puer delicatus* constitutes a point of contention for the Roman poets as they attempt to craft an elevated literature for the homoerotic *amor* between Roman citizen and subaltern. To legitimize an otherwise commonplace and inherently unequal configuration between citizen and slave, the poets participate in a project of assimilation that refigures the subaltern *puer* as a citizen youth and, in the poetry of Statius, even re-imagines the *puer* as a quasi-citizen within the aristocratic Roman family. To conclude, this study urges scholars to reevaluate Roman pederastic poetry as a cultural elaboration that attests to the problem that the stigma of the beloved's status posed to a standard homosexual configuration at Rome.

## Introduction

Despite the rising interest in Roman homosexuality following Foucault's and Dover's work on ancient sexualities, no major study to my knowledge has been devoted to an examination of Roman pederastic poetry. To be more clear, even the concept of a Roman "pederastic poetics" has not been explored. Blanket surveys of ancient homosexuality in Rome have certainly included short analyses of pederastic poems and indicated ways in which they contribute to our understanding of Roman masculinity, ancient conceptions of obscenity, and the fragility of the Roman male identity.<sup>1</sup> Book-length studies of the individual poets likewise integrate readings of these pederastic poems into larger projects on a given corpus, but typically without any serious investment into exploring the identities of the poets' beloveds.<sup>2</sup> While Catullus' Juventius almost always manages to earn a footnote that elucidates the scandalous possibility that he was a citizen, the implicit subaltern status of Horace's Lyciscus and Ligurinus or Tibullus' Marathus typically goes unmentioned and unquestioned. On the other hand, ephebic descriptions of these non-Roman beloveds with white skin, long hair, noble qualities of character, and athletic preoccupations, have led some scholars to argue that these poems provide evidence for the widespread practice of courting free youths at Rome (Cantarella 2002: 120)—a conclusion that is ultimately unsupportable. This thesis will examine poetic treatments of the beloveds mentioned above in order to argue for the development of a Roman pederastic poetics that engaged most centrally with the problem of status inconsistency between Roman citizen and the subaltern *puer delicatus*.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Amy Richlin's *Garden of Priapus* (1992) and Craig Williams' *Roman Homosexuality* (2010).

<sup>2</sup> I am thinking in particular of William Fitzgerald's *Catullan Provocations* (1995), David Wray's *Catullus and the Poetics of Roman Manhood* (2004), Ellen Oliensis' *Horace and the Rhetoric of Authority* (1998), Parshia Lee-Stecum's *Powerplay in Tibullus: Reading Elegies Book 1* (1998), and Carole Newlands' *Statius' Silvae and the Poetics of Empire* (2004).

Suffice it to say that the poems of Catullus, Horace, Tibullus, and others, although they do contain vivid anecdotes and poignant expressions of feeling, do not provide us with a transparent historical window into Roman sexuality and real sexual practice at Rome as Cantarella suggests. Yet they nevertheless allow us to observe how these sexualities were conceived and configured while also attuning us to the concerns of the men reading and writing these poems. More importantly for this project, the fact remains that Roman pederastic poetry has not been thoroughly examined as an unusual subgenre of literature that attempts to negotiate the illegalities of courting free-born youths by refiguring slave *deliciae* as citizens within a romanticized game of sexual pursuit, love, and adulation. By the time of Statius, we even see the poet elevate the status of the slave *puer* to that of a free agent of quasi-free-born status who is then assimilated as such into the Roman family unit. Although status has been thoroughly acknowledged in current research as an important component of Roman sexual ideology, preoccupations with the so-called “penetrative model” and the figure of the transgressive *cinaedus* typically overshadow any nuanced analyses of the relations between citizen and slave by dismissing them as “unproblematic” so long as the Roman assumes the insertive role.

Consider Verstraete and Provencal’s statement (2005: 5-6):

The prevalence of slavery was a key factor in valorizing or stigmatizing sexual behavior. Thus Roman custom and law prohibited homosexual relationships between *ingenui*, freeborn male Roman citizens, but if between *ingenui* and slaves, did not see these at all problematic, provided that the *ingenuus* did not surrender the dominant role of sexual penetrator which was expected of him.

In terms of Roman law, the above statement holds true. The tendency of Roman poetry, however, to conceal the status of subaltern beloveds and reimagine them as *ingenui* with whom Romans shared a romantic, consensual, pederastic love most certainly indicates that the subaltern status of the beloved was problematic to some degree. If the Romans did not have a “pederasty,”

and if Romans had no qualms about their servile love objects, why did they go to such great lengths to develop a Roman pederastic poetics and to obscure the status inconsistency between lover and beloved?

Before the publications of Dover and Foucault, pederasty was not acknowledged as a nuanced cultural and aesthetic development. Now, most scholars follow Dover and Percy in agreeing that an institutionalized Greek pederasty had spread throughout Greece by the sixth century BCE (Verstraete and Provencal 2005: 3). Hence, *erastes-eromenos* relationships in mainland Greece and even Crete had by this time developed an ideological apparatus that reified and valorized the sexual-pedagogical relationship between free citizen adult and adolescent in terms of its import to the polis, its connections to longstanding mythological precedent, and its inherent nobility from a moral and philosophical standpoint.<sup>3</sup> Beginning in the sixth century BCE, myths were revised to celebrate pederastic practice and a number of gods and legendary kings were posited as its founders (Percy 1996: 53-58; Provencal 2005: 106-7). Archaic poets from Athens and beyond idealized smooth-cheeked youths; Solon the lawgiver overtly praised the practice in his own lyrics (fr. 25). Pindar nostalgically recalls the poets of old who, since they were not beholden to his mercenary muse, hurled their sweet hymns at boys holding the sweetness of Aphrodite (*Isthmian* 2.6-8). Attic sympotic pottery, poetry, and philosophical texts routinely ennoble and eroticize young boys as they detail the rules of etiquette that distinguished the pederastic courtship ritual as a righteous endeavor complete with firmly developed moral codes. As Foucault observes, the problematized pleasure that the Greeks found in citizen youths produced an entire “cultural elaboration” (1985: 214). This elaboration was moreover fundamentally aristocratic. The class equality and the aristocratic decorum of the *erastes-*

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<sup>3</sup> While Dover focuses upon Athenian pederasty, Percy extends the discussion to other city-states in mainland Greece and Crete. Cf. especially Percy (2005).

*eromenos* relationship are readily distinguishable features of Attic vase paintings.<sup>4</sup> The symposium and gymnasium themselves, the primary venues in which these Athenian courtships were developed, were locales dominated by the privileged elite.<sup>5</sup> Pederasty in all of its pedagogical and erotic charm was, in essence, an elevated practice reserved for the *kalos kagathos* and ideologically linked with the elite education and refinement that would benefit the city-state.<sup>6</sup>

In Hellenistic Greece, Athenian institutions of sympotic and gymnastic courtship were embraced by other city-states throughout the empire (Percy 2005: 43-46), and pederastic *topoi* remained prevalent in literature. Apollonius of Rhodes and Theocritus each produced a myth of Hylas—a mythological narrative that becomes a staple paradigm for pederastic themes of the Roman period. The epigrams of Callimachus and Meleager variously glamorize and bemoan the love of boys and occasionally follow the sixth-century Theognis in developing the archetype of the cruel and fickle lover. Meleager additionally produces the first “love cycles” that dramatically treat the trials and tribulations of pederastic love, pursuit, and rivalry in a not only highly sentimental but also serial manner.<sup>7</sup> There can be little doubt that the Roman poets look mostly to the Hellenistic epigrammatists for stylistic and topical inspiration, since both Callimachus and Meleager embody a new aesthetic distinguished by erudition, realism, and brevity—tenets that comprise the hallmark of the neoteric credo. Although pederasty in the Hellenistic period does to an extent become eclipsed (especially in scholarship) by the rise of more blatantly heterosexual themes and eroticized women, pederasty still remained a legitimate and elevated institution associated with heroic figures, elite court poets, and a preexisting body

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<sup>4</sup> Shapiro 1992: 55-58; 1981: 133-37 and *passim*.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Hubbard 1998 and 2006; Kurke 1997.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Wohl 2002: 1-29.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Ypsilanti 2005: 92-94; Gutzwiller 1997 and 1998.

of poetry invested in celebrating, ennobling, and preserving for posterity the otherwise ephemeral relationships between older male citizens and citizen youths.

The situation in Rome was quite different. The Romans had what Cantarella aptly calls an “empty code” (2002: 134). Although Craig Williams contends that this lack of infrastructure produced “presumably less pressure than among the Greeks to eliminate the presence of male-male configurations other than the pederastic scheme of bearded man and beardless youth” (2010: 93), the *Lex Scantinia*<sup>8</sup> of 149 BCE legally elided the possibility of courtship with freeborn boys. Hence, legal provisions did condemn “pederasty” by law and prohibit any number of possible configurations between free males. The Scantinian law doubtless speaks to the concern regarding the sexual integrity of the male citizen subject and the threat of his being made a sexual object. Although this apprehension resembles the very anxiety that the Greek pederastic “elaboration” negotiated by creating a protocol and decorum to regulate and valorize sex between citizen males, Romans were instead faced with the predicament of valorizing the licit alternative: relationships with slaves.

Although the *Lex Scantinia* perhaps gestures to the existence of sexual relationships between male citizens and free-born youths, it also speaks to a legal effort to organize male desire into categories of appropriateness. Free youths were untouchable and slaves remained the penetrable alternatives. As Paul Veyne claims, the free-born ephebe was replaced at Rome by the favorite slave.<sup>9</sup> Sources readily bear witness to the fact that sex between master and slaves was commonplace, but the power and class differential nevertheless produces complications for any

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<sup>8</sup> The law, which legislates against particular acts of *stuprum* associated with male homosexuality, is first mentioned by Cicero, but its stipulations remain very elusive. Scholars generally agree that the law punishes acts of *stuprum* against freeborn boys, but it is moreover possible that it punishes citizens who engage in passive homosexual acts. The law postdates a praetorian edict from the second century BCE which forbade any sexual advances against dependent citizens wearing the *praetexta*. For the complications surrounding this law and its targets, see Cantarella (2002: 104-19) and Williams (2010: 130-36). See also Richlin (1993: 554-71).

<sup>9</sup> Veyne 1982: 28. Cf. Foucault 1986: 190.

conception of master-slave “courtship.” Ultimately, slaves were entirely subordinated to the whims of their masters, be they sexual or non-sexual. Seneca mentions Vedius Pollio, who ordered his slave to be thrown as food into his lamprey aquarium as punishment for dropping a goblet.<sup>10</sup> In a soliloquy, the *puer* of Plautus’ *Pseudolus* bemoans the inevitable plight of being raped by his master (767-89). Horace recommends the slave as a safe and expedient means for quelling one’s sexual desire (*Sat.* 1.2.116-18). Slaves were readily disposable items of consumption and exchange, and the owned and objectified bodies of slaves came to engender one of the lowest marks on the Roman measuring stick of depravity. Throughout Greek and Roman literature, men who were subject to their appetites were “slavish.” Threats aimed at adulterers in Roman sources include being urinated upon or raped by slaves (Horace *Sat.* 1.2.44, Valerius Max. 6.1.13). While young Roman citizen youths enjoyed legal protection from penetration, slaves were, in essence, the penetrated. Even freedmen were still bound by the moral obligations of *officium*, which included sexual obeisance to their masters (*Sen. Contr.* 4.10).<sup>11</sup>

While favoritism no doubt existed within households and a slave could ideally utilize his master’s partiality to eventually gain his freedom, slaves were nevertheless devoid of the noble attributes and the civic prerogatives that were the birthright of free-born citizen youth. Plautine comedy, Cato’s moralizing speeches, Cicero’s oratory, and the *exempla* provided above show an acute Roman awareness of the slave’s lowly station. Yet, the love epigram beginning in the early Republic with Q. Lutatius Catulus presents a new picture of the beloved *puer* and signals the beginnings of a whole Roman pederastic poetic tradition that elevates the ordinary and inherently unequal relationship between citizen master and young male slave to a status that comes closer to

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<sup>10</sup> Seneca *De ira* 3.40.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Craig Williams (2010:107-9) for how *officium* became a byword for the freedman’s continued sexual duty to his master. For a qualifying view of the practice, cf. Butrica (2005: 209-21).

approximating the *erastes-eromenos* model.<sup>12</sup> This thesis will examine a selection of poems by Catullus, Horace, Tibullus, and Statius in an effort to trace the continuously unfolding trajectory of a Roman pederastic ethics and aesthetics at Rome. I will demonstrate how each poet mentioned above can be seen to grapple with the problem of valorizing and elevating an otherwise trivial and commonplace desire for slave *pueri* by reframing this desire within a Roman set of norms. This project will challenge previous claims of the supposedly “unproblematic” nature of licit Roman homosexuality and argue that status constitutes a central point of contention at which homosexuality at Rome necessitated an “elaboration” of courtship practices and the development of a discursive category for the *puer delicatus*.

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<sup>12</sup> Although we cannot know the true identities of the boys behind the names in the poetry of Catullus, Horace, and Tibullus, by the time we get to Statius, we see that the poet is deploying the poetics of his predecessors to praise/eulogize actual slave *deliciae*.

## Chapter 1: Catulus and Catullus

ἥμισύ μευ ψυχῆς ἔτι τὸ πνέον, ἥμισυ δ' οὐκ οἶδ'  
 εἶτ' Ἔρος εἶτ' Αἴδης ἤρπασε, πλὴν ἀφανές.  
 ἢ ῥά τιν' ἐς παίδων πάλιν ὄριγετο; καὶ μὲν ἀπεῖπον  
 πολλάκι 'τὴν δρῆστιν μὴ ὑποδέχεσθε νέοι.'  
 τοῦ τις συνδιφήσον: † ἐκεῖσε γὰρ ἢ λιθόλευστος  
 κείνη καὶ δύσερως οἶδ' ὅτι που στρέφεται.

Half my soul is still breath-endowed, and half either Eros or Hades snatched, I don't know who, but it's gone. Has it truly gone again to one of the boys? Indeed I forbade them many a time, "youths, don't welcome the fugitive." Someone seek it out in this place; for my soul, deserving of stoning and lovesick, I think, is perhaps heading there (Callimachus AP 12.73).

Aufugit mi animus; credo, ut solet, ad Theotimum  
 devenit. Sic est, perfugium illud habet.  
 Quid, si non interdixem, ne illune fugitivum  
 mitteret ad se intro, sed magis eiceret?  
 Ibimus quaesitum, verum ne ipsi teneamur,  
 formido. Quid ago? Da Venus consilium.

My spirit vanished; I think it went to Theotimus, as is its wont. So it is; it holds that one as its haven. But what if I hadn't prohibited that he send that fugitive to him within, but rather send him away? We shall go to seek him, but I fear that we ourselves will be ensnared. What am I doing? Venus, give advice! (Gell. 19.9).

Quintus Lutatius Catulus' second-century poem represents the emergence of homoerotic epigram at Rome. Catulus' poem is of course very sympotic (Leach 2010: 125), and the poem's obvious resemblance to Callimachus' Epigram 41 points to the highly imitative goals of this early Roman lyric poet. But it is nevertheless clear that Catulus' poetic imitation is accompanied by his own innovation and personalization. Both poets certainly dwell upon the condition of the subject and his love-borne soul, but Catulus' version does personalize the love object by endowing him with a singularity and, very importantly, a Greek name.<sup>13</sup> Whereas Callimachus'

<sup>13</sup> This Greek nomenclature for beloveds appears to become quite standard as Roman pederastic themes are developed in the verses of Tibullus, Horace, and Statius. Although we can never know the biographical details of Catulus' Theotimus, Tibullus' Marathus, or Horace's Ligurinus, we can at least surmise that these poets made strides to create or portray boy-beloveds of a non-Roman origin. It is, of course, also possible that the Roman poets

τιν' ἐς παίδων πάλιν ᾔιχετο (“does it go to one of the boys again?”) envisions the anonymous *eromenos* as he relates to the larger group of potential boy-beloveds with whom the poet appears to be quite routinely involved, albeit with only half his soul (ἥμισύ μεν ψυχῆς), Catulus isolates his wholehearted fondness for Theotimus specifically and dwells upon the ensuing entanglement that results from his exclusive love interest. Catulus’ invocation of Venus at the end additionally redeploys a common elegiac and possibly Sapphic convention in Roman terms and demonstrates the literariness of the poem in general.

Leach’s comments regarding the subdued pederastic character of this poem warrant some consideration and introduce the question of whether this Roman variation is toned down, and, if so, why.<sup>14</sup> From a completely opposite pole, Cantarella argues that Catulus’ lines “are clear proof of the fact that by now, in Rome, the love of *pueri* was experienced ‘in the Greek style’” (120). It is clear, however, that Catulus’ beloved is Greek. While the “Greek style” would entail a relationship between partners of citizen rank, the Greek naming in this Roman poem implies that the beloved is a non-citizen, which is perfectly in keeping with Roman legal restrictions.<sup>15</sup> But rather than attempt to understand the poem as “less lascivious” or, on the other hand, as a verse that is extremely laden with transgressive sexual innuendo, it is perhaps better to notice its fixation upon personal desire, its narrative, and its clearly pederastic subject matter. For while Catulus’ poem is imitative to say the least, the poet’s variation on a Callimachean theme nevertheless indicates a movement toward a more personalized homoerotic poetics at Rome and

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resorted to Greek pseudonyms to disguise the beloved’s status through the *topoi* already established by the Greek tradition. Consider, too, Valerius Aedituus’ Phileros.

<sup>14</sup> Leach (2010) 125: “Catulus’ little epigram is less lascivious than Callimachus’ playful confession of a persistent and seemingly indiscriminate predilection toward pederasty.”

<sup>15</sup> Cantarella asks how pederastic poetry could flourish in a culture that legally forbade it (2002: 121). After quoting a poem by Valerius Aedituus, she concludes that no distinctions were drawn between hetero- and homosexual relationships, and thus ignores the issues of class and pederasty altogether. She additionally looks at this poem of Catulus as evidence that the *lex Scantinia* was routinely circumvented and consequently dismisses the law’s efficacy when viewed in relation to this poem’s confirmation of Roman male-male desire. But the poem itself abides by the stipulations of the law since the beloved is not described as a free-born Roman youth, but a Greek.

signals the rise of the Roman *delicatus*—a discursive category that is more fully developed and Romanized in the poetry of Catullus.

Whereas Lutatius Catulus' poem has few distinctly Roman characteristics, Catullus, in his Juventius cycle, situates his narratives within a Roman setting with Roman characters and a free-born aristocratic beloved from a prominent Roman family.<sup>16</sup> Although Catullus' *puer* is not explicitly named until poem 81, poem 24 describes him as the "little flower of the Juventii" (*flosculus es Iuventiorum* 1). To be clear, Juventius' identity cannot be confirmed with any certainty. Theories abound as to whether Juventius was indeed a member of the noble Juventii, and many instead read "Juventius" as a mere pseudonym like "Lesbia" or "Mentula" that is designed to disguise the boy's true identity as either a slave or a complete fiction and cleverly allude to his youth (Gaisser 2012: 60-63). Suffice it to say that Catullus' intent is clear, and the *puer*'s free-born name most definitely encourages his audience to notice with shock the beloved's free-born and aristocratic status and his connections with a prominent family of senatorial rank (Wiseman 1969: 7; 1985: 13, 130). Much like Catullus' illicit affair with the married Lesbia,<sup>17</sup> the Juventius poems reveal a poetic persona that is a brazen law-breaker. Moreover, this particular relationship is perhaps the only blatantly "pederastic" relationship developed in Roman literature since Catullus flaunts rather than disguises his love affair with a boy clearly marked as Roman and free-born. The poet's self-consciousness of the illegalities of his passion may even be detectable in poem 14b, which is generally understood to be a

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<sup>16</sup> For a survey of the scholarship surrounding the configuration of poems within the cycle, see Skinner (2007: 35-53). For the longstanding *nobilitas* of the Juventii and the family's mention by Cicero, see Wiseman (1985: 130).

<sup>17</sup> In poem 84, Catullus indicates that Lesbia is married when he describes the many terrible things that Lesbia says of him while her husband is present (*praesente viro*). At 68.143-46, the poet indicates that his mistress was not led to him by her father's right hand (*nec tamen illa mihi dextra deducta paterna*, 143), but that she came at night bearing gifts taken from the very lap of her husband (*munuscula nocte...ipsius ex ipso dempta viri gremio*, 145-46).

programmatically introduction to the cycle of more lascivious and invective poems that revolve around Juventius:

Siqui forte mearum inceptiarum  
lectores eritis manusque vestras  
non horrebitis admovere nobis...

If any of you will perchance be readers of my follies and not shrink from putting your hands on me...

Although we lack the apodosis, the extant lines clearly function as a witty content warning.

Wiseman reads the poem as a caveat for the “avowedly homosexual nature” of the following cycle of poems 15, 16, 21, 23, 24, and 26 (1969: 7).<sup>18</sup> “Homosexual nature” is certainly an inadequate description since poems about homosexual *amor* would be perfectly acceptable insofar as they were properly configured. Yet, the dubiousness of *siqui* and the connotations of dread and contagion in the verb *horrebitis*—as though the poet is doubtful that his *libellus* will find a readership that will deign to dirty its hands on its pages—exhibit the poet’s anxious awareness that some less-than-decent topics are in store for readers.

Another salient feature of Catullus’ poems to Juventius is their cyclic development of a courtship that is intact with a competitive element and a poetics of persuasion that heavily focuses upon economic and social factors. Whereas Lutatius Catulus’ poem is purely subjective and dwells upon the poetic persona’s condition, Catullus’ pleas and references to Juventius develop an extended narrative between lover and beloved and also situate this courtship within the poet’s larger social milieu. The development of this cycle moreover mirrors the Lesbia cycle in a variety of ways. Poems 24, 48, 81, and 99 are addressed to Juventius himself while poems 15, 21, and 23 invoke the boy among friends. Poems 24 and 81 criticize Juventius’ capriciousness and choice of other lovers, poem 48 entreats kisses from the boy, poems 15, 21,

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<sup>18</sup> For a survey of approaches to this poem and the suggestions as to what poems comprise the cycle being introduced, see Forsyth (1989).

and 23 are all addressed to the poet's friends but contain allusions to Juventius, and poem 99 is the poet's final pathetic renunciation of the fickle and spiteful aristocratic child. But the first matter of business will be to recognize that these poems, like Catullus' poem above, very obviously incorporate Hellenistic elements and invoke the tradition of Callimachus and the earlier lyric poets. Not unlike the famous poems 5 and 7 to Lesbia, poem 48 addresses Juventius directly and expresses that no number of kisses could possibly satisfy the poet:

Mellitos oculos tuos, Iuventi,  
 si quis me sinat usque basiare,  
 usque ad milia basiem trecenta  
 nec numquam videar satur futurus,  
 non si densior aridis aristas  
 sit nostrae seges osculationis.

If anyone should allow me, Juventius, to keep kissing your honeysweet eyes, I would kiss them up to three hundred thousand times, and I would not think to myself that I would have my fill, not if the crop of our kiss[es] should become thicker than the dry grain harvests (48.1-6).

On the one hand, this particular poem, like poems 5 and 7 to Lesbia, adopts the topos of enumeration. Catullus attains a clever Callimachean brevity since he conjures a simple image that concisely articulates an immeasurable desire within a short, finite number of lines. The Greek spelling of *mellitos oculos* constitutes an archaic touch, possibly invoking Sappho (Ellis 1988: 169). *Mellitos*, which is Juventius' epithet in poem 99.1,<sup>19</sup> also has a sympotic flavor that associates Juventius' character with the honeysweet wine of a *convivium* or symposium and thereby alludes to the Greek epigrammatic and lyric traditions as well as the pederastic relationship that they generally celebrate.<sup>20</sup> Also like poems 5 and 7 to Lesbia, poem 48 is a

<sup>19</sup> *Surripui tibi dum ludis, mellite Iuventi.*

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Solon fr. 25. Consider also poem 24. Catullus here addresses Juventius in the first line as the *flosculus Iuventiorum*. Like the *anthos* in Greek archaic lyric and Hellenistic epigram, this epithet alludes to the fact that Juventius is in his prime while also setting him apart from the rest of the Roman aristocratic Juventii. Catullus' skillful naming device simultaneously captures the boy's ephebic youth and noble birth and ties these back thematically to Greek tradition. Catullus does the same for Attis in 63. The young ephebic *puer* refers to himself as having once been the "flower" of the gymnasium (*ego gymnasi fui flos*, 64). The poet additionally characterizes

poem of persuasion and seduction that seeks consent and permission for a relationship to unfold. Yet, the difficulty of securing the relationship with Juventius is perhaps even more starkly highlighted here than it is in the poet's poems to Lesbia. Whereas the persona of poem 5 makes his pleas to Lesbia for kisses with a string of hortatory subjunctives and imperatives, poem 48 to Juventius contains a more oblique and distanced *si quis me sinat usque basiare* (if anyone should permit me to continuously kiss you, 2). The conditional places the poet's implicit pleas within a hypothetical realm of the future potential while the *sinat* brings the question of permission, perhaps even the general permissibility of this desire for a citizen, to the forefront.

Regardless of whether the relationship was or was not achievable and sustainable in reality, and regardless of whether "Juventius" was a truly free-born citizen, or a *puer delicatus* adorned with an aristocratic pseudonym, or an eponym for the larger cycle of poems, Catullus nevertheless creates an imaginary that characterizes this *puer* as erotically desirable by virtue of his pedigree. In contrast to poem 56, where the poet shares a purportedly ridiculous and funny anecdote (*rem ridiculum*) about raping a *pupulus* (Richlin 2014: 356, 368), the poems regarding Juventius seek the boy's consent and thereby characterize him as distinct from other, more easily procurable, erotic objects—namely slaves. Consent and status become more problematic and dramatized in poems 24 and 81 where Catullus berates Juventius for his choice of other suitors. In 24, the poet indicates that he would prefer that Juventius give all the riches of Midas to the man who is courting him rather than allow himself to be that man's beloved (*malle[m] divitias Midae dedisses/ isti cui neque servus est neque arca/ quam sic te sineres ab illo amari*, 4-6). Although the name of Juventius' suitor remains unmentioned, his recurring epithet as one to whom there is "neither slave nor moneybox" suggests that the suitor is Catullus' *comes*, Furius,

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Attis by his ties to fatherland, good social connections, and noble birth (*patria bonis amicis genitoribus abero?*, 59). Like Attis, Juventius' desirability appears to be firmly tied to his youth and inherited social station.

since Furius is allotted the same attributes in poem 23 (*Furi cui neque servus est neque arca*, 1). Catullus anticipates Juventius' comeback, that the suitor is doubtless a charming man (*homo bellus*, 7), before he quashes this presumed line of argumentation with a more emphatic rewording of the poem's refrain: *nec servum tamen ille habet neque arcam* ("nevertheless, that man has neither a servant nor a moneybox," 10). Poem 24 importantly lends a competitive element to the Juventius cycle that prepares the audience for the dramatic climax of poem 99 where Catullus becomes the spurned and tortured lover, victim of a spoiled young noble's capriciousness and poor taste.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, the poem further develops Catullus' envisioned courtship with Juventius as an aristocratic endeavor reserved for parties exhibiting the economic and class distinctions of high Roman birth. Juventius is the little choice flower of the Iuventii, and not only of the ones present, but as many as were and will be afterward in other generations (*non horum modo sed quot aut fuerunt/ aut posthac aliis erunt annis*, 2-3). While the unnamed focus of the boy's attentions may be charming (*bellus*), he does not have the clear markers of a *homo nobilis* as both Juventius and the poet implicitly do.

We should additionally note poem 24's highly rhetorical and didactic register. Catullus develops an *argumentum* that highlights Juventius' noble roots and distinction, articulates his own wish, provides an explanation, anticipates the youth's rejoinder, and concludes by rearticulating the obvious disconnect in Juventius' behavior and the well-established expectations for a Roman courtship: the lover is poor and without distinction, and Juventius ought to love a man of his own high rank. A similar sentiment appears in poem 81 when Catullus admonishes Juventius against courting an ill-looking man from Pisaurum who is "paler than a gilded statue" (*inaurata pallidior statua*). The man's pallor suggests his sexual enervation.

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. Theognis 1257-58, 1263-66, 1271-74 and Meleager 12.81, 6.41, and 12.158 for examples of the fickle beloved and the lover's despondence.

Catullus' preference that Juventius find a *bellus homo* rather than entertain a Pisarian's flirtations indicates that the destitute Furius is more desirable than a sexually languid foreigner. The poem additionally takes up the structure of a question: *nemone in tanto potuit populo esse, Iuventi,/ bellus homo quem tu diligere inciperes?/ praeterquam iste...* ("Was there no one charming man in so great a population whom you might have begun to love besides that one..?," 1-2). And the poet concludes his verse by suggesting that Juventius knows not what an outrage he commits (*et nescis quod facinus facias*, 6) insofar as he prefers this sickly boyfriend from Rome's outskirts to Catullus, who possesses the assertiveness and *Romanitas* characteristic of the desirable suitor. The didactic tones of poems 24 and 81, both of which directly address the boy as their recipient, also foreground the educational dimension to the relationship that Catullus envisions, rendering the lover's knowledge as a form of Roman *paideia*.<sup>22</sup> In a way that foreshadows Tibullus, Catullus plays the part of the refined and noble *praeceptor amoris* to the young and impressionable aristocrat who is in dire need of an education in Roman *mores*.

The manners of this courtship are further delineated in 15 and 21, poems both addressed to Aurelius. Although these verses do not mention Juventius by name, most commentators assume that the *meos amores* of 15 refers to Juventius (Gaisser 2012: 61; Garrison 1991:103). The description of Aurelius in the invective poem 21 so closely mirrors Catullus' address to Juventius in poem 24 that readers should be strongly predisposed to making a connection between this poem and the poems describing Juventius explicitly.<sup>23</sup> In poem 15, the erotic dimensions of *meos amores* become quite clear from the beginning since the favor (*veniam*) that Catullus seeks is that Aurelius safeguard Catullus' boy chastely (*conserves puerum mihi*

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Theognis 1231-34, 1235-38, 1238a-1242, 1247-48, 1283-94, and 1278a-78b for examples of Greek pederastic-didactic poetry.

<sup>23</sup> 21.1-3: *Aurelius pater esuritionum/ non harum modo, sed quot aut fuerunt/ aut sunt aut aliis erunt in annis.*  
24.1-3: *O qui flosculus es Iuventiorum/ non horum modo sed quot aut fuerunt/ aut posthac aliis erunt in annis.*

*pudenter*, 5). Moreover, the *puer* should not be protected so much from the larger populace as from Aurelius' own penis, which is wont to molest good and bad boys alike (*verum a te metuo tuoque pene/ infesto pueris bonis malisque*, 9-10). The *meos amores* is subsequently rendered as Catullus' one prized exception (*hunc unum excipio*, 13), and the poem concludes with threats of subjecting Aurelius to the radish-mullet treatment traditionally ascribed to adulterers in Greek literature.<sup>24</sup> Poem 21, in turn, implies that Aurelius did not maintain his end of the bargain. The poet condemns Aurelius for being one with the boy, making jokes with him, and clinging to his side as he tries all things (*nam simul es, iocaris una,/ haerens ad latus omnia experiris*, 5-6). Catullus proceeds to bemoan the fact that Aurelius will teach the boy to hunger and thirst (*nunc ipsum id doleo quod esurire/ me meꝛ puer et sitire discet*, 10-11). The poem ends with a plea that Aurelius stop while he remains chaste, lest he make an end to this philandering by getting raped in the face (*quare desine, dum licet pudico/ ne finem facies sed irrumatus*, 12-13).

As Garrison observes, the tone of these two poems is highly comic and overstated (2012: 103-4, 108). Ellis and others note that poem 15 resembles commendations written by Cicero and others, where a parent entrusts his child to another in his absence. The fact remains, however, that Catullus does not have any claim of parentage or tutelage to Juventius. Based on the poems discussed above, Juventius is a desired lover who is out of reach. The Aristophanic punishment for adulterers of having radishes and mullets shoved into the anus additionally seems more of a literary allusion than an imminent threat. This threat is reiterated in the infamous poem 16, where Catullus threatens Aurelius and Furius with oral and anal rape. Poem 16 also predicates these threats upon the two friends' misreadings of Catullus' poetry. The poet insists that while it is fitting for the poet to be chaste, his poems need not be (*nam castum esse decet pium poetam/*

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<sup>24</sup> *quod si te mala mens furorque vecors/ in tantam inpulerit, sceleste, culpam/...quem attractis pedibus patente porta/ percurret raphanique mugilesque* (15-19). For this punishment of adulterers as a common literary joke with little proof of historical practice, see Roy (1991).

*ipsum, versiculos nihil necessest*, 16.5-6). The threat of rape itself, therefore, most likely embodies a poetic warning and the poet's assertion of agency in his verse as opposed to a practical, real-life promise. The threat rather pinpoints the distinction between poet and poem with a more obvious and startling immediacy that alerts Catullus' readership to acknowledge his adeptness as a poet, who can alternate between a Callimachean and an Archilochean poetics at whim. As such, we are required to reappraise the Juventius cycle at large as a collection of highly programmatic pieces that convey the poet's skill, his acquaintance with an existing lyric tradition, and his anxiety over his poetry's reception all through a literary and pederastic lens.

Fitzgerald, for instance, reads the *puer* in Catullus 15 as a metaphor for a book, arguing that the verse is a dedicatory poem that resembles the collection's original dedication to Cornelius Nepos in poem 1 (1995: 46-49). Just as Callimachus relates his rejection of the common and cyclic poem in an epigram where he simultaneously denounces his preference for a commonly desired boy (1995: 48-51), Catullus' Juventius poems can and perhaps should be read as meditations upon his poetry and its reception. References to Juventius' poor taste in men in poems 24 and 81 validate the poet's own elegance, economic status and social rank, and poetic prowess despite his Veronese origin. Poems 15 and 21 to Aurelius underscore the tenets of friendship regarding how a friend should read and treat the poems so modestly entrusted to him by a companion. Catullus' final renunciation of Juventius in 99, as David Wray posits, constitutes a hyperbolic performance (2004: 65). Catullus the poet, who is ready to assert his dominance elsewhere in the corpus, is suspended on a cross (*suffixum in cruce*, 4) after stealing a kiss sweeter than sweet ambrosia from the unwilling Juventius (*surripui tibi dum ludis mellite Iuventi/ suaviolum dulci dulcius ambrosia*, 1-2). Catullus relates that he was tortured in every

way (*omnique excruciare modo*, 12)<sup>25</sup> while his kiss was transformed from ambrosia to a medicine more sorrowful than sad hellebore (*ex ambrosia mutatum iam foret illud/ suaviolum tristi tristius helleboro*, 13-14). While Catullus' posture is reminiscent of the elegiac pose of the helpless spurned victim, the description of ambrosia turned bitter drug additionally provides a transmuted image for the poet's reception and the poet's fear of poetic failure among his aristocratic readership. Juventius, despite being a scion of a noble house, fails to appreciate Catullus' poems and misreads heavenly kisses as sour medicines. On another level, Catullus' failure to seduce Juventius may also represent an anxiety over his Veronese origin. With all his clever rejoinders, virile threats, and expertise in Roman manners, the poet still fails to "penetrate" Rome's upper echelons.

Despite the literariness and programmatic purpose that underlie these poems, they still must also be appraised as some of the earliest efforts to map and elaborate a pederastic and homosexual relationship in specifically Roman terms. Verstraete understands Catullus' homoerotic poems as "fine but still basically slight compositions" with the exception of the more psychological poem 99 (2005: 303). The complexity of the poems as a cycle, however, should be apparent. Juventius' worth as a love object is set apart from the Ipsitilla and the *pupulus* of poems 32 and 56 respectively. Catullus isolates the youth's nobility and the behaviors proper to his high lineage. He acts as a *magister* whose duty it is to fine-tune the boy's understanding of Roman decorum and provide him with an education in etiquette. Poem 15, a poem of commendation, even treats the beloved as a child to be safely entrusted to a trustworthy friend.

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<sup>25</sup> Ellis (1889: *ad loc.*) and Arkins (1982: 106-8) read this and the entire Juventius cycle as obvious hyperbole that demonstrates how less serious the Juventius poems are compared to the Lesbia poems. The Lesbia poems, too, however, demonstrate a similar strain of exaggeration. Poem 11, for instance, details Catullus' plan to penetrate the furthest boundaries of the earth in his lovelorn state and ends with a comparison of the spurned poet to a tender *flos* touched by the plow—a Homeric image of a youth cut down in his prime. Ultimately, both cycles of poems demonstrate an oscillation between semi-serious feeling and playful exaggeration that points to the literariness of poems themselves that are engaged with varied genres, traditions, and modes of gender and Roman performance.

Not only does Catullus convey his tenderness for the boy, but his assumed prerogative to entrust him to Aurelius' care demonstrates an early interpretation of the lover-beloved dynamic as a relationship with familial connotations. Poem 48 conveys the illimitable bounds of the poet's desire, placing it on par with the poems to Lesbia. Poems 24 and 81, as well as poems 15 and 21 to Aurelius, situate the beloved within the poet's social context, which valorizes the beloved's desirability and exposes his fickleness. In the end, Catullus' Juventius cycle initially invites shock but eventually modulates the poet's pursuit of a freeborn citizen through a combination of panegyric, literary allusion, and the poet's eventual capitulation to the erotic tension. Although the historicity of Catullus' narratives should be generally scrutinized, the Juventius cycle nevertheless provides a narrative foundation, an aesthetics, and an extended discourse for the *vir-puer* relationship to which the later poets with subaltern beloveds aspire and also take into new directions as they struggle to negotiate the ignoble connotations their beloveds' servile status carries.

## Chapter 2: Horace and Tibullus

After Catullus' compositions in the 50s BCE, the next poem to include a lengthy description of a *puer delicatus* is Horace's *Epode* 11. The dates for the *Epodes* are uncertain, but scholars generally agree that they were composed between 42 and 31 BCE, with *Epode* 9 clearly recalling Augustus' recent victory at the Battle of Actium. The *Epodes* have recently recaptured the interest of scholars as verses that bespeak the troubles, uncertainties, and anxieties characteristic of Rome while it was in the final throes of civil war. Although the *Epodes* are later characterized by Horace as a book of Archilochean *iambi* (*Epist.* 1.19.23-28), only a handful of the poems display the harsh diatribe traditionally considered essential to the iambic blame genre. Hence, current analyses typically focus on reevaluating Roman conceptions of *iambi* and negotiating the relationship between poems with disparate themes, meters, and poetic postures.<sup>1</sup>

*Epode* 11 is an especially curious poem since it is the first poem of the collection to deviate from a purely iambic meter. The metrical scheme is instead what is known as the Third Archilochean Asynartete, with iambic trimeter in the first line, followed by hemiepes and iambic dimeter in the second.<sup>2</sup> The metrical change is complemented by a transition in theme since it is also the first quasi-elegiac poem of the *Epodes*, and indeed of the entire Horatian corpus. The poet begins with a direct address to his friend, Pettius (11.1-4):

Petti, nihil me sicut antea iuvat  
 scribere versiculos amore percussum gravi,  
 amore, qui me praeter omnis expetit  
 mollibus in pueris aut in puellis urere.

Pettius, it does not please me at all to write little verses as before since I am  
 pierced by painful love, which seeks to make me above all others burn for soft  
 boys or girls.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Watson (2003: 4-43); Mankin (1995: 12-14) and (2010); Barchiesi (2001); Harrison (2001).

<sup>2</sup> Also the meter of the Archilochean *Cologne Epode*. Although this meter is not purely iambic, it is nevertheless a meter employed by Archilochus, indicating that Horace is closely following the metrical schemes of his model. Cf. Watson (2003: 360-61).

We can see from the very first lines that the poem has a chiefly programmatic function. Scholars generally agree that *Epode* 11's shift in addressee, meter, and theme (since he is no longer pleased to write "as before") introduces the second "chapter" of the *Epodes* and signals a departure from the invective that characterizes the first half of the work (Barchiesi 2001: 160-62; Harrison 2001:180-81). Yet this reading is complicated by the ambiguity of *sicut antea*.<sup>3</sup> Does Horace intend to say that he is no longer writing iambics as he did before or that he no longer writes erotic verses as he did when he was similarly smitten? Despite the ambiguous ellipsis, the *versiculos* of line two recalls the *versiculos* of Catullus 50, where Catullus reminisces about "playing" on his tablets with Calvus and composing poetry in different meters<sup>4</sup> (Woodman 2015: 678; Harrison 2001: 180).<sup>5</sup> What should be abundantly clear as a result is that Catullus is evoked here as the model for Horace's poetry, whether it be for the erotic or the invective poems, and Horace's current affair is directly linked to the writing process and poetic production for his friend, Pettius. Most importantly for this paper's discussion, Horace displays no preference for boys or girls, but remains indifferent to his beloved's sex. This indifference is even dramatized throughout the poem's entirety, since Inachia is introduced in line 6 as the beloved by whom Horace was previously driven mad (*Inachia furere*). The following seventeen lines reminisce on this love affair and the shame it caused the poet (*nam pudet tanti mali, 7*) before finally introducing the poet's current love for Lyciscus in line 24:

nunc glorientis quamlibet mulierculam  
vincere mollitia amor Lycisci me tenet;

<sup>3</sup> Woodman (2015: 673-78) provides the most exhaustive discussion of these lines and their previous interpretations by scholars. As Mankin (1995: 194) and Woodman mention, some are led to supply 'non iuivit' as opposed to 'iuivit' after *sicut antea* to the effect that Horace does not and did not find pleasure/help in writing *versiculos*. Following Wigodsky's careful philological study (1980: 38-39), Woodman argues that when an elliptical phrase follows upon the heels of a negation, the normal meaning of the phrase is positive—an argument with which I am inclined to agree.

<sup>4</sup> *numero modo hoc modo illoc*, Cat. 50.5.

<sup>5</sup> It may also evoke the *versiculos* of Catullus 16, where Catullus also makes a programmatic statement about distinguishing between the immodest subject matter of the poems and the conduct of the poet himself.

unde expedire non amicorum queant  
 libera consilia nec contumeliae graves,  
 sed alius ardor aut puellae candidae  
 aut teretis pueri longam renodantis comam.

Now love for Lyciscus, who boasts that he conquers whatever little lady you please in softness, holds me. Whence neither the gentle counsels nor severe reproaches of friends are able to free me, but rather another passion, either for a bright girl or slender boy, tying back<sup>6</sup> his long hair in a knot (24-29).

As in the case of Lutatius Catulus and the Greek epigrammatists, Horace describes his love for a *puer* with a Greek name. Watson (2003: 366-67, 379-80) suggests that the name, Lyciscus, meaning “little wolf,” could very well refer to the boy’s occupation as a prostitute much like the name “Inachia.” Mankin (1995: 196, 204) instead looks to other appearances of these names to suggest that “Lyciscus,” an attested real name and literary name in comedy, may refer to the boy’s predatory qualities while “Inachia,” not a real name but an epithet of Io, alludes to the girl’s bovine characteristics. More recent studies have proposed that the name “Inachia” could very well be an allusion to the neoteric epyllion of Calvus (Townshend 2016) and could be read programmatically through its mythological meanings as an emblem for the new erotic direction of Horace’s book (Cucchiarelli 2007: 92-94). Both beloveds’ names therefore have poetic precedents that suggest that Horace’s poem is as literary as it is sentimental and autobiographical, if not more so (Harrison 2001: 180).<sup>7</sup> Lyciscus may even evoke the Archilochean “Lycambes,” which likewise derives from the Greek *lykos* (“wolf”) and would present another subtle connection to the larger iambic collection.

When we consider Watkins’ and Mankin’s suggestions side by side, it becomes even clearer that Horace is emblazoning his low-brow, non-citizen beloveds with names that evoke an existing tradition, endow them with literary pedigrees, and in many ways allude to but also show

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<sup>6</sup> See Mankin 205 and Watson 381 for discussions of *renodantis*, which some assume to mean “untie” or “unknot” as opposed to “tie back into a knot.”

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Woodman (2015: 676-77) for descriptions of additional allusions to Virgil and Lucretius.

a departure from the poetry of Catullus. Catullus, with his republican *libertas*, has no misgivings about describing his sexual desire for a prostitute and reserves the sentimental similes, elegiac imagery, and elaborate naming for cycles devoted to his more serious citizen beloveds.<sup>8</sup> Horace's naming devices and descriptions, however, display his effort to elevate a commonplace passion through allusion and create a hierarchy of desirability for these beloveds of a lower status. Lyciscus, for instance, boasts (*gloriantis*) that he can surmount (*vincere*) any little lady (*mulierculam*) in terms of his softness (23-24). Although the poet's madness for Inachia may have made him the talk of the town (8), *Epode* 11 displays the poet's control in crafting his own *fabula* and conveying his success in graduating to a more desirable beloved. The boys and girls for which he burns may remind us of Callimachus' Epigram 42 (discussed in the previous chapter), since Callimachus' soul has run off to one of many eligible boys. The poem's final image of a boy tying back (or possibly untying) his long hair is reminiscent of the Greek portrayals of *eromenoi* in pederastic scenes, since hair was typically worn long by young boys of the wealthier classes just as Lyciscus' softness evokes the Hellenistic preference for effeminate youths.<sup>9</sup>

Moreover, the rotation that this poem intimates, where Horace moves from Inachia to Lyciscus and will only find a remedy for his lovesickness in another passion (*alius ardor*, 27), makes a larger literary statement regarding how beloveds come to engender a particular poetics and how the poet can glorify, refine, and immortalize these fleeting relationships with non-Roman beloveds in his poetry at will. We can compare *Satires* 1.2.116-19, where Horace relates his preference for easily procurable *venerem* through a female or male slave of the household

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Catullus 32, where the poet begs the prostitute Ipsitilla for nine consecutive *futitiones*. Although the Lesbia and Juventius poems are laden with elevated language and emotional pleas, the poet makes no effort to glorify or disguise his sexual desire for a prostitute.

<sup>9</sup> See Dover (1989: 78-80) for a brief overview of the hair of the *eromenos* in Greek vase paintings and poetry. Cf. Simonides fr. 22, Anacreon fr. 347, Aristophanes' *Knights* 580, and Theocritus 5 for Greek examples.

(*ancilla aut verna*). These two poems together demonstrate the variety of ways in which Horace can treat his erotic objects: he can either comment on their practical value as sexual means to an end, or he can sensationalize his servitude to their charms in a quasi-elegiac verse. However, in neither case—even during his sexual diatribe in *Satires* 1.2—does Horace dare to promote any illegal forms of sex as Catullus does or even to describe affairs with free-born Roman citizen males. As the *Satires* repeatedly stress, Horace tends to avoid the extremes in which his predecessors reveled. *Epode* 11 even structurally replicates with ring composition Horace's cyclical pattern of transient affairs, since the poet's longing for *pueri aut puellae* both begins and concludes the poem. Hence, the epode is not so much concerned with Lyciscus or Inachia as with the recurring waves of desire that give rise to an elegiac poetics. Horace, in this respect, looks backward to the cycles of Catullus for the *amor* and *ardor* that drive his Lesbia and Juventius collections and perhaps prompted Catullus himself to enunciate the program for his own *versiculi* so aggressively in poem 16. Yet the homoerotic and adulterous relationships that titillate and elicit shock in Catullus' *carmina* are toned down and made licit, Hellenized, and described in a less personalized programmatic language more suitable for an Augustan audience. *Epode* 11 differentiates little between the sexes, elevates the desire for members of the wider group of non-citizen group *pueri* and *puellae*, and relates this desire back to the poet's ability and inclination to versify it (*scribere versiculos*, 2). Horace's *Epode* 11 therefore anticipates the homoerotic poetry of Tibullus insofar as it is invested in developing an elevated aesthetic for an otherwise mundane relationship between a citizen and subaltern male. Moreover, the cyclic dynamic that Horace outlines adumbrates the extended affair that we see recounted at length in Tibullus' Marathus cycle.

Tibullus' elegies to or about Marathus, published after Horace's *Epodes* and before Tibullus' death in 19 BCE, are recognized as the longest poetic ventures into Roman "pederasty." Although poems 1.4, 1.8, and 1.9 appear to follow a redundant trajectory, where Tibullus proclaims his love for Marathus in 1.4, inexplicably offers advice to a girl in pursuit of Marathus in 1.8, and renounces Marathus in 1.9, the narrative sequence of the poems in the corpus is questionable, especially when considering that, like Catullus' Lesbia poems, the poems of the Marathus cycle are scattered amidst the poet's verses regarding his other female interest, Delia. Nevertheless, the poems, above all poem 1.4, lend invaluable insight to a larger trend of assimilating the non-citizen, and likely slave, *puer* to the status of a *puer ingenuus*.

Tibullus 1.4 is in many ways a proto-Ovidian love handbook designed specifically for pursuing boys. The poem is moreover the first and truly only Roman source to chart out an ethics for male-male courtship. The poem takes the shape of an erotodidactic dialogue between Priapus and Tibullus in which the poet inquires after the deity's *sollertia* (skill) in seducing handsome youths (*quae tua formosos cepit sollertia?*, 3). The tone of the poem is mock-serious. Priapus, an apotropaic divinity renowned for his threatening penis and promises of pedication, schools Tibullus in the skills of artfully seducing boys into compliance. The poet's first address to the divinity foregrounds the irony of the entire poem. Priapus is described, as Maltby indicates (2002: 218), mock-heroically as the *rustica proles* (7) of Bacchus, armed with a curved scythe (*armatus curva...falce*, 8). Tibullus points also to the lowly, unattractive appearance of the god, claiming that it cannot be a shiny beard or comely hair that attracts young suitors (since Priapus has no such qualities); and the anaphoric *nudus* of lines 5 and 6, which describes Priapus' utter destitution in stormy winter and hot summer alike, highlights the god's abject qualities and hints, too, at the jutting member that quite literally stands out in typical representations of the naked

deity. If the opening description of the god incites any expectations of the commonplace show of hypermasculinity, the god's advice immediately dispels such prospects. Rather than launch into masculine threats or boasts, Priapus shows a wisdom-laden wariness and urges Tibullus not to trust the delicate mob of boys since they always have some case for a justified love (*o fuge te tenerae puerorum credere turbae/ nam causam iusti semper amoris habent*, 9-10). Although Priapus will press onward with many delicately composed lines of meticulous advice, the entire subject of courting the *turba puerorum* is brought up with a preemptory caveat against the practice. As Maltby claims, the phrase *causam iusti...amoris* is legal jargon that likely points to the illegalities of the *amor* prohibited by the *Lex Scantinia* (2002: 218). The various *causae* are subsequently outlined:

hic placet, angustis quod equom conpescit habenis,  
 hic placidam niveo pectore pellit aquam,  
 hic, quia fortis adest audacia, cepit; at illi  
 virgineus teneras stat pudor ante genas.

This one brings pleasure because he collects the horse with tight reins, this one strikes the still water with a snowy breast, this one captured you because he has a strong bravery; but a virginal modesty resides upon the cheeks of that one (11-14).

Priapus' catalogue of boy charms evokes the various types of *eromenoi* celebrated in archaic and Hellenistic poetry ranging from the brave, masculine athlete of epic and epinician to the shy, feminized youth of later epigram. More importantly, these youths are clearly engaged in aristocratic activities (Williams 1999: 207-8). Priapus goes on to further elaborate on these pursuits beginning in line 40, as he urges the lover to oblige the beloved on boating trips where the lover will do the rowing (45-46) and hunting trips where the lover will carry the nets (49-50), and in sword skirmishes during which the lover will leave one side exposed to ensure the boy's victory (51-52). Like Horace's Lyciscus, Tibullus' Marathus, whom the poet finally identifies in

line 81, possesses a non-Roman name that suggests a servile status.<sup>10</sup> But the activities attributed by Priapus to the throng of desirable boys, of whom Marathus is ostensibly part, lead an audience to envision them as citizens in training with the modest flush in the cheeks, courage, and gymnastic preparation evocative of the regimen and comportment of the wealthy and noble Roman youth.

Many scholars, of course, have recognized that these descriptions are in keeping with their Greek models and that Tibullus very closely reproduces a Greek *paiderastia*. Maltby even goes so far as to say that the poem is intended to shock (2002: 215). Indeed, the poem functions as an artful introduction to the unfolding cycle since Marathus is introduced within a larger lesson on boys, and therefore becomes identified with these aristocratic, or pseudo-aristocratic, youths worthy of a suitor's attention. Still, it is imperative that readers notice that the poem is marked by incongruities, one of which is that licit beloveds who would have truly been attainable in accordance with the law that Priapus alludes to in line 10 would not have met these criteria. Horses, boats, and hunts were the staple privileges of the *nobiles*. The fact that Priapus asserts that "through subservience, love will conquer the most" (*obsequio plurima vincet amor*, 40), a claim quite not in keeping with the god's traditional character, foregrounds a staple principle of elegy—subordination to *Amor*<sup>11</sup>—and underlines the power imbalances of the entire collection: Priapus is not traditionally a wise and sympathetic teacher trained in rhetoric and sly seduction, aristocrats are not feasible love objects, and slave boys are not athletes, huntsmen, or horsemen. The entire poem itself is, therefore, an effort to imagine and valorize the poet's desire through a Greek lens. Just as Tibullus very audaciously disavows military involvement in preference for Delia in 1.1, poem 1.4 embodies an equally bold apology for the love of youths and appends to

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<sup>10</sup> Verstraete (2012), Nikoloutsos (2009), Booth (1996) all read Marathus as an obvious subaltern.

<sup>11</sup> The line closely resembles Vergil's *Eclogues* 10.69 to Gallus: *omnia vincit Amor: et nos cedamus Amori*.

this desire an entire code of conduct derived from a celebrated literary tradition. Priapus' closing lament in lines 57-72 should therefore be read not only as a criticism of boys' mercenary tendencies, but also as a defense of and lament for a disappearing poetical mode and celebrated courting practice. Priapus first mourns the fact that now (*nunc*) these present generations carry on wretched arts (*artes miseras*), and now (*iam*) the gentle lad has grown accustomed to desire gifts (57-58). Following this statement, the god enjoins youths (*pueri*) to love the muses and learned poets:

pieridas, pueri, doctos et amate poetas,  
 aurea nec superent munera Pieridas.  
 carmine purpurea est Nisi coma: carmina ni sint,  
 ex umero Pelopis non nituisset ebur.

Love the Pierian Muses, boys, and the learned poets, golden gifts cannot surpass the muses. The tress of Nisus is purple because of song. Were there no songs, ivory would not have gleamed from Pelops' shoulder (61-64).

The mythological allusions in these lines very obviously put the poet's erudition (and that of the rustic, but clearly learned, Priapus) on display and simultaneously emphasize the invaluable role of poetry in preserving and immortalizing the past for posterity.<sup>12</sup> More importantly, these lines allot an instructive dimension to the amorous relationship between poet and *pueri*. While Horace's *Epode* 11 connects poetic production and poetical mode with the poet's love life, this Tibullan defense, directed specifically to *pueri*, additionally addresses the pederastic poet's ability to impart knowledge to his beloveds and thereby reproduces, in a Roman context,<sup>13</sup> the educational dimension so integral to the cultural elaboration and

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<sup>12</sup> Of course, the language of *docti poetae* also invoke Catullus and Horace, who use such terminology to emphasize their Callimachean sophistication. Cf. Nikoloutsos (2007) 73-74 for the metapoetic import of these two allusions as meditations upon the transformative power of poetry.

<sup>13</sup> The married Titius is named at 1.4.73 as the intended recipient of this advice, which reminds readers that despite the poem's Greek themes and intertexts, its precepts are designed for a Roman male audience (Booth 1996: 347).

valorization of Greek pederasty.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, Priapus caps off his discussion of poetry's import with a masked threat where he insists that he who does not listen to the muses and sells his love (*qui non audit Musas qui vendit amorem*, 67) will, among other treacherous perils, sever his worthless limbs to Phrygian measures (*et secet ad Phrygios vilia membra modos*, 70). This promise of mutilation is indeed hyperbolic, but it also reinforces the purpose behind Tibullus' poetry to Marathus: to educate him in proper Roman and masculine mores and contribute to his development as an active sexual subject.

Poem 1.4 concludes with Tibullus' command to spurned lovers that they acknowledge him as their teacher (*vos me celebrate magistrum*, 75) who bears the teachings of Venus (*me Veneris praecepta ferentem*, 79). The poet's instructive role pervades the remaining poems of the Marathus cycle. In the opening line of 1.8 the poet boldly states in the first person that he cannot be kept unawares of what a lover's nod or gentle words bear (*Non ego celari possum, quid nutus amantis/ quidve ferant miti lenia verba sono*, 1-2). To heighten the claim even more, the poet emphatically asserts that Venus herself (*ipsa Venus*, 5) thoroughly taught him (*perdocuit*, 6) such lessons. The triangular construction of poem 1.8 is quite baffling since we learn only in line 15 that the addressee receiving the poet's advice is a girl and that the boy at whom she is being trained to direct her attentions is Marathus, who is likewise named very late in the poem at line 49. Once Marathus is mentioned, the purpose of the poem becomes clearer, for in lines 55-66, Tibullus mimics Marathus' complaints in the first person (*quid me spernis?*, 55). This mimed Marathus additionally claims knowledge of Venus (*nota venus furtiva mihi est*, 57) but goes on to bemoan his own plight as a spurned lover (*quid prosunt artes, miserum si spernit amantem/ et fugit ex ipso saeva puella toro?* ("what good are these skills if the savage girl rejects her

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<sup>14</sup> Consider Pausanias in Plato's *Symposium*, where he defends the pederastic relationship that makes the beloved *sophos* and *agathos*. Cf. Dover (1989: 91, 202-3); Foucault (1985: 195-97).

wretched lover and flees from the very bed itself?," 61-62). Of course, these complaints echo Tibullus' own grievances about Marathus at 1.4.82: *deficiunt artes, deficiuntque doli* ("my skills and tricks fail me"). But Tibullus instructs Marathus to stop weeping since the girl is not softened (*desistas lacrimare, puer: non frangitur illa*, 67) and next warns the girl, now identified by the name Pholoe, to heed the boy's example, since Marathus once used to mock his wretched lovers knowing not that a god was behind his head as an avenger (*hic Marathus quondam miseros ludebat amantes,/ nescius ultorem post caput esse deum*, 71-72).

As Booth points out, the entire poem is motivated by the poet's self-interest (1996: 245). Tibullus' intent appears clear: Marathus' rejection is obvious retribution for the boy's refusal of the poet's previous advances. The poet's steadfast advice constitutes part of his strategy to get the boy back. Moreover, we can see, as Booth also indicates, that Tibullus maintains the role of the pederastic teacher despite his failure to secure Marathus' affections. The poet's command that the boy cease to cry, his warning to Pholoe, and his proverbial advice regarding divine vengeance are all characteristic of the role of *praeceptor amoris* that he appropriates for himself in 1.4. And as Maltby notes, the suggestion behind Marathus' failure with a girl implies the boy's lack of knowledge and preparation for a heterosexual relationship (2002: 302) just as Tibullus' emphasis on Pholoe's naïveté throws Tibullus' expertise and abiding pedagogical value to Marathus into relief.

Indeed, Tibullus' efforts do not cease until another older male lover comes into the picture. Poem 1.9, the poet's final renunciation of Marathus, makes mention of Marathus' love for a girl (39) and also curses the man who dared to corrupt the boy with gifts (53). Broken bonds are mentioned (*foedera*, 2), recalling the *foedus* of Catullus 109. Two lovers, then, are introduced to emphasize Marathus' defiance and cupidity, since he both spurned Tibullus' advice

regarding the *puella* and dared to “sell” caresses that were, in theory, the poet’s (*blanditiasne meas aliis tu vendere es ausus*, 77). Truly, the cycle has come full circle. Tibullus recalls the times when he warned (*admonui quotiens*, 17) Marathus not to sully his beauty with gold. The poem’s middle distich reiterates Priapus’ lament over the poetry’s poor reception among youths in 1.4 but now in relation to Tibullus’ own Marathus poems: *quin etiam attonita laudes tibi mente canebam/ at me nunc nostri Pieridumque pudet* (“but even I struck crazy in my mind used to sing your praises, but now I and the Pierian Muses are ashamed of our [affair],” 47-48). The *pudet* here should perhaps remind us of Horace’s retrospective feeling of shame when he considers his affair with Inachia in *Epode* 11. Likewise, Tibullus’ promise that Marathus will weep when *puer alter* (another boy) holds the poet recalls the *alius ardor* of the final two lines of the same Horatian epode and indicates that the Tibullan pederastic project will find another protégé elsewhere.

Horace and Tibullus, then, highlight a similar correlation between the poet’s turnover in beloveds and his ability to turn out poetry. Horace’s *Epode* 11 provides a bird’s-eye view of elegy and a very general description of the non-Roman *pueri* and *puellae* who occupy its center stage. Tibullus’ longer, more elaborated Marathus narratives develop the nuances of these relationships, and particularly those details of a male-male courtship that do not receive such a clear text-book treatment in extant Roman sources. As Cantarella suggests, Tibullus is developing a code of conduct for the Roman homoerotic relationship (2002: 134). But in developing this kind of ethics and aesthetic, Tibullus very obviously reimagines non-Roman, licit *pueri* through a rosy lens as young, desirable aristocrats whom Tibullan poetry can help to transition from passive erotic objects to active subjects.

A similarly romanticized reading of a non-Roman beloved makes another appearance in Book 4 of Horace's *Odes*, published very late in the author's career (ca. 13 BCE) and constituting Horace's reemergence (and perhaps final farewell) as a lyric poet (Fraenkel 1957: 400). Horace's beloved, Ligurinus, briefly appears in poems 1 and 10 and no doubt shows some Tibullan qualities. As in Tibullus 1.4, where Tibullus bemoans his failure to seduce Marathus in the very final lines, Horace's Ligurinus is not mentioned until the second to last quatrain in *Odes* 4.1.<sup>15</sup> The poem sufficiently foregrounds a number of the themes that resurface throughout the book: love, lyric, Rome, and the ageing process. The name "Ligurinus" has itself garnered much recent attention and very likely points to the boy's Ligurian descent while also affirming his role as poetical emblem by designating him as clear-resounding (*λιγυρός*).<sup>16</sup> And the various treatments by scholars surely bear witness to the resonances that can be detected behind the Horatian pen name. Putnam (1986: 43-47) and McCallum (2015) suggest that Vergil's description of the Ligurian Cynus is an intertext that renders Horace's homage to his friend as a rumination upon metamorphosis and mortality.<sup>17</sup> Mitchell understands Ligurinus as a "personification of a conquered people" (2010: 53) since Rome was still in the process of bringing Liguria firmly under its dominion. In all events, the poem does evince Horace's preoccupation with developing the theme of time and his problem of writing love lyrics as an older poet. What first reads as a solemn invocation to Venus (*intermissa, Venus, diu/ rursus bella moves*, 1-2) is shown to be a valediction (*parce, precor, precor*, 2).<sup>18</sup> Horace remarkably admits

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<sup>15</sup> According to Thomas (2011:85-86), these types of reversals constitute a Callimachean punchline common in Hellenistic epigram.

<sup>16</sup> Kiessling and Heinze (1957 *ad loc.*) suggest that Ligurinus is a purely imaginary figure and scholarship tends to veer in this direction. See Garrison *ad loc.* for the name's connection to the Greek *λιγυρός* and the pseudonym's relationship to Liguria. Thomas (2011: 100-101) provides a survey of the name's wide variety of treatments (i.e. possibly referring to "gastronomic preciosity" or even farcical licking). See McCallum (2015) for the name's possible resonances with descriptions of the Heliades in Apollonius.

<sup>17</sup> Cynus is transformed into a swan as his name foretells. See below.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Fraenkel (1957: 411-12).

that he is not as he was (*non sum qualis eram*, 3) and bids the cruel (*saeva*) mother to cease (*desine*) bending him with soft commands since he is around fifty years old (*circa lustra decem*, 5-7). The adjectives *tempestivius* and *idoneum* point out Paulus Maximus as a more suitable lover than Horace. Paulus is moreover *nobilis*, *decens*, and a forensic speaker—qualities desirable in an *erastes*. In contrast to Horace’s desire for *pueri aut puellae* in *Epode* 11, the poet now asserts in 4.1 that neither woman nor boy pleases him (*me nec femina nec puer...iuvat*, 29-31).

Nevertheless, a boy still brings tears to the poet’s eyes, and Horace describes his state with a Sapphic (and Catullan) symptomology:

sed cur heu, Ligurine, cur  
 manat rara meas lacrima per genas?  
 cur facunda parum decoro  
 inter verba cadit lingua silentio?  
 nocturnis ego somniis  
 iam captum teneo, iam volucrem sequor  
 te per gramina Martii  
 Campi, te per aquas, dure, volubis.

But why, alas, Ligurinus, why does the occasional tear flow across my cheeks?  
 Why does my witty tongue, amidst words, fall in an indecorous silence?  
 I, in dreams at night, now hold you captured; now I follow you flitting through the  
 fields of the Campus Martius, you through the whirling waters, o harsh one (33-40).

Horace’s portrayal of Ligurinus very clearly follows the trend we observed in Tibullus. The beloved is adorned with a non-Roman pseudonym but is placed into an aristocratic milieu with a dreamscape topography that is distinctly Roman (Verstraete 2012: 164; Oliensis 2007: 230-32).<sup>19</sup> Ligurinus is, as Verstraete observes, the most Roman of Horace’s *pueri delicati*. The question is why. If we agree with Putnam and McCallum that Ligurinus is a Roman version of the Ligurian

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *Odes* 1.8, where Horace berates his addressee, Lydia, for destroying the youth named Sybaris with her love. Horace laments the youth’s idleness since he neglects the activities of the Campus Martius and does not ride, wrestle, play discus, or touch the waters of the Tiber.

Cycnus mentioned in *Aeneid* 10, the beloved takes on an additional layer of symbolism. Since the mythical Cycnus is transformed into a swan, we can draw a parallel between Horace's Ligurinus and Horace's self-prophesied metamorphosis into a singing swan in *Odes* 2.20, since the Horatian swan, like Ligurinus, travels over land and sea while singing Horace's poems to nations as far removed as the Hyperboreans. And since the swan, in being the bird of Apollo, is an archetypal symbol of the poet (Nagy 1994: 424-25), Horace's inability to firmly capture Ligurinus could very well convey the poet's difficulty in recuperating the poetic inspiration of his youth.

The language of *Odes* 4.10 supports the connection between Ligurinus, Cycnus, and Horace. On the surface, the poem is strikingly Hellenistic. It bears many resemblances to a number of epigrams in Meleager's *Garland*, where *erastai* warn their beloveds to beware the onset of old age (Fraenkel 1957: 414). The poem also contains several Roman touches. Ligurinus is called *crudelis*, evoking Alexis in Vergil's *Eclogue* 2, and the final three lines of the poem mimic the voice of Ligurinus, which recalls Marathus' speech in Tibullus 1.8. But like the book's first poem, 4.10 is polyvalent when considered alongside the odes of Book 4 and the larger collection. The contrast developed between present and future and the overall threat of shaggy senectitude recall the themes of 4.1. The un hoped for plumage (*insperata pluma*) that will fall upon Ligurinus' haughtiness (*superbiae*) as well as the description of his color's transformation (*mutatus*) as it changes (*verterit*) into a bristly appearance again capture the metamorphic and avian qualities of both the Cycnus myth and *Odes* 2.20<sup>20</sup> (McCallum 2015: 38; Asztalos 2008: 297). As a result, the figure of Ligurinus lends itself to a number of readings: as another cruel beloved of homoerotic epigram; as the poet's mirror as he attempts to cope with his own ageing process; and as a symbol for Horatian poetry and its unknowable life (perhaps

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<sup>20</sup> *album mutor in alitem...nascunturque/ leves per digitos umerosque plumae*, 9-12.

swanlike and immortal or maybe prone to age like Horace) once it resides apart from and beyond the life of its author.

Horace's Ligurinus poems above all else demonstrate how the body and behavior of a male beloved can be used as a metaphoric vehicle to relay other concerns. The portrait of Horace and Ligurinus in *Odes* 4.1, presented as an unattainable dream in a Roman setting, importantly captures the fleeting nature of Roman youth itself and the questionable status of Horace's poetry— themes toward which the entire poem and book of poems gravitate. When we consider the poem's mention of Horace's age and the panegyric for the future successes of the young aristocrat Paulus Maximus it is difficult not to read the poem as a larger acknowledgment of mutability. Not only Horace's years and erotic prowess, but his career as a poet is vanishing while new poets, like the Iulus of *Odes* 4.2, are rising to that vocation. *Epode* 11 centers upon Horace's seemingly endless love cycles in his youth, and *Odes* 4 reconsiders these affairs from the more resigned perspective of an author nearing the end of his own career and lifecycle.

The aesthetic qualities and programmatic functions of the *puer delicatus* should direct our attention to how the *puer* is persistently objectified. We should also recall Horace's *Epistles* 1.20, where he depicts his new book (*liber*) as his slave whom he is putting on the market. The double meaning of *prostes Sosiorum pumice mundus* (*Epist.* 1.20.2) denotes the book's display at the bookseller's quarters after being polished with pumice stone in the Catullan fashion and simultaneously describes the *liber* as a depilated slave who is put onto the market as a prostitute. Horace proceeds to imagine his slave/book when its satiated lover grows weary (*cum plenus languet amator*, 8), when it is fondled and dirtied by the hands of the rabble (*contrectatus ubi manibus sordescere volgi*, 11), bound and sent to Ilerdam (*vinctus mitteris Ilerdam*, 13), and when stammering old age overcomes it at last (*occupet extremis in vicis balba senectus*, 18). The

end of the epistle constitutes the author's sphragis where he intimates that his sold slave/book will at one point speak (*loqueris*) about Horace's birth, his means, his reputation, and his age. On one level, the sphragis acts as an epigrammatic device that cleverly seals the book of letters and entrusts Horace's work to its unknowable readership as a personified extension of the poet's voice. On another level, if we follow the poem's analogy between the *corpus* of the book and that of a slave to its conclusion, we cannot help but treat Horace's summary description, that is, his book's authoritative seal, as a master's identifying brand on his slave's body. The poem should then remind us of the potentialities behind the real and metaphorical *puer*, who, whether named or left anonymous, is never autonomous, and whose status as a marketable commodity renders him an instrument beholden to another. The Roman *puer*, as distinct from the noble Greek *eromenos*, inevitably carries connotations of servility. But the *puer*'s unpredictable treatment as such, as a possible favorite or as a bound, spurned, and tortured object, makes for a more ambiguous category onto which an author can map analogous dynamics between poet and text, text and readership.<sup>21</sup>

Although scholars like Nikoloutsos insist that homoerotic poems do not provide us with reliable evidence of pederastic practice at Rome (2011: 27), Horace and Tibullus' poems quite obviously produce a discourse around the *puer delicatus* on a scale never before attempted in Roman literature, and which certainly speaks to a growing literary interest in *pueri* that corresponded to the poets' and their elite audiences' realities in some measure. Augustus himself, Horace's emperor and patron, was reputed to have had a *puer delicatus* named Sarmentus, and funerary inscriptions attest to various occupations for slave favorites at Augustus' court (Williams 2010: 35). In the era of Augustan reformation and legislation, a

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<sup>21</sup> Nikoloutsos (2011: 34, 37) argues for a similar strategy in Tibullus 1.9. He reads Marathus as a *scriptus puer* whose appearance reflects the stylistic characteristics of elegy and whose role in the elegiac love triangle symbolizes the author's alienation from his work after publication.

period that saw the codification of sexual mores in the *lex Iulia et Papia* and the *lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis*, it is unsurprising to observe an analogous poetic move to codify and exalt the licit practice of keeping slaves as sexual favorites. Tibullus and Horace's elevated portrayals of these boys point to an effort to render the commonplace master-slave affair as a celebrated and sophisticated practice governed by a particular etiquette that was appealing and marketable to their elite readerships with cosmopolitan tastes. It is important to note, however, that despite the rosy veneer of these poems, where seduction and lessons take the place of the coercion and threats seen in other sources, and despite the fact that non-Roman slaves may externally take on the qualities of Roman youths in these poems, Tibullus and Horace always ensure that the only pedigrees their beloveds have are literary ones. As such, this poetic project of the Augustan age elaborates upon the mechanics and the aesthetics of same-sex desire, but it also maintains a hard line in terms of class distinctions and, in other words, in terms of what fundamentally constitutes *Romanitas*—a designation that is further problematized in the pederastic poetry of Statius.

### Chapter 3: Statius

Several poems of Statius' *Silvae*, published in the early to mid 90s CE, show a radical departure from the pederastic poems of the Augustan period. As we observed in the previous chapter, Horace and Tibullus take measures to conceal the subaltern status of their beloveds and assimilate them to quasi-Roman youths. If Lyciscus, Marathus, and Ligurinus were not given Greek *noms de plume*, there would be little reason not to read these handsome, athletic, ephobic boys as young Roman aristocrats. Additionally, whether Lyciscus, Marathus and Ligurinus were real beloveds or complete literary fictions can never be known since these *pueri* are only, to us, poetic artifacts and are otherwise absent from the historical record. Statius' consolation and court poetry, however, features real *deliciae* whose existence is corroborated by Martial and others and whose status as slaves is brought to the foreground but couched in terminology that seeks to assimilate them to offspring of noble aristocratic families. This chapter will focus upon *Silvae* 2.1, 2.6, 3.4, and 5.5 as poems that very clearly reveal the problem of publicly expressing and ascribing value to a master's affection for a slave.<sup>1</sup> The poems of Books 2 and 5 are *epicedia* for deceased slave favorites while 3.4 is a dedicatory poem written to commemorate Domitian's eunuch and *deliciae*, Earinus, and the tresses that he sent as an offering to Aesculapius at Pergamum.

Scholars have only recently begun to acknowledge the erotic undertones of Statius' consolatory poem 2.1 to Melior's *alumnus*. Prior to the publications of Asso and Busch,<sup>2</sup> research focused upon the quasi-paternal language and the exaggerated funeral description as

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<sup>1</sup> We should consider, again, Horace's *Satires* 1.2, where Horace recommends slaves as a means to quickly quell sexual desires. And cf. Catullus 61, where the poet mocks a bridegroom's *concupinus* whose time as the groom's favorite has come to an end and who must be assimilated back into the group of other *pueri* (119-33).

<sup>2</sup> Asso (2010) was the first to recognize the erotic language, and he argues that the paternal configuration naturalizes the erotic relationship between *altor* and *alumnus*. Busch (2013) takes these observations a step farther and argues that the erotic undertones in conjunction with the language of kinship express an anxiety over the exploitative relationships between masters and slaves that Domitian sought to regulate with his moral legislations.

evidence for adoption practices or veiled criticisms of freedmen's rising status and masters' lavish treatments of their slaves. What should be quite apparent from the poem itself and the variety of scholarly readings most recently produced around it is that the number of registers used to describe the boy, Glaucias, and his relationship to Melior prevents us from defining their roles univocally and thus resolving the complexities of the bond. Is Glaucias a slave, an adopted son, a beloved, or all of the above? Can he be an adopted son and his adoptive father's sexual object at once? Does Statius, with this oscillation between pederastic and paternal indices, produce a critique of a quasipaternal-pederastic relationship, a justification for it, or both?

The poem takes on the form and purpose of a *consolatio* for a young child from the very start, but the subaltern status of the *puer* is only made obvious at line 51 where the boy's embrace is mentioned in relation to his master's (*domini*) neck (*brachia, quo numquam domini sine pondere cervix*). Prior to line 51, Glaucias is identified as *alumnus* (1) and beloved boy (*dilecte puer*, 37). Lines 8-9 describe tigers and lions deprived of their offspring, 14-16 defend Melior's right to grieve, and 19-25 recall the funeral during which the poet saw Melior surpass the groans of fathers and embraces of mothers (*teque patrum gemitus superantem et brachia matrum*, 24). Statius presents his aptness for composing this poem in terms of his own experience in writing *consolationes* to fathers, mothers, and the siblings of the dead (30-35). In sum, the poem's introductory points of comparison highlight the pain of a parent's loss so as to prepare readers for a poem on a father's bereavement.

When the *puer* is finally introduced, the description underlines his noble attributes: his beauty and precocious modesty (*rapit forma rapit inde modestia praecox*, 39), his chastity (*pudor*) and probity (*probitas* 40), and his bright glow suffused with purple blood (*purpureo suffusus sanguine candor*, 41)—a phrase that bears a great resemblance to Ovid's description of

Daphne in *Metamorphoses* 1.484 (Asso 2010: 670). He is noted for his noble locks (*ingenuique crines*, 44), a mouth ringing with charming complaints (45), kisses redolent of spring flowers (46), and a voice mixed with Hyblaeian honey (48). When we recall descriptions of a boy's rosy white complexion, long hair, and honey-sweet kisses in Catullus, Horace, and Tibullus, we cannot but notice the elegiac and homoerotic topoi in this portrait as well as its clear attempt to fashion the *puer* as a sexually attractive *ingenuus* despite his clearly articulated servile status. Statius' comments on the boy's education, at which his *pater* (supposedly Melior) and teachers marveled (*stupuere*, 119) even recalls the poet's own praise of his father in *Silvae* 5.3.146-56, where he is memorialized for teaching the deeds of heroes.

Although the poetry of Horace and Tibullus is far enough removed from reality to omit discussions of a beloved's origins, Statius takes measures to account for the obvious class difference. The subsequent lines reintroduce Melior as *dominus* and elaborate on the boy's life in Melior's *domus*. Rhetorical questions introduced by an anaphoric *quis* address Melior specifically and ask who now will soothe his breast (*mulcebit pectora*, 57) with lively chatter, banish his cares, placate him when he is incensed and swelling with wild anger toward his slaves, and deflect him away from his burning wrath (*accensum quis bile fera famulisque tumentem leniet/ ardenti in se deflectet ab ira?*, 58-59). Although Glaucias is intentionally not incorporated into this group of *famuli*, the description nevertheless serves as a jarring reminder of the unbalanced power dynamic inherent to the Roman household and the fact that, while Glaucias may be a *libertus* (as we learn from Martial 6.28 and 6.29),<sup>3</sup> he is still beholden to Melior as his *dominus*. The narrator next asks who will steal wine and food from Melior's lips and turn all things into sweet *rapina* (*inceptas quis ab ore dapas libataque vina/ auferet et dulci turbabit cuncta rapina*, 60-61). The image evokes Ovid's description of two lovers in *Amores* 1.4.31-34

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<sup>3</sup> *Libertus Melioris ille notus* (6.28.1); *Glauceia libertus iam Melioris erat* (6.29.4).

and also may denote the function of a *deliciae* at banquets (Asso 2010: 673, 676). In fact, Statius characterizes Ganymede's own abduction as *sacra rapina* in *Silvae* 3.4.13. We can detect additional erotic undertones from the following passage (62-64) asking who will stir Melior early in the morning from his sleep with a whisper, delay his departures, and beckon him back from the doorpost to his kisses (*atque ipso revocabit ad oscula poste?*, 64)—a blissful reversal of the elegiac *paraclausithyron*.

As Asso and Busch both indicate, previous scholarship largely overlooked the homoerotic dimensions of these sympotic descriptions and depictions of daily bedroom activities that find precedents in Ovid's erotodidactic literature. The phrase *dulci rapine* within the context of drinking and dining additionally conjures images of the archetypical *puer raptus*. Inflections of *rapio* likewise figure into description of Glaucias' adoption in line 78 and death in 208. In addition, the poem's seeming oral fixation with repeated mentions of *ora* and *oscula* certainly beckon the audience to reappraise the *alumnus* as a boy practiced in the conventional charms of a *deliciae*. Indeed, Glaucias is finally identified as *deliciae*<sup>4</sup> in line 71, but this designation is oddly made immediately after Statius names Melior as a *pius altor*. Hence, just as Statius appears ready to clarify the erotic character of the relationship at which the poem hints, he stops, redirects us to Melior's *pius* character as a foster father, and then proceeds to explain the sort of *deliciae* that Glaucias is not:

tu modo deliciae, dulces modo pectore curae.  
 non te barbaricae versabat turbo catastae,  
 nec mixtus Phariis venalis mercibus infans  
 compositosque sales meditataque verba locutus  
 quaesisti lascivus erum tardeque parasti.  
 hic domus, hinc ortus, dominique penatibus olim  
 carus uterque parens atque in tua gaudia liber,  
 ne quererere genus...

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<sup>4</sup> For discussions of the term *deliciae* to denote sexual favorites in noble houses, see Butrica (2005) and Richlin (2015).

You were just now his *deliciae*, just now the sweet care of his breast. No rotation of the barbaric auction stage turned you about,<sup>5</sup> not as an infant were you mingled with Egyptian wares on sale, nor did you speak embellished quips and premeditated speeches nor, playful, did you seek out and deliberately procure a master. Here was your home, here your birth, here each of your parents was dear to your master's penates, each free for the sake of your joy, lest you bemoan your stock (71-78).

This passage illuminates the abiding emphasis on Glaucias' origin. *Compositosque sales meditataque verba* and the adjective *lascivus* gesture to the common attributes of exotic *deliciae* purchased from Egypt as sexual playthings. There is an obvious preference, in Melior's case, for a homegrown slave. The point of the passage appears to be that Glaucias is not a foreign luxury commodity, does not have attachments to the common marketplace, can trace his very birth to Melior's Roman home, and was chosen by Melior independently at birth as opposed to seducing his master into a banal transaction. Moreover, Statius describes how Melior—still identified as *dominus*—lifted up the youth (a typical gesture of a father who recognizes his child as his own) just snatched from the womb (*raptum sed protinus alvo/ sustulit*, 78-79) and thought that he had begotten the boy (*genuisse putavit*, 81). Reputation and paternity appear to be the crucial focus here, but Statius obviously finds the notion of quasi-adoption to be problematic. Lines 82-125 present an argument for adoption *contra* personified nature with citations of mythological exempla as support. According to Statius, blood (*sanguis*) and offspring (*propago*) do not bind all things most strongly (84-85), but new (*nova*) and foreign (*adscita*) sons/symbols of marriage (*pignora*) often creep more deeply (*interius...serpunt*) into the heart than kinship ties (*conexis*) (86-87). The discussion is capped with the maxim: *natos genuisse necesse est,/ elegisse iuvat* ("it is necessary to have engendered sons, it is delightful to have chosen them," 87-88).

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Martial 6.29: *Non de plebe domus nec avarae verna catastae,/ sed domini sancto dignus amore puer.*

*Pignora* is an especially odd choice of word for the unmarried Melior's ward, since it usually refers to children as guarantees of a marriage (Bernstein 2005: 259), and hence functions as a symbol of a productive union.<sup>6</sup> The word is used again in line 200, where Melior's old friend Blaesus mistakes Glaucias in the underworld for a descendent from his house (*ignota credit de stirpe nepotum*, 199) that he never lived to meet before recognizing the boy as the *delicias* and *pignus* of a special friend (200). Glaucias' role as *pignus* in the underworld endows him with the function of a social go-between that poignantly reconnects Melior to a dead friend and points to his usefulness as cultural capital (Bernstein 2005: 272). But the designation nonetheless draws attention to the number of ironies and dead ends in the logical fabric of the poem, since the only union mentioned that could come close to approximating a kinship or marriage tie is the union between Melior and Glaucias—a union that lacks any connection to regeneration or equal status. In the mythical exempla that Statius evokes for foster children, he describes Achilles, Perseus, Bacchus, and even Romulus (88-100), but each of these figures, despite his fosterage, comes intact with noble, even divine, *sanguis*. A second section of mythological comparisons mentions Hercules and Hylas, Apollo and Narcissus (112-13)—pairs of pederastic lovers that again constitute an erotic thread being woven into the sequence. The text travels back and forth between paternal and pederastic points of reference entreating an audience to ask what exactly the pleasures (*iuvat*) of choosing an *alumnus* are and how these pleasures are, as Bernstein seems to argue, beneficial.

We find that Melior at the very least found great pleasure in flamboyantly dressing his ward: *cum tibi quas vestes, quae non gestamina mitis/ festinabat erus!* (“what garments, what

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Silvae* 2.6.2-3. Statius describes the grief of parents before defending Flavius Ursus' grief over his slave: *miserum est primaeva parenti/ pignora surgentesque—nefas—accendere natos* (how wretched it is for a parent to burn his youthful pledges and growing sons).

attire did the gentle master not hasten to provide?," 127-28). With a crescendo, Statius tracks the boy's accoutrement at different points:

texta legens modo puniceo velabat amictu,  
 nunc herbas imitante sinu, nunc dulce rubenti  
 murice, nunc vivis digitos incendere gemmis  
 gaudebat; non turba comes, non munera cessant:  
 sola verecundo deerat praetexta decori.

collecting garments, he dressed [him] now in a scarlet cloak, now in a tunic imitating the color of the grass, now with sweet ruby purple; now he took joy in enkindling his fingers with living gems; no crowd of companions, no gifts came to an end. The *toga praetexta* alone was lacking to his modest beauty (132-36).

The description of course ends on a sour note since Glaucias never obtained, and never would have obtained, the token symbol of a youth's citizenship despite the noble qualities that his dress and figure represent. Was it even possible for a Roman to envision a non-Roman *libertus* in a *toga praetexta* without taking offense? Immediately prior to the description of Glaucias' attire, the youth's growth and feats during his childhood are rendered as "Herculean labors" (*Herculeos labores*, 124). But how can this depiction of a bedazzling *puer* evoke a Heracleian image other than the hero's cross-dressing stint as Omphale's slave? In the end, this excessive dress may initially point to Melior's generous care of his *alumnus*, but it also evokes traditional images of *pueri delectati* who are decked out as gemmed luxury items.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, this image serves as a reminder that whatever the costume, indeed whatever elaborate poesy Statius devises, Glaucias is still a non-freeborn, subaltern *deliciae* and the possession of his *dominus*.<sup>8</sup>

The question remains as to why Statius presents such a complicated picture of this relationship. Line 50 contains an aside in which the poet assures his audience that he adds nothing counterfeit to these genuinely good characteristics (*nil veris adfingo bonis*). This caveat should attune us to the poem's rhetorical agenda. The poem is not only a *solamen* for Melior's

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Butrica 2005: 223-34 for examples and discussion of the term.

<sup>8</sup> We should notice that Melior is only called *altor* once. Otherwise he is referred to as *dominus* or *erus*.

loss, but also a *suasoria* for his right to grieve his *deliciae*. Statius' contradiction of *Natura*, the distinctions he makes between Glaucias and the common *famuli* and Egyptian *deliciae*, the mythological exempla, and what Asso calls the "fostering frame" all attempt to answer the question of line 69: *quid mirum, tanto si te pius altor honorat/ funere?* ("What wonder is it that a righteous foster father honors you with so great a funeral?"). The excess implied by *tanto* pinpoints the issue here as the problem of valorizing Melior's indulgence. Even Melior's weeping is ironically described in terms of pleasure and satiety: *iam flendi expleta voluptas* ("is now pleasure of your weeping sated?," 15). Statius' aphoristic retort to *Natura*, too, draws a distinction between the pleasure (*iuvat*) of choosing sons and the necessity (*necesse est*) of begetting them (87-88). Hence, Statius' central predicament is how to publicly memorialize an unproductive erotic relationship between a noble citizen and a subaltern.

When Glaucias is imagined in Elysium and paired with Melior's departed friend, Blaesus, the two are reproduced in a relationship that likewise straddles the line between paternal and sexual affection:

mox ubi delicias et rari pignus amici  
 sensit et amissi puerum solacia Blaesii,  
 tollit humo magnaue ligat cervice diuque  
 ipse manu gaudens vehit et, quae munera mollis  
 Elysii, steriles ramos mutasque volucres  
 porgit et optunso pallentes germine flores.  
 nec prohibet meminisse tui, sed pectora blandus  
 miscet et alternum pueri partitur amorem.  
 Hic finis rapto...

Soon, when he noticed that the boy was the favorite slave and symbolic son (*pignus*) of a special friend and a consolation for the lost Blaesus, he lifts him from the ground and binds him upon his great neck, and for a long time he carries him about joyfully with his hand, and he extends the gifts of soft Elysium: sterile branches, silent birds, and pale flowers with withered buds. He does not prohibit the youth from remembering you, but he, soothing, mixes his heart and divides his love mutually with the boy. This is the end for him having been taken... (200-208).

A degree of linguistic repetition brings the poem back full circle. The *puer*'s embrace around Blaesus' neck recalls his embrace of Melior in line 51. Elysium, too, is rendered "soft" (*mollis*) like the streak of Glaucias' hair in line 44 (*mollis...margo*). *Ligo* is also used several lines earlier to describe Melior as he tied garlands and held Blaesus' image to his breast (192). Like Melior, Blaesus takes pleasure (*gaudet*) in escorting the boy and giving him gifts, which could, at first sight, simply portray a quasi-paternal bond of affection between the two. Yet, these gifts are sterile boughs, silent birds, and pale flowers. Busch reads *steriles ramos...porgit* as a double entendre for the *amor* that the two exchange (92).<sup>9</sup> An emphasis, however, should be placed on the "sterile" nature of this exchange. Although Blaesus and Glaucias find joy in a mutual love, the love remains entirely fruitless.<sup>10</sup> While Statius could have just as easily envisioned a marriage to nymphs for the youth, he instead opts to reproduce the homoerotic bond between *deliciae* and citizen with an additional emphasis upon the bond's sterility.

Of course, the barren imagery of Elysium in 2.1 is designed to resonate with the bleakness of the afterlife and literally pale in comparison to the *vivae gemmae* and other gracious gifts that Melior bestowed upon the boy while he lived. Insofar as Glaucias is imagined happy in a new union characterized by reciprocal love of Melior's departed friend, the depiction meets the criteria of an *epicedion*. We should, however, also remember that *Silvae* 2.1 is part of a larger book that, although dedicated to Melior, is designed for circulation among a public readership (*ate publicum accipiant, praef. 2.33*). As such, we should not be surprised if the poem conveys larger concerns or questions. Indeed, the controlled ambivalence in this poem very much resembles what Newman describes as Statius' "capacious" verse because it accommodates a

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<sup>9</sup> See Van Dam (1984) 174 for the strangeness of the characterization in an *epicedion*.

<sup>10</sup> We can compare this imagery to that of *Silvae* 1.2, an epithalamium, which describes the countless flowers, roses and violets, showered upon the bride (21-23) and defends marriage as a means by which the series of events and the age of the world are renewed (*sic rerum series mundique revertitur aetas*, 1.2.187).

number of readings that can often even unsettle the “dominant discourse of praise” (2002: 23-24). Although Statius does not overtly criticize the master-*deliciae* bond in *Silvae* 2.1, his equivocal language, mismatched analogues, and allusion to the bond’s un-productivity certainly demonstrate some hesitance on his part to firmly allot it a positive value.<sup>11</sup>

*Silvae* 2.6 exhibits a similar anxiety over validating a citizen’s love for a slave and finding the appropriate *lexica* through which to communicate it. As Van Dam notes, poem 2.6 is far less personal than 2.1, and the relationship between Philetos and Flavius is much more vague (1984: 390). Unlike the *alumnus* of 2.1 (whom we also know to be a *libertus*), Philetos is initially addressed as a *famulus* (8), but only after the poet draws another parallel between bereft parents and siblings. With a qualifying phrase, Statius describes how deeply, nevertheless (*tamen*), a lesser strike (*plaga minor*) overwhelms the more intense wounds (*maioraque vulnera vincit*) as far as feelings are concerned (*in sensus*, 6-8). The fact that Statius intimates how the pain of a slave’s death conquers (*vincit*) more serious wounds (putatively the emotional wounds from losing kin) clarifies that the poem is a defense of the bond between master and slave. Statius introduces the bemoaned *famulus* in line 8:

...famulum (quia rerum nomina caeca  
 sic miscet Fortuna manu nec pectora novit),  
 sed famulum gemis, Vrse, pium, sed amore fideque  
 has meritum lacrimas, cui maior stemmate iuncto  
 libertas ex mente fuit...

A household slave (since Fortune thusly mixes the names of things with a blind hand and does not know the soul), but a pious slave, you lament, Ursus, but one deserving of these tears because of his love and faith, whose mind had a greater freedom than his ancestral line (8-12).

Like *Silvae* 2.1, Statius constructs an elaborate argument to justify Flavius Ursus’ anguish. The poet endows Philetos with Roman *pietas*, *fides*, and even *libertas* of mind and

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<sup>11</sup> Bernstein, for example, understands 2.1 as an endorsement of the social powers of freedmen reading the poems (2005: 264).

attributes the name of *famulum* to the blind whim of Fortune. In line 5, however, Statius reverts back to the typical possessive nomenclature when he refers again to Philetos as *hominem...tuum* (“your man/slave”). As in the case of Melior’s Glaucias, Statius flirts with the notion of “slave” as a constructed identity that is capable of possessing Roman virtues. But his primary purpose is clearly aimed at providing Flavius with the justification to openly grieve a subaltern, not at radically disassembling Roman assumptions. Moreover, the description of pet funerals in lines 19-20 (a steed, hounds, birds, and a hind) intimates that the value of the slave lies somewhere between free citizen and beast. In the poem’s final lines, Statius fancies that the fates or Philetos himself will bestow Flavius with “another Philetos” (*alium tibi Fata Phileton,/ forsan et ipse dabit*, 103-4) who will likewise teach this replacement a similar love (*similem docebit amorem*, 105). The language of *alium Phileton* recalls the *alius amor* of Horace’s *Epode* 11 and Tibullus 1.9 to imply that a beloved slave, like the elegiac beloved, is replaceable.<sup>12</sup> And here, even a slave’s *amor* is teachable. The notion of a decedent’s replacement is a consolatory topos found also in Euripides and Seneca,<sup>13</sup> but these authors refer to a bereft parent’s living children or the possibility of begetting new children. In this consolation for the death of a *famulus*, the “fish-in-the-sea” line of argumentation clearly evokes the picture of docile slaves who are available on the market—an image that Statius takes care to eliminate from the histories of Melior’s *deliciae* (2.1.71-78) and that of his own quasi-son in 5.5.66-69.

In the same tenor as *Silvae* 2.5 to Flavius Ursus, the unfinished poem 5.5 is an *epicedion* for Statius’ *puer* but does not contain its conspicuous eroticism. Like the two poems above, Statius focuses upon the problem of grieving his slave as though he were a son. Statius clarifies that the boy, first described as *infans*, was not begotten of him nor was to bear his name or looks

<sup>12</sup> Marilyn Skinner also pointed out to me how this line evokes the *alium...Alexin* in Vergil’s *Ecl.* 2.73 after Corydon expresses his lovesickness as *dementia*.

<sup>13</sup> See Van Dam (1984) 449 for a discussion of the topos and list of examples.

(*non de stirpe quidem ne qui mea nomina ferret/ oraque; non fueram genitor*, 10-11). The following passage exhorts an audience to discern (*cernite*) his tears and trust (*credite planctibus orbi*) the lamentations of one bereft (13-14). Again, Statius frames his grief for a subaltern as a phenomenon that warrants proof and explanation. The words *feritas* and *insania* (23) heighten the poet's emotional distress, and the poet repeatedly apologizes for the fact that grief inhibits his ability to write poetry (25-29; 51-52). An apology, too, is in order for Statius' *puer*:

non ego mercatus Pharia de puppe loquaces  
 delicias doctumque sui convicia Nili  
 infantem lingua nimium salibusque protervum  
 dilexi: meus ille, meus. tellure cadentem  
 aspexi atque unctum genitali carmine fovi,  
 poscentemque novas tremulis ululatibus auras  
 inserui vitae. quid plus tribuere parentes?

I did not purchase a chatty *deliciae* from the Pharian boat, no infant learned in the insults of the Nile, too impudent with his tongue and wits, did I love. That one was mine, mine. I looked upon him falling on the ground and I cherished him who was anointed with a birth song, and I reared him as he cried for new breaths of life with tremulous wails. What more did his parents grant him? (66-72).

This passage bears a striking resemblance to 2.1.71-78 with the exception that Statius' *puer* is not classed as a *deliciae*. Still, the same preference is given to the home-born slave who never touched foot on an Egyptian slave-boat or learned the slave's witty rejoinders. Like 2.1, where Melior's grief outdoes that of parents, and like 2.5.84-85, where Philetos' brother reddens in shame at being outdone by Flavius' funeral arrangements (*et certe vidit funer frater/ erubuit vinci*), Statius frames his relationship to the *puer*'s kin in agonistic terms to imply that he had more to offer. In fact, Statius never once classifies himself as *dominus* or *erus*, but always resorts to a parental register. The most salient moment of the poem occurs at lines 79-80 when Statius claims that for as long as the boy was alive, he did not desire sons (*quo sospite natos/ non cupii*). Of course, the statement highlights the paternal affection that Statius had for this *puer*, but no

promise of the *puer* as *pignus* or carrier of Statius' legacy is implied. The line is especially surprising given poem 5.3 where Statius laments the death of his own father whose status as a freeborn citizen is advertised through a description of his laying aside of the toga and the bulla (119-20) and whose role as Statius' poetic mentor is emphasized throughout.

As in his poem to Melior, Statius's *Silvae* 5.5 directly focuses upon the competing pleasures of rearing sons and owning slave favorites and appears to privilege the pleasures derived from *pueri* over the utility of securing a hereditary line of *fili*. But most importantly for this project, Statius clearly presents the status of desirable slave *pueri* as inherently problematic for masters trying to express their grief. All three poems discussed so far are more apologetic than they are commemorative and adopt a paternal frame to legitimize a master's emotions. Although *Silvae* 2.1 is the most obviously erotic, 2.5 and 5.5 corroborate and further expand upon the difficulty of articulating and valorizing a master's affection for a subaltern and allotting him a legitimate position within the Roman family. Yet, a similar blend of familial and erotic language is employed in 3.4, where Statius commemorates the dedication of Earinus' locks to the temple of Aesculapius at Pergamum. The poem is largely based upon Callimachus' *Lock of Berenice* and Catullus' Latin translation of it (c. 66), but it also contains a number of similarities to Catullus 63 on Attis.<sup>14</sup>

The poem begins with the poet's send-off wish to the tresses (*comae*) themselves as they are carried over the sea. In line 7, Earinus is introduced as the Caesarian boy (*Caesareus puer*) before the narrative of the poem travels backward to Earinus' life before arriving at Domitian's court. The poem in fact draws a clear parallel between the narrative of Earinus and that of his hair. Both are admired for their beauty, undergo a degree of mutilation, and are dedicated as

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<sup>14</sup> For the intertextual connections between this poem and earlier poems on Berenice's lock, see Newlands (2002). For the similarities between *Silvae* 3.4 and Catullus 63, see Vout (2007: 167-212).

offerings. When the narrative travels backward, Venus notices Earinus at Pergamum playing before Aesculapius' altars. The *puer* is noted for outstanding beauty (*egregiae formae*, 26)<sup>15</sup> that leads Venus herself to mistake him for one of her own sons (*natorum de plebe putat*, 29). Venus proceeds to marvel at the youth's boyish splendor, face, and hair (*puerile decus vultumque comasque*, 31)—common pederastic motifs—and declare that the boy will not suffer the mean life of a common slave:

aspiciens 'tune Ausonias' ait 'ibis ad arces,  
neglectus Veneri? tu sordida tecta iugumque  
servitii vulgare feres? procul absit: ego isti  
quem meruit formae dominum dabo. vade age mecum,  
vade, puer: ducam volucris per sidera curru  
donum immane duci; nec te plebeia manebunt  
iura: Palatino famulus deberis honori.<sup>16</sup>

Seeing him she said, "will you neglected by Venus go to the Ausonian citadels? Will you endure the sordid dwellings and common yoke of servitude? Let [this life] be far off. I shall give to that beauty itself the master whom it deserves. Come, go with me, go off, boy! I shall lead you on a flying chariot through the stars to the vast palace for the ruler. No common oaths will await you. You, a slave, will be given for a Palatine privilege" (32-38).

This passage bears a number of similarities to the poems of the *Silvae* discussed above.

Earinus is identified as a *puer* and a *famulus*, and here takes on the additional designation of *amor*. Like Melior and Statius' *alumni*, Earinus is disassociated from the common life of slavery and his servitude under Domitian is presented as a divine edict. Venus' decision to find a master deserving of the boy's beauty introduces the first of many panegyric touches. Subsequent comparisons of the boy to Endymion, Attis, Narcissus, and Hylas (40-44) clarify his role as an eroticized beloved. Just as Melior took joy over dressing up his *deliciae*, Venus fusses over Earinus' presentation, including finding the best arrangement for his hair (*quae forma capillis*

<sup>15</sup> Compare to Venus' appraisal of a bride of noble origins in *Silvae* 1.2.107-9: *hanc ego, formae/ egregium mirata decus cui gloria patrum/ et generis certabat honos* ("I marveled at this one, with whose outstanding beauty the glory of her fathers and honor of her race contended").

<sup>16</sup> *Honori* is a variant ms. reading for *amori*, which perhaps softens the bluntness of the latter.

*optima*, 50-51), clothes that will complement his rosy cheeks (*quae vestis roseos accendere vultus/ apta*, 51-52), gold worthy for his fingers and neck (*quod in digitis, collo quod dignius aurum*, 52). Venus' knowledge of how to best deck out the boy, however, is associated with her previous experience in presiding over Domitian's wedding:

norat caelestis oculos ducis ipsaque taedas  
iunxerat et plena dederat conubia dextra.  
sic ornat crines, Tyrios sic fundit amictus,  
dat radios ignemque suum. cessere priores  
deliciae famulumque greges; hic pocula magno  
prima duci murrasque graves crystallaque portat  
candidiore manu: crescit nova gratia Baccho.

She knew the godlike eyes of the emperor and she herself had joined the marriage torches and bestowed the marriage with her full favor. Thusly does she arrange his [Earinus'] hair, thusly does she pour out the Tyrian cloak, she gives him rays and her own flame. The previous *deliciae* and servile herd yielded. This one carries forth the first cups to the great emperor, and the heavy vases, and the crystal vessels with brighter hand. A new grace grows in the wine (53-59).

Earinus is not only feminized as Russell suggests (2014: 100), but the epanaleptic *sic* invites a comparison between Earinus and a bride, the first one of which possesses the more erotically charged, venereal *ignis*. As we saw in our earlier discussion of *Silvae* 2.1 to Melior, Statius once again resorts to similes in an effort to lend significance to an otherwise commonplace erotic relationship with a subaltern that is predicated upon desire rather than procreation. This designation is particularly problematic given Domitian's existing marriage to Domitia as well as Romans' general attitudes toward marriage between males. In Martial 12.42, for example, the poet presents male-male marriage as a joke and ends the poem by sardonically asking Rome whether it has seen enough or is waiting for the couple to beget children. Juvenal describes the *tormentum* of the same-sex "brides" as their realization that they are "unable to bear children and hold on to their husbands with the birth of a child" (*quod nequeant parere et partu retinere maritos*, 2.138). Although a desire to ridicule a citizen's role as the bride drives

these poems, both poets use the impossibility of procreation as their punch-line.<sup>17</sup> In Statius, however, the implicit idea of marriage to Earinus that the comparison elicits is beautiful and divinely sanctioned by Venus herself. Earinus' role as quasi-bride moreover maintains an appropriate sexual configuration (the citizen penetrator and penetrated subaltern) that leaves Domitian's sexual assertiveness unchallenged.

The barrenness already implicit in the union described above is enhanced by the image of Earinus' castration in lines 68-71 where Aesculapius himself orders Earinus' body to gently cross over from his sex, but without a wound (*leniter haud ullo concusum vulnere corpus/ de sexu transire iubet*, 70-71). Especially puzzling is Statius' qualifying statement that this castration took place before Domitian issued his imperial edict against it (73-77).<sup>18</sup> Indeed, Statius even characterizes the practice as *nefas* (75). This panegyric interlude comes to an end once the poet evokes nature and slave mothers:

...nunc frangere sexum  
atque hominem mutare nefas, gavisaque solos,  
quos genuit natura videt, nec lege sinistra  
ferre timent famulae natorum pondera matres.

Now it is a divine violation to break the sex and change a man, and Nature sees happily only those whom she bore, nor do slave mothers fear to carry the weights of their sons because of a wicked law (74-77).

This digression is, on the surface, praise for Domitian and his moral reforms. Statius not only acknowledges the power of Domitian to redefine the parameters of *nefas*, but he implies that Domitian's laws are merciful and aligned with Nature's preferences. Nevertheless, we are still faced with the problem of why Domitian prizes Earinus so highly as an object of desire when he is a clear emblem of a historical transgression against nature. Moreover, what does it mean that

<sup>17</sup> See Craig Williams (2010: 279-86) for the evidence of marriage between males and its treatment by authors.

<sup>18</sup> *Nondum pulchra ducis clementia coeperat ortu/ intactos servare mares* ("not yet had the clemency of the emperor begun to preserve males as intact," 73-74).

Aesculapius, a god of healing and remedies, carried out the procedure? Is it possible that Domitian co-opts rather than finds concord with Nature? Indeed, *Silvae* 4.3.135 presents Domitian himself as “better and more powerful than Nature” (*Natura melior potentiorque*). Is this praise for the emperor or a veiled suggestion of his *hybris*?

The passage above has posed a number of problems for scholars since Statius seems to simultaneously praise and question the emperor’s moral legislation. Vout understands Earinus as a symbol of the Roman imperial identity, since his story dramatizes for courtiers and poets like Statius the emasculating sacrifices of “getting close to the emperor” (2007: 201-4). Newlands argues that Earinus is a “sign of the troubling sterility of Domitian’s household” (2002: 115) and that the poem demonstrates the alarming suggestions of Domitian’s “Jovian ideology” (107). It is true that Statius’ poem appears to underscore Earinus’ sterility and underline Domitian’s divine characteristics since he receives a cupbearer from the gods who rivals Ganymede’s charms (16-19) and he also redefines the boundaries of *fas* and *nefas*. Whereas Catullus 66 and Callimachus’ *Lock of Berenice* narrate the travels of Berenice’s hair as an etiology for a constellation,<sup>19</sup> Earinus’ *comae* are sent off to Pergamum after being locked up in a mirrored box (*speculum reclusit imagine rapta*, 98). The image recalls the *sterilis amor* that consumed Narcissus in line 42 since the mirror reflects the eternal image of Earinus’ youth (*imagine rapta*, 98), but nothing more. The hair is then dedicated as an offering to the gods in exchange for the renewal of Domitian’s “extended youth” (*longa dominum renovare iuventa*, 101).

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<sup>19</sup> That the poem begins with a description of Earinus’ *comae* and later identifies him as *Caesareus puer* hints at the established association between *comae* and the comet or constellation, and more importantly, the comet connected to Caesar’s apotheosis. Cf. Ovid’s *Met.* 843-51 and Gurval (1997). For a discussion of Vergil’s allusions to the *Lock of Berenice* in connection with the *sidus Iulium* in the *Aeneid*, see Skulsky (1984).

Ultimately, there are many logical inconsistencies in *Silvae* 3.4. We read of castration in a poem that implicitly promises catasterism<sup>20</sup> by virtue of its models; even the hair of a *castratus* is endowed with regenerative, youth-bestowing powers despite the obvious sterility of its dedicator. As in *Silvae* 2.1, Statius alternates between the real and the fanciful, evoking myth and abstract principles in an effort to create an aesthetic that can mitigate and mythologize away the impracticalities and ideological problems posed by the figure of the eunuch. While the poem undoubtedly engages with “the fragility of *sexus*” as Russell posits (2014: 118), it moreover reiterates Statius’ abiding concern with homoerotic *amor* and the lengths to which a poet must go to negotiate the ineradicable stigma of the foreign *famulus* who is both beloved and a part of Domitian’s imperial apparatus.

The consolation and panegyric poems of Statius discussed above can all be seen to struggle with the same problem: how to articulate the meaning of the master’s bond with his slave and valorize his affection for a slave before a public audience. The pederastic poems of Horace and Tibullus are distanced from their poets’ immediate realities to such an extent that their romantic fantasies of slave beloveds energetically riding horses on the Campus Martius do not warrant an extensive explanation. Yet the real lives, deaths, and relationships that constitute the central focus of Statius’ poems require a measure of biography that addresses the beloved’s origins and social position as a subaltern in the Roman *domus*. Ultimately, these poems of the *Silvae* clarify just how contentious the real figure of the *puer delicatus* was for the poet and the Roman, since it brought along with it the fundamentally un-Roman connotations of common servility and a commodified body—qualities that are crystallized in the images of the *catasta*, the

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<sup>20</sup> The poem’s astral descriptions, which are in keeping with the poem’s models, seem to have gone unnoticed by scholars. In line 26, Earinus is noted for his beauty that rivals the stars (*puer egregiae praeclarum sidere formae*). Venus likewise offers to carry Earinus *per sidera* (36). In line 49, Domitian’s new building program (*nova mole*) is said to equal the stars (*mole nova pater inclitus orbis/ exolit et summis aequa Germanicus astris*, 48-49). Earinus, too, is declared to have been born under a “favorable star” (*dextro sidere*, 63).

Pharian slave boat, and the *vulgare iugum*. Statius' attempts at mitigating these status discrepancies by paternalizing or nuptializing the relationship between master and slave may temporarily remedy the problem for the occasion by reframing the relationship within a more conventional and widely approved set of norms that allow for affection. But the poet's back-and-forth movement between apology and analogy as he struggles to find a discourse to accommodate the desire for a subaltern also brings attention to the anxiety surrounding the status divide that characterized a standard homoerotic configuration at Rome.

## Conclusion

The introduction of this thesis posed the question of why the Romans, who did not have an institutionalized pederasty, developed a pederastic poetics. This question is very much informed by Michel Foucault's survey of ancient sexuality. In volume 2 of the *History of Sexuality* Foucault insists that the discourse on pederasty, and not the Greeks' fondness for boys, demands our attention since this cultural elaboration consisting of moral reflections and rituals around the ephebe was historically singular (1985: 214). Foucault subsequently identifies the Greek citizen ephebe as the problematic locus of this elaboration because the ephebe, whose birthright as a citizen entitled him to the dominant role, was treated as the sexual object of another male citizen's desire (1985: 224-25). Greek pederastic discourse, then, is an extensive response and attempt to mitigate the problem posed by the citizen status of the adult male's love object.

Roman interdictions against *stuprum*, on the other hand, would seem to eliminate the need for such extensive contemplation by altogether removing freeborn Roman youths from the pool of legally permissible sexual objects. In fact, Foucault asserts in volume 3 (1986: 190) that there was an "obsolescence of the problem" of love for boys in the Roman period since Romans projected their desire onto slaves "about whose status there was no reason to worry." It is with this statement that this thesis takes its point of departure as it attempts to clarify how the status of the Roman subaltern beloved brings with it its own set of similar problems for the Roman poets, namely the problems of legitimizing and allotting social value to a relationship between social unequals and accounting for the stigma inherently attached to the slave.

The Callimachean qualities of Lutatius Catulus' early second-century poem already direct our attention to how closely Roman pederastic poets engaged with their Greek models. But we

must also pay heed to the status divide that the beloved's Greek name makes explicit. Although Callimachus' Epigram 41 can be read as a statement of pederastic love for a social equal, Catullus' expression of desire for the Greek Theotimus cannot be read as such; in fact, the poem cannot be divorced from the self-and-other imperialist ideology that informs the status differential in the first place.

Catullus' Juventius cycle is somewhat of an anomaly since it does dramatize the poet's desire for a purportedly freeborn youth from a senatorial family. The poet's caveat in the cycle's programmatic poem 14b, however, cleverly alerts readers to the repulsive material of these poems and thereby demonstrates a self-awareness of the Roman taboo regarding acts of *stuprum*. Indeed, it is difficult not to momentarily consider the poet's envisioned relationship with Juventius as a mockery of Greek pederasty itself and an expression of its incompatibility with Roman *mores* since this pederastic affair culminates in the poet's failure; disrupts the harmony between the poet and his *comites* instead of creating socially valuable bonds of *philia*; and taints the reputation of a citizen and, by extension, the reputation of his aristocratic family with opprobrium. Nevertheless, the poems of the Juventius cycle are foundational for their development of a Roman pederastic poetics. Catullus' ephobic portrait of Juventius in his prime, his elaboration of a courtship and etiquette for lovers, his creation of a homoerotic cycle of poems, and his proto-elegiac pose as an agonized *amator* find clear resonances in the pederastic poems of Horace and Tibullus.

While Catullus clearly plays with legal prohibitions in his Juventius poems in a pre-Augustan age that allowed for a greater poetic *libertas*, Horace and Tibullus uphold the appropriate sexual configuration of citizen lover and subaltern beloved in a way that is in keeping with an age marked by sweeping moral reforms. The Greek names Lyciscus, Ligurinus,

and Marathus readily mark these poets' beloveds as non-Roman subordinates. Yet there is a concerted effort on the part of these poets to compensate for this difference in status and render an image of courtship that is distinguished by consent, nobility, and reciprocity. The *noms de plume* in Horace endow his beloveds with a literary pedigree. Tibullus' role as *magister* to Marathus recalls Greek pederasty's emphasis on *paideia* and recasts the subaltern as a Roman pupil learning love's precepts. We should recall Horace's dream of Ligurinus running through the Campus Martius and swimming in the Tiber. Tibullus similarly describes desirable *pueri* sword-fighting, hunting, boating, and horseback riding. While the *puer delicatus* in Statius never makes an appearance outside of his Roman master's *domus*, Horace and Tibullus' *pueri* are repeatedly placed outside domestic boundaries as ostensibly young and freeborn *ingenui*.

The biographical demands of Statius' genres necessitate a fuller picture of the subaltern *puer delicatus* who inevitably carries the stigma of slavery. Still, Statius' portrayals involve a large measure of apology and compensation. Mythical parallels align the beloved more closely with venerated heroes than with slaves. Analogies between master and father problematize the *dominus-servus* relationship and implicitly recommend that the audience reconsider the *deliciae*'s role within the home or imperial palace as a quasi-son or quasi-bride. Statius' pleas that the audience trust in the wailings of one bereft (*credite planctibus orbi*, 5.5.12) point to a general hesitance among the Romans even to acknowledge a slave's death as a master's loss. *Silvae* 2.1 and 3.4 additionally underscore the sterility of homoerotic bonds and raise the question of how a poet is to legitimize the seemingly gratuitous *amor* between master and slave as a socially valuable tie. Ultimately, the immediacy that informs Statius' poems requires that the poet momentarily shatter the illusion so poignantly developed by Horace and Tibullus before creating yet another frame to accommodate a citizen's desire for a subaltern and its public

expression. But this moment of truth alerts us to the underlying problem of the *puer*'s status that Roman pederastic poetry so desperately tries to negotiate by de-commodifying him, rewriting him, and ultimately re-birthing him within the aristocratic Roman family where there is a preexisting discourse of love and adulation.

But does this frame hold? In this survey of subaltern beloveds in poetry it is necessary to also consider Catullus' raped *pupulus* in poem 56, Horace's sex-slaves in *Satires* 1.2, and the number of slaves actually sold on the *barbarica catasta* and Pharian boats in *Silvae* 2.1 and 5.5 respectively. The very mention of the "vulgar yoke of servitude" in *Silvae* 3.4.33-34 bears witness to the commonplace traffic in *pueri* that is likewise deployed as witty metaphor for the poet's book in Horace's *Epistles* 1.20. After an examination of Catullus' Juventius cycle, Horace's Ligurinus poems, and Tibullus' Marathas, Verstraete concludes that "pederastic desire could trump the most extreme of social barriers, namely slavery, in startling ways" (2012: 165). Yet, the poems discussed above only highlight the fact that even literary *pueri* were subject to the whims of their Roman biographers who returned them to the market for circulation in scroll-form—and literally so in Horace *Epistles* 1.20. Although these poems may ostensibly privilege one *puer* over another, in the end, and in spite of the romantic veneers and paternal or matrimonial affections bestowed on a beloved, the poet's stock remedy for disappointment or loss is yet "another." Horace describes his *alius ardor* (*Ep.* 11.28), Tibullus his *puer alter* (1.9.79), and even Statius imagines another Philetos (*alium Phileton*, *Silvae* 2.6.103). In the end, *pueri* are fungible.

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