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Invective Drag: Talking Dirty in Catullus, Cicero, Horace, and Ovid

Casey Catherine Moore
University of South Carolina - Columbia

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INVECTIVE DRAG: TALKING DIRTY IN CATULLUS, CICERO, HORACE, AND OVID

by

Casey Catherine Moore

Bachelor of Arts
University of South Florida, 2007

Master of Arts
University of South Carolina, 2010

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Accepted by:

Paul Allen Miller, Major Professor

Hunter H. Gardner, Committee Member

Mark A. Beck, Committee Member

David Lee Miller, Committee Member

Ed Gieskes, Committee Member

Lacy Ford, Senior Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies
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ABSTRACT

Invective Drag: Talking Dirty in Catullus, Cicero, Horace, and Ovid, studies the relationship between invective texts and masculine self-fashioning. Using gender theory, rhetorical theory, and philology, I examine how invective speech in these authors operates outside the normative social parameters of Roman masculinity. I examine the invectives of Catullus, Cicero, Horace, and Ovid to argue that in the speaker’s aggressive articulation of masculinity, he often ends up effeminizing or queering himself as he attempts to make his opponents radically other. I show that the hypermasculine speaker of the invective genre utilizes a strategy I term “invective drag,” the adoption of non-normative modalities of self-presentation and expression with regard to social status, gender, and sexuality. This work examines the ways in which the invective genre gives the authors of this study a platform to perform masculinity in ways often contradictory to the gender norms operative in their respective cultures.

This research contributes to ongoing debates surrounding the function of invective in Roman society. For the last few decades, Roman invective has largely been studied in terms of how it affects social mores and politics, and only recently has been linked to the invective speaker’s self-presentation. Of those studies, mine is the first to trace a rhetorical invective strategy through multiple authors to discuss invective performance’s role in masculine subjectivity. Through this new framework, other works can be re
examined to reveal a more critical engagement with persona construction in invective and force a reexamination of gender performance in the ancient world.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION: MASCULINITY, INVECTIVE, AND

INVECTIVE DRAG

The purpose of this project is to examine invective texts as instances of self-fashioning that go beyond the limitations of persona theory. My thesis in this dissertation is that the hypermasculine speaker of the invective genre occupies a queer space through his employment of invective drag, which I define as the adoption of non normative modalities of self-presentation and expression with regard to social status, gender, and sexuality. I will examine the invectives of Catullus, Cicero, Horace, and Ovid to argue that in the speaker’s aggressive articulation of masculinity, he often ends up effeminizing or queering himself as he attempts to make his opponents radically other. In order to examine how invective drag operates, we must first understand the intersection of gender performance and masculine self-fashioning, the limits of persona theory, and the relationship between abjection and invective drag, all of which will be taken up in this section. By looking at the genre of invective, which will be defined as verses that convey threats, anger, and assert dominance over others,¹ this work will examine the ways in which the invective genre gives the authors of this study a platform to perform masculinity in ways often contradictory to the gender norms operative in their respective cultures.

¹ The OED defines invective as “a violent attack in words; a denunciatory or railing speech, writing, or expression” or “denunciatory or opprobrious language; vehement denunciation; vituperation” (Oxford English Dictionary A.1 and A.2). The OLD defines invective as a forms of literature that “sets out publicly to denigrate a named individual” that follows “well-articulated rhetorical guidelines.”
Much work on invective is characterized by a pervasive dichotomy between invective as “therapeutic release” and invective as a formal exercise. With the theory of invective drag I will seek both to go beyond this opposition and maintain the socio-historical specificity of the texts under consideration. Catullus, Cicero, Horace, and Ovid write during periods of varying degrees of censorship, political unrest, and masculine expectations, and these historical contexts necessitate that their invectives are neither solely exercises in self help nor hollow displays of erudition. Much of the critical work on the specific texts under discussion, Cicero’s De Oratore and political invective, Horace’s Epodes, Catullus’ iambic poetry, and Ovid’s Ibis, recognizes the tenuous societal expectations for masculine subjects. I seek to further the critical discussion by examining the speakers’ use of invective drag so that the invective speakers are not reduced to personae alienated from the speakers. This reading will serve to open up the discussion of the performance of gender in the ancient Roman world.

**Gender Performance and Masculine Self-fashioning**

Before detailing the theory of invective drag, we must first consider the intersections of gender performance and the construction of masculine identity. This section will examine these connections to show how the invective genre lends itself to masculine performance. Inasmuch as gender is performative (Butler 1990), in the

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3 Butler’s deconstruction of gender began with her publication Gender Trouble (1990), and her theory on the performativity of gender is now one of the driving critical frameworks behind women’s, gender, and sexuality studies. Gender Troubles argues that masculine/feminine are fraught categories that communicate imaginary ideals to which subjects attempt to appeal by repetitively performing gender norms. She extends and clarifies her work on heteronormativity in Bodies That Matter (1993), drawing from a Foucauldian
articulation of gender identity there is a costuming of the speaker in order to prove that s/he is whomever s/he wants to be seen to be. This is starkly apparent in the invective of male speakers, as the speaker both distances himself from a target(s), puts himself in alignment with the target, and positions himself within his own socio-historical context according to the prescriptive measures of his time. For Catullus, the speaker alternates between his position as a love poet and that of hypermasculine invective speaker. In c. 16 he forces the reader to reinterpret his love poetry, showing a tension between expectations of hypermasculinity and the love poet identity. Cicero’s De Oratore seeks to differentiate the orator from the actor, but throughout the text lines between the two kinds of figures blur. In the Epodes, Horace voices impotentia and uses this positioning as a background for invective against female targets. Ovid, in exile, struggles to reconcile the elegist of his earlier oeuvre with his new exilic subject position, which is more deferential and emasculated. Through these processes, the speaker registers multiple, and often divergent personae, many of which, at the aesthetic level, significantly run counter to one of the primary aims of his invective—to show himself to be quintessentially masculine, dominant, and secure in a power position. Invective drag is a symptom experienced by the invective speakers in light of the failure of available modes of masculine behavior.

The desire to attain the public portrayal of a masculine man in a position of power necessarily results from the anxiety of his own position, as well as anxiety over how his masculinity is perceived by his community. Thus, the roots of this anxiety are founded within the speaker’s socio-historical context. Inasmuch as all the authors under discussion in this project were at some points in their careers on the “fringes,” as will be discussed in conception of discursive power’s productivity, to investigate the ways in which the category of man/woman produces and regulates material bodies.
the subsequent chapters on individual authors, their invective poetry served as means for each writer to establish his own masculine identity, identities which expand the category of maleness by subverting traditional expectations.

In both Rome and the contemporary period, masculinity is predicated on physical traits (voice, dress, walk, mannerisms, etc.), character traits, profession, and standing within the community. In large part, Roman masculinity was mediated through relations of dominance and submission between males and based largely on class. This presentation of masculinity was articulated in direct interactions between men as well as in their representation in literary texts. While one must always exercise restraint in construing texts as concrete evidence for specific sexual practices and gender relations\(^4\) the way these texts speak about masculinity cannot be divorced from actual conceptions of masculine identity. Rome possessed social expectations that informed the conception of gender specific to its socio-political contexts. As a result “paradoxes of stratigraphy, rank and class were more decisive in calibrating sexual power relations than physiological manhood. The body of the Roman *vir*, the adult citizen male, was regarded as inviolable, legally protected from sexual penetration, beating, and torture” (Skinner 2005: 195).\(^5\) This masculine expectation appears to be rooted in biological sex; however, the term *vir* is not applied to all biological males in Rome, but only freeborn adult citizens “in good standing and positioned at the top of the hierarchy” (Skinner 2005: 195). Consequently, “What seems a distinct physiological term is actually a description of ‘gender-as-social-status,’ involving factors such as birth, citizenship, and respectability

\(^4\) This is especially true in elegy (which contains many generic elements and does not necessarily recount actual relationships). See Skinner 2005: 17; See also James (2003: 6, 9), who recognizes the fictive nature of elegy, but allows for the poet to be engaged with presumed norms of gender in Rome.

\(^5\) The Roman soldier is an exception to inviolability with respect to beating and discipline (See Walters 1997: 40).
that to our way of thinking have nothing to do with gender” (Skinner 2005: 195).\textsuperscript{6} Time and again, the surviving texts exemplify the promotion (and subversion) of Roman expectations of masculinity that go well beyond physiology, and, in invective, prescriptions for masculine behavior are foregrounded.

As a genre, invective generally intends to make an opponent unfit for society; however, in attempts to accomplish this, one can see the heightened anxiety within male speakers that manifests itself in violent language and imagery deployed against others. There were ways to “be good at being a man”\textsuperscript{7} in the ancient world, but in invective texts, we see speakers moving outside of the socially sanctioned framework of masculinity in order to be effective masculine speakers of invective—a move that is not deliberate but a consequence of the limits of available categories. And, even though the rules and prescriptions for appropriate masculine behavior have changed between ancient Rome and today, there is one constant: the circumvention of rules, norms, or expectations in invective to create (or attempt to create) a certain masculine identity. This study will be examining the circumvention of those rules through “invective drag,” or the invective speaker’s adoption of alternative modalities of self-presentation and expression with regard to social status, gender, and sexuality. The authors of this study manipulate social codes for masculinity so that in performance they are simultaneously fulfilling some generic role expectations and subverting others.

The fragility of Roman masculinity and the anxiety this creates in the subject starkly appear in invective texts. Within Latin texts lurks the “theoretical possibility that a

\textsuperscript{6} See also Richlin 1993: 532; Walters 1997: 32; Williams 1999.
\textsuperscript{7} I borrow this phrase from Wray 2001, who utilizes the Hertzfeldian “poetics of manhood” in his discussion of Catullus: “... it is not so much ‘being a good man’ as it is ‘being good at being a man’ (2001: 59-61, quote at 59).
man could lose his gender,” which renders an androgynous man less of “a breach of logic” than “a potential threat always inherent for the male” (Corbeill 1996: 150; See also 159). In her discussion of Canidia in Horace’s Epodes, Ellen Oliensis (1998: 73) notes the doubling of meaning within the word impotentia itself: as “violence (the failure to master oneself) and weakness (the inability to master another)” (See also Watson 1995: 188). Watson emphasizes the physical context of impotentia in Greek and Roman literature, which “typically involves the inexplicable failure of male sexual equipment in the arms of a woman (or boy) whom the man greatly lusts after,” and this often is in the context of the speaker’s revulsion that prevents his arousal (1995: 190). This anxiety of impotentia fuels much invective discourse of the political sphere.\(^8\)

In ancient political invective, including those invectives that deal with political humor, one of the main objectives, as Anthony Corbeill (1996) argues, is to reinforce communal values (1996: 4-5).\(^9\) As rhetoric teaches Roman men, oratory establishes and defines who makes up the Roman elite, and “by demonstrating that an opponent behaves contrary to the well-being of the state, the orator can isolate that opponent as an individual who has no place in society” (1996: 4). Corbeill divides political humor into the categories of invective concerning an opponent’s physical appearance, name, mouth, feasting, and effeminacy. He argues that political invective of the Late Republic participates

in specific biases already present in Roman society. The persuasive power of humor lies not merely in the speaker’s ability to relax and entertain the audience


\(^9\) Corbeill argues that invective’s sole purpose is to propose and reinforce communal values (1996: esp. 3-5, 9-11, 19-24, 174), but this work seeks to take into account not only the reinforcement of communal values, but also the subversion and redefining of those values as well as self-fashioning in invective.
(captatio benevolentiae). Rather, within each instance of abuse reside values and
preconceptions that are essential to the way a Roman of the late Republic defined

His basis for this argument can be traced back to Cicero himself, as audience approval is
the aim of oratory: “effectus eloquentiae est audientium approbatio” (“the purpose of
eloquence is the approval of the audience,” Tusc. 2.3). Humor serves as a tool that not
only engages the audience but also can convey weightier matters. In De Oratore, Strabo
argues for the use of jokes as a means to convey serious moral principles: “nullum genus
est ioci quo non ex eodem severa et gravia sumantur” (“There is no type of joke from
which stern and serious thoughts are not also to be supposed,” De Orat. 2.250, qtd. in
Corbeill 1996: 9; translation mine). Thus, for Corbeill, “political humor, no less than
serious political discussion, both creates and enforces a community’s norms” (1996: 9) so
that what emerges is a system of values that belong to a powerful but small group of elite
who wish to maintain exclusive/exclusionary power (1996: 11). This dissertation argues,
however, that the reinforcement of communal norms is not where invective ends.

As will be examined in the chapters that follow, the authors under discussion
write their most biting invectives during times in which they are trying assert themselves
most forcefully as masculine subjects. In these instances, they must go outside of the
masculine ideal of their respective historical circumstances. Invective is often relegated to
the public sphere—as a means to mark insiders and outsiders; however, by taking under
consideration the social need for the invective speakers to fashion themselves as
masculine subjects, my evaluation of these texts will go beyond the argument for
invective as solely reinforcement of communal norms and expectations. In considering
self-fashioning of the speaker, we will see how invective turns on the speaker and often effeminizes him during the simultaneous appeal to hypermasculinity. As David Wray notes, the accusations often turn on the masculine speaker, marking him as feminine through voyeurism (2001: 142, emphasis in original):

While the performance of poetic verbal aggression belongs to the blazing sunlight of the public forum and is as such both the exclusive province of men and a performance, in the most literal sense, of a poetics of manhood, it remains that the aggressive act of shaming regularly involves publicizing *private* details about the victim. In consequence, the material, the message, of male-gendered invective utterance . . . can have been obtained only through the male speaker’s prior involvement in the shady, clandestine and ‘unmanly’ activities of peeping, snooping, and gossiping.

Thus the hypermasculine speaker of invective effeminizes himself through the deployment of invective. The gender fluidity of invective is often explained by discussing competing personae within a text. Instead of seeing this dichotomy between hypermasculine persona and feminine wiles as an extension of masculinity, persona theory is often invoked as an explanation.

The root of this trend in scholarship has to do with the nature of invective itself—it is often, even if aesthetically complex, disconcerting. Invective is, in a simplistic sense, defined as, “a violent attack in words; a denunciatory or railing speech, writing, or expression” or “denunciatory or opprobrious language; vehement denunciation; vituperation” (*Oxford English Dictionary* A.1 and A.2). The denunciation and vituperation in invective includes grotesque, violent subject matter deployed in
hyperbolic ways that are unsettling for the listener or reader. As a result of the visceral reaction elicited from invective works, they are often discussed as either texts of persona alienated from the presumed author at best or, at worst, counterfeit art created and disseminated solely for shock value. Indeed, such estimations of invective make up a large portion of the critical work on Catullus’ iambics, Horace’s Epodes, and Ovid’s Ibis.¹⁰

The Limits of Persona Theory

Because of invective’s jarring nature, as well as the fact that much invective performance in a text will run counter to other performances in the text, persona theory is interjected into evaluations of invective. The interaction of persona theory and works of the ancient world is problematic because for the ancient authors themselves, the line between the author and the persona is blurred. As Roland Mayer (2003) has discussed, Greeks and Romans did not look at conceptions of persona in the same way that we do today and had their own perception of the “masks” of literary personae (56).¹¹ As discussed in Kenneth Dover’s pioneer work, the Greek use of the literary persona begins with Archilochus (1964: 202; ctd. in Mayer 2003:57). Dover argues that Archilochus’ use of “I” was not necessarily giving the opinions or personal voice of the speaker, but rather a communal voice; however, as Lavigne argues, Archilochus’ poems cause the audience to see the persona loquens as the historical poet in that “the narrator offers a description

¹¹ W.S. Anderson’s essays in the 1960s (collected in Anderson 1982) are foundational for reading Roman satire as spoken in a persona divorced from the actual satirist. On Horace in particular, Kirk Freudenburg also argues that Horace “never drops the mask” (1993: 30).
of his own activities in his own voice” (Lavigne 2003: 393). Later writers, such as Critias, assumed that what Archilochus said was evidence of his own perspective (1964: 202). Consequently, “for the rest of antiquity Archilochus was read as personal poet, describing his own experience,” and “that belief shaped the understanding and production of personal poetry thereafter” (Mayer 2003: 58). Nevertheless, we see the split between persona and speaker/writer in criticism as far back as Aristotle, who thought that it would be in bad taste to speak in propria persona but maintained that this persona still shows something about the author himself. Thus this mask serves “to express the speaker’s own opinion, only by a tactful induction” (Mayer 2003: 60 ad Arist. Rhet. 3.1418B 23ff).

Even with the awareness of the use of such a mask, the interpreters of the works read the poems as indicators of the poet’s character itself, as one can see in the Roman interpretations of Greek works, which are often interpreted as personal. Cicero, in the Tusculans, says of love poetry “quid denique homines doctissimi et summi poetae de se ipsis et carminibus edunt et cantibus,” (“indeed the most learned men and the greatest poets publish about themselves in their songs and poems”), so that the poems and songs are “about themselves,” and betray no sense of persona (Tusc. 4.71 qtd. in Mayer 2003: 62). Cicero continues to discuss the amatory verse of Alcaeus and Anacreon, concluding with Ibycus: “maxime vero omnium flagrasse amore Reginum Ibycum apparet ex scriptis” (“But most scandalous of all in this regard, if judged by his writings, was Ibycus of Rhegium”), stating that this personal poetry provides insight into the disposition of the author himself (Mayer 2003: 62). 12 Similarly, Horace, in Satire 2.1.30 says that Lucilius

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12 Cicero also assumes personality in satire (De Orat 3.171) and Crassus as a mouthpiece for Cicero is noted by Quintilian (Inst. 10.3.1).
entrusted some account of himself to his satires,\textsuperscript{13} and Horace in the \textit{Satires} and the \textit{Epodes} is doing the same thing through his own use of personae (See Oliensis 1991, 1998). Horace, Mayer argues, can do two things by using personae: “However disparate the characters of writer and speaker, nonetheless the Romans tended to believe that they could see through the mask: to parody theological terms, they detected only a distinction of person, not a distinction of being” (Mayer 2003: 65).\textsuperscript{14} On the stage itself, masks were exaggerations of outsiders so that they would be recognizable and, as Corbeill notes, the mask “came to denote the personality of the character behind the mask and thus, by extension, was commonly applied to any individual’s moral temperament.” Thus, the persona was not an attempt at concealment but rather a “visual cue for the person beneath” (Corbeill 1996: 41).\textsuperscript{15}

While modern conceptions of persona theory can be usefully applied as a critical framework to evaluate invective works, I agree with Roland Mayer in that we cannot completely discount these works as \textit{solely} instances of personae. As Mayer says, if a persona is only “. . . a deliberate construct of the writer, it is very odd that poets like Horace and Ovid persist in treating the works of the predecessors as documentary” (2003: 79). Such reductions are also problematic, as Paul Allen Miller notes in his discussion of Catullus, because all aporetical moments are “seen as part of a rhetorical strategy designed to illustrate the shortcomings of the persona, who also happens to be a poet” (2004: 51). By evaluating invective performances as more than artificial personae, the psychological and social implications of these respective works emerge. Invective lends

\textsuperscript{13} “Lucili rito, nostrum melioris utroque. ille velut fidis arcana sodalibus olim credebat libris neque, si male cesserat, usquam decurrens alio neque, si bene; quo fit ut omnis votiva pateat veluti descripta tabella vita senis” (Serm. 2.1.29-34).

\textsuperscript{14} For Horace’s use of masks in the \textit{Epodes} as iambic exercise divorced from author, see Watson 1995: 189.

\textsuperscript{15} Contra Allen 1950, who discusses persona in Latin elegy.
itself to psychoanalytic discussion by its very nature. The obscenity—sexual, violent, transgressive—suggests that there are things beneath the surface fueling the discourse. Jeffery Henderson’s comments on obscenity are useful here: “The use of obscene language is tantamount to exposing what should be hidden . . . Additionally, the use of obscenity can reveal the speaker’s adoption of a mask, a liberating disguise under which social conventions, including linguistic norms, can be subverted” (1991: 393). This psychoanalytic approach, as Elizabeth Manwell says with respect to Catullus, allows the poet to be conceived as a “psychologically rich and intelligible being, one who displays a variety of emotions not as ‘personae’ or ‘characters’ alone, but as real facets of a human psyche—conflicted, contradictory and complex, as all humans are” (2003: 11). It is in the invective poems of Catullus, as well as the other writers under discussion, that the idea of a split between fictive persona and poet’s psyche is most problematized. The first person voice employed, the emotionality of the invective, and direct address of victims elicits the reader’s desire for the characters involved to be actual, but the hyperbole, excess, and stark contrast to other works in the respective authors’ corpuses show artificiality. These characteristics of invective are manifestations of the anxiety of impotence and symptomatic of the process of abjection.

Abjection, Queer Space, and Invective Drag

The invective poet occupies liminal space, as he “tends to take his stand on the threshold between inside and outside, confronting an enemy ‘you’ head on” (Oliensis 1998: 65) while projecting varied personae not wholly alienated from the speaker himself.

16 Henderson’s argument runs contra Anthony Corbeill (1996), who argues for invective and political humor as means to strengthen core societal values, as will be discussed below.
but often divergent and contradictory. This section will argue that the competing personae in invective works are symptomatic of the process of abjection. After discussing abjection’s role in identity construction, I will argue that abjection is usually the root of invective drag and that this reciprocal process is foregrounded in the works of the invective speakers under discussion. The split and liminal space between the invective speaker and persona parallels the split, fragmented nature of the ego. The instability between the self that is imagined by the subject and what is projected in art is indicative of this struggle of the psyche. Catullus, Cicero, Horace, and Ovid simultaneously appeal to the fictive nature of their projected selves, but the repetition of abjection, of self-assertion, and moves to portray a specific kind of masculinity result from actual anxiety about their own self-perceptions. In order to be viewed as masculine, the speakers of the verse radically alienate themselves from anything deemed antithetical to masculinity, making the other monstrous and necessitating the act of pushing the object away. This process, abjection, is discussed in Julia Kristeva’s *Powers of Horror*.

*Powers of Horror* seeks to investigate the separations necessary for the ongoing process of self-identification. In this work, Kristeva details abjection, a process by which individuals and nations both separate from and identify with what she terms as “abject.” Her definition of the abject is not always what would be considered grotesque or unclean, but that which does not “respect borders, positions, rules,” and “disturbs identity, system, order” (Kristeva 1982: 4). The abject lies on the border and, because of its position there, is both alluring and frightening. A living subject’s confrontation with the abject causes horror within the subject because the abject lies outside of the symbolic order, where meaning collapses, the place where “I” am not (Kristeva 1982: 2). Because of the threat
to life that the abject presents, it must be “radically excluded,” past an invisible boundary that separates the self from what is not the self (Kristeva 1982: 2). However, the abject must always exist because it is through the process of abjection that the subject may take up his or her “proper place within the symbolic” (Creed 1993: 9).

The subject is consistently exposed to the abject that fascinates desire but must be repelled in order to prevent self-annihilation (Creed 1993: 10). When a subject is confronted with the abject, he or she is put into a crisis where boundaries assumed to keep the abject at bay “threaten to disintegrate, collapse” (Creed 1993: 28). The self, as Lacan argues in “Some Reflections of the Ego,” is an imaginary construct, formed in the “mirror stage” when a child perceives its own body as a unified whole in an image it receives from outside itself, and because the unified self is an illusion, it is always in danger of regressing. When a subject encounters the monstrous, the abject, he or she experiences such a crisis. Because the abject “exists in opposition to the paternal symbolic, which is governed by rules and laws,” it is placed on the side of the feminine (Creed 1993: 37).

The feminine is not abject in and of itself. Woman’s body, her relationship to birth and death, and connection to the earth are abject through the lens of patriarchal ideology. The presentation of woman as monstrous is designed to “perpetuate the belief that woman’s monstrous nature is inextricably bound up with her difference as man’s sexual other” (Creed 1993: 83). When masculinity is threatened and identity shaken, woman provides, in patriarchal institutions, a place to diffuse fear and angst.17 When the subject is confronted with his own lack in the face of the abject, the crisis forces the

subject to attempt to radically alienate himself from the abject. In doing so, however, he often ends up adopting the traits of the abject, as the abject is part of what constitutes the self. Invective illustrates a dynamic that problematizes these theories. For the purposes of this study, when the invective speakers seek to separate themselves from their abject targets, which are often presented as feminine, the alternative modalities they take on ultimately elicit the speaker’s own adoption of feminine or ambiguous gender positions through invective drag. Through the invective drag process, the poets marginalize themselves—Catullus at the edge of the field and outside of conventional Roman masculinity, Cicero as the rising novus homo and later the political outcast, Horace establishing himself within the new political circle, and Ovid exiled on Tomis—othering themselves and taking on attributes of that from which they were attempting to radically exclude themselves, the abject. From this position, the poets become queer and often adopt what they have made abject—the feminine. It is from this queer positioning that they engage in invective drag in their articulations of masculinity.

Queer space/positioning not only allows for a fluidity of gender dynamics in the texts, but also helps to situate the speaker on the fringes, to appeal to an outsider status while simultaneously voicing their foothold within the inside. This outsider status, in a sense, removes the speaker from the prescribed rules of masculine behavior (allowing him to more easily and effectively inhabit a non-masculine space) as well as emphasizes a subcultural position that all of the speakers under discussion utilize. For Catullus, his outsider status lies in his refusal of (or at the least disdain for) the political, the militaristic, the legal—all things that a good Roman would have been engaged in. Catullus presents a (re)articulation of a masculinity, of a Roman-ness that simultaneously
bemoans his contemporary power structures and utilizes the terms usually reserved for those structures for his own purposes. In Cicero’s speeches under discussion, Cicero is outside of the political power position at various points in his career. For Horace, in the *Epodes* he is an outsider inasmuch as he (consistently tells us) was the son of a freedman, not yet taken into the elite circle of Maecenas, and a previous supporter of the wrong side in the civil war between Pompey and Caesar. Ovid is, in fact, both literally and figuratively an outsider because at the time he composed his *Ibis*, he had been exiled from Rome for three years and had completely lost any hope of return, which leads him (reluctantly, so he says, *Ib.* 9-10) to take up invective and leave love poetry behind. Ovid becomes a stranger within what used to be his own genre and geographically removed from the site of production of the masculine expectations he seeks to situate himself within despite his exile. What these authors have in common, then, is the desire to utilize a variety of strategies to create a specific persona—outsider, minority, masculine—that constitutes the self through invective.

Echoing the repetitive desire to expunge the abject, “queer” is a repetitive process or a series of ongoing acts. This study argues that the repetitive nature of abjection is intimately connected to queer performance. Abjection creates the opportunity for invective drag, and this consequence is repeated through the adopting of various, often feminine, attributes as means to complete the abjection process. Central to both this study as well as Sedgwick’s work is the use of the first person in these performances. In her definition of “queer,” Sedgwick writes (1993: 9, emphasis in original):

‘Queer’ seems to hinge much more radically and explicitly on a person’s undertaking particular, performative acts of experimental self-perception and
filiation. A hypothesis worth making explicit: that there are important senses in which ‘queer’ can signify only when attached to the first person. One possible corollary: that what it takes—all it takes—to make the description ‘queer’ a true one is the impulsion to use it in the first person.

Similar to Sedgwick’s formulation of the queer as individualized, Jack Halberstam situates the formulation of queer identity within the 1980s AIDS crisis; however, this work argues that the same undercurrents in his marking out of queer identity were pervasive in the ancient texts. Queer, for Halberstam, “refers to nonnormative logics and organizations of community, sexual identity, embodiment, and activity in space and time” (2005: 6). Halberstam sees “transgender” as more than just a term to designate those who “want to reside out of categories altogether” but for people “who want to place themselves in a way of particular forms of recognition. Transgender may indeed be a term of relationality; it describes not simply an identity but a relation between people, within a community, or within intimate bonds” (2005: 49). Thus, transgender is not necessarily an identity but can be used as a “marker for all kinds of people who challenge, deliberately or accidentally, gender normativity” (Halberstam 2005: 55).

In some instances, the speaking subjects are not subverting traditional notions of gender, but rather extending them to create a new counterfeit masculinity that is more compelling. Brandon Teena was an American trans man who was raped and murdered in Nebraska in 1993. In Halberstam’s discussion of the Brandon Teena documentary, he writes of the crux of the counterfeit in gender performance (2005: 45):

. . . queer genders profoundly disturb the order of relations between the authentic and the inauthentic, the original and the mimic, the real and the constructed . . .
there are no true accounts of ‘passing lives’ but only fictions, and the whole story turns on the production of counterfeit realities that are so convincing that they replace and subsume the real. This case [Brandon Teena] itself hinges on the productive of a ‘counterfeit’ masculinity that even though it depends on deceit and illegality, turns out to be more compelling, seductive, and convincing than the so-called real masculinities with which it competes.

Halberstam gives as an example the male jazz singer Jimmy Scott, whose voice often causes him to be heard as female; however, in interviews when this is brought up to Scott, he vehemently objects. As Halberstam says, Scott insists, “... in a way, that his voice, his transgressive voice, extends the category of maleness rather than capitulates to the strict dictates of gender normativity” (2005: 55, emphasis mine). In maintaining rigid gender categories (and while masculinity is the focus of this work, the same holds true for notions of femininity), we are doing a disservice. Despite the emergence of more masculinity studies, little attention has been paid to the fact that the crisis of masculinity often produces its own solution in terms of “alternative forms of masculinity” (2005: 126).

In his comments concerning how the drag king or butch dynamic affects male comedy, Halberstam makes interesting observations about how, through performance of alternative modalities of gender, the gender status quo is challenged, redefined through the simultaneous juxtaposition of masculine lack and hyperfemininity. King comedies “capitalize on the humor that comes from revealing the derivative nature of dominant masculinities, and so it trades heavily in tropes of doubling, disguise, and impersonation” (2005: 128) and drag king culture constitutes a “counterpublic space” (cf. Munoz 1999:
“where white and heteronormative masculinities can be contested, and where minority masculinities can be produced, validated, fleshed out, and celebrated” (Halberstam 2005: 128). In the king comedy, masculinity can become supplementary—one who seems to be lacking masculinity will have masculinity intensified when paired with someone or something hyper-feminine, such as Mike Myers and Elizabeth Hurley of *Austin Powers*. In this formulation, Powers “. . . anxiously announces and emphasizes his masculinity even as she towers over him and makes visible his masculine lack” as they go around the room and phallic objects, which Hurley devours or breaks, take the place of his genitalia. (Halberstam 2005: 131). In such scenes, the viewer simultaneously views the norms and their undermining.

Counterfeit masculinities, which I would argue would be those that are presented through invective drag, are produced subculturally. Subculturally produced masculinities “challenge the primacy, authenticity, and originality of dominant masculinities” (Halberstam 2005: 134). In order to create alternative modes of masculinity, subcultural positioning, even if artificial, is foundational in the same way it is in king comedies. What the success of the drag king shows is the ridiculing or parodying of dominant masculinity. In modern comedy, we have the traces of this parodying, and it is effective because “. . . humor is neither a skill nor a gift; rather, it is an effective tool for exposing the constructedness of male masculinity” (Halberstam 2005: 135). The comedies Halberstam discusses “show dominant masculinity to be the product of repeated and scripted motions” and “they highlight the ways in which most masculinity copies and models itself on some impossible ideal that it can never replicate” (Halberstam 2005:
Queer space enables the extension of the category of maleness. What invective contributes to the extension of the category of maleness lies in the moves of the speaker to construct his own persona. These moves are symptomatic of historical circumstances that show the norms of the specific times to be insufficient.

In Erik Gunderson’s (2000) *Staging Masculinity*, he considers the “textual production or staging of the body” within rhetorical literature to argue that the body is fashioned from self description and that this body, the articulation of the body, is always about the self. He writes (2000: 5):

> If rhetorical theory is intended . . . as a means of training the orator and is likewise produced by a man who professes to know how to speak, then where is the place of objectivity in this discourse that is always about the self? Naturally there is and can be no subjectivity . . . Rhetorical theory declares itself to be a theory of self-mastery. Thus, while the gaze of the theorist can be critiqued as a constitutive exercise of power, this same gaze is turned upon the speaker himself and turned into a positive discipline. The orator becomes a theorist of himself and his own spectator.

For Gunderson, then, the body within the rhetoric is never “neutral territory,” and this argument is *contra* Gleason (1995: 104 cf. 73), who argues that femininity and masculinity in rhetoric are opposed as a means to differentiate legitimate from illegitimate men (Gunderson 2000: 9). Gleason’s estimation supposes that there are no theories before the crisis, but Gunderson argues that the “failures of being and the anxiety of nonpresence or nonidentity enable the very calisthenics of manhood that Gleason so well describes” (Gunderson 2000: 12). Thus, “the elite male of antiquity is never a given:

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18 Cf. Butler (1990: 21), where she argues gender functions as “a copy with no original.”
the infant never passes into aristocratic manhood without mastering a variety of recognized threats and crises” (Gunderson 2000: 12-13). Masculinity, then, is a repetitive performance in which the actors are aware of the norms from the outset—and consequently anxious about the performance with this knowledge of the rules.

Thus, whereas others, most notably Anthony Corbeill, have focused on rhetoric’s role in the shaping and espousing of communal values, Gunderson, building primarily off of the gender theory of Judith Butler, shows rhetoric’s importance in the shaping of the speaker through his performance of masculinity. This performance is necessary for the Roman male citizen because his elite status is never a given, even if he is of the right birth, origin, or education. The fact that the citizen must face these threats and crises points to the feeling of lack within the speaker, and rhetorical theory and rhetoric, then, becomes “the constant revisiting of this site of loss to secure that illegitimate is berated all over again” (Gunderson 2000: 20). Due to the repetitive nature of identity formulation and, I would argue, abjection, the oratorical handbook fails as therapy and “pure masculinity remains an elusive and ephemeral dream” (Gunderson 2000: 20).

Nevertheless, the failure to achieve the operative masculinity portrayed in texts like De Oratore is a success at the level of social consequence, as societal prescriptions are defined and negotiated within this space (Gunderson 2000: 20).

The orator, in Gunderson’s estimation, participates in the whole debate of “good and true bodies”—it is a creative, performative space and not one that is totalized (2000: 26):

Rhetoric needs performativity to secure its status as a lived modality of power.

The performance, though, is never complete. Nor, in its turn, is performance even
adequately or exhaustively described by the theory that would encompass it. Thus the world of performance and the descriptions of performance have between them and within them a potential space for queer—in the fullest sense of the term—and revolutionary consequences. Indeed, both performance and theories of performance routinely produce their own queer obverse. Here again we have rhetoric’s failed analysis and therapeutics, again its fertile failure, but in this case we see more clearly the extent to which it could never have succeeded.

This “potential space for queer” is the split between theory and practice. When rhetoric is, with Cicero’s law speeches, reduced to prescriptions and reassertions of the status quo, the speaker himself is cut out of the equation as little more than one who is maintaining and parroting the elusive ideal created within the social context. The inability to reconcile theory and practice, and the queer space it creates, forces the masculine subject to break the rules, to use strategies foreign to the predominant prescriptions. This failure is in some ways a success because the process of articulation in rhetorical works has social consequences—the proposing, expanding, or defying of norms. It is in the space between performance and descriptions of the performance that invective drag emerges.

As the masculine speakers of Catullus, Cicero, Horace, and Ovid strive to put forth a wholly masculine identity in their invectives, they are not usually (especially when they are most effective) speaking from a conventionally masculine position. In the face of anxiety over a lost masculinity, the speaker adopts alternate strategies of identity construction because the normative modalities available to him are inadequate. In his deployment of invective drag, the speaker adopts a queer, often subcultural position, in which gender is fluid and allows the speaker to slip in and out of what is “appropriate”
for a masculine subject—into what often reads as feminine or ambiguous positioning.

This queer space is utilized because queer space in and of itself is marked for subversion (Halberstam 2005: 150). It is only outside of the rigid social structures and expectations of masculinity that the speakers are able to articulate what they believe may be some form of stable masculinity or expand the social definition of masculinity. The ways in which the speaker takes on invective drag are multiple: with respect to gender, speaking in the voices of feminine characters, comparing himself to feminine characters, “un-manning” himself, voicing maternal powers; and, with respect to social position, embracing and exaggerating a lower status, using vernacular language when one would expect more sophisticated rhetoric, and tearing down the figures whom their societies would expect them to emulate. In this process, the speaker ends up foregrounding the anxiety inherent within dominant masculinity, and they appear forced to go beyond masculine, to masculinity.

**Invective Drag in Catullus, Cicero, Horace, and Ovid**

The Latin poetic texts under discussion have often been treated to narrow interpretations: Catullus’ invective poems show no political ideas (Quinn 1972: 267) or are isolated from the Lesbia poems and play no role in shaping his own subjectivity;¹⁹ Horace’s *Epodes* are the rantings²⁰ of an insecure poet who becomes transformed²¹ and refined by the end of the third book of the *Odes*; Ovid’s *Ibis* is the “scream” of a manic-

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¹⁹ While these scholars have made societal dynamics crucial in interpretations of the corpus, the invectives are reduced to solely matters of social commentary, rather than a part of his own self-fashioning (See, e.g., Kennedy 1993: 34-39; Nappa 2001: 23; Skinner 2003: 60-95; Wray 2001: 30-35). See also Tatum 2007.

²⁰ Horace’s *Epodes* are often segregated by subject matter into “trivial” and “serious” epodes (Oliensis 1998: 65). For example, *Epode* 9 (on Actium) is elevated while the preceding *Epode* 8 (on the oversexed Roman matron) is dismissed as an exercise in *iambos*. See, e.g. Fraenkel 1957: 58-59, 71-75.

²¹ See Ruffell 2003, who argues that Horace’s leaves behind the invective of the *Epodes* in his later *Satires* and *Odes* to establish an elite genre.
depressive mindset\textsuperscript{22} that has been addled in his forced exile. This is not to say that these texts have not been seriously considered as legitimate pieces of literature, but that they, with some notable exceptions, are argued to be instances of complete performativity, seen as divorced from the authors and predominantly evaluated in terms of how they interact within the construction of societal rules for appropriate behavior.

In the following chapter, I will consider the invective poems of Catullus to argue that Catullus articulates a masculine identity that falls outside of the prescriptions of Roman masculinity. Catullus’ invective drove David Wray to say that the speaker(s) of the \textit{Carmina} “is not a nice man, by any stretch of the imagination” (2001: 113), and he certainly is not in the invective poems. The invective poems of the corpus present a wide range of grotesque/aggressive subjects—face rape, excrement, promiscuity, poverty, and so on. When faced with these poems, connections between the non-invective poems or other subjects in Catullus’ poetry are multiple, intricate, and apparent, as scholars such as Paul Allen Miller (1994, 2004), Micaela Janan (1994), and Ellen Greene (1998, 2006) have shown.

Part of the issue with pinning down a conception of Catullus is that an appropriate vocabulary was simply not available, which is shown by the contradictions that arise when the speaking subjects attempt to define a desire that is unsignifiable (Greene 1995: 87-71; Janan 1994: 54ff, and Miller 2004: 16-30). These connections, the multiplicity of meaning, solicit a rereading of the corpus. My own rereading of the \textit{Carmina} will focus

\textsuperscript{22} Williams calls Ovid’s \textit{Ibis} “an inarticulate scream” that comes out of an elaborate elegy and Ovid’s “release of inner tensions and the expression of an inescapable agony” (1996: 32; See also 33, 81, 101); Williams sees the \textit{Ibis} as a scream from the manic-depressive or bipolar tendencies of the poem’s persona, although not necessarily of the speaker himself, as the poem is “too artificially constructed and artistically controlled” (1996: 5: 112-15, quote at 115). Williams argues against contemporary discussions of the \textit{Ibis} that start and finish with Housman, who sees the poem as a complex appeal to Ovid’s poetic prowess (See Wilkinson 1995: 356-67; Kenney 1982: 454; Mack 1988: 42).
on the invective poems, building on the work of Miller, Janan, Greene, Skinner, and Wray, to look at how Catullus’ self-fashioning of masculinity is mediated by his appeal to marginality and use of invective drag. I will argue that Catullus is most biting in these poems when he plays with gender inversion in this specific manner—a move that is rooted in the anxiety of self-emphasized outsider status and the lability of masculinity.

Catullus’ own hypermasculine invectives show the contradictions within the speaker as they indicate that expressions of masculinity “may coexist with a feminized self” (Greene 2006: 50). Evaluating Catullan iambics as expansions of the category of masculinity through ambiguous gender positioning will allow for a reading that does not reduce such instances of aggression to literary form or psychic exercise.

In the Catullus section, I first consider the poet as an *impotens amans*, using c. 63 as a springboard to discuss the imbalance of power relations within Catullus’ relationship with Lesbia. Gender inversion in Catullus is foregrounded in the love poetry, where Catullus presents himself as *mollis* and subordinate. It is in the invective poems, I argue, that Catullus seeks to push away the self presented in the love poetry. I split the invective poems into two sections, the invective in the polymetrics and the invective in what Marilyn Skinner (2003) terms the *elegiac libellus*. In the polymetrics, the hypermasculine invective, most stark in c. 16, self-consciously seeks to counteract Catullus’ self-presentations as a *mollis mas* through his attacks on Lesbia, her lovers, and Caesar, Mamurra, and their constituents. In the *elegiac libellus* the invective becomes more impassioned in the attacks against Rufus and Gellius and more disinterested in the political attacks. The reader is faced with a poet who does not quite fit into any category.

What Catullus does for this study is provide a series of performances of masculinity—

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23 See Konstan 2000: 14 for Catullus as-outsider- in c.11.
performances that are contradictory, complex, and self-referential. And while they do not quite fit, ultimately the roots of performance are the same, and what we are left with, perhaps, is cross-dressing that does not quite pass but acts as a springboard for future performers.

In the third chapter, I will provide an overview of the rhetorical principles of Cicero’s *De Oratore* and evaluate three speeches that coincide with moments in Cicero’s career in which refashioning his masculinity was crucial to his emergence and reemergence into the Roman social and political spheres.\(^{24}\) When reviewing these pieces, Cicero emerges as one who was trying to construct himself as the ideal orator, described in *De Oratore*. As a *novus homo*, Cicero’s rise to become an influential political figure and ultimately consul was not guaranteed by his birth. He had to play the game of self presentation and, even in his early years as a lawyer, no matter whom or what he was arguing for or against, he was always constructing his public appearance in the process. He showed deference when required, touted his accomplishments when it was beneficial, and played with claims to insider status, as well as outsider status, throughout his works. Cicero appeals to his outsider status explicitly in the Verrines: “sed non idem licet mihi quod iis nobili genere nati sunt, quibus Omnia populi Romani beneficia dormientibus; longe alia mihi lege in hac civitate et condicione vivendum est . . .” (“But I am not permitted the same privileges as men of noble birth, who, even while sleeping, still see all the honors of the Roman people laid at their feet; in this state I must live under far different conditions and according to a very different law,” *in Verrem* 2.5.180). Cicero

\(^{24}\) As an emerging righteous prosecutor (*In Verres*), former exile reestablishing himself (*In Pisonem*), and elder statesman’s final exertion of authority (*Philippicae*). For the opposition between Cicero’s appeals for anger control and use of anger in speeches, See Harris 2001: 211-14.
was at a disadvantage as a *novus homo* because he was required to prove his worth and ability by his own work, whereas the nobility’s worth was presumed to be inherent.

When Cicero writes *De Oratore*, which builds on *Brutus*, he constructs the ideal orator while simultaneously putting himself within the framework of this presumably unattainable ideal. *De Oratore* is a philosophical text written during Cicero’s exile from Rome for his actions as consul during the Catiline conspiracy. In short, the work presents Cicero’s conception of the ideal orator, the best way to be a successful orator, as well as the moral and political duties expected of this ideal orator. While the primary function of this text would be to address orators who would be statesmen, legal persons, or otherwise intricately involved with the Roman government, like Cicero’s speeches, the text serves not only to espouse the values important in his time but to fashion Cicero himself—as a consummate orator and viable masculine subject in ancient Rome. Cicero, painfully aware of his *novus homo* status at the outset of his career, must show himself as a legitimate contender in the Roman political arena. Consequently, Cicero’s speeches and philosophical texts always contain his self presentation as an undercurrent. This concern for his character construction, fueled by anxiety, causes the orator of the political speeches to, often, diverge from the prescriptions set out in his philosophical works.

In the fourth chapter of this project, I consider Horace’s *Epodes*, notably *Epodes* 5, 8, 12, and 17, as instances of invective drag that function within Horace’s articulation of masculine identity. Within Horace’s early poetry, the *Epodes* as well as the early *Satires*, there is an idea that the “true” Horace is barely visible, that when he deploys his invective or presents imagery reminiscent of the bawdier Catullus poems he adopts masks, or multiple personae (Barchiesi 2001; Mayer 2003; Oliensis 1998, 2004;
Sutherland 2002); however, I agree with Ellen Oliensis’ emphasis that “It may not always be Horace speaking, but it is always Horace acting” (1998: 2).\(^{25}\) Oliensis sees Horace as “acting” as a mouthpiece whose purpose lies in being a policer of social values,\(^{26}\) much like Corbeill’s (1996) argument about the general purpose of invective;\(^{27}\) however, Horace’s “acting” is also a process for his own constitution as a masculine subject.

At the time the *Epodes* were written, Horace’s position in Roman society was precarious—he had been on the losing side of the civil war between Caesar’s assassins and Octavian, was flirting with the elite circle of Maecenas, and managing his status as the son of a freedman. As a means to control anxiety over his tenuous identity, Horace aligns himself with the women whom he denigrates in invective (Oliensis 1998: 64), often speaking through the mouths of women, and in one instance through the mouth of an impotent youth. It is in these instances of invective drag that Horace most clearly asserts himself as a masculine subject, as these various poses allow him to subvert normative modalities of masculinity.

In my fifth chapter, I look at Ovid’s rarely studied *Ibis* to argue that the invective of the poem serves as Ovid’s refashioning of himself in his now exiled state. Ovid seeks to (re)imagine his fractured identity, but to do so he must explore alternate modalities of

\(^{25}\) See Mayer’s (2003) study of the ancient reader’s conception of personae in invective poetry, where he argues that later poets interpreted the use of personae as not divorced from biographical conceptions of invective poets such as Archilochus. He cites the roots of this practice to Aristotle’s recognition that beneath the speaker’s persona speaks the author’s mind (*Rhet.* 3.1418B 23ff). Horace himself states that Lucilius provides an “account of himself to his satires” (*Aristoxeni sentential est. Ille enim in suis scriptis ostendit Saphphonem et Alcaeum volumina sua loco sodalium habuisses*, Serm. 2.1.30, noted in Mayer 2003: 62). For personae in Roman satire as divorced from the author, see Anderson 1982: 3-10, 1982b: 13-49, esp. 28ff). For persona in Latin poetry see Henderson 1991, Lavigne 2008, Manwell 2003, Miller 2004: esp. Ch. 7.

\(^{26}\) Oliensis says that through is “rude faces” Horace acts as a “protective gargoyle or Priapus,” but that despite this perceived role the poet ends up making it difficult for the reader to differentiate between the author and his enemy (1998: 15).

\(^{27}\) Namely that Roman oratory established social role and proper moral behaviors (1996: esp. 4-5, 11, 19, and 159).
self presentation in his absence from Rome. I look at the *Ars Amatoria*, the *Tristia*, and the *Ibis* to evaluate the continuing relationship and conversation between Ovid and Augustus. In the *Ars*, Ovid maintains bravado and deliberately pokes fun at the imperial family, Augustus, and the princeps’ moral legislation. Ovid is exiled in 8 CE for a “poem and a mistake” (*carmen et error*, *Tr.* 2.207). The poem is undoubtedly the *Ars*, as Ovid gives an *apologia* for the work in *Tristia* 2. I discuss the shift between the speaker of the *Ars* and the *Tristia*. Ovid, now away from Rome, reimagines himself and forces a rereading of his prior work and performance as a love poet.

In the recesses of exile, with the *Ibis* Ovid not only resorts “to an aggressive mode that bears ineradicable associations with Horace’s early poetry,” (Oliensis 2004: 307) but also mirrors Horace in his manipulation of feminine position and voice in his attack, most notably when he serves as the mouthpiece for Clotho when he spells out Ibis’ fate. Ironically, when Ovid answers Clotho’s call for a *vates* to sing Ibis’ fate, (“Ille ego sum *vates,*” 247), he asks the gods to grant him the *vires* to accomplish the task (“Dent modo di *vires* in mea verba,” 248). In the *Ibis* the reader encounters less Ovid’s anxiety of falling into a feminine position and more his manipulation of the feminine position via invective drag as means to induce anxiety within the target and the reader. Ovid’s manipulation of feminine positioning is necessitated by his exilic circumstances, and one of many ways that the poet articulates the struggle to conceive of “whatever he will be” (*quicquid ero*, *Ib.* 153) when traditional expressions of masculinity are denied to him. I argue that Ovid’s invective is strangled because he is barred from using the name of his target—Augustus himself. Ovid is now an imperial subject, and the previous parameters for masculinity are no longer available in the Principate. The only invective that is
possible for this particular subject is one that is riddled, ambiguous, and voiced from a position of insecurity.

For all the hypermasculine speakers of these texts we will have demonstrated the importance of impotence, outsider status, abjection, and invective drag in self-fashioning. Masculinity is mediated by a man’s socio-historical context, and to articulate one’s masculinity is always a dangerous game—the stakes are high and critics are everywhere. “Being a man” is an elaborate performance, with prescribed gestures and aesthetic expectations that are often divergent and complicated. Further, inasmuch as manliness encompasses more than gender alone—social position, dominance, and class all play complicated roles—masculinity becomes a high-stakes game in which any misstep can cause the whole presentation to come under attack. Invective in and of itself is the unleashing of anger, and the angry emotions are coded as feminine. In his discussion of anger control in antiquity, William Harris notes that, “a persistent topos, or rather stereotype, on record from Homer to the Council of Elvira, represented women as the irascible sex . . . Just as women were unduly liable to give in to other passions and appetites, so they easily surrendered to the angry emotions, and their anger was seldom if ever justified” (Harris 2001: 264). The contradictions inherent in invective speak to the labile nature of masculinity on the one hand and the historic inescapability of the parameters for masculinity on the other—regardless of whether the speaker(s) appears to be upholding or subverting those norms. The hypermasculine flinger of insults all too often becomes the one wearing a dress and heels. The investigation of this inversion and its associated moves in the world of Latin iambic and invective poetry and is the object of this study.
“Catullus is a problem. No matter the narrative, he never quite fits. He is a lyric poet who almost never writes in lyric meters. He is a young rebel who invokes traditional values. He is a spontaneous and passionate poet who composes complex learned poetry. He is an elegist, but not quite” (Miller 2004: 31).

“An attempt to assess or contextualize masculinity within the Catullan corpus may initially seem to be futile” (Manwell 2007: 116).

“I do not discuss directly those poems of Catullus that contain mockery of physical deformities” (Corbeill 1996: 22n17).

“It is difficult to find a poem of [Catullus’] that is not constructed with perfect elegance; then again, the poems ring with vitality, and a great many depend on ideas or images that are not elegant at all” (Richlin 1983: 144).

“The speaker of Catullus’ poems is not a nice man, by any stretch of the imagination. Aggression poses an ethical problem in any context. Catullus’ aggression, the question of how he came to be such a good hater, continues to pose a critical problem as well” (Wray 2001: 113).

“Not unexpectedly, Catullan invective is no simple matter. It draws on native and Greek literary traditions alike, a dual heritage that resists sorting out. Instead, the poems exhibit and exploit the contrast between the voice of the righteous Roman moralizing and that of compromised iambic reviler, one effect of which is that Catullus sometimes interrogates the very traditionalism toward which he gestures in his explosions of conventional censoriousness” (Tatum 2007: 350-51)
In the Catullan corpus, one encounters many “Catulluses”: the sentimental love poet of the kissing poems, the self-deprecating jilted lover of c. 8 and c. 11, the playful gossip, the poetic wordsmith, and the scathing invective speaker defending his masculinity and art. The divergent, often self-contradictory personae of the corpus interact with one another to provide moments of an illusory unified subject, one that spans the spectrum of human emotion, of decorum, and poetic achievement. The vitriolic verses, found throughout the entirety of the corpus and making up more than fifty percent of the poems, are juxtaposed with images of the poet as lover because the poet’s identity is constantly being renegotiated. Through these renegotiations, the speakers of Catullus’ poems carve out an alternative to traditional Roman masculinity—one predicated on contradictions, and therefore constantly shifting—that embraces tenets that are often coded as non-masculine.

While gender inversion permeates Catullus’ poems and has been discussed at length by others, a study of invective in Catullus presents its own problems. The moments in the corpus that portray the starkest gender fluidity, for the most part, lie outside of those in the invective mode. For this reason, this chapter seeks to use Catullus as a means to test the limits of the theory of invective drag rather than take Catullus as an early model. I contend that the hypermasculinity of the invective speakers is a consequence of anxiety regarding a perceived failed performance of masculinity—when Catullus is most threatened, usually with respect to Lesbia’s lack of fidelity—aggressive, masculine invective is aimed at his opponents; however, hypermasculinity is also vilified in other invective poems, namely those in the Caesar-Mamurra cycle. Thus invective in

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29 E.g. c. 11, c. 63, c. 64.
Catullus has intersections with the theory of invective drag; namely, the presentation of multiple and divergent personae, a symbiotic relationship between anxiety and hypermasculine threat, and (rarely) invective speakers that operate outside of normative masculine expectations. This chapter will discuss the ways in which Catullus sets himself up as effeminate, usually in poems not in the invective mode, and how the effeminate position produces anxiety that renders invective reactionary to his self-presentations of *impotentia*. I will argue that while the invective poems are deployed through an unapologetic hypermasculine stance—thus divergent from my model of invective drag—the speakers create space for invective drag in which invective is most explicit when Catullus’ sexual *potentia* is under attack, rather than his political aloofness.

This chapter will first consider *impotentia* in the Catullan corpus. Focusing on c. 63, Catullus’ poem on Attis, and its relationship to other instances of *impotentia*, I will argue, building on Miller and Greene, that the inherent lack of the speaker fuels the process of subject formation in the poems. In these poems, Lesbia is often in the position of power, and often portrayed in masculine terms, while Catullus has less power. He is shown unable to control himself with regard to his feelings for Lesbia as well as unable to keep her to himself. Catullus’ subordinate position in his relationship with Lesbia is parallel with Attis’ submission to the figure of Cybele in c. 63, and his imbalanced relationship with Lesbia and insecure position in Rome, in turn, fuels the intense, hypermasculine invectives throughout the corpus.

The second section of this chapter will focus on invective in the polymetrics, beginning with polymetric invective in the Lesbia cycle. In these poems, there is a rupture between Catullus as poet-lover and Catullus as invective speaker. These two
modes of self presentation play off of one another in a process in which hypermasculine threat is reactionary to presentations of masculine lack, most starkly in c. 16, which charges Furius and Aurelius with misreading Catullus’ love poetry. Thus the invective, I argue, is deployed as an attempt to counteract Catullus’ own self-presentation as *mollis*. Next I will consider the polymetric poems within the Caesar-Mamurra cycle. Within this cycle Catullus highlights their hypermasculinity, even depicting himself as on the receiving end of Memmius’ irrumation, to emphasize their insatiability and greed. I will argue that the poems in this section of the Caesar-Mamurra cycle seek to differentiate the speaker from political corruption and greed while simultaneously providing a reimagining of the power imbalance within Catullus’ relationship with Lesbia.

The third section of this chapter will discuss the invective poems in what Skinner (2003) argues makes up the elegiac *libellus*, poems 65-116. In this *libellus*, the invective shifts focus largely onto the *ego* of the poet himself. In these poems Catullus’ invective is reactionary to his inability to keep Lesbia as his own and is in some part a result of his inferior social and political position. This section will first consider how the invectives against Caesar-Mamurra differ from the polymetrics, namely that the speaker is more disinterested and less aggressive, and then will focus on Catullus’ poems against Rufus and Gellius to argue that in these invectives Catullus seeks to further abject the *mollis mas* self-presented in the polymetrics.

*The* impotens amator

The term for “man” in Latin, *vir*, entails more than sex. *Vir* encompasses the masculine gender in the sense that the *vir bonus* is a “manly man”—an achieved state
rather than an inherent one (Gunderson 2000). Ethical values of *disciplina* (discipline), *pietas* (dutiful behavior), *fides* (loyalty), *continentia* (self-restraint), and *virtus* (manly excellence) are central characteristics of the *vir bonus* (Manwell 2007: 113). Another important aspect of the Roman *vir* was *potentia* (potency) and its counterpart, *duritia* (hardness), which a Roman man shows through a stoic exterior and acting as the penetrative, active partner in sexual encounters (Manwell 2007: 113; See also Edwards 1993: 174; Williams 1999: 163). Men who were charged as not being *durus* were accused of *mollitia* (softness), and “unsurprisingly, softness, an attribute of women, marks men effeminate and not truly male. The *mollis mas* (“soft male”) has “failed in his attempt to achieve the status of a ‘real’ man, and this failure is often attributed to sexual failings” (Manwell 2007: 114). The *cinaedus*\(^{31}\) willfully engages in “softening” behavior, deliberately abdicating the role of the *vir* (Manwell 2007: 114).\(^{32}\) In Catullus’ poems, the speaker oscillates from the position of a self-proclaimed hard and potent man to soft lover, sometimes occupying both positions simultaneously. The poem on Attis is a more concrete example of the willful abdication of manly *virtus*—from his self-castration, the ultimate marker of *mollitia*, to his acknowledged separation from Roman places and institutions special to males. The Attis poem can be read as an imagining of Catullus’ relationship with Lesbia, with Lesbia/Cybele as the powerful, unrelenting *domina* and Catullus/Attis as the *mollis mas*, willfully abdicating *virtus* in service of the *domina*.

\(^{30}\) For recent comprehensive overviews of Roman masculinity, see Richlin 1992; Gleason 1995; Williams 1999; Burrus 2000; Gunderson 2000.

\(^{31}\) All *cinaedi* were not necessarily only penetrated males but also men who were male “gender deviants” (Williams 1999: 175-88).

The opening lines of c. 63, laced with vocabulary that insists on urgency, mania, and the irrational, set up Attis as a lover figure;\footnote{33 In many ways Attis’ devotion to Cybele is parallel to the lover and controlling \textit{domina}.} it is by speed and desire that Attis reaches the Phyrgian forest (\textit{Phyrgium ut nemus citato cupide pede}, 2).\footnote{34 All citations of Catullus are from Garrison 2012.} The opening lines of the poem progress quickly, narrating in eleven lines Attis’ voyage (1), arrival (2-3), insanity (4), castration (5-6), and transformation into an orgiastic devotee of Cybele (8-10). There is no natural pause until Attis calls together his fellow devotees (\textit{vaga pecora}, 13). Attis here is a \textit{pastor} of the frenzied flock, exhibiting some form of control despite his madness (Sandy 1968: 392). His insanity is described as “a mad fury, wandering in mind,” (\textit{furente rabie, vagus animis}, 4) as a result of the fragmenting effects of \textit{amor}. Konstan defines \textit{amor} as “a spell of overriding passion, a fit of madness, and the lover was regarded as the subject of temporary insanity: the \textit{amans}, as the figure had it, was \textit{amens}” (Konstan 1973: 102). This passion for Cybele, which mirrors Catullus’ infatuation with Lesbia, forces Attis to forfeit his identity in order to find unity in the other.

It is in this intense mania that, in only the fifth line of the poem, Attis castrates himself with a piece of flint (\textit{devolsit ili acuto sibi pondera silice}, 63.5). In the height of erotic frenzy there is a “dissolution of subject”; Attis has torn away a part of himself that, later, he realizes constituted who he conceived himself to be (Janan 1994:102). When faced with that which does not submit to signification, the Real, the “Catullan erotic sublime presents a shattering moment that shakes the subject to its roots,” a “shearing of
the self” (Miller 2004: 33). Attis’ castration, his literal removal of an integral component that constructs his male identity, presents this alienated self. Just as Ariadne’s garments fall off of her, visually representing a split within herself, so too does Attis’ removal of his *ili pondera* indicate a similar rupture (63.5) The rupture and separation is reinforced by the juxtaposition of a concrete image of his old self in the “fresh blood still staining the soil of the land” (*etiam recente terrae sola sanguine maculans*, 63.7), with his new feminine identity exemplified by the relegation to the feminine pronoun: “incited she grasped the tympanum with her snowy soft hands” (*niveis citata cepit manibus leve tympanum*, 63.8). Attis is reconstituted as now not male, not female, but a “false woman” (*notha mulier*, 63.27).

The earlier Attis as *pastor* of the *vaga pecora* (63.13) has fallen to the ranks of the “forest-wandering boar” (63.73). As Janan notes, Attis’ repeated use of the first-person pronoun shows him “hysterically asserting the existence of an ‘I’ at the very moment [he denies] it exists any longer . . . The inadequacy of the language to capture his situation highlights a conceptual insufficiency in the Symbolic, marked by *jouissance* and the feminine, that has reached out and claimed him” (1994: 105). At the height of Attis’ frenzy, after giving orders to his fellow worshippers, with the imperatives *agite* and *ite* (63.12-26), Attis is in a position of power. He is “just as an indomitable bull shunning the burden of the yoke” (*veluti iuvenca vitans onus indomita iugi*, 63.33); however, after his

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35 Ariadne, standing on the shore after her abandonment in c. 64, as Miller shows, best captures this “destructive and erotic” self-alienation that presents the violation of the “integrity of the subject” (2004: 34).

36 For an analysis of the implications of this term within Roman society, see Wray 2001.
joining with Cybele in manic devotion, Cybele reasserts her authority and renews the bind, as she unbinds the yoke constraining her lions.\textsuperscript{37}

It is gender inversion and disproportionate power relations that draws comparison between Attis and Catullus and Cybele and Lesbia.\textsuperscript{38} Both Attis and Catullus are driven insane by a harsh, dominating mistress who places them in what was thought to be the passive, feminine role.\textsuperscript{39} In Lacanian terms, as mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, the subject’s occupation of the feminine position “indicates that the Symbolic codes of masculine ideology no longer were completely adequate to the Imaginary identifications that structured the elegiac poet’s experience” (Miller 2004: 45).\textsuperscript{40} Although the Symbolic splits subjects with the signifiers “Man” and “Woman,” anyone can take up masculine or feminine positions in knowledge or procedure (Janan 1994: 28-29). With this in mind, Catullus’ transitions between genders can be seen as “changes in position with respect to an arbitrary signifier” (Janan 1994: 29). As a result, both Catullus and Lesbia are “doomed to alternate between the same set of subject positions, each changing places with the other in a dance that constantly reasserts their sexual and subjective differences in the Symbolic even as it affirms their Imaginary identification” (Miller 2004: 48). The parallel between Catullus and Attis and Lesbia and Cybele, also shows the gap between signification and the Imaginary. This failure of signification that is representative of desire is shown most clearly, as Greene notes, in c.

\textsuperscript{37} Discussed in Sandy 1971: 193. See Glenn 1973: 63 for yoke as a tool to restate the image of castration.


\textsuperscript{39} Putnam 1974 suggests the Cybele who drives Attis to castration, recalls Lesbia as the plow in c. 11, the woman who “causes loins to burst and ‘touches’ flowers” (80). Janan suggests that the figure of Cybele allows the dueling images of Lesbia as “Goddess and Castrating Monster” to operate simultaneously (1994: 107).

\textsuperscript{40} The generic conventions of elegy are pertinent to discussion of Catullus notably in the imbalance of power between Catullus and Lesbia.
76 when Catullus employs the principles of \textit{fides}, \textit{sancta amicitiae}, and \textit{foedus}, principles that are not justified in light of Lesbia’s unfaithfulness to her husband, and so, “ironically, what makes Catullus’ world of love possible, and, in fact the elegiac world in general, is the violation of law, piety, sanctity, and chastity” (Greene 1998: 14; See also Greene 1995: 88).\footnote{That Catullus elevates his relationship with Lesbia to a marriage, is a theme that is pervasive throughout the \textit{carmen maior}. Attis joins himself to Cybele in “a perverted form of marriage which demands his emasculation as an expression of devotion” (Forsyth 1970: 68). See also Janan 1994: 109, 110, 121, 122, 134, 136, 139; Miller 1994: 111-116; Sandy 1971.}

The contrast between Attis’ power position and later subservient placement, as well as his oscillation between masculine and feminine identity, suggest the fragmenting effect of \textit{amor} on the lover. This effect, as Greene understands it with respect to cc. 8, 72, and 76 is also highlighted within Attis’ lament (1998: 1-17). Under the power of \textit{amor} the subject of the lover becomes divided, and he functions in both the past and present (1998: 3). The change with the rising sun,\footnote{For a discussion of the function of sleep as well, see Shipton 1984.} from Attis’ mad frenzy in the beginning of the poem, pervaded with vocabulary of heat and speed, has changed into slower narrative with imagery of darkness and coolness. After Attis wakes, he is again described with the masculine pronoun, “as if to remind the reader of his situation and that day has opened his eyes but cannot change what he has done” (Lockyer 1995: 166). As Attis laments what he has done, his loss of previous self-identification, he is “both lamenting and renouncing an ideal past and present, then and now” (Greene 1998: 3). In cc. 8, 72, and 76, Catullus “explores the conflict between an uncontrollable passion for Lesbia and the rational awareness of the destructiveness of that passion” (Greene 1998: 8). The fate of Attis shows that this destructiveness can culminate in an absolute, irrevocable loss of control and masculinity, and a perpetual frenzy.
It is the knowledge of this frenzy, and the fact that masculinity is always at perpetual risk (especially at the hands of a sexually wanton female, Greene 1998: xiii) that Catullus warns himself against in c. 8. In this poem, there is a tension between Catullus’ “moral resolve and his reversion to a ‘womanish’ state in which he lapses into powerlessness and emotionality” (Greene 1998: xiii). There is a gap between reason and emotion, played out in the interchange of speaking positions (first, second, and third person positions). Throughout c. 8, Catullus plays the double role of both abandoned (feminine) lover and rational (masculine) voice that begs “Catullus” to recognize the destructive effects of amor. The poem opens with a plea in the masculine voice, “Miser Catulle, desinas ineptire, / et quod vides perisse perditum ducas” (“Miserable Catullus, you must stop being inept and consider ruined what you see is ruined, 8.1-2). The speaker then slips into the first person (amata nobis, 8.5) for a moment of nostalgia, but then the speaker highlights “Catullus’” impotentia and appeals for him to be durus (8.9-13):

Nunc iam illa non volt: tu quoque, impotens, noli,
   nec quae fugit sectare, nec miser vive,
   sed obstinata mente perfer, obdura
Vale, puella! Iam Catullus obdurat,
   nec te requiret, nec rogabit invitam.
Now she longer wishes: you also, powerless, must not want it, nor chase her who flees or live miserably, but carry forward resolutely, endure. Goodbye, girl! Now Catullus endures, he will not search or ask for you against your will.

In the lines that follow, however, it is not only “Catullus” who is impotens, but also the rational speaker. As Greene notes (1998: 5):
When the speaker breaks away from his imaginative vision of past happiness and calls ‘Catullus’ ‘impotens,’ it is also an expression of his own ‘impotence’ in being unable to persuade Catullus to stop desiring the puella. We can hear desperation and urgency in the word impotens in that it again links the speaker and lover in their mutual failure.

As the speaker, obsessively imagining what will happen to Lesbia, slips into rapid, emotional questions, it is obvious that the appeals to reason have failed, and the repetition of the plea for “Catullus” to be firm that closes the poem has lost the force that appears to open the poem. As much as Catullus as the poet/lover “can remove himself from his own personal narrative and see himself whole” he is “powerless to integrate the voices that are at war within him” (Greene 1995: 87).

In c. 76, Catullus again appeals to “Catullus” to end his torment and leave “unrequited love” (ingratus amor, 76.6) behind. Logical discourse comprises the first half of the poem, as the speaker tells Catullus that he has done everything he could, he asks Catullus why he continues to let himself suffer (76.10-16):

Quare iam te cur amplius excrucies?

Quin tu animo offfirmas atque istinc teque reducis,

et dis invitis desinis esse miser?

Difficile est longum subito deponere amorem;

difficile est, verum hoc qua lubet efficias.

Una salus haec est, hoc est tibi pervincendum;

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hoc facias, sive id non pote sive pote.

Why do you continue to torture yourself further? Why not be resolute in mind and lead yourself away from there and cease to be miserable with the gods unwilling. It is difficult to put away a long love suddenly. It is difficult, but truly it is best for you to do this. It is the one salvation, this must be accomplished by you, this you must do, whether it is not possible or possible.

In the lines above, Catullus addresses himself in the second person in much the same way he appeals to “Catullus” in c. 8. Just after these firm pushes for Catullus to walk away, the poem changes to a first-person, emotional speaker using the language of a (feminine) abandoned lover (76.17-26):

O di, si vestrum est miserere, aut si quibus umquam
extremam iam ipsa in morte tulistis opem,
me miserum aspicite et, si vitam puriter egi,
eripite hanc pestem perniciemque mihi,
quae mihi subrepens imos ut torpor in artus
expulit ex omni pectore laetitias.
Non iam illud quaero, contra me ut diligat illa,
aut, quod non potis est, esse pudica velit:
ipse valere opto et taetrum hunc deponere morbum.
O di, reddite me hoc pro pietate mea.

O gods, if pity is yours, or if ever you have brought help to anyone near to death itself, look on miserable me and, if I have conducted my life purely, take away this plague and disaster from me, which creeping upon my innermost depths like a
paralysis drives away joy from my whole heart. Now I do not seek that she loves me as I love her, or for her to wish to be chaste, because it is not possible. I wish for myself to be well and to put down this foul disease. O gods, returns this to be on behalf of my piety.44

Thus in c. 8 Catullus occupies the position of both the abandoned (feminine) lover and the (masculine) voice of reason. This is a result of the direct relationship between performance and tenuous masculinity. The admonition of the speaker at the beginning of the poem is only voiced because of the failed masculinity of “Catullus.”

The clearest examples of feminine positioning in Catullus are in his love poems, most often those that indicate the imbalance of power relations between Lesbia and himself. Just as Attis castrates himself and devotes himself only to Cybele, rendering him submissive and effeminate, Catullus, in his desire to be Lesbia’s sole lover, willfully abdicates the duritia required of men who control themselves and those subordinate to them. This is the self that is presented in the love poems concerning Lesbia, and this is the self that he seeks to recuperate in his invectives in the polymetrics.

non bona dicta: Invective in the Polymetrics

While there are numerous examples of invective in the polymetrics, this section will focus on what I identify as two major approaches within these poems: 1. the invectives against Lesbia charging her with a lack of fidelity and 2. the political invectives that concern Caesar and Mamurra. It is my contention that the deployment of

44 The desperate plea that closes c. 8 echoes Attis’ final plea in c. 63: “Dea, magna dea, Cybebe, dea domina Dindymi, / procul a mea tuos sit furor omnis, era, domo: / alios age incitatos, alios age rabidos” (“Goddess, great goddess Cybele, goddess mistress of Dindymon, may all your fury be away from me, mistress, and far from home: drive others to madness, drive others to frenzy,” 63.91-93).
invective is a reaction to (and perhaps overcompensation for) a perceived failed masculine performance, or, more specifically a performance that does not adhere to the strict confines of socially sanctioned masculine norms—the self that is presented in the love poetry concerning Lesbia. Thus Catullus’ invective is a kind of self-abasement when articulations of it are examined within the context of the corpus overall. In the invectives against Lesbia, Catullus defaces her, which, in turn, tears down Lesbia as worthy love object in the love poems and seeks to overcompensate for other failed masculine performances. The invectives against Caesar and Mamurra also point to failed masculine performance, through vilifying the hypermasculine personalities of Caesar and Mamurra, and this move distances Catullus from socially sanctioned normative Roman masculinity.

The first poem with invective in the Lesbia cycle is c. 11,45 where Catullus describes how far his dubious comites Furius and Aurelius would follow him. He ultimately charges them to deliver a not-so-nice message to Lesbia. This is perhaps because Furius and Aurelius were rivals, as both men were not only prepared to share adventures with Catullus all over the world but “at the same time to try all these things and whatever else the will of the gods may bring,” (omnia haec, quaecumque feret voluntas / caelitum, temptare simul parati, 11.13-14). This line may indicate an involvement with Lesbia, especially given the task with which they are charged (11.15-24):

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pauca nuntiate meae puellae
non bona dicta
cum suis vivat valeatque moechis,
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45 I would argue, following Uden 2005 that the first invective piece in the corpus is c. 6, where Flavius’ puella is degraded as an inelegant whore.
While this poem is in some ways the lament of an abandoned lover, it is also an invective poem; lines 17-20 deliver a brutal insult to Lesbia. But where does this insult come from? At the same time Catullus accuses Lesbia of gross adultery (ironically because their own relationship is predicated on adultery) he admits a failure: he was unable to keep his lover to himself, to keep her interested in Catullus alone.\textsuperscript{46} Noting this failure, Catullus pushes Lesbia away from himself with his invective.

The invective spoken in these lines, however, is immediately followed by one of the most poignant examples of gender inversion in the poems. Catullus not only compares himself to the \textit{flos}, a term more typically used to speak of women, but he situates himself as an outsider on the edge of the field. Lesbia’s status as a Roman elite

\textsuperscript{46}Cp. c. 72: “Dicebas quondam solum te nosse Catullum, / Lesbia, nec prae me velle tenere Iovum” (“You used to say you wished to know Catullus alone, Lesbia, nor to wish to hold even Jove before me,” 72.1-2; cf. c. 70).
placed her above Catullus’ equestrian status. Within Rome, Catullus was wealthy enough to operate within the upper echelon of society but never truly one of them. This image goes a step further when Lesbia becomes the aggressor, the plow running over Catullus. Despite the fierce threat deployed in hopes of hurting Lesbia, Catullus ultimately fails—a failure that is seen in two other invective poems from the polymetrics, c. 37 and c. 58.

Poem 37 mirrors the charges against Lesbia in c. 11. The poet laments Lesbia’s infidelity and insatiable lust, but these charges point to a fault within Catullus himself—Lesbia takes on these other lovers instead of Catullus, lovers whom the poet depicts as base and foul. In c. 37, Catullus threatens a tavern filled with Lesbia’s lovers:

Salax taberna vosque contubernaes,
a pilleatis nona fratibus pila,
solis putatis esse mentulas vobis,
solis licere, quidquid est puellarum,
confutuere et putare ceteros hircos? 5
An, continenter quod sedetis insulsi
centum (an ducenti?) non putatis ausurum
me una ducentos irrumare sessuali
Atqui putate: namque totius vobis
frontem tabernae sopionibus scribam. 10
Puella nam mi, quae meo sinu fugit,
amata tantum quantum amabitur nulla,
pro qua mihi sunt magna bella pugnata,
consedit istic. Hanc boni beatique
omnes amatis, et quidem, quod indignum est,

omnes pusilli et semitarii moechi;

tu praeter omnes une de capillatis,
cuniculosae Celtiberiae fili,

Egnati, opaca quem bonum facit barba

et dens Hibera defricatus urina.

Lecherous tavern and you comrades-in-arms, ninth pillar from the temple of the Brothers in the hats [Castor and Pollux], do you think you are the only ones with cocks? The only ones permitted to fuck whatever girls there are and to think all others goats? Or because one hundred (or two hundred?) of you idiots sit in a line, you think I would not dare to face fuck you two hundred sitters together? But believe it: for I will scrawl cocks all over the front of the whole tavern. Because my girl, who was loved as much as no one will ever be loved, for whom many battles were fought by me, who fled my embrace, sits down in this place. And here all her good and blessed lovers come, and truly, rather unsuitably, all her insignificant and back alley adulterers; and first among all these longhaired pansies, son of rabbity Iberia, is you Egnatius, whose good is marked by a bushy beard and teeth cleaned with Spanish urine.

The targets of the poem are degraded. They are almost limitless in number, pompous, and the first among them is one of the most base, Egnatius, whom Catullus attacks at length in c. 39 again for his nasty teeth-whitening process as well as his inability to conduct himself appropriately in social situations. In this poem Catullus “reasserts his own Priapic
manhood against the collective through the threat of irrumation and painting the tavern’s front with penises, and against Egnatius by portraying him with a mouth befouled with his own urine—a kind of displaced irrumation” (Wray 2001: 87). This large number of adulterers, and their characterization as inept, reflects poorly on Lesbia; her preference in these men defaces her own reputation. She not only possesses an insatiable desire for sex but one that does not discriminate, to Catullus’ mind, between worthy and unworthy men.

The two levels of insults, against the two hundred adulterers and against Lesbia, also points to lack within Catullus himself. He was unable to satiate Lesbia, unable to compete with these corrupt and unrefined men. Catullus’ desire for Lesbia, whom he depicts in this degraded way, reflects poorly on the poet himself. Catullus, consequently, shows himself to be impotent—unable to keep Lesbia for himself and unable, despite his self-proclaimed superior status, to win in the struggle against these men for her affections. In order to combat Catullus’ apparent inferior and submissive position in this poem, the poet launches hypermasculine, aggressive invective, which is thus reactionary to his inferior, impotent position.

Just after the line that Catullus accuses the male adulterers of thinking their competitors (who would include Catullus) to be cock-less (sc. impotent) goats (solis putatis esse mentulas vobis, / solis licere, quidquid est puellarum, / confutuere et putare

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47 “Irrumatio in Catullus draws attention to a potentially aggressive aspect of poetry itself, which puts words into people’s mouths; it speaks for everybody and everything while all else is silent (or mouthing its words), and it makes its subject matter take on the meanings of a single voice. But even when the poet is himself the object of irrumatio, he may, so to speak, enter it on the side of profit, for poetry allows him to speak from several positions at the same time” (Fitzgerald 1995: 72).

48 Cp. c. 58: “Caelius, our Lesbia, that Lesbia, she alone whom Catullus more than himself and all his own, now in crossroads and backalleys peels the descendants of great-hearted Remus”).
ceteros hircos? 37.4-5), he counters their insult with hypermasculine threat: that he indeed has a cock and one that is able to face-fuck the lot of them with it (non putatis ausurum / me una ducentos irrumare sessores, 37.7). He will also scrawl cocks all over the tavern itself, encasing the whole of the “insignificant and back-alley adulterers” with a visual testament to his masculinity; however, these bold assertions are immediately followed by lines that highlight the poet’s failed masculinity. The reason that Catullus gives for his threats is Lesbia’s willing departure, her “fleeing” from the poet’s embrace (Puella nam mi, quae meo sinu fugit, 37.11).

Thus in c. 37 Catullus presents two selves: 1. the jilted lover, impotent in his ability to keep Lesbia for his own, and 2. the hypermasculine speaker of invective asserting his masculinity. These two selves are competing with one another. Catullus, as hypermasculine speaker, is refuting the self he presents elsewhere in the Lesbia cycle—as the poet-lover eager for kisses (c. 5, 7) and awestruck by Lesbia’s beauty (c. 51). Despite the fact that in the invective lines themselves Catullus adopts a wholly masculine position, their deployment is made possible by and as a consequence of Catullus as a mollis mas. This reciprocal relationship is highlighted in Catullus’ charge to Furius and Aurelius (See also Lavigne 2010: 81).

Poem 16 is one of the most aggressive in all of Catullus’ oeuvre. Furius and Aurelius, the pair given the task of breaking up with Lesbia for Catullus in c. 11, have charged Catullus with effeminacy as a result of his soft poetry, and the poet responds with detailed sexual threat:

Pedicabo ego vos et irrumabo
Aureli pathice et cinaede Furi,
qui me ex versiculis meis putastis
quod sunt molliculi, parum pudicum.
Nam castum esse decet pium poetam
ipsum, versiculos nihil necesse est;
qui tum denique habent salem ac leporem,
si sunt molliculi ac parum pudici,
et quod pruriat incitare possunt,
non dico pueris, sed his pilosis
qui duros nequeunt movere lumbos.

Vos, quod milia multa basiorum
legistis, male me marem putatis?
Pedicabo ego vos et irrumabo.
I will fuck you in the ass and fuck you in the face, fairy Aurelius and faggot
Furius, who thought me to be too little chaste, based on my verses, because they
are soft. For it is appropriate for the pious poet to be chaste himself, but it is not
necessary that his verses be. Indeed they have wit and charm, if they are soft and
too little modest, and able to incite sexual longing—I say not in boys but in those
hairy old men who are unable to keep hard dicks. You, because you have read of
my many thousands of kisses, think me to be an effeminate man? I will fuck you
in the ass and fuck you in the face.

Just as in c. 37, Catullus makes his threat of irrumation\(^49\) clear, with the added threat of
anal penetration; however, this threat is closely followed by mention of Catullus’ less-

\(^{49}\) For a discussion of the overall oral imagery of the poem, see Manwell 2003: 26-41. For c. 16 as an
instance of cacemphaton of c. 6 and c. 16, see Fontaine 2008.
than masculine self-presentation in his other poems. The reason that Catullus gives for Furius and Aurelius’ charge that Catullus is “too little chaste” (*parum pudicum*, 16.4) in that his poetry is effeminate. Catullus does not deny this; he terms his verse in the diminutive (*versiculi*, 16.3) and says “because they are soft,” (*quod sunt molliculi*, 16.4; *si sunt molliculi ac parum pudici*, 16.8) in the present indicative. Catullus’ answer does not refute the softness of his poetry, especially the kissing poems (cf. 16.12-13), but charges Furius and Aurelius for making a mistake in their reading—assuming based on his poetry that Catullus played a passive role in a sexual relation (Konstan 2000: 13).⁵⁰

Catullus forces the disjunct between poet and speaker to emerge, highlighting poetry’s inability to articulate reality. Conversely, the threat comes from the poetry itself, in a poem in which Catullus poetically presents two selves, the hypermasculine invective speaker and the poet-lover of the Lesbia cycle. The invective threat that opens and closes poem 16 (*Pedicabo ego vos et irrumabo*, 16.1, 14) brackets the self that Catullus seeks to repudiate, the one that invited Furius and Aurelius’ charges of effeminacy. Additionally, as Uden argues, the Priapic stance⁵¹ of the poem may not necessarily be an appeal to hypermasculinity. He argues that instead of valorizing the hypermasculine stance of Priapic threat, Catullus’ adoption of Priapus’ persona becomes “less an assumption of hyperphallic masculinity and more a witty way in which to lampoon a world-view dominated by an obsessive focus on penetration. Impersonating Priapus meant, in fact,

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⁵⁰ See also Krostenko 2001: “When Furius and Aurelius reach the final line of the poem and realize the first line meant something different from what it seemed to mean, they discover they have been forced to misread, much as they misread Catullus’s kissing poems. Where they forced him, by their act of reading, into being *parum pudicus*, now he forces them, by his act of writing, into being *pathicus* and a *cinaedus*. Their inability to understand the poetry of nonce pleasure means they will have to suffer enduring shame: for the *pedicatus* ‘butt-fucked’ and *irrumatus* ‘mouth-fucked’ were acutely stigmatized in the very ideology that generated the hermeneutic that led to Furius and Aurelius’ misreading” (280).

⁵¹ See also Richlin 1983: 58, 145.
exposing the garden dog and his hopeless rusticity to urbane critique” (Uden 2007: 1).

The Priapic stance lends itself to self-conscious reflection, and so the mode seeks to show the failure of the capital of hypermasculinity (Uden 2007: 5). Taking into account the poet’s isolation in c. 11, one can see that hypermasculinity is not necessarily a positive attribute. This claim is further supported by the fact that the poems of the Caesar-Mamurra cycle decry the pair’s aggression at the same time the invective charges them with effeminacy.

In the poems of political invective against Memmius, Caesar, and Mamurra, the politicians’ aggression is excessive, and it leads to great greed and makes victims of other men. In all instances, emasculating shame is heaped on all parties involved—including Catullus himself. Although the Caesar-Mamurra cycle spans the entire corpus, I will first focus on those in the polymetrics, as I contend that a shift in Catullus’ relationship with Lesbia alters the kind of invective hurled against Caesar and Mamurra in the elegiac libellus. In the hendecasyllabic poems on Caesar and Mamurra (c. 29, c. 41, and c. 57), the pair is lambasted for their insatiability and over-expansion. Taking these poems in light of the catalog that opens c. 11, I argue that the poems against these two figures mirror the struggle in Catullus’ relationship with Lesbia. ⁵２ Given their similarities with respect to Lesbia and Catullus’ insatiability and imbalances of power, as well as the fact that Catullus has higher levels of anxiety surrounding his love life, ⁵³ in the polymetrics the invective against Caesar and Mamurra is more graphic, more sexual, and more aggressive than the poems in which they appear later in the corpus.

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⁵２ See Greene 1997.
⁵³ See, e.g. c. 7 where Catullus shows Lesbia asking Catullus “how many kisses are enough and more than enough” (Quaeris quot mihi basiationes / tuae, Lesbia, sint satis superque, 7.1-2).
The most common charge leveled at Caesar and Mamurra is that of greed—for profit, for overexpansion—and a lack of control over their desires for more, political and sexual. In poem 29, the speaker expresses shock that one, whom he twice refers to as “faggot Romulus” (cinaede Romule, 29.5, 9), could stand by while Caesar allows Mamurra to gobble up riches and lands across the known world (29.1-5):

Quis hoc potest videre, quis potest pati,
nisi impudicus et vorax et aleo,
Mamurram habere quod comata Gallia
habebat ante ultima Britannia?

Cinaede Romule, haec videbis et feres? 5

Who is able to see this? Who is able to endure this, except one who is unchaste, and ravenous, and a gambler? Will Mamurra have what transalpine Gaul had before and distant Britain? Faggot Romulus, will you see these things and stand for it?

Catullus, because of his inability to do anything about Caesar and Mamurra’s behavior, is a part of the group of impotent onlookers, a Romulus Cinaedus. He goes on to catalog Mamurra’s previous squandering of campaign riches (29.16-20):

Paterna prima lancinata sunt bona,
secunda praeda Pontica, inde tertia
Hibera, quam scit amnis aurifer Tagus:
nunc Galliae timetur et Britanniae

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54 Jocelyn argues that Catullus picks Romulus as the one to stand by in reference to the statues of Romulus that adorned the Roman city (1999: esp. 113).
First he wasted his good inheritance from his farther, then the spoils from the Black Sea, then third from Spain, which the gold-bearing Tagus knows: now there is fear in Gaul and Britain.

These catalogue descriptions comment on the vast insatiability of Mamurra’s (and consequently Caesar’s) greed. As Ellen Greene has recently argued (2006: esp. 50-51), these qualities are not only repulsive character traits of the politicians, but also share in common faults Catullus finds within his lover and his own excess in his relationship with her. The starkest example of how these three figures are tied together is found in the opening of c. 11 (11.1-14):

Furi et Aureli, comites Catulli,

sive in extremos penetrabit Indos,

litus ut longe resonante Eoä
tunditur unda,

sive in Hyrcanos Arabasve molles,

seu Sagas sagittiferosve Parthos,
sive quae septemgeminus colorat
eaquora Nilus,

sive trans altas gradietur Alpes,

Caesaris visens monimenta magni,

Gallicum Rhenum, horribile aequor
ultimosque Britannos,
omnia haec, quaecumque feret voluntas
caelitum, temptare simul parati . . .

Furius and Aurelius, comrades of Catullus, whether he will penetrate the furthest of the Indies, or the shore where the beating of the eastern waves resounds far, whether he stops with the Hyrcani or the gentle Arabs, or the arrow-carrying Parthians, or the seven fold Nile that paints the plains; whether he steps across the high Alps, going to see the great monuments of Caesar, the Gallic Rhine, or horribly distant Britain, you are prepared to try all these things, and whatever else the will of the gods will bring.

In c. 11 Lesbia’s behavior looks like Mamurra’s; like the commander she is “predatory and destructive” (Konstan 2000: 227). Thus in this poem Catullus excludes himself, on the edge of the field, as someone who

is unable to participate in a world in which erotic relations are polarized into predatory and submissive partners, both equally dissolute and indeed interchangeable, a place where the cinaedus is a woman-chaser and a corrupter of boys and women crush men’s loins in their passion. By locating himself at the edge of the field, Catullus projects an alternative vision of love and simultaneously casts himself as the victim of an inexorable system, on the model of the distant tribes that Roman armies were in the process of reducing or exterminating (Konstan 2000: 228).

The parallels between c. 11 and the Caesar-Mamurra cycle in the polymetrics show the political, for Catullus, to be wrapped up in the erotic. The Catullan speaker presents
himself as on the periphery in both instances, “untouched by the corrupting presence of political institutions” (Greene 2006: 50). Like Attis’ self-exile from the palaestra and the forum, in Catullus’ desire to be Lesbia’s only love, he willfully abandons the realm of the civic and the political. His only direct interaction within political invective in the polymetrics puts him on the receiving end of hypermasculine penetration.

In the first direct instance of political invective, c. 28, Catullus himself is victim of the irrumation he threatens Furius and Aurelius with in c. 16. Catullus asks how Veranius and Fabullus are faring on Piso’s staff in Macedonia, assuming that perhaps they are being shafted in the same way Catullus was under Memmius in Bithynia (28.6-15):

Ecquidnam in tabulis patet lucelli expensum, ut mihi, qui meum secutus praetorem refero datum lucello?
O Memmi, bene me ac diu supinum tota ista trabe lentus irrumasti. 10
Sed, quantum video, pari fuistis casu: nam nihilo minore verpa farti estis. Pete nobiles amicos!
At vobis mala multa di deaeque dent, opprobria Romuli Remique. 15

Does it show anything in your account books of small gain paid out, as I report what was paid out by me, who followed my leader? “O Memmius, for a long time you made me, on my back, suck your dick well and slowly with that whole shaft.”
But, as far as I can see, you have had equal fortune; for you were stuffed with a cock no less hard. Seek noble friends! But to you, disgraces of Romulus and Remus, may the gods and goddesses give many evil things.

While these lines, of course, do not necessarily mean that Catullus actually performed fellatio on Memmius, given the context irrumation directly correlates with aggressive masculinity. Aggressive masculinity is parallel to the aggressive phallus—Mamurra himself is referred to solely as mentula (“prick”) in poems 93, 94, 105, 114, and 115. The aggressive male center at which Catullus directs these insults is, as Ellen Greene argues, opposed to where Catullus situates himself on the margins but interconnected to the imbalance of power in Catullus’ relationship with Lesbia. Catullus attributes to Caesar and Mamurra the very qualities of immoderation and passivity associated throughout the Lesbia poems with the male narrator. In assigning to Caesar some of the traits he reviles in himself, the speaker suggests that the sphere of the political and the erotic are by no means opposed to one another but are rather bound together by common functional roots in desire (Greene 2006: 51).

Mamurra’s own relationship with Ameana, the puella defutata (“fucked out girl,” 41.1) reflects poorly on Mamurra himself. The girl, whose physical faults make her worth much less than she asks for, echoes Mamurra’s own hollow character.

The last invective poem against Caesar and Mamurra in the polymetrics is the most scathing, and most sexually explicit (c. 57):

Pulcre covenit improbis cinaedis,
Mammurae pathicoque Caesarique.

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55 On Mamurra and Ameana, see Wray 2001: 71-72.
Nec mirum: maculare pares utrisque, urbana altera et illa Formiana, impressae resident nec eluentur morbos pariter, gemelli utrique, uno in lecicul o erudituli ambo, non hic quam ille magis vorax adulter, rivales socii et puellularum.
Pulcre convenit improbis cinaedis.

How well these two wicked faggots fit together, the fairies Mamurra and Caesar. It is no wonder: the stains are equal for both of them, one from [Rome] and the other from Formiae, so deeply engrained that they will never be washed out, diseased equally, both twins, both educated in one little bed, and nor is the latter a more voracious adulterer than the former, allied rivals for little girls. How well these two wicked faggots fit together.

By calling Caesar a cinaedus, Catullus

. . . collapses distinctions between Roman and non-Roman, between the decadent effeminate Easterners and the ‘virtuous,’ ‘masculine’ Romans. Moreover, the implicit image of the great conqueror ‘shaking his butt’ in the manner of a cinaedus serves not only to depreciate Caesar’s status and accomplishments, but also to suggest that the contradictions of desire and Roman conceptions of virtue are difficult to resolve (Greene 2006: 52).

Even though Caesar and Mamurra are charged with effeminacy, this does not necessarily negate masculine vices, as “this type of invective often charges the opponent with the
seemingly oxymoronic combination of passive, effeminate subservience and violent, male lust” (Corbeill 1996: 149). The tactic allows the speaker to insult through the worst vices of both males and females. While Caesar and Mamurra are coded as masculine in most of these poems, their inability to control their desires shows a lack of control and, consequently, a lack of *potentia*, which is a charge that could be leveled at Catullus himself. Nevertheless, in these political invectives, Catullus situates himself on the outside. He is fundamentally at odds with the privileged sphere of public achievement in Roman society. Yet the speaker’s hyperphallic invectives suggest how conventional expressions of masculinity may coexist with a feminized self . . . Catullus’ attacks on Caesar and Lesbia in poems 57 and 11 do not merely express the speaker’s sense of moral outrage at their decadence and depravity but, more than that, they show how Catullus’ invectives serve to highlight the contradictions in Catullus’ own persona (Greene 2006: 50).

The intensity of the invectives hurled against Caesar and Mamurra match the intensity of Catullus and Lesbia’s relationship. If the political invectives function as parallels for Catullus’ imbalanced relationship with Lesbia, the fact that Catullus emerges as still not conventionally masculine, even in invective, does not come as a surprise. Catullus does not quite fit in with the normative modalities of masculinity. In the elegiac *libellus*, Caesar and Mamurra cease to be stand-ins for his imbalanced relationship with Lesbia. As more concrete rivals for her affections emerge, the invective is more heightened and explicit and directed at the adulterers themselves.
mala dicere: *Invective in the Elegiac Libellus*

Marilyn Skinner’s *Catullus in Verona: A Reading of the Elegiac Libellus* (2003) argues for a tripartite division of the Catullan corpus. The work focuses on what she asserts was its own poetry book, the elegiac *libellus*, poems 65-116. She bases this argument, in part, on the fact that both c. 65 and c. 116 are professions of Callimachean aesthetics, as both poems contain the phrase *carmen Battiadae* (65.16 and 116.2): “By identifying the Catullan persona, in each instance, as an imitator of Callimachus, the verbal echo stakes out an aesthetic position common to both texts and thereby marks them off as the closely related ‘framing’ pieces regularly found at the beginning and end of an Alexandrian poetry book” (Skinner 2003: 3; See also Forsythe 1977; Van Sickle 1981). If one sections off the invective in poems 65-116 from the invective in the polymetrics, s/he can see several shifts in the nature of invective in Catullus that help to understand Catullus’ positioning within invective drag. In these invective poems, it appears that Catullus has heightened levels of anxiety concerning rivals for Lesbia’s affection; consequently, the invective aimed at two targets who appeared in the polymetrics, Caesar and Mamurra, is more detached, and other than Mamurra’s repeated nickname *mentula* (“prick”), is less sexually explicit. The invective leveled at Rufus and Gellius, Lesbia’s lovers, is more intense and overtly sexual in nature. These changes indicate that anxiety over masculine *potentia* directs the aim and vigor of invective discourse, an important element of invective drag. While Catullus adopts a hypermasculine stance in the invective verse, he is simultaneously competing with his more feminine presentation as the helpless, jilted lover.

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56 See also Hubbard 2005.
The first poem of invective in the Caesar-Mamurra cycle in the *elegiac libellus*, is brief, a far cry from Caesar the *cinaedus* in c. 57:

Nil nimium studeo, Caesar, tibi velle placere,

nec scire utrum sis albus an ater homo

I am not too eager, Caesar, to want to please you, nor to know whether you may be swarthy or pale.

This is the only direct mention of Caesar in the elegiac *libellus*, and Catullus here is disinterested. He professes not to know what Caesar looks like, or care to find out in face-to-face interactions. Instead of berating Caesar and painting the dictator as effeminate, Catullus stands aloof.  

The last four poems in the cycle all center around Mamurra, whom Catullus refers to as *mentula*. The first immediately follows the Caesar poem and provides an explanation of the nickname:


Hoc est quod dicunt: ipsa olera olla legit.

Mentula commits adultery. Mentula commits adultery? Certainly. This is what they say: the pot gathers its own potherbs.

Mamurra’s adultery is only natural because a prick is designed to fornicate. It is possible that Catullus was reproached by Caesar for his verses against them in the hendecasyllabics, and in the elegiac *libellus* Catullus has shifted his tactics. *Mentula* is a

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57 Skinner (2003: 112) argues that because Catullus is using commonplaces, he is acting as a voice of his community as a whole (Transpadane Gaul).

58 For Mamurra as a poetic foil to Catullus, see Deuling, 1999.

barely disguised play on the phrase *diffututa mentula* applied to Mamurra at c. 29.13 (Skinner 2003: 113), and here Catullus justifies the nickname.\(^{60}\)

The last two poems about Mamurra, cc. 114 and 115, are reminiscent of the comments about Caesar and Mamurra’s insatiable greed in poems 28, 29, and 57:

Firmano saltu non falso Mentula dives

    fertur, qui tot res in se habet egregias,

aucupium omne genus, piscis, prata, arva ferasque.

    nequiquam: fructus sumptibus exsuperat.

Quare concedo sit dives, dum omnia desint.  5

Saltum laudemus, dum modo ipse egeat.

They say, not falsely, that Mentula is rich with the pastures of Firmum, which has so many extraordinary things in it, fowl of all sorts, fish, meadows, fields and wild animals, but in vain: his wealth is overpowered by his costs. Therefore I concede that he may be wealthy, while everything is lacking. Let us praise the pasture, so long as he himself is lacking.

Mentula habet instar triginta iugera prati,

    quadraginta arvi: cetera sunt maria.

Cur non divitiis Croesum superare potis sit,

    uno qui in saltu tot bona possideat,

prata arva ingentes silvas saltusque paludesque  5

    usque ad Hyperboreos et mare ad Oceanum?

omnia magna haec sunt, tamen ipsest maximus ultro,

\(^{60}\) *A mentula* is, further, not equipped to compete in the poetic realm (c. 105): “Mentula conatur Pipleium scandere montem: / Musae furcillis praeciptem eicient.” (“Mentula tried to ascend the mountain of Pipleia: the Muses hurled him headfirst with pitchforks”).
non homo, sed vero mentula magna minax.

Mentula has altogether some thirty acres of land for grazing, forty of ploughland, the rest is sea water. Why can he not surpass Croesus in wealth, when he is master over so many good things in one estate, meadows, ploughland, great woods and pastures and pools as far as the Hyperboreans and water of the ocean? All these things are great, however he himself is greatest of all, not a man, but truly a great threatening cock?

While these invectives deal with the same subject matter as the invective against the two figures in the polymetrics, namely their greed, the language is not sexually charged, and the outraged speaker the reader finds in, for example, c. 29 (Cinaede Romule, haec videbis et feres? 29.5, 9), is nowhere to be found. The charges against Mamurra in the elegiac libellus seek to show him as counterfeit. He has a lot of wealth, but it is no match for his insatiable greed, so he does not, the speaker implies, deserve his position in the upper class. Marilyn Skinner argues that Catullus is highlighting the political by using commonplaces, that he is appealing to the community to back him in his charges against Mamurra and Caesar (2003: esp 109-12). Conversely, I follow Miller in the contention that the ethical vocabulary exhibits resistance to conservative values of Rome and shows “a utopian vision of love and poetry as a private world removed from the dangers of political life and constant civil war” (Miller 1994: 136; See also Minyard 1988: 26-29 and Platter 1995: 216-19). What I think is most notable within the invective of the

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61 For Catullus’ aggression as criticizing or deconstructing the societal ethical norms of his time period, see also Skinner 1989 and Seldon 1992. Wray argues that Catullus is not, as hoped for by many modernist critics, “aloof” from his invective/insult/harsh language—he is not acting as commentator/moderation of social values. He questions “... whether we may hope to find social critique at all in Catullus’ poetry” his reading of the poems intuits “... no voice groping toward an ethical stance I wish to embrace or recognize as kindred” (Wray 2001: 128).
epigrams is that the reader does not find in these poems the power imbalance that is highlighted in the hendecasyllabics. The focus is now on indifference to Caesar and Mamurra’s “poverty,” and Mamurra and Caesar cease to function as parallels for his relationship with Lesbia. Sexually charged and impassioned invective finds new targets in the elegiac *libellus*, Rufus and Gellius. And in the epigrams invective against Lesbia is mild at best.

Throughout the epigrams, Catullus oscillates from celebrating a happy union with Lesbia (cc. 83, 92, 104, 107, 109) to, more often, lamenting his unrequited love (cc. 70, 72, 75, 76, 85, 87). Within the poems that portray a more positive account of their relationship, he explains the *mala dicta* they have spoken of each other. In cc. 83 he rationalizes Lesbia’s abuse of him:

Leśbia mi praesente viro mala plurima dicit:

haec illi fatuo maxima laetitia est.

Mule, nihil sentis? Si nostri oblita taceret,

sana esset: nunc quod gannet et obloquitur,

non solum meminit, sed, quae multo acrior est res, 5

irata est. Hoc est, uritur et loquitur.

Lesbia says many bad things to me in front of her husband. This is a great joy to that idiot. You ass, do you not realize? If she could, forgetting, be silent about me, she would be sane. Now she snarls and interrupts me, so not only does she remember me, but a much worse thing, she is angry. That’s that, she burns as she speaks.
Given the ups and downs of the relationship, the more prevalent theme in the epigrams, this could be wishful thinking. Catullus also provides rationale for their abuse of each other in c. 92:

Lesbia mi dicit semper male nec tacet umquam
de me: Lesbia me dispeream nisi amat.

Quo signo? Quia sunt totidem mea: deprecor illam
assidue, verum dispeream nisi amo.

Lesbia always speaks ill of me, nor is she ever silent about me: Lesbia loves me; if not, I would be destroyed. By what sign? Because my signs are the same: I incessantly show disapproval of her, but if I do not love her I would truly be destroyed.

Further, Catullus also back pedals on his previous abuse of his lover, in c. 104:

Credis me potuisse meae maledicere vitae,
ambobus mihi quae carior est oculis?
Non potui, nec, si possem, tam perdite amarem:
sed tu cum Tappone omnia monstra facis.

You believe me to be able to speak badly of my life, she who is dearer to me than my two eyes? I could not, nor, if I were able, would I love her to distraction: but you Tappo make everything monstrous.

If the reader recalls the negative poems about Lesbia in the hendecasyllabics s/he knows Catullus’ claim to be untrue. The *mala dicta* against Lesbia in the epigrams, however, is hardly invective at all, but largely centers on his competing emotions of hate and love for Lesbia: “Odi et amo. Quare id faciam, fortasse requires. / Nescio, sed fieri sentio et
excrucior” (“I hate and I love. You may ask, perhaps, why I do this. I do not know, but I perceive it to be happening and I am crucified”). Catullus more often bemoans his unrequited love, and there are only a few phrases throughout the negative epigrams that are directed at Lesbia: he regards her as “more vile and worthless” the more he knows her (Nunc te cognovi . . . es vilior et levior, 72.4-5), that he cannot wish her well even if she became her best (. . . ut iam nec bene vell queat tibi, si optima fias, 75.3), and calls his love for her a pestilence and ruin (pestis perniciesque, 76.15). In the epigrams, it is not Lesbia who is defaced, but her alleged lovers, Rufus and Gellius.

The rivals for Lesbia’s affections in the hendecasyllabics are largely faceless (cf. c. 37), with Egnatius as a brief exception and Furius and Aurelius occupying some kind of middle ground—it is possible they competed for her love, but there are no direct references to their involvement with her. In the elegiac libellus, however, Catullus serves up some of the fiercest invective, along with a concrete accusation of Rufus and Gellius’ involvement with Lesbia.

Rufus is the first rival who appears in the epigrams. As Rufus wonders why no women wish to sleep with him, Catullus answers that he has no chance because, as rumor says, he keeps a wild goat under his armpits (Laedit te quaedam mala fabula, qua tibi fertur / valle sub alarum trux habitare caper, 69.5-6). Like Gellius, he is insulted before the reader knows his offense.

The first poem in which Gellius appears, c. 74, accuses him of incest:

62 For c. 85 as a paradox epigram, see Feeney 2008: 38.
63 For a reading of the epigrams concerning Rufus’ exclusion from Catullus’ social circle, with aesthetic and moral implications, see Nappa 1999.
64 For background on L. Gellius Publicola, see Skinner 2003: 21.
65 On the theme of incest in Catullan poetry, see Watson 2006.
Gellius audierat patruum obiugare solere,
    si quis delicias diceret aut faceret.
Hoc ne ipsi accideret, patrui perdepsuit ipsam
    uxorem et patruum reddidit Arpocratem.
Quod voluit fecit: nam, quamvis irrumet ipsum 5
    nunc patruum, verbum non faciet patruus.

Gellius had heard that an uncle was accustomed to reproach someone who may
say or do anything erotic. Lest this would happen to himself, he screwed his
uncle’s own wife and swore his uncle to silence. Now he does what he wishes:
for, even if he would face fuck his own uncle, he will not say a word.

The charges here are intense and sexually graphic. Catullus defaces Gellius with one of
the worst taboos, and the emphasis is on sexual insatiability. This insatiability is
something that is parallel with the characterization of Caesar and Mamurra in the
hendecasyllabics.

In c. 80, Gellius is a *pathicus*, willingly performing oral sex on other men:

    Quid dicam, Gelli, quare rosea ista labella
        hiberna fiant candidiora nive,
    mane domo cum exis et cum te octava quiete 5
        e molli longo suscitat hora die?
    Nescio quid certe est: an vere fama susurrate
        grandia te medii tenta vorare viri?
    Sic certe est: clamant Victoris rupta miselli
        ilia, et emulso labra notate sero.
What should I say, Gellius, about how your lips happen to be whiter than wintry snow, when you leave your house in the morning and when the eighth hours rouses you from a quiet nap when the day is long? I do not know what is certain: is what rumor mumurs true, that you devour the hard cock from the middle of a man? Thus is it certain: poor Victor’s ruptured groin shouts it, as do your lips, stained with sucked off semen.

The opening phrase about the paleness of Gellius’ lips sets up the assumption that his expression of pallor is representative of the lover, but this reference is cut short with the literal evidence of his performance of fellatio on another man (Skinner 2003: 84). Before revealing the identity of Gellius, Catullus turns to incest once again (c. 88):

Quid facit is, Gelli, qui cum matre atque sorore
prurit et abiectis pervigilat tunicis?

Quid facit is, patruum qui non sinit esse maritum?

Ecquid scis quantum suscipiat sceleris?

Suscipit, o Gelli, quantum non ultima Tethys66 nec genitor Nympharum ablui Oceanus:

nam nihil est quicquam sceleris, quo prodeat ultra,
non si demisso se ipse voret capite.

What is he doing, Gellius, who has sexual longings for his mother and sister and lies awake at night with their tunics thrown aside. What is he doing, who will not allow his uncle to be a husband? Do you know how much sin he undertakes? He

66 As Watson notes, “... given the existence of a tradition that Oceanus and Tethys violated the incest taboo by marrying each other, given also that these two personages feature in a narrative that reestablishes conjugal relations between the divine brother and sister Zeus and Hera, the maritime spouses scarcely constitute the most appropriate paradigm for metaphorical ablution of Gellius’ incestuous excesses!” (2006: 39).
undertakes so much, O Gellius, that neither furthest Tethys nor Oceanus, father of
the nymphs, can wash it away: for there is not any crime to which he could
proceed further, not unless he devoured himself with his lowered head.

CC. 89 and 90 accuse Gellius of incest a second time, with his mother and sister again,
adding his aunt and cousins to the register. These poems deface Gellius in the worst of
ways, but it is not until c. 91 that the reader learns the reason for the speaker’s animosity
toward Gellius—it is personal:

Non ideo, Gelli, sperabam te mihi fidum
   in misero hoc nostro, hoc perdito amore fore,
quod te cognossem bene constantemve putarem
   aut posse a turpi mentem inhibere probro;
sed neque quod matrem nec germanam esse videbam  5
   hanc tibi, cuius me magnus edebat amor.

Et quamvis tecum multo coniungerer usu,
   non satis id causae credideram esse tibi.
Tu satis id duxti: tantum tibi gaudium in omni
   culpa est, in quacumque est aliquid sceleris.  10

It is not because I knew you well or thought you to be faithful, Gellius, or that you
would be able to keep your mind from vile sin, that I thought you would be loyal
to me, in this miserable hopeless love of mine; but because I was aware that she,
for whom a great love consumes me, was neither mother nor sister to you. And
although I was linked with you in close friendship, I did not think that would be
enough cause for you. You thought it enough: there’s so much joy for you in all there is fault, in whatever there is of crime.

With the information given about Gellius in c. 91, the reader also becomes aware that Rufus is charged with the same crime. In c. 71, the speaker says that his rival, presumably Gellius, ends up with the same disease because of their shared mistress, and in c. 77 we learn that the shared woman is Catullus’ Lesbia:

Rufe mihi frustra ac nequiquam credite amice

(frustra? immo magno cum pretio atque malo),

sicine subrepsti mi, atque intestina perurens
ei misero eripuisti omnia nostra bona?

Eripuisti, heu heu nostrae crudele venenumvitae, heu heu nostrae pestis amicitiae.

Rufus, in vain and to no purpose believed to be a friend to me (in vain? rather with a great and evil price), thus you have crept up on me, and burning my inner organs you snatched away all good things from miserable me? You snatched away, alas, alas, you the cruel poison of my life, alas, alas, the plague of my friendship.

Because of Lesbia’s infidelity, Rufus and Gellius are the overt targets of invective in the elegiac libellus. The faceless lovers of c. 37 are no longer the presumed threat—it is two men whom Catullus called friend who are named and vilified.
Conclusion

While there are cross-references between poems throughout the entire Catullan corpus and it is possible that all 116 poems were, at some point, published together, by looking at the invective from poems 1-60 and 65-116 as units that stand on their own, notable shifts occur in the figures of Lesbia, Caesar, Mamurra, and Lesbia’s respective lovers. In the epigrams, the invective against Lesbia is more mild, and poems about her are dominated by the themes of unrequited love and betrayal; Caesar and Mamurra, while still targets of invective, do not have the same sexually explicit charges and Mamurra, who was railed against for his insatiable greed is shown as impoverished; Furius and Aurelius, the rivals of the hendecasyllabics are threatened violently in c. 16, but not as consistently and pointedly as Rufus and Gellius are in the epigrams. And it is not Lesbia who closes the elegiac *libellus* and Catullus’ known body of work, but Gellius, who committed the most grievous crime (c. 116):

Saepe tibi studioso animo venante requires
carmina uti possem mittere Battiadae,
qui te lenirem nobis, neu conarere
tela infesta meum mittere in usque caput,
hunc video mihi nunc frustra sumptum esse laborem,
Gelli, nec nostras hic valuisses preces.
Contra nos tela ista tua evitabimus acta:

at fixus nostris tu dabi’ supplicium.

Often I have been searching around, my mind eagerly hunting, for how I would be able to send you one of Callimachus’ poems, which would soften you towards
me, so you would not try to send dangerous spears on my head. Now I see the labors I undertook were in vain, Gellius, my good prayers to be worthless. Now in return I will evade those missiles of yours hurled against us: but you shall be punished, pierced forever by mine.

Because of Gellius’ disregard of his friendship with Catullus, the love poet is forced to hurl iambic threats.

As evidenced by the epigraphs that open this chapter, and this investigation itself, it is apparent that Catullus is, indeed, a problem. Opposing scholars equally well-versed in construing Latin produce divergent interpretations of single poems, cycles, *libelli*, and the collection as a whole. In this chapter, I have not sought to produce a neat, easy interpretation of invective in Catullus—the poet resists finite observations. While Catullus does not engage in invective drag in the way the other authors of this study do, throughout his work there are intersections with various aspects of my theory: conflicting personae, masculine anxiety, and masculine performances that do not quite fit the accepted modalities of the time. Gender inversion is a current that runs through all of these moves. Putting these instances in conversation with one another highlight both parallels and divergences.

The speakers of Catullus’ œuvre are divergent and conflicting. From poem to poem, and sometimes within the same poem, Catullus is both the effeminate jilted lover and conventionally masculine. He is both the *flos* run over by the plow or castrated lover-figure as well as masculine hurler of invective threat. What these disjuncts show is that masculinity itself is fragile, inconsistent, and unstable, which causes fissures between the poet and speaker:
The separation of the mask from the face of the performer is enhanced by the underlying cause of these anti-social acts, which are typically motivated by a slight to the poet’s masculinity. Since they are aligned with social norms, the narrated actions are appealing; but, as extreme, rabid attacks, they always hint at their cause which lies in an earlier failure of masculine prowess . . . There is much in common with Judith Butler’s analysis of the ‘performativity’ of drag queens, who simultaneously repulse, through their over-the-top performance of gender roles, and attract, by the accuracy with which they perform gender and, thus, reveal their status as performances (Butler 1990: 134-35)” (Lavigne 2010: 80).

This instability causes multiple instantiations of masculinity to emerge, each persona never quite attaining the masculine ideal. While in Catullus effeminacy is primarily restricted to love poems, and not invective threat, the labile nature of masculinity is integral to the invective drag in which the other authors of this study participate. The manifestation of masculinity’s instability in conflicting personae results directly from anxiety over the tenuous nature of masculinity.

Throughout many of the poems that center around Lesbia, Catullus is in a relationship with an imbalance of power. He is the one under Lesbia’s control, he is the one asking for thousands of kisses and praying, in frustra, for her to be chaste. The Catullus of his love poetry is the man who comes under Furius and Aurelius’ attack. Catullus’ reply, c. 16, acknowledges his presentation as mollis in the kissing poems, and presumably others, and maintains that just because his poems are soft he is, in fact, durus and capable of returning their insults with hypermasculine threat. In the epigrams, Catullus’ lack of potentia, his lack of ability to keep Lesbia to himself, fuels the hate-
filled lines of invective against not Lesbia, but her lovers and Catullus’ former friends Rufus and Gellius. The hypermasculine stance in these invectives does not possess traces of femininity, is not in the garb of invective drag, but has these instances of *mollitia* in view.

What the reader is left with is a poet who does not fit neatly into any one category. He is hypermasculine and effeminate, hard and soft, aggressive and wounded. He loves just as well as he hates, often simultaneously. What Catullus does for this study is provide a series of performances of masculinity—performances that are contradictory, complex, and self-referential. Throughout the corpus, Catullus renegotiates his self-presentation and positioning. He presents himself as both effeminate and masculine, *durus* and *mollis*, and is on both sides of invective threat. And while these performances do not quite fit, ultimately the roots of performance are the same, and what we are left with, perhaps, is cross-dressing that does not quite pass but acts as a springboard for future performers.
CHAPTER THREE: CICERO: ABJECTION, THE ACTOR, AND POLITICAL INVICTIVE

Often considered the exemplar *par excellence* of Roman Republican virtue, Cicero’s philosophical works and speeches set precepts for the invective genre—appropriate language, topics, and strategies for the effective tearing down of one’s opponents. While Cicero’s invectives necessarily served a public function within the Roman legal system, these speeches, as well as his oratorical theory, served first of all as a means for Cicero to present himself as a viable masculine subject. This chapter will consider how Cicero’s *De Oratore* and his speeches, *In Verrem, In Pisonem,* and *Philippic 2,* utilize theory of invective and invective practice as a means to construct the persona of the speaker. In constructing this persona, the orator engages in an abjection process with the actor, which is prevalent throughout all of *De Oratore.* Through his crossing of lines of gender, class, and decorum in the invective speeches, he becomes a spectator of his own body through his performance of self, the passive object of the voyeurism that drives his invective against others. Cicero’s invective drag is the turning of the gaze on the speaker, achieved through transgression and self-presentation.

In order to detail how invective drag operates in Cicero, I will first discuss an early speech, *In Verrem. In Verrem,* throughout which Cicero’s aedile-elect status is highlighted, coincides with Cicero’s emergence as a viable figure within the Roman political scene. In this speech, one can see the crucial need for the orator to develop his own persona through invective. Cicero achieves a coherent persona, one that presents him
as deferential to authority and simultaneously a contender in future political discourse. This speech, which shows the necessary focus on the orator as the key to effective speech, can be read against Cicero’s later philosophical treatise on rhetoric, *De Oratore*, which will be discussed in the second section of this chapter.

As *De Oratore* was a reflective piece, written during Cicero’s time in exile after the Catalinarian conspiracy, the orator was undoubtedly evaluating his own political accomplishments, especially in the oratorical arena, as well as elevating a reputation tarnished by his exile. By focusing on the orator himself, rather than general rules of oratory, the text foregrounds the process of self-fashioning. In the invective mode specifically, the orator can dramatically craft his own self-presentation. Crucial to the construction of this self-presentation lies in delivery, or *actio*. The importance of *actio* is a problematic concept because of the figure of the actor.

The third section of this chapter will focus on a pervasive undercurrent of the work that is operative in self-fashioning: the juxtaposition of the orator and the actor, who is often brought close to the orator for comparison and then radically pushed away in the process of abjection. This back and forth between comparison and contrast with the orator highlights the inescapable centrality of theatricality in oratorical performance that is pervasive in Cicero’s speeches.

The fourth section of this chapter will discuss how Cicero’s two later speeches, *In Pisonem* and *Philippic 2*, can be read against his oratorical theory and *In Verrem*. Whereas *In Verrem* was published when Cicero’s political position was precarious, his later speeches were crafted when he was in a more powerful place within Roman political society. Cicero’s more secure position allows the orator to circumvent the rules he lays
out in *De Oratore* in more dramatic ways that diverge from the operative discourse of masculinity of his time. *In Pisonem* was delivered after Cicero’s return from exile when he needed to reestablish himself and restore his reputation within politics. And finally, *Philippic 2*, the most scathing of the speeches against Antony, is not only Cicero’s last exertion of political power, but also a showcase of the orator’s experience and steady voice amidst the crumbling of the Roman Republic. These two speeches employ voyeurism, gossip, and excess—traits that are all coded as feminine in the ancient world. After discussing these aspects of the two speeches and their relationship to *De Oratore* and *In Verrem*, I will argue that in the process of making the opponents other through theatrics and transgression of gendered behavioral expectations, the orator turns the gaze upon himself through his self-articulation, rendering him a passive object to be viewed, in the feminine position.

*The Cultivation of the Masculine Persona: The Verrines*

Although rhetoric and oratory became crucial practices as early as communities began organizing themselves into recognizable states (Habinek 2005: 1), rhetoric’s potential power of self-promotion finds no finer example than in the career of Cicero himself. Cicero, as a *novus homo*, the first holder of high office in his family, attained fame through his oratorical and legal successes. His early court cases gained him the renown, as well as the loyalty and support, needed for his electoral ambitions. His early successes enabled him to go through the *cursus honorum* at rapid pace, culminating in his election as consul in 63 B.C.E. at the age of 42, the youngest age allowed for election to the consulship (Habinek 2005: 26; May 2002b: 2-17).
The art of speaking well was a large part of Roman male education. Rhetorical education was:

. . . designed to instill in Roman boys habits that would make their masculinity literally visible to the world: along with constructing logical arguments, handling narration and interrogation, and creative ways to use words, they learned to stand up straight, look others straight in the eye, gesticulate with grace and authority, and speak with easy confidence (Connolly 2007: 86).

Rhetoric, exclusively the domain of men, taught Roman men how to be “good at being men” so that they would be able to cultivate their public self on their own terms. A Roman man’s dignitas, or his worth as determined by his community, was not ingrained. As Gunderson writes, “the elite male of antiquity is never a given: the infant never passes into aristocratic manhood without mastering a variety of recognized threats and crises” (Gunderson 2000: 12-13). A Roman man’s skill in oratory, and most importantly his performance of self, was crucial to his reputation and success.

Although, as Cicero argues, a wide base of knowledge is important to the successful orator, it is in the delivery, actio, that the speaker is fashioning himself for public view. This exercise in self-presentation does not limit itself to audience perception but is an important space for the subject’s constitution of itself. The common understanding of “performance” “may readily align performance with rhetoric under the sign of the false and merely seeming,” but when the act of performance is more carefully considered, it can be seen as a “critical site of subject constitution” (Gunderson 2000: 112). While several forms of rhetoric are at play in the self-articulation within the speeches, as will be discussed below, invective speech in particular provides an excellent
arena for the orator to define himself against an other, elevating his positive attributes while vilifying his opponent’s faults.

The juxtaposition of the noble orator/prosecutor and unworthy opponent/defendant has pushed much scholarship on Roman invective to argue that the objective of invective is to make the opponent other in the pursuit of reinforcing communal values and prejudices. Anthony Corbeill’s important work, particularly his (1996) book *Controlling Laughter: Political Humor in the Late Republic*, has contributed much to the study of invective along these terms. He argues that the invective speaker draws on specific biases already present in society. The persuasive power of humor lies not merely in the speaker’s ability to relax and entertain the audience (*captatio benevolentiae*). Rather, within each instance of abuse reside values and preconceptions that are essential to the way a Roman of the late Republic defined himself in relation to his community (Corbeill 1996: 5).

The values and preconceptions that, for Corbeill, the orator proposes and reinforces, are those of the elite. Consequently, invective functions as a space in which the invective speaker can make his opponent excluded from the elite realm through public shaming, a process that reasserts the power and seeming cohesion of elite Roman values.  

Corbeill argues that Cicero’s greatest works of invective, *In Verrem*, *In Pisonem*, and *Philippicae* are “moral lessons for posterity” (Corbeill 2002: 211).  

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67 “The inherited responsibility for maintaining this desirable fear of shame falls . . . to the public speaker, the representative of the ‘best citizens.’ Through the extra legal means of invective, the public speaker employs language to exclude the potential lawbreaker from the community of the elite” (Corbeill 2002: 198).

68 Corbeill uses Cicero’s letter to Brutus as a source for the orator’s own evaluations of his invective speeches: Cicero’s most lucid explanation of invective’s importance: “I delivered these opinions . . . not so much for the sake of vengeance. Rather, I intended to use fear for the present situation to deter wicked
While invective certainly has a social function of establishing, altering, or reinforcing communal values, reducing all instances of this type of speech to its communal function does not take into account invective’s relationship to the speaker himself. In his discussion of invective, Corbeill references the anxiety of the Roman male, due to the precarious nature of masculinity, but only in terms of how the speaker’s ability to rouse such feelings affects the audience and supports communal prejudices and values. In invective that attacks an opponent’s perceived masculine failure, Corbeill says that what makes such an attack effective is that “…the theoretical possibility that a man could lose his gender has opened up a legitimate space for invective. The ‘androgynous man’ does not represent a breach of logic so much as a potential threat always inherent for the male” (Corbeill 1996: 150). Playing on this kind of anxiety does affect the audience, but this dissertation seeks to redirect that anxiety to investigate how it functions within the speaker himself and drives his own self-presentation.

Invective speech lends itself to subject constitution because of its relationship to subjectivity and the other. In the game of praise and blame rhetoric, or epideictic, as the speaker denigrates his opponent, he situates himself against that opponent in order to constitute himself and make himself look better. As Dugan writes,

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citizens from attacking the state, while I intended to leave behind for posterity a lesson so that no one might wish to imitate their style of madness” (ad Brut. 23.10 (1.15.10) qtd. in Corbeill 2002: 212; translation and emphasis Corbeill’s).

69 Corbeill most often references the Roman male’s anxiety over the precarious nature of masculinity with charges of effeminacy, often in tandem when charges of excess are brought against an opponent: “The power in the rhetoric of banqueting lies not simply in a clever manipulation of xenophobia but in Roman concerns about the nature of the masculine self” (Corbeill 1996: 128) because “An effeminate male participates in the debauchery of the feast; the stigma of convivial excess stems from anxiety over what constitutes—and what deconstitutes—Roman masculinity” (Corbeill 1996: 128-29). The androgynous figure of the effeminate male “appealed to Roman fears of the potentially unstable nature of masculinity” (Corbeill 1996: 11); See also Edwards 1993.
Epideictic, since it is not grounded in the reality of a court case or political meeting, is a genre that stands apart from questions of truth and falsity. Its presence within the ludic domain of *otium*, the realm of the free-play of signification, suggests that its orientation may be reversed, from praise to blame and vice versa (Dugan 2001: 42; See also 36).70

Cicero’s invective speeches contain many elements of epideictic. Epideictic’s relationship to both performance and textual fixity are pervasive in the speeches discussed in this chapter. Because “epideictic is the rhetorical genre most associated both with *ex tempore*, *viva voce* performance and with the textual fixity of written form,” its “writerliness reflects both its status as the most self-consciously literary and artistic rhetorical type and the fact that epideictic was thought particularly suited to publication” (Dugan 2001: 42). Cicero’s *In Pisonem* is performative and theatrical, and his written but never delivered speeches, the *actio secunda* of *In Verrem* and *Philippic 2*, are written theatrically to preserve this facet of praise and blame rhetoric. In the course of the speeches, Cicero defines himself against his opponents.

The speeches that thrust Cicero into public view were the *Verrine Orations*, which coincided with his election to the aedileship in 70 B.C.E.71 The Verrines were speeches made against Gaius Verres, a former governor of Sicily who was on trial for corruption and extortion. Cicero, who served as a quaestor in Sicily five years before the trial, took on several Sicilian clients who were beneficial sources of information and

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70 See also Craig (2004: 194) who argues that invective is “part of a larger arena of social expression in which it can be argued that a speaker, and thus a rhetorically educated audience, are not at all concerned with the plausibility, much less the actual validity, of specific assertions.” See also Aristotle’s definition of epideictic at *Rhet.* 1.3.1358b20-29.

71 Even though the early speeches helped Cicero establish himself as part of the higher class of Romans, publishing the Verrines “offered him a chance to define a public persona in a much more sustained work and before a much wider audience than those earlier speeches” (Vasaly 2002: 98).
supporters throughout the trial (Vasaly 2001: 90). The first speech was the only one to actually be delivered. In this speech, Cicero spends minimal time talking about Verres’ actual extortion crimes. Instead, the orator employs an approach that diverges from the commonplaces of legal oratory. First, playing on the vanity of the all-senator jury and emphasizing Verres’ early character, and second, admonishing the defense for their attempts to delay proceedings until the following year. In this short speech, Cicero, given his precarious position on the fringes of Roman politics, emphasizes his commitment to the well-being of the state and his own virtue while remaining deferential to the senatorial jury.

Cicero opens the speech by telling the jury that this trial will be a chance for them to restore their reputation for dismissing cases for money (In Verrem 1.1):

Quod erat optandum maxime, iudices, et quod unum ad invidiam vestri ordinis infamiamque iudiciorum sedandum maxime pertinebat, id non humano consilio, sed prope divinitus datum atque oblatum vobis summo rei publicae tempore videtur. Inveteravit enim iam opinio perniciosa rei publicae, vobisque periculosa, quae non modo apud populum Romanum, sed etiam apud exteras nationes, omnium sermone percrebruit: his iudiciis quae nunc sunt, pecuniosum hominem, quamvis sit nocens, neminem posse damnari.

Judges, that thing that greatly should be hoped for, that one thing most pertinent to allaying the hatred of your order and disgrace of your judgments, which appears to have been bestowed upon you, given not by the counsel of man but on

72 Juries were made up entirely of senators because of Sulla’s laws, and were consequently prone to corruption. With this in mind, Cicero argues that it is not only Verres who is on trial but the senators themselves for charges of impropriety—whatever verdict they placed on Verres would reflect on them either positively or negatively, as acquitting Verres, he asserts, would mean the condemnation of the Senate (1.47).
account of the gods at a time of highest importance for the republic. Indeed an opinion destructive to the republic, and dangerous for you, has established itself that has become very wide spread in conversation of everyone, not only among the people of Rome but also foreign peoples: that the courts that now exist are not able to convict any man, although he may be guilty, as long as he is a rich man. Cicero is setting himself up on equal footing with the senators, taking the opportunity to admonish them for their previous behavior and assert himself as someone who has the reputation of the Roman senate as a top priority.

He then is sure to mention he has the Roman people’s “highest good will and interest” as the trial’s prosecutor (cum summa voluntate et expectation populi Romani, In Verrem 1.2). Conversely, the defending attorney’s inability to defend Verres is a two part problem: on the one hand, no one could be skilled enough in oratory and, on the other hand, Verres’ vices are too great: “Indeed what natural talent is so great, what faculty of speaking rich enough, which would be able to defend even some part of the life of that man, convicted of so many vices and crimes and already previously damned by the will and judgment of everyone?” (Etenim quod est ingenium tantum, quae tanta facultas dicende et copia, quae istius vitam, tot vitiis flagitiisque convictam, iam pridem omnium voluntate iudicioque damnatam, aliqua ex parte possit defendere?, In Verrem 1.3). To Cicero, rhetoric has the power to make or break a defendant’s chances in court, and he plans on breaking them.

Later in the speech, Cicero promises to act in concert with the will of the populace during his aedileship, which will begin the following year (In Verrem 1.36). Despite the fact that in this section Cicero promotes his future virtuous magistracy, just a few
sentences prior he takes pains to tell the jury that he will not use the fully allotted time in self-promotion that would show that “no one in the memory of man may appear to have come before a court of justice better prepared, more vigilant, or more trained for a trial” (ut nemo umquam post hominum memoriam paratior, vigilantior, compositior ad iudicium venisse vidiatur, In Verrem 1.32).\(^{73}\) Despite this appeal to modesty, the actio secunda of In Verrem provides the self praise he denies to seek in the first speech.\(^{74}\)

The second speech was intended to be a rebuttal if the trial had continued. Even though the trial came to a halt with Verres’ self-imposed exile, Cicero wrote the actio secunda, which is longer and more intricate than any of his previous speeches. The speech, written as if it had actually been given before the jury, places the speech within its own genre. As Vasaly notes, the speech:

> ...[hovers] somewhere between epideictic (i.e. literary or ceremonial oratory) and forensic oratory. It is similar to certain literary orations, such as those of Isocrates, in its creation of the illusion of an original speech act that never occurred, but dissimilar to such works of pure epideictic by its intimate relationship to an earlier, albeit incomplete, forensic performance—a relationship that ... Cicero allows to determine much of the speech’s form and content (Vasaly 2002: 91).

\(^{73}\) He cites the fact that if he uses the extent of the time allotted there would be great danger in the criminal escaping (Sed in hac laude industriae meae reus ne elabatur summum periculum est, 1.32).

\(^{74}\) In depicting Verres’ character for the jury, Cicero uses occultatio (1.12-15), where “enough of a summary of the allegedly omitted material is given to provide the information, and hence the effect, he wishes to convey” (Usher 2008: 18), which includes brief reference to Verres’ indecent youth. Cicero says he “shall pass over all that I cannot refer to without indecency” (1.14). Because Cicero did not lay out what charges and facts he would put forward in his prosecution, the defense was in an uncomfortable position. This ended up a moot point because after the first speech, Verres fled Rome and went into exile.
The main objective for Cicero’s publication of this speech was to create a *monumentum* to his rhetorical skill and patriotism that could be a “public work which for Cicero, now aedile-elect” that “might stand as a source of public renown and self promotion as memorable as the games, building projects, and festivals he would oversee in his aedilican year” (Vasaly 2002: 91-92). The *actio secunda* is less about damning an already self-exiled Verres and more about creating an other to emphasize Cicero’s skill and virtue.

The relationship of this prosecution speech to his political career appears early in the speech: “Hanc ego causam cum agam beneficio populi Romani de loco superiore, non vereor ne aut istum vis ulla ex populi Romani suffragiis eripere, aut a me ullam munus aedilitatis amplius aut gratius populo Romano esse possit” (“As I conduct this case from the high place of the support of the Roman people, I am not afraid that any violence will snatch [Verres] away from the verdict of the Roman people or that any other service from me as aedile will be able to be more honorable or pleasing to the Roman populace,” 2.1.14). The next time that he emphasizes that he is executing the will of the people, he adds that he undertook this particular case not only to help give a criminal his due “but also so that a diligent and strong accuser may come to the trial” (*sed etiam diligens ac firmus accusator ad iudicium venire*, 2.2.1). Cicero closes the *actio secunda* not with an everlasting image of Verres’ wickedness, but with a reassertion of his diligence in the case, obligation to Rome, and the sole credit that is his due if the court rules in his favor (2.5.188):

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75 Cicero also mentions that his election to the aedileship was bestowed by the will of the people alone (*In Verrem* 2.5.36-37).
si in hoc reo atque in hac causa omnia mea consilia ad salutem sociorum, dignitatem rei publicae, fidem meam spectaverunt, si nullam ad rem nisi ad officium et virtutem omnes meae curae vigiliae cogitationesque elaborarunt, quae mea mens in suscipienda causa fuit, fides in agenda, eadem vestra sit in iudicanda. If this prosecution and all my discussion in this case has considered the safety of the allies, reputation of the republic, and my good faith, if all my thoughts, cares, and vigilance have bestowed care for nothing in this affair except my duty and character, which was my reason in undertaking this case, and integrity in conducting it, that those same motives be yours in sentencing.

Throughout all of *actio secunda* Cicero is very aware of the image of himself that he is crafting for his audience, which in this instance is not only a senatorial jury but also the Roman people. Cicero even ties his public image to his virtuous reputation as quaestor and the acknowledgment that his reputation was earned because of the awareness that he was under constant scrutiny (2.5.35):

Ita quaestor sum factus ut mihi illum honorem tum non solum datum, sed etiam creditum et commissum putarem; sic obtinui quaesturam in Sicilia provincia ut omnium oculos in me unum coniectos esse arbitraber, ut me quaesturamque meam quasi in aliquo terrarum orbis theatro versari existimarem.

Therefore when I was made quaestor, I thought that that honor was not only given to me but entrusted and committed to me. Thus I held the quaestorship in the Sicilian province as I was witnessing that the eyes of everyone were directed upon me alone. I considered myself and my quaestorship as if they were staged in some theatre of the whole world.
The main tactic that adds to Cicero’s ability to craft his persona is the performative nature of the speech.

Although a written speech that was never actually given, the theatricality of the speech permeates the text. Cicero maintains the fiction of the trial, including description of Verres’ reactions in the courtroom and updating the audience on his own emotional state in real time. He addresses the tribunal as if he speaks before them (2.1.2, 2.1.32, 2.2.108), as well as Verres’ lawyer Hortensius with great detail: “Videtis illum subcrispo capillo, nigrum, qui eo vultu nos intuetur ut sibi ipse peracutus esse videatur, qui tabulas tenet, qui scribit, qui monet, qui proximus est” (“You see that man with curly hair, dark complexion, who looks at us with a face that he seems to consider a sharp expression, who holds documents, who writes, who advises, and who is nearest [to Verres],” 2.2.108; See also 2.5.32). This description is a complete fabrication, as the trial never took place.

Cicero calls out Verres throughout the speech, showcasing his opponent’s impotence against the backdrop of his barrage of charges and insults. He even reports Verres’ responses to his ongoing prosecution: “Video quid egerim: erigit se . . .” (“I see what I have done: He raises himself up . . ., 2.1.35).76 Later in the second book of the actio secunda Cicero fires off a series of questions to which Verres will never respond: “Quid expectatis? Quid quaeretis amplius? Tu ipse, Verres, quid sedes? Quid moraris?” (“What are you waiting for? What more are you searching for? You yourself, Verres, why are you sitting? Why do you delay?” 2.2.191).

The invective mode is ideal for fashioning the orator’s own self-presentation because by making the opponent unfit for and dangerous to society, othering him, the

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76 This created reaction of Verres follows Cicero’s mentions of Verres’ more explicit licentious behavior (2.1.33).
orator defines himself against that foil. Verres was “differentiated and cut off by Cicero from the body of the elite” and “in order to do so convincingly, the prosecution [had] to present the court with a probable character worthy of such suspicion” (Hammar 2013: 134). The formal criminal charges were less important to Cicero, and he focused on showing a current of immorality in Verres’ past life to convict him in the present. One of the ways that Cicero tears down his opponent is to question his sexual immorality (In Verrem 2.2.192):

Nunc vero quid faciat Hortensus? Avaritiane criminal frugalitatis laudibus deprecetur? At hominem flagitosissimum, libidinosissimum nequissismumque defendit. An ab hac eius infamia ac nequitia vestros animos in aliam partem fortitudinis commemoratone traducat? At homo inertior, ignavior, magis vir inter mulieres, impure inter viros muliercula proferri non potest.

Truly what should Hortensius do now? Should he beg pardon for [Verres’] charges of greed by praising his honesty? But he defends a man most disgraceful, most sexually wanton like no one before him. Is he to lead your minds away from his dishonor and wickedness by referencing another part of his bravery? But a man is not able to bring forward someone lazier, more cowardly, a great man among women, a filthy little hussy among men.

Verres’ greed is what elicits the comments about his wanton sexuality because “someone who lusted for money could easily be suspected of sexual wantonness, as Roman culture did not ostensibly distinguish between sexual immorality and excesses of other kinds. Lust was lust” (Hammar 2013: 153; See also Edwards 1993: 5). The charge that Verres is a woman among men suggests that he is sexually penetrated by men, passive, and this
makes it impossible for him to maintain his social status. This depiction is a foil to the
*virtus* that Cicero emphasizes within his own presentation.

Although Cicero indeed provides many detailed charges and evidence against
Verres, his consistent juxtaposition of his own merits with Verres’ crimes makes the
figure of the orator central to effective speech. Cicero’s public renown after the
publication of the *Verrine Orations* is tangible proof that the figure of the orator, his self-
portrayal in rhetoric, is a driving force in the pursuit of eloquence, which Cicero would
take up in his philosophical treatise on rhetoric, *De Oratore*.

**De Oratore: Reflection and Making the Ideal Orator**

Because of rhetoric’s impact on Cicero’s career, it is no surprise that *De Oratore* focuses on the figure of the ideal orator, rather than serve as a general handbook on
oratory. The work, written during Cicero’s exile from Rome (58-57 B.C.E.) for ordering
executions without trial during the Catilinarian conspiracy, is both a testament to his
oratorical and political achievements as well as an attempt to reassert his political
influence. He published *De Oratore* the same year as he delivered *In Pisonem* (55
B.C.E.), a speech that attacked those involved in his exile and emphasized the city of
Rome’s joy upon his return. *De Oratore* provides the philosophy behind the cultivation of
the orator’s persona. The work emphasizes the importance of the orator for the health and
safety of the state. The treatise details not only how an orator can put forth the best
persona in order to win the good will of the audience but also, in effect, argues that
carefully crafted positive self-representation indicates inward virtue. In detailing the
construction of the ideal orator, Cicero adds philosophical weight to the practice of

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77 All passages from *De Oratore* are cited from Wilkins’ 2002 text.
Roman oratory. In doing so, an unintended side effect is that the orator becomes a body to be viewed, evaluated, and this body is no doubt constructed through Cicero’s own self-reflection in his earlier speeches.

Cicero’s ideal orator is one of immense learning, ingrained skill (*ingenium*), and inner virtue. As a profession, one is hard pressed to find one more difficult, largely because of the wide breadth of knowledge required of the orator. As he argues in the prologue to Book One: “Ac, mea quidem sententia nemo poterit esse omni laude cumulatus orator, nisi erit omnium rerum magnarum atque artium scientiam consecutus” (“And it is truly my opinion that no one is able to be an orator abundant in all merit, unless he has obtained knowledge of all important subjects and skills,” 1.20). Crassus, who is generally a proponent of Cicero’s views, praises oratory as a means to work for good: “neque vero mihi quidquam . . . praestabilius videtur, quam posse dicendo tenere hominum [coetus] mentis, adlicere voluntates, impellere quo velit, unde autem velit deducere” (“Truly, there is nothing that appears to me more excellent than, in speaking, to be able to hold an assembly of men, to win over the good will of their minds, to drive them to wherever [the speaker] wishes, or to lead them from where he wishes,” 1.30).

What is problematic, of course, is that in order for oratory to do good the speaker’s intentions must be good. Cicero acknowledges that speech can be dangerous but argues that the ideal orator would work for the greater good of the community; however, the criticism that an orator must face is paramount (*Adest enim fere nemo, quin acutius atque acrius vitia in dicente, quam recta videat: ita, quiquid est, in quo offenditur, id etiam illa,*
quae laudanda sunt, obruit, 1.116-17). To be ready to combat these criticisms, the orator must also equip himself with rigorous training to arm himself against attack.78

The ideal orator, which the speakers of De Oratore acknowledge does not actually exist (1.94-95)79 is defined throughout the work and, in many ways, contains aspects of the best of many fields, as Antonius says (1.128):

In oratore autem acumen dialecticorum, sententiae philosophorum, verba proper poetarum, memoria iurisconsulorum, vox tragoedorum, gestus paene summorum actorum est requirendus.

But in an orator we must require the cunning of the logician, the thoughts of the philosopher, words almost of the poet, the memory of the lawyer, the voice of the tragedian, and the gestures almost of the consummate actor.

The comparison between the orator, the actor, and the poet80 is rooted in the emotional task of the orator. For Cicero and the speakers of his dialog, the orator has unmatched abilities in affecting the emotional states of his audience, as inciting or calming the audience members’ emotions is necessary for winning his case. The orator must understand the breadth of human emotion (1.17), and his virtue is manifested in his ability to stir young men’s hearts to anger, hatred, or indignation as well as move them from these same emotions to mildness and mercy (Quis enim nescit, maximam vim

78 To the orator’s required wide breadth of knowledge, effective arrangement, and intimate understanding of human nature, “there ought to be added a certain humor and wit, the erudition suited to a gentleman, and quickness and terseness alike in repelling and delivering the attack, and all joined with light charm and urbanity” (Accedat eodem oportet lepos quidam facetiaeque, et eruditio libero digna, celeritasque et brevitatis et respondendi, et laessendi, subtili venustate, atque urbanitate conjuncta, De Orat. 1.17). This ability, as Crassus says, gives the orator the arma so often invoked in invective: “What however is so critical as always to have weapons by which you are able to defend yourself or provoke the wicked, or when provoke to avenge yourself?” (Quid autem tam necessarium, quam tenere semper arma, quibus vel tectus ipse esse possis vel provocare integer vel te ulcisci lacessitus? De Orat. 1.32).

79 Quintilian makes a similar comment: “We seek to create that perfect orator, who is not able to exist unless he is a good man” (oratorem autem instituimus illum perfectum, qui esse nisi vir bonus non potest, Inst. Rhet. 1 praef. 9).

80 Cp. also de Orat. 3.200 where the orator is compared with the gladiator in the palaestra.
existere oratoris in hominum mentibus vel ad iram, aut ad odium, aut ad dolorem incitandis, vel ab hisce eisdem per motionibus ad lenitatem misericordiamque revocandis? 1.53). This emotional power of the orator over his audience also affects citizens’ actions, as Antonius remarks (2.35):

Eadem facultate et fraus hominum ad pernicie, et integritas ad salutem vocatur.

Quis cohortari ad virtutem ardentius, quis a vitiis acrius revocare? Quis vituperare improbos asperius, quis laudare bonos ornatus? Quis cupiditatem vehementius frangere accusando potest? Quis maerorem levare mitius consolando?

By that same skill [eloquence] the trickery of men is called to ruin and integrity to safety. Who more passionately encourages virtue or more fiercely reclaims from vice? Who can more harshly censure the wicked, or more honorably praise good men? Who, in his accusation, is able to break carnal desire more vehemently?

Who, in consolation, is able to lighten grief more gently?

The ability of the orator to inspire emotion in his hearers is, often, more important than the tools of judgment and deliberation (2.178):

Nihil est enim in dicendo, Catule, maius, quam ut faveat oratoris, qui audiet, utque ipse sic moveatur, ut impetu quodam animi et perturbatione, magis quam iudicio aut consilio regatur.

Now there is nothing greater in speaking, Catulus, than he who hears the orator, favors him, and to have the hearer himself so moved that he is guided by something that is an emotion or impulse of the mind more than by judgment or deliberation.
Antonius’ statement above, in a way, undermines the high importance on wide learning emphasized earlier in *De Oratore*. While moving the audience to specific emotional states is a duty of the effective actor, Antonius cuts short any direct comparison with the actor, who feigns emotion, by stressing that in order to effect emotional changes in the audience, the orator must feel himself the very emotions he wishes to incite. The emotions must “appear to be imprinted and branded upon the orator himself” (*in ipso oratore impressi esse atque inusti videbuntur*, 2.189). Antonius goes on to state emphatically that he never, in a speech, tried to arouse feelings in his audience without being stirred himself by the emotions to which he wished to move them (2.189-90).

The orator’s expression of felt emotion often occurs in invective because in professing his intense indignation for the vices and crimes of the opponent, the audience is roused to feel the same indignation and hopefully grant the orator his desired verdict. The assertions that the orator experiences feelings of repulsion are often coupled with the assertion that the opponent has attained never seen levels of wretchedness, as in *In Verrem*: “Equidem ceteris istius furtis atque flagitiis ita moveor ut ea reprehendenda tantum putem; hic vero tanto dolore adficiar ut nihil mihi indignius, nihil minus ferendum esse videatur” (“For my part I am so moved by his thefts and shameful acts that I think that they ought to be condemned; but this one afflicts me with such pain that nothing appears more shameful, nothing more intolerable,” 2.4.83). The speaker’s intense reaction to the crimes of the opponent emphasizes his modesty and virtue, fashioning himself with the opponent as his foil.

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81 Harris notes that it is possible that Cicero put these comments in Antonius’ mouth as a means to distance the practice from himself: “It was recognized that an effective orator needed to display anger as well as stimulate it. It may be that in *De Oratore* (of 55 BCE) Cicero tried to avoid directly endorsing this view when he attributed it to the unrefined though highly successful orator of the previous generation, M. Antonius (consul in 99)” (Harris 2001: 211).
Antonius himself notes the performative self-fashioning required when making an opponent appear unfit for society (*De Orat.* 2.182):

*Valet igitur multum ad vincendum probari mores et instituta et facta et vitam eorum, qui agent causas, et eorum, pro quibus, et item improbari adversariorum, animosque eorum, apud quos agetur, conciliari quam maxime ad benevolentiam, cum erga oratorem tum erga illum pro quo dicet orator. Conciliantur autem animi dignitate hominis, rebus gestis, existimatione vitae; quae facilius ornari possunt, si modo sunt, quam fingi, si nulla sunt. Sed haec adiuvent in oratore: lenitas vocis, voltus pudor- [is significatio], verborum comitas; si quid persequare acrius, ut invitus et coactus facere videare.*

Therefore it will be useful for the customs, principles, deeds, and life courses both of those who plead cases and of the clients to be approved, and conversely those of the opponents to be reproached; and for the feelings of the tribunal to be, as much as possible, benevolent both towards the orator and the client for whom he speaks. Moreover, the members of the court are won over by a man’s reputation, achievements, or esteemed life, which are able to be embellished more easily, if indeed they are true, than to be made up if they do not exist. But these things are useful for the orator: a light tone, a modest expression, polite language; and if he pursues something aggressively to appear to do so unwillingly and under compulsion.

In this passage, Antonius, while discussing the importance of communal values—and asking for a consensus of approval from the audience—belie the fact that this is achieved through performance. In the speaker’s performance, he is placed under
evaluation in the same way that Cicero says he was constantly judged in his previous political career (*In Verrem* 2.5.35). Consequently, at the same time the opponent is held up to the audience for approval, the orator is staging himself to undergo the same evaluation.

In its presentation of the ideal orator, *De Oratore* creates a body to be viewed and judged based on its appearance in much the same way that the accused in the courtroom is on display and evaluated. The body put forth in the rhetorical textbook, as Erik Gunderson argues, is “a discursive body and a body that is a product of its own description” (Gunderson 2000: 4) so that the self is created through description of the self. The need to constitute the self derives from a feeling of lack that results from the inability to attain a cohesive representation of masculinity. The anxiety that arises in the subject as a result of this lack propels the subject to construct himself against an other. This process is repetitive because it is doomed to fail:

Indeed, rhetorical theory requires the constant revisiting of this site of loss to secure that the illegitimate is berated all over again. The handbook’s therapy fails once again, and pure masculinity remains an elusive and ephemeral dream. But again the failure is a success to the extent that the process itself has useful social consequences that are served even as one is cheated of the ostensible goal. Thus there is a melancholy that clings variously to the performative as one of its fundamental moments and as a sort of engine driving the compulsive repetitions of both performance and the theory of performance (Gunderson 2000: 20).\(^\text{82}\)

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\(^{82}\) See also Gunderson 2000: 26: “Rhetoric needs performativity to secures its status as a lived modality of power. the performance, though, is never complete. Nor, in its turn, is performance even adequately or exhaustively described by the theory that would encompass it.”
Gunderson argues that in the orator’s repetitive process of dealing with the lack within himself, he deposits that lack on the other and emerges as virile and masculine. Thus, in mediating charges of effeminacy that result from oratory’s feminine virtues and its association with the actor, which will be discussed below, Gunderson’s estimation is that the orator emerges from this process as a better actor, a better man, than the others against whom he defines himself (Gunderson 2000: 131).

Whereas in Gunderson’s determination the orator under review is found to portray a Roman masculinity that coincides with the operative discourse, I wish to expand his reading to contend that the orator’s performance puts him in a similarly submissive (and consequently feminine) position as an object of the male gaze. As a theatrical body to be viewed, the usually feminine object that is the subject of the gaze is the orator himself. The turning of that gaze is inspired by the orator’s constant struggle between maintaining a masculine performance and achieving masculine presentation by working outside of acceptable masculine behavior, and this struggle is manifested within the dichotomy between the orator and the actor that is a current in rhetorical speeches and treatises.

Actio and the Abj ect Actor

The gendered problem that is apparent in rhetoric is the tension between masculine virtues and the virtues of successful oratory. If “virtue, action, substance, integrity, and war constitute the ideal values of Roman manliness in its most archaic form—the purest expression of Rome’s collective cultural fantasy” then the values that make good oratory are completely counter: “words, style, eloquence, artifice, politics”

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83 “By depositing his lack in these other bodies and assuring the virility and potency of all cathexes to his own body” (Gunderson 2000: 135).
There is a split between words (women) and deeds (men). The tension between masculine and feminine is because Rhetoric and its object, eloquence, are constituted in and made possible by things that the Romans (and other cultures, ancient and modern) defined as not-manly: the artful manipulation of words, the willingness to deceive, the equation of power with persuasion rather than action, verbal ornament, theatricality, emotional demonstrativeness. The failure of ideal masculinity to square with the demands of eloquence makes rhetoric’s legitimacy a fundamental issue for Roman rhetoricians—its legitimacy as a social practice, a pedagogy, a professional discipline, and a theory of language (Connolly 2007: 84).

The problematic aspects that Connolly mentions—manipulation, ornament, theatricality, emotional appeals—are bound up within the execution of oratory. In discussing the ways in which the orator can achieve successful delivery, *De Oratore* repetitively references models and techniques that are coded as non-masculine, particularly the relationship between *actio* and the figure of the actor. The actor, in both *De Oratore* and the speeches under discussion, looms over the texts; he cannot be eradicated because the orator defines himself against the actor, but when he recognizes himself in the actor he pushes him away in a continuing abjection process. The inability to eradicate the actor from the realm of oratory is lucidly displayed in the invective speeches because they diverge from the admonitions voiced in *De Oratore*.

The hesitancy to associate the orator with the actor lies in the actor’s status in the Roman social structure. According to prescriptions for Roman masculinity, the *vir*’s body is inviolable; except in the case of soldiers, the Roman male body was not to be used by
others for gratification—physical or otherwise (Connolly 2007: 89; Walters 1997; Williams 1999). Given that the objective of the actor is to give pleasure to an audience, the actor is in a subservient, submissive position. The profession of acting, therefore, was limited to those belonging to the lower class. In a culture that “privileges authenticity over acting,” and the tendency to perceive theatricality as feminine, “rhetorical discourse may be seen to undermine its own quest: in its effort to inculcate the essence of manliness, rhetoric ends up constantly at war with itself” (Connolly 2007: 90). At the same time that Cicero instructs the good, manly orator” to ‘be what he wishes to seem’ (vero assequetur, ut talis videatur, qualem se videri velit, De Orat. 2.176), his acknowledgment of the proximity between the rhetorical and the dramatic acts implies that masculinity, along with its assimilated values, such as sincerity, authenticity, and knowledge of the truth, are learned techniques, unnatural and artificial—the very inversion of the values masculinity is imaged to represent (Connolly 2007: 90, emphasis in original; See also Connolly 1998: 136-37).

*De Oratore*, then, cannot escape from its own “actorliness . . . generating the effect necessary to create an impression of auctoritas” (Zerba 2002: 318). The realization that masculinity is learned rather than engrained, that masculinity is contingent on performance, contributes to the anxiety surrounding masculine identity. In Cicero’s ideal scenario, actio “refers to a performance in which the orator’s gestures, voice, and body language truthfully enact the inner good man that he is—the thoughts, arguments, interpretations, and ends of his disciplined, well-trained soul. But this sense often gives way to talk about the orator as pretender, masker, dissimulator” (Zerba 2002: 301). This
anxiety is played out between the orator and actor with respect to their shared investment
in ornamentation and appeals to emotion.

The orator’s connection to appeals to emotion and performance, however, makes crossing in and out of the realm of the actor common in speeches, especially invective speeches because of their performativity. Actio is what allows the orator (and the actor) to affect his audience emotionally — the most important means of securing the desirable verdict. Delivery is so crucial, Crassus argues, that even a mediocre speaker with great delivery can outdo the best: “Actio, inquam, in dicendo una dominator; sine hac summus orator esse in numero nullo potest, mediocris hac instructus summos saepe superare” (“Delivery, I say, is the one master of speaking; without this the greatest orator is not able to be of any account at all, and an average speaker trained in delivery often surpasses the best,” 3.213).

Earlier in the dialog, the figure of the actor, most often the famed actor Roscius, is brought into view as a useful model for physical performance (1.156):

Iam vocis, et spiritus, et totius corporis, et ipsius linguae motus et exercitationes, non tam artis indigent, quam laboris; quibus in rebus habenda est ratio diligenter, quos imitemur, quorum similes velimus esse. Intuendi nobis sunt non solum oratores, sed etiam actores, ne mala consuetudine ad aliquam deformitatem pravitatemque veniamus.

Now the movement and training of the voice, breath, the whole body, and the tongue itself require not so much art as work; and in these matters, it must be carefully considered whom we should imitate, who we wish to be similar to. We

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84 Connolly defines ornament as “first of all, superfluous: it is what fills the space between what is necessary for bare communication and what is not” (2007: 93). This crucial need for ornamentation in rhetoric also elicits comparison between the orator and the poet and the mime.
ought to consider not only orators, but also actors, lest by bad habit we may come
to some ugly condition.

The burden to create a scene also falls on the orator, as it is his responsibility, when
telling stories or jokes, to make the audience feel as if the stories are happening in real
time:

Est autem haec huius generis virtus, ut ita facta demonstres, ut mores eius, de quo
narres, ut sermo, ut vultus omnes exprimantur, ut eis audiunt, tum geri illa
fierique videantur.

Now the virtue of this kind [of jesting], is that you refer to the incidents in such a
way, that the customs, speech, and all the facial expressions of the one whom you
are speaking about are portrayed so that to those listening, those incidents appear
to be happening and taking place [at the same time].

Aspiring orators should study these aspects of actors but with the caveat, which Antonius
gives, that the orator cannot spend all of his time on gesture and vocal training (1.251).

Despite the initial comparison with the actor, Antonius expresses reservations lest all
orators should try to be too much like Roscius (1.258-59). Crassus will get into specific
physical movements of the orator that separate him from the actor at the end of the third
book, and in the first book Antonius differentiates the actor and the orator based upon the
kinds of criticism they receive from the audience in response to their respective
performances.

In his delivery, the orator is judged simultaneously as he speaks, which makes for
the great burden and power of the orator (1.116):
Magnus quoddam est onus atque munus, suscipere, atque profiteri, se esse, omnibus silentibus, unum maximis de rebus, magno in conventu hominum, audiendum. Adest enim fere nemo, quin acutius atque acrius vitia in dicente, quam recta videat: ita, quidquid est, in quo offenditur, id etiam illa, quae laudanda sunt, obruit.

Great indeed are the burden and the duty that [the orator] takes up, who declares himself, when all are silent, as the one who ought to be heard concerning the greatest affairs, in a large assembly of men. For there is almost no one present who may see with a sharper and more piercing eye the good points in speaking than his faults.

Whereas if an actor, even one as talented as Roscius, gives a bad performance, the audience would likely say that it was because he was “out of sorts,” an orator is held to a much higher standard, and if he errs in his speech is thought to be unintelligent (1.124). The orator’s performance never ends, as his self-presentation is renegotiated throughout the course of his speech, as well as his overall career.

Despite *De Oratore*’s moves to push the actor away from the orator, the figure returns in many discussions relating to delivery. This process, of the speaker seeing himself in the actor and then moving to radically push him away is an abjection process. The adjection process, as Kristeva argues in *Powers of Horror*, is repetitive, as the subject can never fully exclude the abject because the abject is critical in how s/he defines her/himself. A living subject’s confrontation with the abject causes horror within the subject because the abject lies outside of the symbolic order, where meaning collapses, the place where “I” am not (Kristeva 1982: 2). Because of the threat to life that
the abject presents, it must be “radically excluded,” past an invisible boundary that separates the self from what is not the self (Kristeva 1982: 2). However, the abject must always exist because it is through the process of abjection that the subject may take up his or her “proper place within the symbolic” (Creed 1993: 9). The actor, lying outside of the elite instantiation of Roman masculinity to which the orator aspires, disturbs such boundaries. The abject lies on the border and, because of its position there, is both alluring and frightening.

The abject is placed on the side of the feminine, as it “exists in opposition to the paternal symbolic, which is governed by rules and laws” (Creed 1993: 37). In several instances, for a male, the confrontation with the abject occurs when he encounters what he perceives as oppositional to masculinity, as in the case with the orator’s confrontation with the actor. The orator is drawn to the actor because of their shared investment in actio, but the orator must attempt to exclude the actor because of the fear of being perceived as non-masculine.

Actors, gladiators, and prostitutes were “symbols of the shameful,” and in the late Republic and early Principate this was reinforced by the law, labeling them as infames, or “lacking in reputation” (Edwards 1997: 66). Legally, members of these groups were not able to speak for others or bring others to trial, and they were not permitted to stand for election to magistracies (Edwards 1997: 66). Additionally, it was allowable to beat, mutilate, and violate the bodies of actors, gladiators, and prostitutes without impunity (Edwards 1997: 66). This submission puts these figures into passive, and feminine, positions. As Edwards notes (1997: 68):

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It is surely no coincidence that all professions that incurred infamia were associated with transgressive sexuality. These figures were the objects of other people’s desire. They served the pleasure of others.

The professions that incur infamia—actor, gladiator, prostitute—are associated with transgressive sexuality because they sell their own flesh for the pleasure of the public (Edwards 1997: 68). Infamia itself means a lack of public honor and these players were “tarnished by exposure to the public gaze” (Edwards 1997: 68). Actors were subject to the most legal disqualifications, as they were regarded with intense suspicion because they could attain large amounts of money and get away with things on stage other citizens could not (Edwards 1997: 79):

The suspicion with which actors were regarded is perhaps also due to their public voice—an opportunity to command the attention of the Roman people, otherwise denied to all but the political elite. But actors were explicitly in the business of trickery and illusion. While all those who sold their bodies for entertainment thereby undermined the trust one might place in their words, the speech of actors was paradigmatically false.

Their falsity is also foregrounded in the gender bending that takes place on the stage. Because men often play women they are sexually ambiguous, which makes the “experience of being penetrated . . . a necessary part of an actor’s professional training” (Edwards 1997: 80). It was assumed that actors were prostitutes not because it was likely they were actually selling sexual services but because in making their living by being viewed in public their bodies became the point of fascination and consumption (Edwards 1997: 81).
As a result of acting’s connection to the pleasure of the sense, actors were considered sexually deviant (Edwards 1997: 83). Further, they were coded as feminine figures (Edwards 1997: 85):

Those who sell their bodies for public exhibition in the theatre or arena are assumed to be sexually available. All these bodies are the objects of uninhibited public gaze. Subordinated to the desires of others, these infamous persons are assimilated to the feminine and the servile, unworthy to be fully Roman citizens. This is compounded by the fact that cross-dressing plays a central role in acting, which also ties them to the prostitute. Prostitutes often wore the toga and male actors, in playing women, would dress the part (Duncan 2006: 157). The prostitute’s wearing of the toga highlights her connection to the actor because it “called attention to the appearance-reality gap” (Duncan 2006: 158-59).

It is no surprise, then, that Cicero would seek to separate the role of the orator with that of the actor. Nevertheless, actors and orators were tied together, especially because the verb agere is used to describe the actions of both (Fantham 2002: 362). The orator is an actor “both because he pleads his case (causam agit), and because he enacts the speech he has (normally) himself composed” (Fantham 2002: 363). Cicero differentiates the orator from the actor because the actor imitates reality while the orator engages with it (Fantham 2002: 363 ad. De Orat. 2.34, 2.193, and 3.214). For Cicero, the profession of acting runs counter to the orator’s association with gravitas.

Duncan classifies actors and prostitutes as “low-Others,” who both repulse the elite subject as he seeks to differentiate himself but also fascinates desire:
Paradoxically, this very horror works not only to arouse disgust and thus reassure, but also to arouse desire; as the bourgeois subject increasingly cordons himself off from various low-Others who help define him, he finds them increasingly, and disturbingly, desirable (Duncan 2006: 125). In part because of this draw, “actorliness,” to borrow Connolly’s term, runs throughout invective speeches. As discussed above, Cicero went to great pains to maintain the appearance of a performed trial. In *In Verrem*, however, Cicero is still relatively moderate in the speech with respect to accusation. A bulk of the speech puts forth solid evidence that he emphasizes he collected with great effort and careful planning, and most of the more lascivious acts that he charges Verres with are mentioned in little detail or in asides that simultaneously appeal to Cicero’s own modesty. These characteristics of this early speech result from Cicero’s less secure foothold in the political arena. In his later invective speeches, notably *In Pisonem* and *Philippic 2*, Cicero has secured his position as a good, masculine citizen with the best interests of the Roman state at heart. From this more comfortable position, the orator is better able to circumvent the rules and admonitions concerning the use of “actorliness” in oratory. As a result, the performative is exaggerated, tangible evidence is less apparent, and Cicero is willing to go farther beyond expected masculine behavior, garbed in invective drag, which in the end leads to his occupation of queer space.

*Masculine Bravado and Queer Space: In Pisonem and Philippic 2*

During the same year that Cicero publishes *De Oratore*, 55 B.C.E., he delivers the scathing invective speech against Piso, who was a key figure in Cicero’s exile. The
theatricality, hyperbole, and intimate details of Piso’s private life that read as gossip, show Cicero as working outside of the operative discourse of masculinity—and violating many of the precepts laid out in *De Oratore*. *Philippic 2* circulated eleven years later in 44 B.C.E. after the assassination of Julius Caesar and is even more outlandish, scathing, voyeuristic, and carnivalesque. Cicero is able to go so far outside normative rhetoric and self-presentation because he, in *In Pisonem*, is reasserting his previous political clout and, in *Philippics 2*, is, at least temporarily, in a powerful position with the conspirators against Caesar as his allies and the protection of Octavian. The orator of these speeches has moved far beyond the anxiety surrounding the speaker of *In Verrem*. He speaks to the senators as equals and constructs his persona through his invective, but in these instances his rhetorical style engages in what were considered feminine modes. In this way, Cicero constructs his masculinity outside of the rules of masculinity.

A prevailing tactic in *In Pisonem* and *Philippic 2* is the effeminization of Cicero’s targets, which usually coincides with excessive banqueting. In an early depiction of Piso, Cicero asks him if he remembers when Cicero visited him and Piso came to the door in slippers, with his breath emitting the filth of a tavern (*Pis. 6*):

> Meministiné, caenum, cum ad te quinta fere hora cum C. Pisone venissem, nescio quo e gurgustio te prodire involuto capite soleatum, et, cum isto ore foetido

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85 At the beginning of the speech, Cicero refers back his previous offices, ending with his consulship. He goes on to reference his *novus homo* status, confidently asserting that he won the expansive support of the people because they awarded his distinction “to a man, not to noble birth, to his character, not to his ancestors, to approved virtue not to reputed nobility” (*hominis ille honorem non generi, moribus non maioribus meis, virtuti perspectae non auditae nobilitati deferebat*, *Pis.* 1). For the historical background of the Piso trial, see Griffin 2001.

86 “In the description of the feast many charges of political invective converge—gluttony, financial mismanagement, political ineptitude, and sexual (especially homosexual) profligacy.” Descriptions are supposed to be obscured because “those speaking cannot share too many details about them without implicating themselves within the participation of such unacceptable behaviors” (Corbeill 1996: 134), but Cicero goes into elaborate detail in both *In Pisonem* and *Philippic 2*.
taeterrimam nobis popinam inhalasses, excusatione te uti valetudinis, quod diceres vinulentis te quibusdam medicaminibus solere curari?

Do you remember, you scum, when I visited you around the fifth hour with Gaius Piso, how you, in slippers, came out from some hovel, your head wrapped, and, how when you exhaled from your foul mouth the disgusting smell of a tavern, with you using the excuse of poor health, which you said was because you were in the habit of caring for it with medicinal wines?

In order to show Piso as effeminate, Cicero relays gossip of Piso’s excessive banqueting, naked dancing, and lolling around with Greeks in debauchery (Pis. 10; See also 70-71). He further charges Piso with gathering “effeminate dancers and the pretty brothers Autobulus, Athamas, and Timocles” (tuis teneris saltatoribus et cum Autobulo, Athamante, Timoicle, formosis fratribus, Pis. 89) and spending days in immoderate grief in the company of Euchadia, wife of Excecestus (Pis. 89). Cicero must work hard to tear down Piso’s masculinity, as his outward appearance does not lend itself to this kind of attack. Piso, Cicero argues, is a false sign—his outward appearance does not correspond with the wretchedness that lies beneath, so the orator stages Piso’s abject nature through his rhetoric.

Cicero says that few men knew of Piso’s habits, so he makes it a point to publish the depravity, often emphasized by his association with Gabinus (from whom saltatrix, “dancing girl” is a frequent epithet). Cicero says he doesn’t need to make Gabinus and Piso’s debauchery known, but takes pains to paint scenes of the pair’s immoral behavior (Pis. 10):

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87 “Pauci ista tua lutulenta vitia noramus; pauci tarditatem ingenii, stuporem debilitatemque linguae” (“Few of us knew of dirty vices of yours, few the sluggishness of your talent, the stupidity and feebleness of your tongue,” Pis. 1).
Quid ego illorum dierum epulas, quid laetitiam et gratulationem tuam, quid cum tuis sordissimis gregibus intemperantissimas perpotationes praedicem? Quis te illis diebus sobrium, quis agentem aliquid quod esset libero dignum, quis denique in publico vidit? Cum conlegae tui domus cantu et cymbalis personaret cumque ipse nudus in convivo saltaret: in quo cum suum illum saltatorium versaret orbem, ne tum quidem fortunae rotam pertimescebat. Hic autem non tam concinnus helluo nec tam musicus iacebat in suorum Graecorum foetore atque vino, quod quidem istius in illis rei publicae luctibus quasi aliquod Lapitharum aut Centaurorum convivium ferebatur; in quo nemo potest dicere utrum iste plus biberit an vomuerit an effuderit.

What should I say about your banqueting of those days, what of you happily congratulating yourself, what of licentious binge drinking with most vile company? Who in those days ever saw you sober, who saw you doing something in public that was worthy of a free man? When the house of your colleague was ringing with song and cymbals and when he himself was dancing naked at the feast in which when he was whirling around gyrating and then was not afraid of the wheel of Fortune. [Piso], however, was not such an elegant or musical glutton and was lying in the wine stench of his Greeks while, amidst all the troubles of the republic, the banquet was talked about as if it was something of Lapiths and Centaurs, which no one was able to say whether he was [spending more time] drinking or vomiting or urinating.

Depicting such a banquet and activities makes Piso and Gabinus look excessively wanton, with insatiability associated with foreigners and promiscuous people. Cicero
emphasizes Piso’s servility to pleasures of the body, saying “solet enim in disputationibus sui oculorum et aurium delectationi abdominis voluptates anteferre” (“Indeed he is accustomed in his discussion to put more weight to the desires of the stomach than the eyes or ears,” *Pis. 27*). A proper Roman man is one who keeps his desires in check, and Piso’s inability to control himself, the excessive hunger, makes him effeminate and excluded from the realm of Roman virtue.

Cicero states that he knows about the licentiousness of Piso because of a “certain Greek who lives with Piso” (*Est quidam Graecus, qui cum isto vivit, Pis. 28*). The Greek had educated Piso in epicureanism, but Piso’s stupidity and insatiability led him to take the philosophy to the extreme (*Pis. 28*):

> itaque admissarius iste, simul audivit voluptatem a philosopho tanto opera laudari, nihil expiscatus est: sic suos sensus voluptarios omnis incitavit, sic ad illius hanc orationem adhinnivit, ut non magistrum virtutis, sed auctorem libidinis a se illum inventum arbitaretur.

And so as soon as that sodomite heard pleasure praised in the works of such a philosopher, he did not press for exact information—he incited all his pleasurable senses, and was so eager for this speech of his, that he thought he had found not a teacher of virtue but a proponent of lust.

It is a fault of Piso’s, Cicero argues, that he reads too much into the philosophy, picking and choosing parts of it to justify his debased lifestyle. The Greek composed verses for and about Piso, and Cicero says that these writings are like a mirror that reflects the wantonness of Piso himself (*Pis. 29*).
As much as Cicero’s attack on Piso marks him as unfit for society, parallels between the two figures run throughout the speech. They had similar early career paths (*Pis.* 1), departures from Rome (*Pis.* 14), and returns to Rome (*Pis.* 22). In each of these instances, Cicero draws Piso into comparison with himself to push him away as someone who is less deserving of any renown he achieves. Thus Cicero’s invective against Piso, performs two simultaneous tasks: it exacts retribution against that figure whom Cicero treated as largely responsible for his exile and his consequent loss of prestige, and it seeks to recuperate that lost prestige by presenting Piso’s vices as the mirrored opposite of Cicero’s own virtues. By so radically configuring Piso as Other, and by casting suspicion on all of those qualities that Cicero presents as absolutely Other than his own qualities, by implication Cicero validates his own self (Dugan 2001: 62).

At the same time, though, Cicero’s “Piso” is “a construction based on Cicero’s own suffering and anxieties” (Dugan 2001: 64). This is starkly apparent in Cicero’s description of a minor setback of Piso’s that draws on Cicero’s own experience of exile (Dugan 2001: 65). (*Pis.* 99):

> Abiectum, contemptum, despectum a ceteris, a te ipso desperatum et relictum, circumspectantem omnia, quicquid increpuisset pertimescentem, diffidentem tuis rebus, sine voce, sine libertate, sine auctoritate, sine ulla specie consulari horrentem tremulentem adulantem omnis videre te volui: vidi.

> You downcast, held in contempt, despised by others, despairing of yourself and abandoned, looking around at everything, terrified at every sound, mistrustful of your circumstances, without a voice, without freedom, without influence, and
without the slightest appearance of being a consular, trembling, shivering, and flattering everyone; this I have desired to see, and this I have seen.

The fictionality of *In Pisonem* allows “the neatness of the correspondence between Cicero’s own misfortunes and those he imputes to Piso . . . The epideictic status of the oration facilitates the speech’s persuasive agenda, which is predicated on a dynamic of deferral and substitution” (Dugan 2001: 64).

About ten years after *In Pisonem*, in 44 and 43 B.C.E., Cicero published the invective speeches against Antony, the *Philippicae*. The first speech was delivered to the senate on September 2nd, 44 B.C.E., just six months after the assassination of Julius Caesar (Ker 2006: 18). Things had become heated between Antony and a rising Octavian, and Cicero aligned himself with Octavian and was the mouthpiece that made Antony a public enemy. As Ker notes, the first *Philippic* is “studiously moderate,” as Cicero only attacks Antony’s public acts and does not say anything about Antony’s private conduct—this would be reserved for the undelivered second *Philippic*, which was published in October 44 B.C.E. The second *Philippic*, as it contains the most scathing invective against Antony, will be the object of the current study.

While the second *Philippic* was not performed before the senate, throughout Cicero indicates performance. After defending himself against the charge that he was involved in the assassination of Caesar, he asks “What is it? Do I upset you?” (*Quid est? num conturbo te? Phil. 2.8*). At 2.14, he uses the same verb, *conturbo*, to call out Antony as if he is giving the speech in front of him: “Nescio quid conturbatus esse videris; numquid subtimes, ne ad te hoc crimen pertinere videatur? Libero te metu” (“I don’t know why you appear to be upset; Can it be that you are secretly afraid, lest this crime
appears to reach you? Phil. 2.14). He says that Antony “does not hide his reactions, Conscript Fathers, it is apparent that he is moved: he sweats, he grows pale” (Non dissimulat, conscripti patri; adparet esse commotum; sudat, pallet, Phil. 2.33). The fact that Cicero makes the speech theatrical increases the shaming of Antony—as if he was sitting there, with everyone staring at him, as Cicero tears him apart.

Cicero opens the speech by stating that no man in the last twenty years has been an enemy to the state without being one of his enemies as well. He says, referencing the delivered first Philipic, that he “abstained from slander” when he was complaining about Antony’s abuse of the constitution (abstinere maledictis, Phil. 2.3). In this line, Cicero uses the common description of invective as “bad words.” It is clear early on that Cicero will not be abstaining in this speech, focusing instead of Antony’s lack of virtus and pudor, as a man who “had known little of the conventions of good men” (Quis enim umquam, qui paulum modo bonorum nosset . . . Phil. 2.4). Cicero will not treat Antony as a consul because Antony has not treated Cicero as one (Phil. 2.5), even though Cicero, in a crowded assembly, “so pleased the senate that there was no one who would not give thanks to me as a father and received me as the one who had preserved their own life, fortune, children, and the republic” (Frequentissimo senatui sic placuit, ut esset nemo, qui mihi non ut parenti gratias ageret, qui mihi non vitam suam, fortunas, liberos, rem publicam referret acceptam, Phil. 2.5). He charges that Antony’s speech was ineffective because it was contradictory and he was “not so much in contention with me as much as with yourself” (. . . ut tanta mecum quanta tibi tecum esset contentio, Phil. 2.8). Unlike

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88 “By what fate of mine, Conscript Fathers, should I say that it’s happened that no man in the last twenty years has been an enemy to the republic who has not also declared war against me at the same time?” (Quonam meo fato, patres conscripti, fieri dicam, ut nemo his annis viginti rei publicae fuerit hostis, qui non bellum eodem tempore mihi quoque indixerit? Phil. 2.1).
Cicero, he charges, Antony’s performance of self was clumsy and inept. Cicero spends a bulk of the early speech refuting the charges that Antony made against him, including the charge that Julius Caesar was killed on his advice (\ldots Caesarem meo consilio interfectum, Phil. 2.11) before getting into the slandering of Antony’s character and admonishing his private life.

Antony’s entire life is on trial in the speech, and Cicero starts from the beginning: “Visne igitur te inspiciamus a puero? Sic opinor; a principio ordiamur” (“Therefore do you wish that we examine you from boyhood. Yes, I think—let us start from the beginning” Phil. 2.17). He charges that Antony was not only bankrupt from an early age, but that his virtus was faulty because of his relationship with Curio, which Cicero paints in sexual terms (Phil. 2.18):

Sumpsisti virile, quam statim muliebrem togam reddisti. Primo vulgare scortum, certa flagitii merces, nec ea parva; sed cito Curio intervenit, qui te a meretricio quaestu abduxit et, tamquam stolam dedisset, in matrimonio stabili et certo collocavit. Nemo umquam puer emptus libidinis causa tam fuit in domini potestate quam tu Curionis.

You took up the toga of manhood, which you immediately rendered a woman’s toga. At first a vulgar slut, the price of your disgrace fixed, and not that small. But Curio quickly intervened, who led you from your whoring around and, as he had given you a dress, called you into lasting and certain matrimony. No boy ever purchased for the cause of lust was as much in the power of a master as you were to Curio.
Here Cicero questions Antony’s masculinity from the moment that he was supposed to become a man. He paints him as womanly, whorish, and passive. These depictions are interspersed throughout the speech, as Cicero alternates between his legal acts and personal licentiousness, stopping every now and then to “pass over his sexual misconduct and shame” (Sed iam stupra et flagitia omittamus, Phil. 2.19). Not only is Antony’s own behavior sexually deviant, but the company he keeps, mimes and pimps, marks him as a part of the lowest of society (Phil. 2.24, 2.25, 2.41).

Like the attack on Piso, the invective against Antony is rooted in convivial excess. Cicero says, “You drank so much wine at Hippias’ wedding that it was necessary for you to vomit in the sight of the Roman people the next day” (tantum vini in Hippiae nuptiis exhauseras, ut tibi necesse esset in populi Romani conspectu vomere postridie, Phil. 2.25), filling his lap with fragments of food and reeking of wine. Cicero accuses Antony of turning the house of Pompey into a cross between a brothel and a banquet hall, as he fills it with actors and prostitutes who would drink with him for days (Phil. 2.27). Emphasizing Antony’s gluttonous behavior parallels Cicero’s more direct attacks of effeminacy, such as a submissive sexual relationship with Curio (Phil. 2.18). Cicero goes on to directly call Antony a catamite (Phil. 2.31), and compares him to the most famous ill-reputed woman of all, Helen of Troy (Phil. 2.22).

The purpose of calling out Antony as effeminate in these ways was to reduce his standing in Roman public life, and this tactic was common in Roman invective (Sussman 1998: 114). But the frequency and vividness of the attacks in Philippic 2, Sussman

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89 Men were supposed to take pleasure but not be consumed by pleasure. See, for example: Cantarella 1992: 120-54; Edwards 1993: 81-84; Richlin 1992: 139, 222; Williams 1999: 138-59; Wray 2001: 147.
90 He is again accused of vomiting all over the place at Phil. 2.30.
91 Antony is also charged with public intoxication at Phil. 2.31 and 2.41.
argues, render them “hackneyed commonplaces, easily passed over and conveniently forgotten. For real effect the orator in Cicero’s day had to transcend these old favorites, which dated back at least to the elder Cato’s days, and find much more novel, shocking, and scandalous variations” (Sussman 1998: 114). Given Cicero’s well established reputation in Roman politics, he was more free to cross the line in the speeches against Antony.

There are more comedic and mimic elements in Philippic 2 than any other of Cicero’s speeches (Sussman 1998: 117). In the opening passage about the affair between Antony and Curio, Cicero literally sets the stage by talking about Antony sitting with the equites at the theatre (Noted in Sussman 1998: 118). The narration “is filled with the familiar devices of comic deception: transvestitism, change of identity, surreptitious entrance into a house, and incurring debt that was probably never intended to be repaid” (Sussman 1998: 118). As De Oratore and Cicero’s other speeches show, performance is the most effective way to achieve the goals of a political speech, which is why Cicero here “imitates such a performance even if the statement of his political opinion is a written text right from the beginning” (Manuwald 2004: 63). The performative nature of this speech is even more prevalent than in the ones that were actually delivered; Cicero’s examples of recent events and Roman history do not follow chronological order, but are presented in a way that results in a vivid and more attractive way of telling, which is more adapted to moving an audience than a factual report. The opportunity for such a way of

92 Although Strabo says that the obscene is not appropriate for the orator (De Oraf. 2.252), Cicero violates this in here and several other speeches, particularly with using invective related to sex (Corbeill 1996: 104; See also Richlin 1992: 96-104).
presentation might be another reason why the *Second Philippic*’s invective is cast in the form of speech since that literary form allows a more graphic and sensational description of Antony’s misdeeds, at which both the orator and the audience can look with disdain (Manuwald 2004: 64).

Explicit detail is problematic to the orator because of its relationship with the feminine. As Gunderson writes (2000: 134),

> Explicitness can be aligned with the feminine by the following set of associations: the explicit is servile, and it panders to meaning much as a woman is subordinated to the man. But the threat expressed most generally would be that when one is seen performing, the spectators feel pleasure. That is, the performance might make the spectator desire you as a woman, desire to possess you.

While Gunderson argues that the way for the orator to dodge this accusation is to make sure that the performance is “. . . one of masculinity. If the spectacle of masculinity provokes any desire, it ought to be a desire to submit to this masculinity” (Gunderson 2000: 134). However, in making the opponent other, as the orator is shifting the gaze upon his target, he simultaneously places himself under the male gaze. And this male gaze, because of the orator’s resemblances to the actor, feminine tactics, and explicit, voyeuristic detail, presents a subject that does not conform to the normative confines of masculinity.

**Conclusion**

How can the orator be, as Gunderson argues, a performer of powerful masculinity while simultaneously undermining the principles of the operative discourse of
masculinity? Instead of viewing the orator as an inversion of what is masculine, he can be seen as extending the category of masculinity, and he is only able to do this by occupying a position that weaves in and out of the boundaries between feminine and masculine. As the invective mode encourages, perhaps necessitates, going out of normative gender categories, the dressing up of one’s masculinity in the non-masculine, invective drag, allows the speaker to reassert himself as masculine from a queer position.

This process begins in the defining of oneself, particularly with respect to abjection. In the case of the rhetorical theory and speeches of Cicero, the orator must abject the actor, the feminine nature of rhetoric, and his political opponents. Throughout abjection the orator identifies with the object he attempts to eradicate because of its initial allure due to the inherent lack of the subject. The subject will, however, never cease to constitute itself. When the existing means of signification do not allow a subject to articulate himself, he must carve out his own position, on his own terms because “People have a need to exercise control over the production of their images so that they feel empowered. For the disenfranchised, the recognition, construction and maintenance of self-image and cultural identity function to sustain, even when social systems fail to do so” (Johnson 2010: 11). As Judith Halberstam has recently argued, queerness is “compelling as a form of self-description” because it “has the potential to open up new life narratives and alternative relations to time and space” (Halberstam 2005: 1-2). Queer genders . . . profoundly disturb the order of relations between the authentic and the inauthentic, the original and the mimic, the real and the constructed . . . there are no true accounts of ‘passing lives’ but only fictions, and the whole story turns on
the productive of counterfeit realities that are so convincing that they replace and subsume the real (Halberstam 2005: 45).

I am not suggesting that the figures in this investigation identified as “queer” in the postmodern sense, nor that occupying a liminal position is a conscious or deliberate move of the speaker. What the speakers’ wanderings outside of the prescriptions of masculinity indicate is more of a failure of the symbolic categories available, categories that are altered and renegotiated throughout different historical contexts. While Cicero’s works, being philosophical and political prose, separate the orator from the poets of this study, his programmatic treatise on oratory, violations of espoused precepts in his own speeches, and central focus on self-fashioning through oratory and invective, make for his own unique form of invective drag and sets the stage for utilization of invective drag in poetry. The focus on the speaker of oratory, the self reflection and self evaluation tantamount to successful oratory, feeds seamlessly into the more interior art of poetic expression. Further, the public function of invective remains embedded in the poetic texts
CHAPTER FOUR: HORACE: MEDIATING ANXIETY AND ALTERNATIVE MASCULINITY

Ad res Venerias intemperantior traditur; nam speculato cubiculo scorta dicitur habuisse disposita, ut quocumque respexisset ibi ei imago coitus referretur (“It is reported that he was immoderate in his desire for erotica; for he is said to have had sordid pictures placed in his mirrored bedroom so that wherever he looked, there images of intercourse would be presented to him”). - Suetonius, *Vita Horati*

The Horatian speaker of the *Epodes* is an iambist, a political critic, occasionally a morality policeman, a misogynist and, in many ways, an inversion of the kind of speaker one encounters in Catullus’ hypermasculine invectives. In Horace’s *Epodes* the speaker deploys biting invective against female figures whom the poet depicts as grotesque, insatiable, and promiscuous. The figures are so foul that no decent Roman man would be involved with them. However, in the speeches to and depictions of these figures, the speaker implicates himself as someone physically engaged with these women. The speaker does this through the information he shares about the women’s bodies, through the description of his *impotentia*\(^93\) in sexual situations with them, or in Canidia’s case, his

\(^{93}\) With respect to Canidia in particular, the word *impotentia* contains the double meaning of “violence (the failure to master oneself) and weakness (the inability to master another) . . . played out in the three poems dominated by Canidia” (Oliensis 1998: 73). In S. 1.8 Priapus does not get the witches out of the garden with an instance of male virility, but a “terrified fart”; In *Epode* 5 the males presented, a youthful boy and sterile man, Varus, offer no masculine authority, and in *Epode* 17, Horace is himself presented as parched skin and bones as a result of Canidia’s heat (*ossa pelle amicta lurida*, 17.22; Oliensis 1998: 73). On *impotentia* in *Epodes* 8 and 12, see Oliensis 1998: 74-75.
impotence in light of her spells and fury. The rhetorical strategy that I term “invective drag,” in which a masculine speaker speaks from a self-adopted queer position, allows Horace to mediate these tensions between proximity and disgust, by debasing the women in their own words, adopting their voices and depicting himself in a passive, assaulted position. This kind of invective has powerful ramifications for considerations of the construction and perception of gender in the *Epodes*. The depiction of the debased women of the *Epodes* consequently produces a fractured, inconsistent, and contradictory depiction of “feminine whores” threaded together through the figure of Canidia. These depictions, instead of effectively constructing a femininity that eradicates the credibility and emphasizes the depravity of the feminine subjects, in fact results in a parodic depiction of masculine anxiety. The *Epodes* present several different speakers, often divergent from one another, whose tone varies from lighthearted jest to scathing invective. This chapter will discuss the *Epodes* in the invective mode and how they, in conjunction with the book as a whole, help to construct Horace’s own persona and, consequentially, his own brand of masculinity. A masculinity fueled by self-deprecation and performed through the diatribes against his targets.

The performance of masculinity in Rome has been discussed by several scholars. As Gunderson says in his opening to *Staging Masculinity*, “Everyone knows where babies come from. The same cannot be said for men” (2000: vii). What constitutes a *vir bonus* is his performance of masculinity, not only presenting himself at length as a “good

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94 Drawing conclusions about femininity through invective is problematic because of the use of stereotyping and exaggeration. As Richlin notes: Because satire so often employs stereotyping in invective attacks, it is often assumed that these stereotypes are “exaggerated but basically realistic versions of their prototypes”; however, this assumption causes the focus to be on the victim when in actuality they can “tell us nothing (directly) about Roman women, but plenty about the fears and preoccupations of Roman society with regard to women, as enunciated by male satirists” (Richlin 1984: 67).
man” but “being good at being a man,” to borrow Wray’s phrase (2001: 59-61). An elite Roman male’s identity, thus, is “never a given” (Gunderson 2000: 13). Often, the feminine figures present in Latin literature are a threat to the masculine subject. This feminine threat is frequently attacked through invective as a means for the speaker to radically separate himself from the feminine and articulate his own self-perceived masculine identity. As Corbeill argues, the performativity of Roman masculinity brings with it “. . . the theoretical possibility that a man could lose his gender,” and this\(^{95}\) has opened up a legitimate space for invective. The “andrognous man” does not represent a breach of logic so much as a potential threat always inherent for the male” (Corbeill 1996: 150). As a result of this perceived threat, the masculine speaking subject aims to differentiate himself from what is not masculine. In the invective process, however, the masculine subjects blur the line that separates themselves from that which they attempt to make “other” through the queer space that is opened up between performance and descriptions of performance (Gunderson 2000: 26; See also Butler 1997). Horace’s use of obscenity, which is a cornerstone of his invective in the *Epodes*, reveals his adoption of a mask, a costume, “a liberating disguise under which social conventions, including linguistic norms, can be subverted” through what emerges as an articulation of alternative masculine identity (Lavigne 2003: 393). This articulation, I argue, is rooted in abjection and performed via invective drag.

There is no way, of course, to call Horace “queer” with respect to actual sexual identity, and there is certainly no evidence that he was cross-dressing; however, if one discusses queerness as a matter of aesthetics, Horace is, through solidarity with marginal feminine figures in his works, using “invective drag” as a means for him to expand the

\(^{95}\) Cf. Richlin 1984; See also Gunderson 2000.
category of maleness, rather than merely engaging in a process of abjection to reaffirm or re-present conventional masculinity for moral purposes. By viewing Horace’s invectives through the lens of queer theory, one can offer a reparative reading of the text, which instead considers how the poet presents himself “in solidarity with the deviant,” rather than flatly opposing it (Broder 2010: 66 cf. Sontag 1964). Queerness, in this dissertation, follows Halberstam and others in its separation from sexual identity. Queer space, as Halberstam argues, develops in part “in opposition to the institutions of family, heterosexuality, and reproduction,” and “according to other logics of location, movement, and identification” (2005: 1). It is a counter-normative discourse in which “incongruous situations and juxtapositions are presented in a theatrical manner for humorous effect, expressing the relationship of sex, gender, and kinship deviant to dominant discourses of normativity and embracing the stigmatized identity of the deviant, marginalized other” (Broder 2010: iv). Horace’s self-placement at the fringes, comic presentation of his own impotenta, and adoption of feminine attributes and voice in the Epodes foregrounds a “willfully eccentric” mode of being, subversively outside of the expected parameters of Roman masculinity. In the Epodes, as defaced as the feminine targets of invective are, they most often end up in positions of power and aligned with the speaker, and the alignment of speaker and feminine invective target creates space for an alternative masculinity. Horace, through the personae and feminine characters he creates, presents no stable self or consistent image of masculinity or femininity. In a way, the personae of Horace’s Epodes, particularly the ones that present debased, feminine whore figures, are transgender inasmuch as “transgender” as a term “can be used as a marker for all kinds of people who challenge, deliberately or accidentally, gender normativity,” and thus Horace

96 This phrase is borrowed from Halberstam 2005: 1.
is able to extend the category of “maleness,” rather than capitulate “to the strict dictates of gender normativity” (Halberstam 2005: 55). The speakers employing invective against debased women in the poems rearticulate and expand masculinity through simultaneously presenting masculine authority and *impotentia* by laughing at not only the feminine figures, but themselves, and it is in the figure of the woman who appears in *Epodes* 8 and 12 and Canidia that masculine superiority and masculine lack are most foregrounded.

The first section of this chapter will consider historical background for the *Epodes* and a selection of the so-called “political” epodes. Horace was initially on the wrong side of the civil war between Octavian and Antony and Brutus, and his precarious social and political position informs much of the book of poems. During the time Horace wrote these poems, Rome had already endured over one hundred years of civil war and was in the midst of another between Octavian and Antony. While dating the individual epodes is difficult, when taken together one can see an undercurrent of anxiety surrounding the future of Rome herself. This anxiety has ramifications for masculinity, as what constituted the *vir bonus* was altered during the shift from Republic to Principate.

In the second section of this chapter, I will discuss *Epodes* 8 and 12. In these poems, Horace emphasizes his position as a soft and impotent man and receiver of verbal attacks from an insatiable and grotesque woman. In recounting the details of this woman’s body, Horace not only implicates himself as a sexual partner but also engages in abjection in the process of his description. He attempts to radically exclude the woman from himself, but she is the figure upon which he bases his own *impotentia*. And so Horace’s identity is tied up with the insatiable whore, and she is reflected in the dominating figure of Canidia.
The last section of this chapter will pair Horace with Canidia, a figure who dominates and parallels the woman of *Epodes* 8 and 12 in many ways. Horace’s abjection process with Canidia shows the poet trying to distance himself from her, but as both are makers of poetry, joined together by the verb *canere* and the double meaning of *carmen* as both poem and spell, Horace shares an uncanny resemblance with the witch herself. Thus Horace occupies a space that does not fit with the rigid expectations of Roman masculinity. Horace’s invective process, and his problematization of normative masculinity, carves out a new space for the male citizen, and hence a new masculinity.

*Historical Background and Political Epodes*

The century before Horace’s publication of the *Epodes* and first book of the *Satires* was a time of civil wars and great changes for Rome. Rome saw dictators like Marius, Sulla, and Caesar rise through the ranks through military conquest and popular support and attain great and threatening power. These events culminated in Julius Caesar’s march on Rome. After Caesar’s assassination, Octavian and Antony led a campaign against the conspirators, ordered ruthless rounds of conscriptions, and ultimately faceoff in what would be the last civil war before a reign of peace that coincided with Augustus’ rule over Rome. The Republic fell, the Principate was born, and Rome was on its way to Empire. Horace, born in 65 BCE, grew up in the times of civil war, was in his twenties at the time of Caesar’s assassination, and witnessed firsthand Octavian’s takeover of the Roman state. All the Augustan poets “watched or remembered their fellow-citizens suffering at one another’s hands. It stands to reason that they would be concerned both with giving voice through their poetry to the anger and
pain of their people, and with correcting fault-lines that might lead to another deadly disruption” (Johnson 2012: 3-4).

The literary record offers a wealth of biographical details about Horace. Much of this information comes from Horace’s works themselves, as well as the excerpt extant from Suetonius. The basic narrative is that Horace was the son of a freedman, his father gave his son the education that a Roman elite would receive, culminating in his studies at Athens. While studying in Athens, Brutus recruited Horace for his campaign and gave him the office of military tribune. Thus Horace was on the losing side of the civil war between Octavian and Antony and Brutus and the conspirators, and his property was confiscated upon his return. Nevertheless, he had enough money to secure a position as a treasurer and began his ascent in the elite circle of Octavian. His writing earned him an introduction to Maecenas, Octavian’s second in command and patron of poets. Maecenas was one of the wealthiest men in Rome, certainly wealthy enough enter the Senate, but he maintained his status as an *eques* and did not vie for political office. He was a staunch supporter of Octavian and a sponsor of some of the greatest poets of Rome, including Vergil and Horace. Horace held a close relationship with Maecenas up until Maecenas’ death, and it is to Maecenas that his book of the *Epodes* are dedicated (Armstrong 2010: 12; Watson 2003: 1-3).

While the composition dates of the individual epodes are debated, I follow Watson that they were written over a long period, likely from about 42 BCE to 30 BCE, at which point they were published as a collection (2003: 5ff). While some epodes appear easier to date than others, such as the Actian epodes dated to 31 BCE, the uncertainty during the period before Actium is prevalent in other political epodes. This project will
not seek to carve out dates for the various poems in the collection, but rather, argue that the order of the poems in the collection is deliberate despite the fact that they do not progress in chronological order. The erratic timeline of the *Epodes* is a reflection of the anxiety of not only the general situation in Rome during Octavian’s early rise to power, after Rome faced over one hundred years of civil war, but also of the author’s precarious social position.

Some of the *Epodes* are often marked out as “political,” including two that deal with the battle of Actium and a plea to Roman citizens to flee from Rome because all is lost. While I would argue that all of the *Epodes* are collected together and organized intentionally, a detailed discussion of each poem in the collection is beyond the scope of this chapter; however, marking out a selection of the political poems first will serve to highlight how the author processed the changes occurring in Rome.

The *Epodes* open just before the battle of Actium in a poem dedicated to Maecenas.  

The poem is a testament to Horace’s friendship with Maecenas and at the same time provides the backdrop to many of the poems of the collection. Maecenas is “prepared to undergo all Caesar’s dangers” (paratus omne Caesaris periculum / subire, *Maecenas, tuo* 1.3-4). Horace asks if he and others should enjoy the leisure Maecenas suggests, “utrumne iussi persequemur otium / non dulce, ni tecum” (“whether we will pursue the leisure [you] order, which is not sweet if not with you,” 1.7-8), or if they ought to endure this labor with him, as strong men (non molles viri, “not soft men,”) ought to do.

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97 I follow Watson 2003: 55-57 that Actium is the battle referenced in this epode, although because there is not ample evidence testifying to Maecenas’ presence at Actium it has been a matter of contention. See, for example, Thompson 1970, who dates the epode to the campaign against Sextus Pompey in 36 BCE (Watson 2003: 57n31).

98 All citations of the *Epodes* are from Mankin 1995.
Horace says that they will bear it (*feremus*, 1.11), but immediately follows with a description of himself as *mollis* (1.15-22):

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roges tuum laborem quid iuvem meo
imbellis ac firmus parum:
comes minore sum futurus in metu,
qui maior absentis habet,
ut assidens implumibus pullis avis
serpentum allapsus timet
magis relictis, non, ut adsit, auxili
latura plus praesentibus.
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You asked how I, unwarlike and too little strong, may help with your labor. If I am your companion, I will be in less fear. Those who are absent suffer most from fear, just as a watching mother bird fears the gliding snake for her unfledged chicks more when she’s left them behind; though, if she were present she could offer no more help by their side.

Horace distances himself from those skilled in war, setting himself up as a counter to the *duri viri* of line 10. The poet has removed himself from the battle lines, describing himself in a passive position as both a soft man and likening himself to a mother bird. Horace as “too little hard” (*non firmus parum*) reappears throughout the *Epodes*, an impotent spewer of invective in a time of crisis.

The tension of civil war and its disastrous effects on the Roman populace are detailed in *Epode 7*:

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Quo quo scelesti ruitis? aut cur dexteris
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aptantur enses conditi?
parumne campis atque Neptuno super
fusum est Latini sanguinis,
non ut superbas invidae Carthaginis
Romanus arces ureret
intactus aut Britannus ut descendet
Sacra cantenatus Via,
sed ut secundum vota Parthorum sua
Urbs haec periret dextera?
neque hic lupis mos nec fuit leonibus,
numquam nisi in dispar feris.
furorne caecus an rapit vis acrior
an culpa? responsum date.
tacent et albus ora pallor inficit
mentesque perculsae stupent.
sic est: acerba fata Romanos agunt
scelusque fraternae necis,
ut immerentis fluxit in terram Remi
sacer nepotibus cruor.

Wicked ones, to where are you rushing? Why are sheathed swords grasped by your hands? Has too little Latin blood been poured over the fields and Neptune’s waves? Not so that Rome could burn the proud citadels of the envious Carthaginians, nor that unconquered Britons might descend the Via Sacra in
chains, but so that following the prayers of the Parthians the city might perish by
its own hands? This is not the way of wolves or lions, they never [fight] except
against disparate beasts. Does blind fury, or a stronger force or crime seize you?
Give response! They’re silent and a white paleness colors their faces and their
overpowered minds are astounded. Thus it is: A bitter fate and crime of brother’s
murder drives the Romans, ever since the blood of guiltless Remus fell on the
earth from his descendents.

Watson calls *Epode* 7 a “deeply pessimistic document” (2003: 268). The poem, which is
a fictive imagining of an address to the populace (Watson 2003: 267), discredits the
expansion, and the military campaigns, that made Rome powerful and instead is critical
of the city’s very foundations: “Rome’s destiny has been vitiated from the outset by the
fratricidal murder of his brother by the city’s eponymous founder, a crime which the
Romans are doomed to repeat in perpetuity” (Watson 2003: 268). The populace offers no
response to Horace’s attack, which largely ignores the periods of peace that occurred
from the founding of Rome to the period of the civil wars.

*Epode* 16 is as pessimistic as *Epode* 7, and Horace places the fault of civil wars,
again, squarely in Roman hands (16.1-16):

Altera iam teritur bellis civilibus aetas
suis et ipsa Roma viribus ruit.
quam neque finitimi valuerunt perfere Marsi
minacis aut Etrusca Porsenae manus
aemula nec virtus Capuae nec Spartacus acer
novisque rebus infidelis Allobrox,
nec fera caerula domuit Germania pube
parentibusque abominatus Hannibal,
impia perfemus devoti sanguinis aetas
ferisque rursus occupabitur solum,
barbarus heu cineres insistet victor et Urbem
eques sonante verberabit ungula,
quaeque carent ventis et solibus ossa Quirini
(nefas videre!) dissipabit insolens.
forte quid expediat: communiter aut melior pars
malis carere quae quis laboribus?

Already another generation is ground down by civil war and Rome destroys herself by her own strength. What the neighboring Marsians were not able to destroy, nor the Etruscan army of threatening Porsenna, nor Capua’s rival strength, nor the vigor of Spartacus, nor the treacherous Gauls in their new things, nor the savage blue-eyed German youth she subdued, nor Hannibal, hated by our ancestors. Our impious generation alone, of cursed blood, shall destroy this city, which will be occupied again by beasts. Alas, a barbarian conqueror will stand on ashes, calvary will pound on the city with sounding hooves, and will, impious to see, and the bones of Romulus, now sheltered from the winds and the sun, will be scattered. Perhaps you are asking, commonly or the better part of you, what would help, how to be free from these evil toils?

Horace here uses the same verb, *ruere*, to open with the disaster in the Roman state. This time, however, he provides a solution to the cycle of perpetual civil war (16.17-24):
nulla sit hac potior sententia: Phocaeorum
velut profugit exsecrata civitas
agros atque Lares patrios habitandaque fana
apris reliquit et rapacibus lupis,

ire pedes quocumque ferent, quocumque per undas
Notus vocabit aut protervus Africus.
sic placet? an melius habet suadere? secunda
ratem occupare quid moramur alite?

There is no more powerful argument than this: just as the Phocaeans, having cursed their fields and ancestral gods and shrines, left them to be inhabited by ravenous wolves and boars, so let us go wherever our feet take us, wherever through the waves the North or reckless southwester will call. Is this pleasing? Or does anyone have a better plan to suggest? Why delay to board the ship when the omens are favorable?

Horace’s proposal is a bleak message: “to quit the doomed city for good and make for a utopian paradise at the extremities of the known world, represents a veritable counsel of despair which more than anything expresses the utter hopelessness of Rome’s situation” (Watson 2003: 479). If Horace and those he addresses stay in the city, they are doomed, yet the consequences of fleeing to the outermost corners of the earth are just as dark as staying amidst the ravaged homeland. The solution that Horace provides—to flee—reflects back on Horace’s nature as unwarlike and too little strong (imbellis ac firmus parum, 1.16); however, his inability to act, to fight, is a symptom of the fractured state.

As Octavian transformed the Republic into the Principate, men of ambition were
dangerous, and prowess on the battlefield no longer could lead to becoming the first man in Rome. Thus masculinity itself was being renegotiated during this period. Horace here presents a man counter to the leaders that came before him. He is rallying the troops in order to persuade them not to fight, but to back down and flee.

The great changes in Rome reflected in the *Epodes* also indicate changes in the way Roman masculinity was conceived during the time period. Whereas in the Roman Republic men were encouraged to move through the political ranks, show prestige within the military, and exercise their *libertas* through, often hypermasculine, free speech, the years of civil war and new Principate demanded a different ideal Roman man—one deferential to authority and hesitant to vie for large amounts of control over the political state. In Ellen Oliensis’ *Horace and the Rhetoric of Authority*, she charts the oscillation between deference and authority throughout Horace’s works, noting a shift from Horace’s very vocal loyalty to Maecenas to his ultimate deference to Augustus by the time the poet completes the fourth book of the *Odes*. In the earlier *Epodes*, however, one can see the author grappling with how to be a Roman man. One of the ways that, Oliensis argues, the anxiety of the age is managed is through the poet’s use of various masks or personae. She argues, however, that these personae are not divorced from the poet himself—Horace is always the one acting (1998: 2).

In this performance, Horace negotiates what it now means to be a man in Rome. This process is tied to abjection. For Kristeva, while the ultimate example of the abject is the corpse (1982: 5), it is

> . . . not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-
between, the ambiguous, the composite. The traitor, the liar, the criminal with a good consciences, the shameless rapist, the killer who claims he is a savior . . .

Any crime, because it draws attention to the fragility of the law, is abject, but premeditated crime, cunning murder, hypocritical revenge are even more so because they heighten the display of such fragility (Kristeva 1982: 4).

While Horace is not here the criminal, the idea of crime as a source of abjection can be traced back to *Epode* 7, where the blood of Remus has doomed generations of Rome to be trapped in a cycle of perpetual violence. Within these parameters, the socio-cultural circumstances of Horace’s time would have instigated an abjection process—the rules for Roman men were ambiguous, changing, and in the political epodes Horace stands squarely on the border; he cannot stay or go to Actium with Maecenas, he cannot fight as a “soft man,” and his only solution to his fellow citizens is to pack up and leave Rome.

The behavior of his fellow citizens verges on the animalistic: “The abject confronts us, on the one hand, with those fragile states where man strays on the territories of *animal*” (Kristeva 1982: 12, emphasis in original). The chaos (and violence) of his surroundings, of civil war, induced anxiety and as Horace tries to establish his own subject position he is engaged in a process of abjection. This negotiation of subject position in invective speech hinges upon the diatribes against the women in the epodes.
Horace’s Whores: Epodes 8 and 12

The feminine, woman, is one of the most powerful sites of abjection, especially lascivious women or prostitutes. As Kristeva writes,

In societies where it occurs, ritualization of defilement is accompanied by a strong concern for separating the sexes, and this means giving men rights over women. The latter, apparently put in the position of passive objects, are none the less felt to be wily powers, ‘baleful schemers’ from whom rightful beneficiaries must protect themselves. It is as if, lacking a central authoritarian power that would settle the definitive supremacy of one sex—or lacking a legal establishment that would balance the prerogatives of both sexes—two powers attempted to share out society. One of them, the masculine, apparently victorious, confesses through its very relentlessness against the other, the feminine, that it is threatened by an asymmetrical, irritation, wily, uncontrollable power (Kristeva 1982: 70).

The relentless domination of man over woman is fueled by man’s anxiety over the presumed sapping of strength in the face of the feminine power, which Kristeva traces back to fear of the archaic mother. The women who are targets of Horace’s invective and whom he blames for his softness are objects from which Horace attempts to eradicate himself but ironically hinges his identity upon. His masculine attacks are couched in passivity, a feminine position, in his encounters with the insatiable woman of Epodes 8 and 12 and Canidia in Epodes 5 and 17.

99 “But it is especially with prostitutes and nymphomaniacs, who are nevertheless tackled with fascination if not with a certain amount of sympathy, that we are presented with a wild, obscene, and threatening femininity” (Kristeva 1982: 167).

100 “Fear of the archaic mother turns out to be essentially fear of her generative power. It is this power, a dreaded one, that patrilineal filiation has the burden of subduing. It is thus not surprising to see pollution rituals proliferating in societies were patrilineal power is poorly secured, as if the latter sought, by means of purification, a support against excessive matrilineality” (Kristeva 1982: 77).
The double image of sexual *impotentia* and masculine assertion is nowhere more apparent than in *Epodes* 8 and 12, in which Horace aggressively replies to a woman who has confronted him about his lack of physical arousal:

Rogare longo putidam te saeculo

 viris quid enervet meas,

cum sit tibi dens ater et rugis vetus

frotem senectus exaret

hietque turpis inter aridas natis

 podex velut crudae bovis!

sed incitat me pectus mammae putres,

 equina quales ubera,

venterque mollis et femur tumentibus

 exile suris additum.

esto beata, funus atque imagines

ducant triumphales tuum,

 nec sit marita quae rotundioribus

 onusta bacis ambulet:

quid, quod libelli Stoici inter Sericos

 iacere pulvillo amant,

illiterati num minus nervi rigent

 minusve languet fascinum?

quod ut superbo provokes ab inguine,

 ore allaborandum est tibi.
You, rotting away in all this endless time, ask what makes my manhood effeminate, when you have black teeth, and when extreme old age ploughs your forehead with wrinkles, and your nasty and dry asshole is gaping just like a constipated cow’s. But that flabby chest, and those breasts, like the teats of a mare, arouse me, and that soft belly, and those scrawny thighs stuck on those swollen calves. May you be blessed, may triumphant effigies lead you in your funeral, and may no other wife walk laden with fatter pearls. But why do the little works of Stoics love to lie among your silken pillows? Does that make my dick, illiterate, any stiffer, or my cock less limp? To call it forth from my arrogant crouch there is a lot of work required of your mouth.

Watson (2003: 293) asserts that the claim that Horace here addresses a *meretrix*¹⁰¹ is summarily refuted by the reference to her as *marita* at line 13; however, as Mankin (1995: 156 *ad ThLL* VIII 406) argues, while the synonymous relationship between *vir* and *maritus* is long established, if Horace intends *marita* here to stand for *uxor*, it would be the first instance in extant literature for this kind of substantive. Regardless, the way that the female addressee’s libidinous nature is highlighted, and Horace’s demand, as Watson himself notes, that she become “Horace’s sexual tool” (2003: 293) for the sole purpose of Horace’s own arousal and fulfillment, constructs her as such. As a result, there is friction between her possible upper-class status and her low-class characterization.

Horace refers to the woman as *putida*, “rotting one,” which not only refers her old age¹⁰² that is foregrounded by his description of her sagging, wilting body, but also recalls, for

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¹⁰¹ See also Clayman 1975; Versnel 1998: 260.
example, Catullus’ “foul slut” of poem 42 (\textit{moecha putida} 42.11) and the Priapea’s lusty hag (\textit{turba putida facta saeculorum} 57.2). Indeed, many translators render \textit{putida} in Horace’s address to the woman as “foul/stinking whore/slut.” ¹⁰³ And Horace blames his addressee for the physical embodiment of his masculine lack when she dares to ask him what “weakens/effeminizes” his “manliness” (\textit{vires . . . enervet meas} 8.2), and when he later describes his “drooping penis” (\textit{languet fascinum} 8.18); however, Horace’s invective is not anxiety over this physical \textit{impotentia}, but rather what ends up emasculating him—the woman is not only the sexual aggressor via gender inversion, but in his detailed account of her naked body he implicates himself, as he is in essence admitting previously successful sexual liaison(s) with this woman. ¹⁰⁴

The male-as-aggressor standard is immediately inverted in \textit{Epode} 8 with the exclamatory infinitive \textit{rogare}. While formally \textit{rogare} governs “quid enervet,” as Watson notes, the context “suggests the additional sense ‘proposition sexually’” (2003: 293-84). ¹⁰⁵ Thus, the woman is the sexual aggressor from the beginning of the poem, as the man is usually the figure who \textit{rogat} ¹⁰⁶ (Watson 2003: 294). In the role reversal in \textit{Epodes} 8 and 12 the poet presents himself as a victim through “an inversion of erotic and imagistic norms, [where] the woman becomes the sexual aggressor/predator, [and] Horace her fugitive, defenseless prey” (Watson 1995: 193). Horace pins the blame for his inability to become sexually aroused on the woman herself, but he does so through an account of her body, one that is far too detailed to deny previous sexual relations with the

¹⁰³ See, for example, Kline 2005, West 1997: 11.
¹⁰⁴ On Horace’s detailed descriptions of the woman’s body and its effect on the reader, who would question why he was previously involved with her, see Watson 2003: 190-91.
¹⁰⁵ cf. Ov. \textit{Am.} 1.8.43-44: \textit{casta est quam nemo rogavit; / aut, si rusticitas non vetat, ipsa rogat} “she’s chaste, whom no one asks; / or, if naivete does not forbid her, she asks herself”).
woman. In addition to the black teeth and wrinkled brow (*dens ater et rugis vetus / frontem senectus exaret* 8.3) reminiscent of the sacrificial *puer*’s depiction of Canidia, Horace describes her rectum as wide open as a constipated cow (*hietque turpis inter aridas natis / podex velut crudae bovis!* 8.5-6) and implicates himself even further as he moves up her body (8.7-10). He leads the reader to believe he has seen these parts of the body he depicts as grotesque, that he depicts as bestial, and deploys the same sort of invective in *Epode* 12, which is presumably about the same old woman (Watson 2003: 382), as both female figures are similarly described and equally irate over Horace’s sexual inadequacy.

*Epode* 12 again situates the female target within the realm of the bestial in his descriptions of her body, as well as her smell:

Quid tibi vis, mulier nigris dignissima barris?

munera quid mihi quidve tabellas

mittis nec firmo iuveni neque naris obesae?

namque sagacious unus odoror

polypus an gravis hirsutis cubet hircus in alis

quam canis acer ubi lateat sus.

qui sodor vietis et quam malus undique membris

crescit odor, cum pene soluto

indomitam properat rabiem sedare, neque illi

iam manet umida creta colorque

stercore fucatus crocodili, iamque subando

tenta cubilia tectaque rumpit!

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107 Richlin (1984: 70) labels the cataloging of the body in *Epodes* 8 and 12 as the “part by part” technique.
vel mea cum saevis agitat fastidia verbis:

‘Inachia langues minus ac me;
Inachiam ter nocte potes mihi semper ad unum
mollis opus. pereat male, quae te
Lesbia quaerenti taurum monstravit inertem,
cum mihi Cous adesset Amyntas,
cuius in indomito constantior inguine nervus
quam nova collibus arbor inhaeret.
muricibus Tyriis iteratae vellera lanae
cui properabantur? tibi nempe.
ne foret aequalis inter conviva, magis quem
diligeret mulier sua quam te.
o ego non felix, quam tu fugis ut pavet acris
agna lupos capreaeque leones!’

What do you want, woman a black elephant would better suit. Why do you send me gifts and letters when I am not a hardened youth and do not have a wide nose? But I have one sharper than a keen hound at sniffing out where a swine lies hidden to smell whether it is a tumor or a hairy goat that lies in your armpits. What a sweat spreads over your shrunken limbs, what a bad odor rises, as my penis slackens and she hurries to settle her untamed lust, and already that damp makeup, dyed with crocodile dung, continues to wear off, and now she breaks the strained bed and canopy! She even urges on my loathing with cruel words:
‘You’re less tired with Inachia than me; you are able to do Inachia three times in a
night, but for me you are soft after one time. May she end badly, this Lesbia, when I, seeking a bull, proved your impotence when Amyntas of Cos was available to me, whose dick is firmer planted than a young tree on the hills. For who were these woolen fleeces twice-dyed Tyrian purple strung up for? Certainly for you, lest there may be a guest among your friends, whose man may love him more than I love you. Oh, I am so unhappy, how you flee me just as a lamb is terrified of fierce wolves, or the deer the lions!’

Of the animals mentioned in the poem, three of them deliberately evoke the woman’s unbridled lust—elephant, pig, bull—and the comparison of her odor with a goat (gravis hirsutis cubet hircus cubet hirucae in alis 12.5) recalls the notorious lechery associated with goats,108 and her self-comparison with a wolf at the end of poem emphasizes her dominant “sexual predacity” (noted in Watson 2003: 385).109 The woman’s appearance, her veracity, instigates and is blamed for Horace’s impotentia, which he again conveys through mentioning his flaccid penis; however, this time he also admits prior arousal that comically fails, not a flat impossibility of physical arousal (12.7-12).

While the woman’s specific sexual activity is unclear, in these few lines Horace attempts to present himself as in control by assimilating her sexual activity with animals, as well as, in this instance, playing at least some part in the success of her sexual fulfillment—she does, at any rate, break the bed. In Horace’s “defensive reversal, the hideousness of the woman is manufactured to excuse the incapacity of the man” and makes Horace’s poetry inseparable from the misconduct it details; the ugliness that Horace describes is the ugliness of his description. In effect, his attempts to repel this

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108 Cf. Carson 143ff, Lorax 1993: 100-5. See also Catullus 69 and 71.
109 On the use of bestial imagery in invective against women, see also Richlin 1984: 71.
woman is itself repellent: “as he makes faces at the enemy, the invective poet defaces himself” (Oliensis 1998: 65), laughing in the process and valorizing both himself, as the speaker of invective, and the deviant feminine figure, as sexually competent.

*Epodes* 8 and 12, although arguably more blatantly comical, connect to Canidia’s appearance in *Epodes* 5 and 17 in a number of ways, including invective threat, the means of grotesque physical description, and insatiable lust discussed above. At the outset of *Epode* 5, Horace juxtaposes divergent presentations that allow for a queer reading of the poem. The *puer* offered up for Canidia’s spell exacerbates her crime because he is even more powerless than a grown man, an exaggeration of the powerless adult speakers of *Epodes* 8, 12, and 17. Additionally, the vast disjunct in social status, physical unattractiveness, and integrity between Canidia and the *puer* serves as a main vehicle for the comedy of the poem. Humor and the ironic placement of divergent figures gives the poem a “camp sensibility,” a sensibility that Broder says “simply means that a camp voice ironizes the relationship between deviance and dominance and expresses solidarity with the deviant: that is, embraces a stigmatized identity which need not necessarily be its own identity” (2010: 88). It is when the purpose of these dark, intricate rites are revealed that the comic nature of the poem is foregrounded. The *puer* is the final ingredient of an intricate spell that includes a long list of gross, mostly animal related, ingredients: Canidia commits the cruel murder of a Roman youth, who would die of starvation so that “his marrow and liver, dried and cut out, would be a potion of love” (*exsecta uti medulla et aridum iecur / amoris esset pocolum* 5. 37-38). Her insatiable lust has fueled her heinous crime. Canidia is preparing the potion to use on Varus, whom she herself calls the “old adulterer” (*senex adulter* 5. 57), whom all people ridicule (*quod*
omnes rideant 5. 57). Canidia’s emphasis on the adultery of Varus and detailed
description of his body indicate a previous physical relationship with him in the same
way that Horace’s account of the woman of Epodes 8 and 12 implicates a physical,
sexual relationship. Canidia further defaces herself through her own description of Varus
as a less-than-appealing object of desire, smeared with oils and prowling around
brothels, which further intensifies the humor. The puer’s invective at the close of
Epode 5 is opposed to the hyperbolic presentation of Canidia as ridiculous, but its
connection with the invective of the Horatian speaker against the woman of Epodes 8 and
12 suggests his elaborate curse’s inability to achieve its objective.

The monstrous-feminine: Horace’s Canidia

Kristeva’s theory of abjection, while rooted in psychoanalysis, semiotics, and
Lacan’s three orders, challenges the Lacanian notion of subjectivity’s relation to the
object. Horace engages in the process of abjection throughout the Epodes, hinging his
own identity upon what he attempts to make radically other. Kristeva argues that the
maternal body is not the infant’s first object, but that it is abject first of all—neither

110 For the disproportionate relationship between Varus and the effort put forth in Canidia’s spell, see
111 For influence of mime on comedy in Horace’s Epodes, see Watson 2003: 182. For mime as influential in
Horatian satire, see Ruffell 2003.
112 Lacan’s three orders are the Symbolic, the Imaginary, and the Real. The Symbolic consists of signifiers
that talk about the way we perceive the world, the Imaginary. The Real is not reality, but representative of
the limitations of the Imaginary and Symbolic (Miller 2004: 5)—not everything can be reduced to
signification.
113 Desire’s relationship to Lacan’s three orders helps to describe an emotional state that refuses
rationalization. Desire is rooted in Lacan’s Real and presses toward a fictive, unattainable “whole”
(Janan 1994: 24). Although the whole can never be attained, “charged” signifiers, or “points de capiton”
(“upholstery buttons”), can give the subject “illusory wholeness” (Janan 1994: 24-25). This is applicable to
the Catullan narrative in that, with respect to language, points de capiton keep the “movement of desire”
“buttoned down” long enough to present a “legible whole”; this is called capitonnage (Janan 1994: 25). In
his repeated attempts to define both Lesbia as subject and their love through language, Catullus finds
moments of this “illusory wholeness.”
object nor nonobject, but in between. *Powers of Horror* suggests that a process of identification and separation informs subjectivity, in particular the repetitive struggle to exclude the abject—initially the maternal body—that establishes identity (Oliver 1997: 225-26). Barbara Creed applies these theories to horror films, challenging the common assertion within horror film analyses in which women are conceived of only as victim.\footnote{A telling example Creed provides is horror film theorist Gerard Lenne, who does not think female monsters should be presented because in real life woman is “both mother and lover” and “should be represented by characters that convey the feeling of a sheltering peace” (1979: 35 qtd. in Creed 1993: 3). Lurie 1981 and Williams 1984 are foundational for the investigation of female monstrosity in horror, but it is Creed 1993 who provides the first detailed study of woman in horror film without viewing her as a victim and paying particular attention to why her gender in particular makes her monstrous.}

Creed utilizes Kristeva’s notion of the “border” the subject believes to be between himself and the abject, her discussion of the mother-child relationship, and the abject nature of the feminine body. Kristeva’s discussion of the process of abjection surrounding bodily fluids and the corpse is foundational for Creed’s theory (Kristeva 1982: 3-4):

> Such wastes drop so that I might live, until, from loss to loss, nothing remains in me and my entire body falls beyond the limit—cadere, cadaver. If dung signifies the other side of the border, the place where I am not and which permits me to be, the corpse, the most sickening of wastes, is a border that has encroached upon everything. It is no longer I who expel. “I” is expelled.

Not only are horror films filled with obviously abject images—the corpse, blood and other bodily wastes—but, as Creed argues, the viewing of the horror film is a process of abjection for the viewer, as the film is often said to have “scared the shit out of” the viewer (Creed 1993: 10). The act of watching the horror film illustrates the very repetitive, contradicting nature of encounters with the abject. It signifies both a desire for
the “perverse pleasure” gained from confronting “sickening, horrific images/being filled with terror/desire for the undifferentiated,” as well as the desire, after becoming inundated with this perversity and taking pleasure in it, to “throw up, throw out, eject the abject (from the safety of the spectator’s seat)” (Creed 1993: 10). This combination of desire and revulsion is seen when the viewer, covering his or her eyes, still looks at the screen through gaps between his or her fingers. The notion of the border, between subject and abject, between Symbolic order and what is outside of order and meaning, is particularly relevant to the horror film. In films like *Carrie* and *Alien*, the viewer is confronted with a monstrous-female(s) that arouse both desire and repulsion, much like Kristeva’s theory of the abject.

Although the nature of the border changes, it is acts of transgression beyond borders that initiate encounters with the abject. In Horace’s relationships with his monstrous females, the monstrous-feminine, borders are transgressed both by the poet, trying to push away the abject as their desire fuels them to reach out to it, and the abject women, who cross boundaries as they blur the lines between good and evil, normal and supernatural, exude excessive sexual heat, and invert proper gender roles. Although Creed argues that it is “almost always” in connection with her relationship to mothering and reproductive functions that woman is considered abject or monstrous, she acknowledges instances in which woman’s monstrousness is related more closely to sexual desire (1993: 7).¹¹⁵

Female figures in Horace’s works, with their ability to cause *impotentia* in the males around them, show “masculinity under threat,” a threat that the poet attempts to

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¹¹⁵ She argues in particular that Freud’s argument that woman’s appearance of being castrated and fear of castration led to the “monstrous phantasy” of woman as castrator (1993: 87-166).
combat with expulsion, as such expulsion would leave the *virtus* of the men remaining behind (Oliensis 2007: 226). Witches in particular arouse “lurid fantasies of emasculating witchcraft” (Oliensis 2007: 225). Canidia arouses both fascination and desire in her appearances in the *Epodes*. As a witch who ignores law and relies on magic and murder to attain what she desires, she is the “antithesis of propriety,” the ultimate other against which Horace can define his art and himself (Oliensis 1998: 68). In Canidia’s exclusion she is presented as ugly, violent, insatiable, sometimes pathetic and ineffectual, and at other times as powerful and threatening. Canidia’s name alone is connected with imagery of *impotentia*. The name Canidia recalls the word Canicula, or Dog Star, the hottest star of the year that is often referenced in ancient works as a time where female heat overpowers male virility. Canidia, through her heat, saps the strength of the males around her and embodies a reversal of sexual hierarchy that would threaten the patriarchal order. Horace plays with the idea of woman as periphery and opposed to the male center through these presentations.

Although there is no known mythological source for the character of Canidia, traditional beliefs concerning the general depiction of witches and ritualistic witchcraft enables Horace to present his own monstrous and deformed feminine figure, who is also directly opposed to feminine expectations, but embedded in her role as witch. Horace cements the idea of woman as periphery, opposed to the male center, in the figure of Canidia. Canidia is one of these figures living outside, on the fringes. She is an example

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116 Oliensis’ argument for *impotentia* in the *Epodes* diverges from the recent reading in Watson’s commentary, who argues that Horace’s inability to become aroused is not from a failure of equipment, but rather a “revulsion which precludes arousal” (Watson 1995: 190).

117 The scholiast Porphyrio identified Canidia with an “estranged mistress,” Gratidia, who lurks behind the poetic alias “Canidia,” but, if she existed, there is no trace of her within the Horation poetic collection (Oliensis 1998: 71).

118 For a literal interpretation of the use of Canidia as a way to comment on the real problem of the practice of witchcraft among the aristocratic class, see Manning 1970.
of the perversion of traditional Roman hierarchies—completely opposed to the exemplary *matrona*, she uses harsh language and drips with uncontrolled, insatiable sexuality (Oliensis 1998: 68).

The first mention of Canidia is in passing in *Epode* 3, in which Horace playfully curses his patron, Maecenas, for the garlic in his food. Horace suggests that garlic, “deadlier than hemlock” (*cicutis alium nocentius* 3.3), could be used as punishment for crime. He asks what poison burns his entrails, whether it is viper’s blood and herbs or if Canidia has “managed this harmful feast” (*an malas Canidia tractavit dapes* 3.8). Immediately following the mention of Canidia, the next 8 lines tell how the famed sorceress Medea used “this” (*hoc* 3.12, 13) to aid and to later destroy the woman whom he makes Medea’s rival. Canidia is immediately connected with the witch Medea, famed for high crimes against order, society, and maternal obligation. The witch is defined as abject because within patriarchal discourses she is known to be an “implacable enemy of the symbolic order” (Creed 1993: 76). The witch dislocates boundaries between the rational and irrational, the Imaginary and the Symbolic.

In her main appearances in *Epodes* 5 and 17, Canidia’s physical depiction, her speeches, and the persistent emphasis on her insatiable lust and animalistic instincts, make her comparable to the unnamed target of invective in *Epodes* 8 and 12. Canidia becomes an image, an identity that Horace alternates between. He separates himself from her and, more often, speaks from her (and the other women’s) voice and position in invective drag. Horace portrays Canidia as the antithesis of decorum, a ravenous, dangerous woman who is powerful at the expense of masculine virility (Oliensis 1991). He attempts to use the portrayal of Canidia’s destructive use of power as a foil to his own
creative, positive use of power. Although Canidia’s appearances in the *Satires* are beyond the scope of this paper, it is worthwhile to note that Horace compares his poetry to Canidia’s poison in *Satire* 2.2, saying that it is by the law of Nature that individuals use their power to terrify those they mistrust. Horace draws a striking parallel between his writing and the witch’s spells, but his portrayal of Canidia’s power in the *Epodes* appears initially divergent from his own writing; however, at the same time the distinction is presented, the difference between the two individuals begins to blur.

Canidia is more widely destructive as she is shown engaged in an act of murder in *Epode* 5. In this poem, monstrous Canidia appears in full force. She, along with two other witches, Veia and Sagana, are engaged in preparations to concoct a love potion—preparations that include the sacrifice of a Roman youth. Horace’s description of the boy sets up a juxtaposition between the vision of a beautiful, innocent male and a predatory, physically distorted female, as he has a youthful body that “would be able to soften the wicked hearts of the Thracians” (*impube corpus, quale posset impia / mollire Thracum pectora* 5.13-14); but he elicits no sympathy from the witches. The *puer* is not just any boy, he wears the *toga praetexta*, worn by upper class boys before they take up the *toga virilis* upon entering manhood. But this mark of order, “glory of purple” (*deus purpurae*, 6), the *puer* prays by in vain.

That Canidia chooses a young *puer* renders her crime worse because he is even more powerless than a grown man, and she poses a threat to the inability of the grown men to protect their posterity. Canidia does not hesitate to violate any expectation of appropriate treatment for a young Roman citizen. Rather, she zealously undertakes an

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119 “ut quo quisque valet susceptos terreat utque / imperet hoc natura potens, sic collige mecum” (“as each one having taken up what makes them strong against those who may terrify them, powerful nature demands this, thus with me” 2.1.50-51).
intricate potion that requires a list of unsettling ingredients including “feathers and eggs of owls smeared with the blood of repulsive frogs” (uncta turpis ova ranae sanguine / plumamque nocturnae strigis 5. 19-20) and “bones ripped from the jaws of a hungry dog” (ossa ab ore rapta ieiunae 5. 23). When the poem returns to the young boy, the purpose of these dark, intricate rites are revealed. He is the final ingredient in her love spell for Varus. The boy and Horace are mirrors of each other:

On one level, the poet-persona, as narrator, is imitating the voice of the boy—by the end of the poem the audience is completely aware of this fact. On another, complementary level, the poet-persona, at least for the first lines of poem, is the boy. The duality of voice, though eventually resolved, contributes to the iambic nature of Horace’s collection and gives the Epodes the kind of multivocality seen in the poems of the Greek Iambicists (Lavigne 2005: 141-42).

Like Horace in Epodes 8 and 12, the boy is an impotent spewer of invective. Horace as the soft youth is defenseless against the dark arts of the witch.

When savage Canidia, gnawing on a long nail with a discolored tooth (hic irresectum saeva dente livido / Canidia rodens pollicem 5.47-48), calls on Diana to help her with her rites, we find that Canidia is preparing the potion to use on Varus, whom she herself calls the “old adulterer” (senex adulter 5. 57), whom all people ridicule (quod omnes rideant 5. 57). Varus makes for a less-than-appealing object of desire, smeared with oils and prowling around brothels. The young boy, an image of softness, buried up to his neck, helpless, does “not now, as before, try to soothe the wicked women with soft words” (. . . puer iam non, ut ante, mollibus / lenire verbis impias 5.83-84), but unleashes “Thyestean curses,” threatening to pursue the witches as a Fury after he dies, a shadow
that will claw their faces and watch as the crowd stones them and wolves and birds scatter their limbs (5. 86-102). The epode ends at the close of his speech, and this allows him to have the last word and upper hand. Canidia’s ineffectual magic, and the young boy’s last stand, render her an object of ridicule. In the opening of *Epode* 5 Canidia is the epitome of the monstrous-feminine, physically horrific, bloodthirsty, remorseless. Initially she is portrayed as an other, powerful and consuming, and abject.

As abject, Canidia is not, and cannot be, indefinitely excluded. She reappears at the close of the *Epode* book, in a position of power and dominance. As Horace begs Canidia to stop torturing him with her spells, she refuses to relent, to be eradicated. Horace laments that he has become a physical wreck from her spells, which she cast upon him as punishment for divulging the secrets of ancient rites, and for the negative, public things he said about her. As Horace wastes away, as his youth flees, his hair whitens, and his bones become covered with sallow skin from her potions (*Fugit iuventas et verecundus color / reliquit ossa pelle amicta lurida, / tuis capillus albus est odoribus* 17. 21-23), he begs for pardon. The speaker is now forced to admit what he “previously denied, that magic has the power to inflict physical hurt” (Watson 2003: 534). In a way, he becomes withered and resembles the witches and unnamed woman of *Epodes* 8 and 12.

The grotesque ingredients that constitute Canidia’s love potion in *Epode* 5 are to be “burnt in Colchian flames” (*flammis aduri Colchicis* 5.24); the magically poisoned robe “carried away in flames” the victim of Medea, the daughter of Creon (*cum palla, tabo munus imbutum, novam / incendio nuptam abstulit* 5. 65-66), and she wants Varus to “burn in smoky flames” for her (*meo flagres uti / bitumen abris ignibus* 5. 81-82). As
Horace wastes away, his body shrivels up and he is on fire (*ardeo*, 17. 30), burned by flames hotter than “Hercules smeared in the blood of Nessus” (*delibutus Hercules / Nessi cruore* 17. 30-33), hotter than the Sicilian flames on the top of Mount Aetna (*nec Sicana fervida / virens in Aetna flamma* 17. 32-33). Horace burns so greatly that he will eventually become “dry ashes carried away by injurious winds” from her Colchian poisons (*tu, donec cinis / injuriosis aridus ventis ferar, / cales venenis officina Colchicis* 17. 33-35). Horace is becoming desiccated and weak, a parallel figure to the helpless *puer* of *Epode* 5. Horace cannot overpower Canidia, and she has, in effect, dominated his book of poetry. As grotesque as she appears, it is her speech that is the final moment of the *Epodes*.

It is Canidia’s speech that closes the book of the *Epodes*. Horace cannot, even through his vivid, grotesque descriptions of her physical appearance, her murderous acts, or a comic caricature of her repulsiveness, place her completely apart from himself, because she will always return, as her rebuff of his pleas attests. Not even suicide may be an escape for Horace, even if he should leap from high towers or lay his chest upon a Norican sword because Canidia promises that he will waste away in tiresome grief (17.70-73). Canidia has sapped all of his strength with her heat and asserts her complete dominance over him; she “rides across his shoulders as a horseman,” and even the earth herself will submit to Canidia’s extravagance (*vectabor umeris tunc ego inimicis eques, / meaeque terra cedet insolentiae* 17.74-75). Just after her assertion of the potency of her magical abilities, she ends with a question that contradicts her assertion that she is able to effect an inversion of natural order: “. . . et polo / deripere lunam vocibus possim meis, / possim crematos excitare mortuos / desiderique temperare pocula” (“I may able to seize
the moon from the sky, with my voice, arouse the cremated dead, and concoct cups of desire”). Right after she proclaims these great abilities she asks Horace, “Should I weep if the outcome of my magic proves unsuccessful against you?” (plorem artis in te nil agentis exitus 17. 81). These lines convey that Canidia has slight doubts about her magical powers, through the subjunctive possim, and the mention of potential failure once again recalls the ambiguous, repetitive nature of her character, and, consequently, repetitive and failed attempts to exclude her.

Horace and Canidia are most intimately connected by their shared role as makers and producers of poetry. The Latin word for a poem, carmen, also means “song” or “spell.” Horace’s deliberate attempts at pushing away Canidia as an abject figure throughout the course of the Epodes culminate in his refusal to answer Canidia’s question that closes the book (plorem artist in te nil agentis exitus? 17.81):[122]

[Canidia] could be wrapped up in the ritual package and cast away except that the iambic Horace neither expels nor silences her; he makes song with her . . . Horace and his Canidia listen to each other and her half of the song begins and ends with questions, which, however rhetorical in tone she delivers them, allow for response (17.53-81). This is where Horace closes his Epodes. No matter how close his symbiosis with Canidia (both are blame artists), his interactions with her show

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[120] Even though Canidia’s closing speech, ending in the word “exitus” (end, outcome, departure, solution), may signify Horace’s transition from iambic invective toward the more refined verse in the Odes, Canidia’s final position of strength, which contradicts her weaker stature at the end of Epode 5, also shows that she, the witch, the monstrous-feminine, the abject, cannot be silenced or eradicated. While Canidia does not appear in the Odes, those poems are not without dark imagery, scattered with references to Diana, patron of witches, and within them is contained another, real-life, monstrous female, Queen Cleopatra.

[121] For repetition as it relates to feminine subjectivity, see Kristeva 1979 “Les Temps des femmes,” which links feminine subjective to the semiotic, rather than the Symbolic. See Gardner 2007 for application of this work in discussing Catullus’ Ariadne and the successor puellae of Augustan elegy.

[122] Ellen Oliensis suggests that Horace’s inability to put a “period” at the end of the collection is “symptomatic of his involvement in a civil war that jeopardizes the very distinctions that underwrite closure”—within the Epodes, as in the civil war, there is a realization of the push to separate the self from the “despised other” (1998: 91, 95).
that his iambic criticisms are of a different sort if they can successfully incorporate, create echoes among, alternative perspectives (Johnson 2012:16).

After Horace attempts to eradicate and differentiate himself from Canidia, the abject monstrous-feminine in the *Epodes*, she never disappears. The poems within the *Odes* draw an indisputable parallel between the poet and the witch as he attempts to define himself. The fact that Canidia is never truly exiled proves that desire for and confrontation with the abject not only causes horror and an attempt to expel it, but that abjection is a necessary process for a subject’s own self-construction.

**Conclusion**

While Horace composed the *Epodes*, Rome was enduring radical change that had serious implications for not only the political system, but the ways in which men would now function within the Roman state. Horace is an example of masculinity in crisis. Due to his previous affiliation with the conspirators, his position was precarious in a time of uncertainty. His uneven footing during the early Principate is foregrounded in his depiction of masculinities in the *Epodes*. The invective speakers that are offered—the *puer* (5), impotent Horace (8 and 12) and desiccated Horace (17)—are counter examples to the Roman script of masculinity. Additionally, Horace’s plea to the citizens to abandon Rome herself belies a political impotence. These presentations offer an alternative masculinity that functions outside of the basic script for what constituted a Roman man.

In the political epodes, Horace maintains his unwarlike nature. As he berates the Roman citizens, he does not incite them to use their *vires* to fight back, but to be passive and flee forever, as far away as possible. In *Epodes* 8 and 12, his scathing invective
reveals his own physical impotence. In the poems concerning Canidia, Horace is first a helpless boy and then a helpless dried out old man. None of these representations work within the normative modalities of Roman masculinity. In the invective dialog throughout these poems, Horace attempts to abject, through invective, the other(s) confronted in the poems. In the process, however, the process reveals more fractures within his own identity that the faults of the targets.

The masculinity in Horace that is predicated on impotence is inherently queer. If to be masculine is to exert potestas over oneself and others, Horace misses the mark. The scathing invective comes from a place of deficiency, doubt, and self-proclaimed lack of vires. Horace, through his vivid, grotesque descriptions of Canidia’s physical appearance, her murderous acts, the comic caricature of her repulsiveness, and the similar referents between her appearances and the woman of Epodes 8 and 12, suggests that the kinship between the invective poet and the witch is deep-rooted. The dialogue format of Epode 17 shows “symmetries of revenge” between the poet and the witch, similar to Epode 5, in which Canidia’s speech against Varus leads to the threatening speech of punishment voiced by the young boy victim (Oliensis 1998: 76-77). Nevertheless, it is Canidia, and, in effect Horace himself who comes out on top at the close of the book. Just after her assertion of the efficacy of her magical abilities, she ends with a question that contradicts her assertion that she is able to effect an inversion of natural order. These abilities are similar to Horace’s testaments to the powers of his own poetry, apparent in much of his work, in and outside of the Epodes. After the comedic struggles with the whores of the Epodes, he immortalizes them, a lasting monument through his depiction. Without Canidia and her referents, and without the components of her character that make her a
peripheral figure, Horace would be unable to identify himself as one who gives immortality. Horace absorbs these tenets of the women depicted in the Epodes, making himself look like them. In this process, Horace extends what encompasses masculinity, and the depiction challenges the standard conventions of Roman gender expectations by speaking from a position that straddles multiple lines of division—between masculinity and femininity, insider and outsider, and high and low social positions. Through invective drag, which results in Horace’s convergence with the whores of his Epodes, the poetry presents the speaker’s solidarity with such figures, elevating them instead of wholly excluding them.
CHAPTER FIVE: OVID: THE SCREAM OF THE EXILED LOVER

“Et quotiens scribes, totas prius ipse tabellas / Inspice: plus multae, quam sibi missa, legunt” (“And whenever you write, first look at all the whole document: they read more than the message sent to them,” *Ars Amatoria* 2.395-96).

*Introduction*

When the other works of invective in this study were written, Rome was in flux. For Catullus, the Republic was in crisis, citizens disillusioned by the cycle of civil wars (Miller 1994: 139); Cicero was the last battle cry of the Republic and saw the beginnings of the Principate; Horace’s early works were published before Octavian had consolidated power under the name *princeps*. By the time we get to Ovid’s *Ibis*, Rome is completely altered. The Republic is dead and the first succession of the new order eminent. Octavian, now Augustus, *is* Rome. The Republican subject had free speech. He could challenge and comment on the status of other citizens and the state itself. He could engage in invective. This changes when Augustus takes control and it is apparent that he will pass on rule to an heir (Miller 1994: 140).123 As we have already seen, invective, while an aggressive form, often produces masculinities that run counter to normative expectations. The *carmen et error* that Ovid cites as the cause of his exile in 8 C.E. demonstrates clearly that the nature of free speech had changed during the Principate. His *Ars Amatoria*

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challenged the moral legislation of Augustus and he saw something he should not have. In the work he is the *praecher amoris*, the teacher of love, instructing his readers on prospective places to meet lovers, how to communicate (especially in furtive ways if the beloved has another lover), and how to keep a lover interested. Although Ovid takes care to say that he is not writing for upper class women (who should be following Octavian’s moral legislation) the work was widely read in Rome (*A.A. 1.31-34*). This is the *carmen* for which Ovid was exiled. Ovid, in exile, is one of the Imperial subjects, but cut off from Rome and the markers he previously used to identify himself (Miller 2004: 213). This new subject position does not have the freedom to challenge norms; he spends most of his time in exile apologizing (largely for his publication of the *Ars Amatoria*), struggling with his feelings for the Muses he believes had betrayed him, and begging Augustus to let him come home or, at least, change the place of his exile.

All the writing of exile is not sad, however. There are occasionally biting words for enemies in the *Tristia*, and Ovid’s 640 line invective poem, the *Ibis*, is a masterpiece in its own right—exploding with an abundance of mythological figures, divine punishments, and scathing threats. But he does not write this work in iambics, which he says himself is the meter “in which wars ought to be waged” (*Ib. 53-54*). The new subject position occupied by Ovid creates a space for invective that is wrapped in the meter of

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124 The *Lex Papia* of 9 BCE says that marriage age is twenty to fifty for women and twenty-five to sixty for men (Gardner 2013: 42). In increasing the age for women, the formerly venerated *univera*, a woman married once was widowed and did not have to remarry, was now coerced into further marriage through childbearing years (Gardner 2013: 46). The *Lex Julia de adulteriis coercendis* highly impacted the “marital experience of a young Roman wife” in politicizing adultery (Gardner 2013: 46).

125 James 2003 argues that the beloved in Tibullus, Propertius, and Ovid is a *meretrix* and whom she terms a *docta puella* (“learned girl”) whose (fictive) relationships with the poets were only made possible by her profession and the exchange in goods—poetry for access to the *puella*’s bedroom (See esp. 35-68 and 71-107).

126 As Miller says, “The subject of erotic elegy has been removed to a world beyond that recognized by the speaking subject in Rome. He exits in limbo” (2004: 213).
love elegy, elegiac couplets, and deployed from a place of self-deprecation, apology, and ultimately impotent threats, as the promised iambics never come. He continuously asserts that he is writing outside of his ability and comfort, a love poet that has turned to war.

Ovid began his poetic career as a young man. He was a love poet, with his earliest work being the *Amores*, elegies centered around a (probably fictional) love interest, Corinna. In the *Amores*, Ovid is the typical locked out lover of elegy that we also see in Tibullus and Propertius, who were inspired by Gallus (James 2003: 35-68). It is in the *Amores* that Ovid defines himself as a love poet. At the beginning of each book, Ovid writes that he tried to write about loftier themes, but that Cupid prevented him from doing so. Essentially it was willed by the gods that love be the subject of Ovidian poetry. Ovid repeats this sentiment in the *Tristia*, saying that his calling kept him from moving to senatorial rank or moving forward on the *cursus honorum* (*Tr.* 4.10.41-92).

Ovid did not suffer exul but relegatio—he was able to keep his property and his citizenship even if he was not allowed to return to Rome. His wife became the sole manager of his estate, and Ovid’s works were not destroyed, though the *Ars Amatoria* was pulled from libraries in Rome (Henderson 1996: xxivff). Exiled to Tomi, on the Black Sea, Ovid paints his surroundings as bleak, though he likely exaggerates. Throughout his exile, Ovid writes that his skills as a writer are degenerating because he has no books and no one to talk to. He even goes as far to say that he losing his ability to write in Latin and warns his reader that “barbarisms” may slip into his poetry of exile. He writes of Rome often in the *Tristia*, but his isolation has significantly changed his identity. He cannot identify himself as love poet in service to Cupid; he is now the exile subject to Augustus’ wrath, a poet of sad things who struggles with articulating himself in
a context so far removed from everything he knows. Nevertheless, he composes these poems too in the same meter as the Amores and the Ars Amatoria. The Epistulae ex Ponto follow suit.

In order to study the piece of invective that comes out of Ovid’s exile, we must first consider the poetic persona that was crafted in two of his other works, the Ars Amatoria and the Tristia. I focus on these works because the Ars Amatoria is a manifestation of libertas, the Tristia and Ovid’s exile showcase what that presumed free speech cost Ovid, and the Ibis shows the end result: a deferential yet powerful subject position that is created by Ovid’s exilic circumstances. Discussion of these works will show how Ovid shifts into a new, queer, subject position, one that dictates the kind of invective that is possible in the Ibis. The Ars Amatoria is emblematic of Ovid as a love poet and praeceptor amoris, and it is the image of himself that he seeks to recuperate in the exile poetry. In the Tristia, Ovid states that when he wrote the Ars Amatoria he did not think anything bad could happen, and that is evident from the bravado and recklessness shown throughout the work. He calls Augustus a puer, names specific monuments and spaces of the imperial family as places where lovers can meet, and gives concrete advice for dangerous liaisons between attached women and their lovers. The poem is one about love and sex, hidden pleasures and, in it, Ovid maintains a position of power and masculine virility. It is an identity that he has a hard time letting go of when he is exiled for the work.

The next section of this chapter will deal with Ovid’s Tristia. In Book 2, Ovid reframes his own image and the Ars Amatoria itself. He goes through the work, often citing directly lines from the Ars Amatoria, to show that the work, in fact, praises the
emperor and only gives advice to those who, he thinks, would be exempt from Augustus’
moral legislation. I will then discuss the reframing of his relationship with Augustus in
the *Tristia* overall—no longer the *puer* of the *Ars Amatoria*, Ovid makes Augustus a
living god, often comparing him with Jupiter and his wrath to Jupiter’s lightning bolt.
Ovid is in the ultimate subservient, self-flagellating position; he repeats that he deserves
this punishment, that he wishes he had burned the *Ars Amatoria* and never seen what he
was not supposed to, that Augustus is merciful in his exile, and that he hopes that
Augustus will forever maintain his power, his domain, and his divine status. This is a
completely different speaker than the reader encounters in the *Ars Amatoria*—Ovid has
become a broken subject.

The last section of this chapter will discuss Ovid’s *Ibis*, a long invective poem
launched at an unnamed target given the eponymous name that matches Callimachus’ lost
poem. This work is sprawling, with threats and stories often reduced to single couplets, a
seemingly never ending list of torments and threats for the target; however, there are
headings throughout that section off the poem that speak to the poet persona’s self-
conception. He opens the poem in a deferential position and in lines similar to his
opening in the first book of the *Amores*. He repeats this articulation later in the poem,
ending the long work with a threat for future abuse, in iambics. It is my contention,
following Sergio Casali (1997), Ellen Oliensis (2004), and Alessandro Schiesaro (2011)
that the scream of the *Ibis* is at least partly directed at Augustus himself, a name he is
barred from using in this kind of attack.\textsuperscript{127} My reading will focus on the self-deprecating language and effeminate positioning that highlights the use of invective drag in the \textit{Ibis}.

The conclusion to this chapter will put these varying images of the poet in conversation with one another and show the metamorphoses in Ovid’s subject position, from one that is virile, confident, and playful, to the submissive yet assertive position one encounters in the \textit{Ibis}. In Augustus’ exile of Ovid, he forces the poet to transform. The fracture of identity, resonating in the images of dismemberment in the \textit{Ibis}, that the poet confronts forces him to reimagine himself. He cannot let go of his love poet identity completely, evident in his continued use of elegiac meter even as his subject matter changes, as do the protestations that he is not writing in his accustomed genre. A new position is forced upon him, one that is deferential, unsure, and emasculated. The \textit{Ibis} is a symptom of this poetic castration—the only invective possible in this new Rome, once sexual license is curbed and freedom of speech is precarious, is the self-deprecating, ambiguous, and convoluted text of the poem itself. In this way Ovid’s invective drag lies in his queer positioning. He is outside of Rome, navigating new avenues of masculinity in the exilic subject position.

\textit{Ovid, Augustus, and the Ars Amatoria}

The \textit{Ars Amatoria} is a pervasively erotic text. It tells women and men where to meet each other for sex, how to communicate in body and writing, and how to hold on to lovers. Although Ovid gives caveats throughout to exempt himself from the moral legislation of the time, he undercuts his claims by making the text for the every(wo)man.

\textsuperscript{127} Darcy Krasne’s recent (2012) article asserts that Ovid is talking to his muses, and while Ovid is tortured by what he feels like is their betrayal, he continuously states throughout the \textit{Tristia} that their inspiration is the only thing that is getting him through his exile
Augustus, as well as places associated with him and his family, are referenced throughout the work. In this text, Augustus is not the parallel of Jupiter as he is in the *Tristia*.\textsuperscript{128} He is described in terms of his nephew, as the *puer* or *iuvenis* on the brink of power. This section will first discuss Ovid’s masculine, assertive position throughout the *Ars Amatoria* as *praecceptor amoris* and how this position further highlights Augustus’ more passive position—as a *puer*, as the butt of joking throughout much of the text. These two alternate power positions open up space for Ovid to be subversive: his elevation of adultery and courtship runs counter to what was expected of Roman citizens, especially in light of Octavian’s moral program and aims to legitimize succession amongst elite families.

The promotion of adultery in the *Ars Amatoria* is problematic because the status of the feminine love object in elegy, the *puella*, is disputed. Sharon’s James (2003) *Learned Girls and Male Persuasion: Gender and Reading in Roman Love Elegy* argues that the *puella* of elegy is a highly educated *meretrix*, and that her status as puella, and not respectable *femina* is what makes the relationship between the poet-lover and beloved possible (See esp. James 2003: 71-107).\textsuperscript{129} James reads elegy as an art of persuasion, in which the poet-lover exchanges poetry for access to the *puella’s* bedroom (James 2003: 13; See also Stroh 1971). While James follows the modern criticism that sees elegy as rooted in “unreality” (cf. Veyne 1983), she reads “generic and class truths” through the *docta puella’s* reading of elegy (James 2003: 29):

\textsuperscript{128} Parallels between Augustus and Jupiter also span the *Metamorphoses*. See, for example, 1.205-10, 15.846-47, 15.911-55, 15.965-67).

\textsuperscript{129} She argues the *docta puella* is “an independent courtesan based on the models of the *meretrix* and *hetaira* of New Comedy, though she is found also in Herodas’ first mime. The *vir*, who often appears to be a husband, is nothing more than the *puella’s* primary client, who retains some rights over her by agreement” (James 2003: 35).
men have financial and political power over women; the erotic power of women over men is limited by time and controlled by absolutely biological factors (youth, beauty, sexual attractiveness); the wealthy and elite have resources of time and money not available to others; personal relationships are always more complex than social ideologies would have them be.

The elegiac subjects of Tibullus, Propertius, and Ovid, run counter to normative expectations. The lover-poet violates “all standards of upperclass Roman masculinity, through both servile behavior and inertia of character” (James 2003: 129) and he is “utterly passive, virtually feminized in his subjugation to a woman made of sterner stuff” (James 2003: 131). James offers that the status of the puella as meretrix gives Propertius, Tibullus, and Ovid, a means to function, literarily, outside of Augustus’ increasingly influence and restrictions of Roman men’s private lives (2003: 35-69, 212-23).

Ovid diverges from the other elegists, James argues, in his insincerity and satirizing of the elegiac genre (James 2003: 155-56). He returns to amatory elegy in the Ars Amatoria and Remedia Amoris, focusing on “disingenuity, deception, infidelity, and depicting a regularized, systematic male anger and revulsion against women” (James 2003: 156). James reads the Ars Amatoria as a text that is hostile to women,\(^{130}\) and that the praeceptor has a “desire to hurt women as payback for his own erotic disappointment” experienced in the Amores (James 2003: 195). What the Ars Amatoria offers is exposure of gender relations in ancient Rome and a satirization of the elegiac genre, as he reveals “the hypocrisy and disingenuity of the elegiac male, whose social status grants him the means and leisure to pursue courtesans” (James 2003: 210). James’

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reading is compelling, but the praeceptor of the Ars Amatoria does not always clearly
distinguish between the social statuses of the women to be caught—just because a
woman can be read as meretrix does not mean that she is cannot be a matrona.
Additionally, the Ars Amatoria’s constant reminders that the work is to serve as a guide,
its acknowledgement of the moral prescriptions of the day, and mention of Augustan
landmarks and figures, puts Ovid into dangerous territory.

The opening of the Ars Amatoria sets itself up as a manual with guaranteed
results: “Siquis in hoc artem populo non novit amandi, / Hoc legat et lecto carmine doctus
amet” (“If anyone among this people does not know the art of loving, let him read this
and, having read this poem, let him love skillfully” A.A. 1.1-2). He argues that the art
of loving is a skill, akin to the mastery required to sail ships and drive chariots (A.A. 3-4).
Ovid tells the reader that he will be the leader in this journey, the Tiphys and Automedon
of Love (A.A. 5-6). Early on he sets up the game of love as warfare. Later, he recounts
the rape of the Sabine women and asks that Romulus give him the power to carry out this
task—he will be a soldier (miles ero, A.A. 1.132). Ovid, a man who shirked away from
military service and the cursus honorum (Tr. 4.10.41-92), dresses himself up as warrior
wholly in charge of the battlefield of love. He is the antithesis of what the Roman male
elite should be, much like his precursor Catullus and Augustan love elegists. He writes,
“Neither ambition or love of possessing touches us: having contempt for the forum we
cultivate the couch and the shade” (Nec nos ambitio, nec amor nos tangit habendi: /
Contempto colitur lectus et umbra foro, A.A. 3.541-42).

131 The text of the Ars Amatoria is Henderson 1979.
132 “Principio, quod amare velis, reperire labora, / Qui nova nunc primum miles in arma venis” “First strive
to obtain an object you wish to love, you who now for the first time comes as a solder in arms,” A.A. 1.35-
36. cf A.A. 2.233: “Militiae species amor est” (“Love is a kind of warfare”).
Ovid not only subverts the Roman soldier to become a *miles amoris* but also teaches an art traditional for the Roman statesman: rhetoric. He tells his reader (*A.A.* 1.459-62):

Disce bonas artes, moneo, Romana iuventus,

Non tantum trepidus ut tueare reos;

Quam populus iudexque gravis lectusque senatus,

Tam dabit eloquio victa puella manus

I warn you, Roman youth, learn good arts, not only so that you may counsel trembling plaintiffs/defendants; a girl no less than populace, serious judge, or chosen senate will give in, conquered, by eloquence.

The poet here is not talking to the common man, but the aristocrat, someone who could be a *patronus* for his *clientes*.133 This audience would be problematic for Ovid because Augustus’ moral legislation was directed at elite citizens to encourage their reproduction (cf. Gardner 2013: 42-49; James 2003: 213. Effective rhetoric would overcome even the paragon of wifely virtue, Penelope herself (*A.A.* 1.475-76).

Ovid’s confidence lies in the fact that he claims he will be immortal through his works. He does this throughout his works, notably at *Amores* 1.15, the end of the *Metamorphoses*, and even the exilic poetry. It is clear that the poet thought he would be above punishment for this scandalous work. His close to Book 2 is emphatic in his strong position (*A.A.* 2.739-44):

Me vatem celebrate, viri, mihi dicite laudes,

Cantetur toto nomen in orbe meum.

133 He also mentions to the reader that his toga should be clean, which is not a garment for the poor man “let your toga be fit and spotless (*Sit bene conveniens et sine labe toga*, *A.A.* 1.514).
Arma dedi vobis: dederat Vulcanus Achilli;

Vincite muneribus, vicit ut ille, datis.

Se quicumque meo superarit Amazona ferro,

Inscribat spoliis 'NASO MAGISTER ERAT.'

Men, celebrate me, the prophet, speak praise for me, let my name be sung
throughout the whole world. I have given arms to you: Vulcan had given arms to
Achilles. Conquer with these given gifts, as that one conquered. And he whoever
overcomes an Amazon with my steel, may he inscribe on the spoils: ‘Naso was
my teacher.’

He repeats these instructions to his female audience of Book 3 (A.A. 3. 811-12). This kind
of hyperbole is as comical as it is dangerous. Ovid wholly embraces his role as teacher
and guide, and he is emphatic that his name be tied to the consequences that occur from
the work—something he will pay dearly for several years after the Ars Amatoria is
published.

The image of Ovid as the stalwart teacher of the art of love is pitted against the
main authority figure mentioned early in the poem, Augustus himself. In this work,
however, Augustus is the puer and princeps, not mighty Jupiter wielding the thunderbolt.
Before he mentions the princeps by name, he suggests places of liaison that are
connected to the imperial family (A.A. 1.67-72):

Tu modo Pompeia lentus spatiare sub umbra,

cum sol Herculei terga leonis adit:

Aut ubi muneribus nati sua munera mater

Addidit, externo marmore dives opus.
Nec tibi vitetur quae, priscis sparsa tabellis,

Porticus auctoris Livia nomen habet

Only walk slowly under the Pompeian shade, when the sun draws back to
Hercules’ lion. Or where the mother has added her own gifts to her son’s, a work
rich with exterior marble. Nor should the Livian colonnade, scattered with ancient
pictures, which keeps its founder’s name, be avoided by you.

The work where the mother has added gifts to her son is the Portico of Octavia,
Augustus’ sister, which was dedicated to the memory of her son Marcellus. And the
Livian colonnade, of course, was named after Augustus’ wife (Henderson 1979: 16n3-4).
The poet cites even the law courts as places to pick up lovers (A.A. 1.79). After moving
on to the opportunities presented to the lover at the Circus, Ovid cites a naval fight staged
by Octavian that brought in many foreigners and opportunities for lovers to meet (A.A.
1.171-76). In Book 3 of the Ars Amatoria, addressed to women, Ovid again cites
locations connected to the imperial family as places where one can meet possible lovers.
He tells them (A.A. 3.389-92):

Visite laurigero sacra Palatia Phoeb:

Ille Paraetonicas mersit in alta rates;

Quaeque soror coniunxque ducis monimenta pararunt,

Navalique gener cinctus honore caput . . .

Visit the palace sacred to laurel-wreathed Phoebus: that one sank Paraetonian
ships\textsuperscript{134} into the deep; and the monuments that the sister and wife of the leader
raised, and his son-in-law [Agrippa] whose head is surrounded by naval honors.

\textsuperscript{134} These are the ships of Cleopatra, defeated, along with Antony, by Octavian is 31 B.C.E. (Henderson 1979: 146n3).
In citing these various places, Ovid keeps Octavian and his family a running current throughout the text. Additionally, most of these places are mentioned in the *Res Gestae* (Davis 2006: 97). The *Res Gestae* was Augustus’ formal publication of all his triumphs, part of the program to establish him as a heroic, just, and beneficent ruler of Rome, and Ovid’s mocking of these locations in the erotodidactic work is a deliberate insult.

The *Ars Amatoria*’s connection to Octavian lies not only in locations for trysts. Ovid also digresses to mention the upcoming Parthian campaign, to be led by Gaius Caesar, son of Agrippa and Julia, and he describes the avenger in a way that parallels descriptions of young Octavian (*A.A.* 1.181-86):

\[
\text{Ultor est, primisque ducem profitetur in annis,} \\
\text{Bellaque non puero tractat agenda puer.} \\
\text{Parcite natales timidi numerare deorum:} \\
\text{Caesaribus virtus contigit ante diem.} \\
\text{Ingenium caeleste suis velocius annis} \] 185 \\
\text{Surgit, et ignavae fert male damna morae.}
\]

The avenger is here, and though early in years proclaims himself leader, and though a boy, handles wars no boy should handle. Stop, timid people, counting the birthdays of the gods: manly excellence touches the Caesars early. Heavenly talent rises quicker than years, and suffers as harmful evil the cowardly delays.

Young Gaius’ praise is directly tied to that of Octavian’s: “Auspiciis annisque patris, puer, arma movebis, / et vinces annis auspiciisque patris” (“With the authority and

135 Ovid repeats these places when he speaks to women in Book 3.387-94.
experience of your father, boy, you will move arms, and with the authority and
experience of your father, you will conquer,” *A.A.* 1.190-91). Gaius’ divinity is imminent, but Octavian’s is already attested: “Marsque pater et Caesarque pater, date numen eunti: nam deus e vobis alter es, alter eris” ("Father Mars and father Caesar give divine spirit to the one going: for one of you is a god, the other will be,” *A.A.* 1.203-4). So although Ovid is not directly speaking about Augustus, the parallel between the young man and his uncle is not lost on the reader. As Gardner writes (2013: 56),

> In praising the young Gaius, Ovid focuses so intently on the precedent set by Octavian—defined emphatically as a *puer*, despite the senate’s decree—that the first half of the digression . . . speaks much more of the adoptive father’s former glory than of Gaius’ present promise.

Octavian’s youth and rising rank in his early career was unprecedented, and his young age was often cited by writers like Cicero (See Casali 2006).

> The fault that Augustus presumably found with the *Ars Amatoria* was its alleged promotion of adultery. Ovid gives a warning to his audience of women early on (*A.A.* 1.31-34):

> Este procul, vittae tenues, insigne pudoris,

> Quaeque tegis medios, instita longa, pedes.

> Nos venerem tutam concessaque furta canemus,

> Inque meo nullum carmine crimen erit.

> Stay away, slender bands, signs of modesty, and the long skirt that hides the feet in the middle of its folds. We will sing of safe love and permitted thefts, and within my poem there will be no crime.
Despite this warning, which is one he returns to in the *Tristia*, his advice seems to cater to everyone. It could be argued that the disclaimer was intentionally provocative because “. . . there is no doubt that referring to the *Julian Law on the Suppression of Adultery* plainly had the potential to backfire, for such frequent reference to the law could only reveal the teacher’s awareness of it and render the poet more obviously liable to the charge of encouraging legal actions” (Davis 2006: 91). Just as the images of the statesman noted above, Ovid seems to say that all women are fair game: “Prima tuae menti veniat fiducia, cunctas / Posse capi; capies, tu modo tende plagas” (“First let confidence come to your minds, all [women] are able to be caught. You will catch them, if only you hold out your nets,” *A.A.* 1.269-70).\(^{136}\)

The adultery gets more explicit as we move forward (*A.A.* 1.579-82):

Sint etiam tua vota, viro placuisse puellae:

Utilior vobis factus amicus erit.

Huic, si sorte bibes, sortem concede priorem:

Huic detur capiti missa corona tuo.

Let it also be your vow to please the husband of your girl. He will be made more useful to you if he will be your friend. To him, if you drink by lot, concede the first turn. Give the crown that has fallen from your head to him.

The sexual encounters detailed in the *Ars Amatoria* are not marriages as, “Not by the order of the law have you come into one bed. For you, love performs the duty of the law” (*Non legis iussu lectum venistis in unum: / Fungitur in vobis munere legis amor, A.A.* 2.157-58). James, as mentioned above, argues that these encounters were between poet-

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\(^{136}\) He repeats this at *Ars*. 1.343: “Ergo age, ne dubita cunctas sperare puellas” (“Therefore go, do not doubt you can hope for all girls”).
lover and *meretrices*, but the repeated assertions that all women can be caught if the
*praecaptor’s* rules are followed makes this reading problematic. Even though Ovid says
in the lines above, and repeats in the *Tristia* (2.247-50), that the prescriptions in the *Ars
Amatoria* were not for *matronae*, adultery is not absent from the work. Ovid absolves the
most legendary adulteress, Helen, for her sins (*A.A. 2.365-72*):

> Nil Helene peccat, nihil hic committet adulter: 365

> Quod tu, quod faceret quilibet, ille facit.

> Cogis adulterium dande tempusque locumque;

> Quid nisi consilio est usa puella tuo?

> Quid faciat? vir abest, et adest non rusticus hospes,

> Et timet in vacuo sola cubare toro. 370

> Viderit Atrides: Helenen ego crimine solvo:

> Usa est humani commoditate viri.

Helen sins in nothing, that adulterer committed nothing: what you would do, what
anyone would do, that one did. By giving time and place you are forcing adultery.
What did the girl use except your counsel? What could she do? The husband is
absent, and the rustic guest is present, and she fears to lie in an empty bed alone.

Let the son of Atreus see: I absolve Helen of crime, she used the courtesy of her
husband.

In the passage, the blame for adultery is placed on opportunities created by absent
husbands. And, if Helen can be absolved of her crime, who is to say that other noble
Roman women couldn’t be as well?
The women of the *Ars Amatoria* are often described as attached to another man, and much of the advice lies in how to convey feelings stealthily, through befriending nurses, sending coded letters, and communicating through signs. But Ovid is writing in a rapidly changing world. While some can read Ovid’s subversiveness as ambiguous or problematic, at the end of the day he is at the very least problematizing the Rome that Augustus was trying to create, as Davis notes (2006: 108):

The question is a difficult one to answer. If we distinguish carefully between the poet and his persona, there is clearly scope for arguing this is a case in which the author creates so wholly outrageous a caricature of himself that no sane reader could possibly attribute the speaker’s thoughts to the author. On the other hand, the poet claims at *Tristia* 2.212 that one (presumably sane) reader, Augustus, considered the poet to be a ‘teacher of foul adultery.’ The question is perhaps insoluble. But in my view one thing is clear, viz. that the poem offers an amusing (and therefore powerful) critique not only of Augustus’ radical attempts to reconstruct Roman society, but also of the ideology underpinning both them and the emperor’s own position (Davis 2006: 108).

Ovid is very emphatic that he is writing in Augustus’ Rome, by invoking Roman places and mentioning the legislation that was oppositional to the program of the *Ars Amatoria*.

The specificity of place is apparent in Book 3 (3.113-28):

Simplicitas rudis ante fuit: nunc aurea Roma est,

Et domiti magnas possidet orbis opes.

Aspice quae nunc sunt Capitolia, quaeque fuerunt: Alterius dices illa fuisse Iovis.
Curia, concilio quae nunc dignissima tanto,

De stipula Tatio regna tenente fuit.

Quae nunc sub Phoebus ducibusque Palatia fulgent,

Quid nisi araturis pascua bubus erant?

Prisca iuvent alios: ego me nunc denique natum

Gratulor: haec aetas moribus apta meis.

Non quia nunc terrae lentum subducit aurum,

Lectaque diverso litore concha venit:

Nec quia descrescunt effosso marmore montes,

Nec quia caerulae mole fugantur aquae:

Sed quia cultus adest, nec nostros mansit in annos

Rusticitas, priscis illa superstes avis.

There was rude simplicity before, now Rome is golden, and possesses the great wealth of the conquered world. Look what the Capitol is now, and what it had been. You would say it belonged to different Jupiters. The Curia, which is now most worthy of such counsel, was full of straw when Tatius was ruling. The Palatine, which now shines under Phoebus and our leaders, what had it been except pasture for oxen destined for the plow? Let past times please others: I give thanks to myself that I was now finally born: this age is apt for my ways. Not because now reluctant gold is led from the earth, not because shells come collected from opposing shores, not because mountains shrink from extracted marble, not because the dark blue waters are put to flight by the dam: But because
culture is present, and rusticity, which persevered until our grandfathers, does not remain in our years.

In this Rome Ovid wants to be honored, like his predecessors and contemporaries—he cites Gallus, Propertius, and Tibullus (A.A. 3.333-34)—and hopes that this poem, and his name, will last (A.A. 3.339-48):

Forsitan et nostrum nomen miscibitur istis,

Nec mea Lethaeis scripta dabuntur aquis:

Atque aliquis dicet ‘nostri lege culta magistri Carmina, quis partes instruit ille duas:

Deve tribus libris, titulus quos signat Amorum,

Elige, quod docili molliter ore legas:

Vel tibi composita cantetur Epistola voce:

Ignotum hoc aliis ille novavit opus.’

O ita, Phoebus, velis! ita vos, pia numina vatum,

Insignis cornu Bacche, novemque deae!

And perhaps my name will be counted with theirs, nor will my writings be given to Lethean waters. And someone will say ‘Read the elegant poems of our master, that one who instructed the two sexes, or from the three books which are marked out by the title of ‘Loves,’ choose that which you may quietly read with soft voice. Or let a Letter [of the Heroides] be sung by you in a polished voice. That one invented this work.’ O, wish it thus, Phoebus! Make it thus, righteous divinity of prophets, and Bacchus, marked by horns, and nine goddesses!
It is apparent that Ovid is aware of the political and social circumstances surrounding his work, and his claims to everlasting fame through his poetry demonstrate that he did not think he would be censured, and certainly not exiled, for their publication. He claims that he is not doing anything any different from the other love elegists, who wrote also about fictive mistresses. In the above passage from Book 3, Ovid wants to be remembered through his works—the *Ars Amatoria*, the *Amores*, the *Heroides*—so he is fusing his identity with the *praeeptor*, the poet-lover, and the speaker of (mostly) jilted female lovers. It is this identity that must be recast in the *Tristia*.

Reframing Guilt: The *Tristia*

While the *Tristia* are written in the same meter as Ovid’s love poetry, the poems present a different kind of poet. His situation has parallels with that of the locked out lover one encounters in the *Amores* and the elegies of Tibullus and Propertius, but the forceful and confident tone that is pervasive throughout the *Ars Amatoria* is absent. Ovid is emphatic about the fact that his situation, his sadness, taints the work, often appealing to his deteriorating abilities as he moves through exile. In the work he is reimagining himself. He is no longer the lover or teacher or love, but a deferential exiled subject, the victim of the wrath of the sole leader of the Roman empire. In the opening to Book 1, he visually separates these poems from the ones that came before (*Tr*. 1.1.1-14):

\[
\text{Parve—nec invideo—sine me, liber, ibis in urbem,}
\]

---

137 The difference with Ovid, as James argues, is that he is exaggerating the circumstances created in elegy and, in the *Ars Amatoria*, speaking from a place of rage against women. This anger toward women is the natural progression of the lover after a long time of being shut out by the mistress.

138 In exile Ovid is “an unhappy lover, an *exclusus amator* singing his paraclausithyron before the locked door that stands between him and the object of his desire” (Miller 2004: 212).

139 The text of the *Tristia* is Henderson 1996.
ei mihi, quo domino non licet ire tuo!
vade, sed incultus, qualem decet exulis esse;
infelix habitum temporis huius habe.

nec te purpureo velent vaccinia fuco—
non est conveniens luctibus ille color—
nec titulus minio, nec cedro charta notetur,
candida nec nigra cornua fronte geras.

felices ornet haec instrumenta libellos;

fortunae memorem te decet esse meae.

nec fragili geminae poliantur pumice frontes,
hirsutus passis ut videare comis.

neve liturarum pudeat; qui viderit illas,
de lacrimis factas sentiet esse meis.

Little book—I’m not jealous—you will to the city without me, to the place which
your master is not permitted to go! Go, but unrefined, the kind that is
fitting for an exile; unlucky, have the appearance of this time. You will not
be enfolded in dye of purple berries—that color is not fitting for mourning. No
title marked with vermilion or pages with cedar, you wear no white knobs on your
black brow. These things ornament lucky books; it is fitting that you remember
my fortune. Let your two edges not be polished by brittle pumice, so that you
appear rough and shaggy-haired. And do not be ashamed of blots—he who sees
them will think they were made by my tears.
He asks that the book not try to refute the charges laid against him (Tr. 1.1.25-26), and
notes that it will be criticized and considered “beneath the praise of my genius” (… ingeniiue minor laude ferere mei, Tr. 1.1.36). In much the same way as he denies the
efficacy of his invective poem, Ibis, Ovid is overly deferential and apologetic for his
work. As he says, he is no longer Love’s teacher: “‘Inspice,’ dic ‘titulum. non sum
praecceptor Amoris; / quas meruit, poenas iam dedit illud opus” (“Say, “Look at the title, I
am not the teacher of Love; that work has paid the penalties that it deserves,” Tr. 1.1.67-
68).

In the exile poetry, Ovid is what Miller 2004 calls the new Imperial subject. The
conflicted positions of elegy are no longer available. Now, in the Principate, “Instead, we
see a new model emerge in which the subject is always already absent from view, always
already speaking from nowhere, from a place beyond the contingencies of the here and
completely different than elegy, but a recasting of the earlier work (Miller 2004: 211).
This new speaking subject has been removed from the recognizable landscape of Rome,
and there is a rupture between the Symbolic markers available and the poet’s Imaginary
identity (Miller 2004: 213-14):

His exclusion from Rome and the publicly recognized system of honors and
rewards is the necessary condition for his elaboration of this radically separate,
transcendental world. That this elaboration is never complete, and never could be,
goes without saying. Nonetheless, it is the tension between the poet’s Symbolic
construction of this other world, complete with his Imaginary investment in it, and
his desire to regain the world of the living, with its endless and fleeting satisfactions, that makes the exilic poetry so fascinating.

In this new “Augustan Imperial Symbolic” all power leads to a single center, and the poet no longer has the space for individual maneuver that characterized the Republic (Miller 2004: 214): “In the world of empire it is no longer possible to revision the world as a collective endeavor or project. All that is left is the micropolitics of self-fashioning and ironic resistance, functionally indistinguishable from flattering acceptance: a condition not that different from our own” (Miller 2004: 236). Ovid is completely subject to the wrath of Augustus. He states repeatedly that his punishment is just, but he never seems to lose hope completely that the emperor will relent, even if that only means that he will change the place of his exile to somewhere milder. Augustus has complete power over his life and could just as easily take back what he has given (Tr. 1.2.67-68). Augustus is usually invoked as divine, a parallel of Jupiter, with his rage against Ovid the lightning bolt that has struck him down.

Although in this deferential position starting from the first book of the Tristia, Ovid has a unique opportunity in his removal from Rome. He is recasting his identity, detailing Augustus’ wrath (which when compared with Jupiter does seem excessive). In Book 2, his apologia for the Ars, he essentially charges Augustus with a mistake in his reading. This apologia also serves as an opportunity for Augustus to show mercy. The poet says “But if I had not sinned, what would you be able to give up?” (sed nisi

140 Cf. “merciful wrath of Caesar,” (mitissima Caesaris ira, Tr. 1.2.61).
141 See for example, Tr. 1.3.11-12, 1.4.25-26, 2.179-81. On Augustus as Jupiter, see Williams 1994: 137-38, Kenney 1982: 444, Weinstock 1971: 305, Scott 1930: 52-58
142 Cf. Tr. 2.33-34: “si, quotiens peccant homines, sua fulmina mittat / Iuppiter, exiguo tempore inermis erit” (“If every time men sinned Jupiter sent down his lightning bolt, in a brief time he would be armless”).
pecasem, quid tu concedere posses? Tr. 2.31-32) and that “it is customary for a deity to be appeased sometimes” (sed solet interdum fieri placabile numen, Tr. 2.141). One of the main aims of the rehabilitation of the Ars is to show Augustus as harsh and give the emperor the opportunity to alter his punishment. In his recusatio in Tristia 2, he is digging at Augustus—blaming him for his reading, and making his lack of mercy ridiculous. Ovid’s muse is still “mischievous” (Williams 2002: 241).

Ovid tries to control the interpretation of the work that offended the emperor and, in effect, how he is viewed as a poet and a citizen. Even though he calls the poem a “game of his youth” (. . . hoc iuveni lusum mihi carmen, Tr. 1.9.61), his long justification elevates it. In one sense Tristia 2 is publicity for the work, further immortalizing it, and in another an opportunity to reframe the discussion surrounding it. In this book he has pitted himself as love poet against his new self as exiled poet. In this space there is gender ambiguity because the act of writing is both masculine, with its ties to speech, and feminine, with its abstention from the political and martial. As Sharrock notes (2002: 98):

To be a love poet, in particular, is both to be virile and to be effeminate. This paradox develops a particular poignancy for Ovid in exile: on the one hand, we have the elegiac limp and the failing poetic powers, but on the other hand the sexiness of his poetry which caused his downfall is also what makes his exilic poetry attractive. Moreover, this is a heroic failure. Ovid in exile is Ulysses—an epic hero but weaker, more vulnerable to suffering than his exemplum. . . the terminology of wounding is again very active: Ovid has been wounded by his poetry, both literally hurt and in love; and wounded by Augustus, who has also been wounded by him. The vulnus both gives and destroys his poetic vires. It is
the *vulnus* itself which stimulates the poetry, gives it *materia*, as in erotic elegy, and yet it is the *vulnus* for which he seeks a cure through the poetry. In this way the exile poetry and the earlier *Ars* are bound together. In the exile poetry, . . . Ovid presents himself as a wretched exile and contrite offender whose self-professed guilt implies resignation and defeat before the emperor. The poems themselves, however, circumvent his punishment and make public the poetry at least partly responsible for his banishment (McGowan 2009: 3).

Instead of silencing him at Rome, Ovid’s poetry enables him to continue as a player (McGowan 2009: 15). Ovid’s newfound position on the margins of the empire gives him, paradoxically in view of the professed wretchedness of his physical and mental state, power through poetic knowledge. From exile in Tomis the poet gains a critical perspective from which to comment on the Augustan, and thus the first, phase of the Roman Principate (McGowan 2009: 19).

It is from this space that Ovid is able to publicize his prior work throughout its defense. The poet-lover and *praecaptor* are recast in the poems of lament, but through the *Tristia* the erotic poems are never absent from view. As a result, Ovid has created a new space in which to reimagine his identity as poet and citizen. In this space Ovid utilizes deferential, submissive language, but his message is actually one of power in his re-publicizing of his more scandalous works.

Ovid places his defense of the *Ars Amatoria* in the Muses’ hands. Although he has a problematic relationship with the Muses because of his punishment, he cannot help but try to recast the work of his youth: “Quid mihi vobiscum est, infelix cura, libelli,  

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143 Krasne 2012 argues that the *Ibis* is in fact directed at Ovid’s Muses, who are responsible for his exile.
/ ingenio perii qui miser ipse meo? / cur modo damnatas repeto, mea crimina, Musas?"

(“What are you to me, books, my unlucky care, miserable me, destroyed by my own talent? Why do I return to my now renounced Muses, my crime?” Tr. 2.1-3). He places the fault on his work alone, but he is compelled to fight for it, like a gladiator returning to the arena or a ship returning to the sea (Tr. 2.17-18).

His punishment was the result of two faults, a poem and a mistake (Tr. 2.207ff), and because he must be silent about the error, what he can do is offer a reinterpretation of the Ars Amatoria. He begins his defense with the assertion that Augustus, if he had read the work, would find it faultless (Tr. 2.237-44):

miser in hoc igitur tantarum pondere rerum

te numquam nostros evoluisse iocos?

at si, quod mallem, vacuum tibi forte fuisset,

nullum legisses crimen in arte mea. 240

illa quidem fateor frontis non es severe scripta, nec a tanto principe digna legi:

non tamen idcirco legum contraria iussis

sunt ea Romanas erudiuntque nurus.

May I wonder, therefore, that you, weighted down by such great affairs, never unrolled my jests? But if, as I would prefer, by chance you had the free time, you would have read no crime in my Art. That written work truly, I confess, has no serious side, \(^{144}\) nor is it fitting to be read by so great a prince: but nevertheless is it not contrary to the law you ordered, nor does it instruct Roman daughters.

\(^{144}\) Ingleheart 2010: 227 notes that this comment is not to disparage the Ars Amatoria but stresses its frivolity in order to claim Ovid did not teach adultery.
He quotes *A.A.* 1.31-34 (cited above) almost exactly as proof that he gave fair warning in the text for noble women to stay away (Tr. 2.247-50).\textsuperscript{145} He goes on to say that if *matronae* would follow advice intended for freedwomen, then they should not be allowed to read anything, because “there is nothing useful that is not able to be injurious at the same time” (*nil prodest, quod non laedere possit idem*, Tr. 2.266). The fault is placed squarely on the reader (Tr. 2.273-76):

\begin{quote}
\textit{discitur innocuas ut agat facundia causas;}
\textit{protegit haec sontes, inmeritosque premit.}
\textit{sic igitur carmen, recta si mente legatur,}
\textit{constabit nulli posse nocere meum.}
\end{quote}

Eloquence is learned for innocent causes; this protects the guilty and oppresses those undeserving.\textsuperscript{146} Therefore the poem, if read by a virtuous mind, it will be evident, although mine, it is able to harm no one.

As a consequence, then, Augustus’ illicit reading reflects negatively on Augustus’ virtue. Ovid repeats this in a similar way about his female readers (Tr. 2.301-8):

\begin{quote}
\textit{omnia perversas possunt corrumpere mentes;}
\textit{stant tamen ipsa suis omnia tuta locis.}
\textit{et procul a scripta solis meretricibus Arte}
\textit{summovet igenuas pagina prima manus.}
\textit{quaecumque irrupit, quo non sinit ire sacerdos,}\textsuperscript{147}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{145} Ovid changes the language in the *Tristia* to be more legal sounding to build up his case—replacing *Venerem tutam* with *nisi legitimum* (noted in Davis 2006: 90).

\textsuperscript{146} “Ovid’s identification of rhetoric with legal advocacy may suggest distaste for the legal career of his youth (cf. *Tr.* 4.10.17-20). It is ironic that the pentameter claims that legal eloquence does more harm than good, given the context of the eloquent, legalistic *Tristia* 2, Ovid’s ‘case for the defence;’ might Ovid thereby hint that in *Tristia* 2, eloquence is used to defend the guilty?” (Ingleheart 2010: 244).
protinus huic dempti criminis ipsa rea est.
nec tamen est facinus versus evolvere mollis;
multa licet castae non facienda legant.
All things are able to corrupt perverse minds, nevertheless all things stand safe in their own places. And its first page wards off noble hands from an *Art* written for *meretrices* alone. Whoever rushes into a place that is not permitted by the priests immediately removes the crime from him and becomes the defendant herself. Nor however is it a crime to read tender verse; the chaste are permitted to read many things but not do them.

With these two passages, Ovid is arguing that the fault lies in others’ misreading of his poetry. In this way he is trying to control his own reception.

Despite these protestations, Ovid is careful to bring the blame back to himself, in order to maintain his deferential and apologetic position: “at cur in nostra nimia est lascivia Musa, / curve meus cuquam suadet amare liber?” (“But why is my Muse exceedingly wanton, and why does my book persuade anyone to love?” *Tr.* 2.313-15). He says “warlike Rome” (*bellatrix Roma, Tr.* 2.321) provided him with a subject and that Augustus’ deeds would have been better subject matter (*Tr.* 2.323-25), but says he was not able to write on those themes because he lacked the talent necessary, as he is suited to other pursuits (*Tr.* 2.331-38):

> forsan—et hoc dubito—numeris levioribus aptus
> sim satis, in parvos sufficiamque modos:
> at si me iubeas domitos Iovis igne Gigantes

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147 Ingleheart suggests that in using this metaphor Ovid casts himself as the priest, playing on the Augustan concept of poet as *vates* (2010: 260-61).
dicere, conantem debilitabit onus.

divitis ingenii est immania Caesaris acta

condere, materia ne superertur opus.

et tamen asus eram; sed detrectare videbar,

quodque nefas, damno viribus esse tuis.

Perhaps, and this I doubt, I am suitable enough for lighter verse, sufficient enough for small measures. But if you order me to speak of the Giants conquered by the fire of Jove, the work will debilitate me while I try. Only a man rich in talent can tell of Caesar’s immense deeds lest the work surpass the subject matter. I tried nevertheless, but I appeared to disparage it—an unspeakable thing—to injure your power.

The fact that Ovid indicates that he in some way damaged Augustus’ power, which he refers to with a word related to masculinity (vis, viris, n.), in fact, elevates what Ovid has done. Though he says he regrets it, his work had the power to harm, which is something that he will deny later in the Tristia and in the opening to the Ibis. In this earlier part of the Tristia, when Ovid thinks that he may get to come home, or at least be relocated, he uses the force of his former writing to show its power. As he spends more time in exile, finally pushed to rage in the Ibis, his position becomes more passive and deferential.

The poet says that out of all the authors who have written on illicit themes, he alone has been punished: “denique composui teneros non solus amores: / composito poenas solus amore dedi” (“Finally not I alone have wrote about tender loves, but for writing of love I only have been punished,” Tr. 2.361-62). He urges Augustus to not

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148 Ingleheart (2010: 276) asks if in retelling the Gigantomachy Ovid is casting himself as the Giants, who challenged the supreme ruler.
conflate his writings with his life, in the way one could do with “wanton Catullus” 
(lascivus Catullus, Tr. 2.427). But this is not Catullus’ Rome. Ovid is under the empire, 
Augustus is the most important reader, and Ovid’s entire early poetic career runs counter 
to the prescriptions for Roman elites. Though Ovid begs the princeps to consider the 
section of the Metamorphoses concerning Augustus and his adoptive father, Caesar (Tr. 
2.557-60 ad Met. 15.745-870), Ovid is unable to erase his persona as love poet and 
teacher of love. He closes Book 2 of the Tristia with a plea for a safer place of exile (Tr. 
2.577-78).

In the last two books of the Tristia, the poet’s positioning becomes more insecure, 
and his hope of moving to a new a place of exile, let alone being forgiven, is strained. In 
Book 3, he moves from defending the Ars Amatoria to outright denigration: “id quoque, 
quod viridi quondam male lusit in aevo, / heu nimium sero damnat et odit opus” (“And 
also that evil work, with which he once played in green youth—alas, too late—he 
condemns and hates,” Tr. 3.1.7-8). The poet then pretends that his book has arrived in 
Rome, describing familiar places (Tr. 3.1.27ff)—Caesar’s forum, the Palatine, and 
Augustus’ palace, and the book wonders if the palace is “Jove’s abode” (domus Iovis, Tr. 
3.1.35). He finds that his works have been shut out, “I was seeking my brothers, certainly 
except those whom the father wishes he never brought forth, seeking in vain . . .”
(quaerebam fratres, exceptis scilicet illis, / quos suus optaret non genuisse pater. / 
quaerentem frustra . . . Tr. 3.1.65-67). He ends the search, hopeless, shut out from the 
library in the temple of Liberty because “The fortune of the wretched author overflows 
onto his offspring, and we suffer at our birth the exile that he has borne” (in genus 
auctoris miseri fortuna redundat, / et ferimus nati, quam tulit ipse, fugam, Tr. 3.1.73-74).
In the next poem, Ovid wishes for death, because nothing could be worse than exile from Rome (Tr. 3.2.23-30):

\[ \text{ei mihi, quod totiens nostri pulsata sepulcri} \]
\[ \text{ianua sub nullo tempore aperta fuit!} \]
\[ \text{cur ego tot gladios fugi totiensque minata} \quad 25 \]
\[ \text{obruit infelix nulla procella caput?} \]
\[ \text{di, quos experior nimium constanter iniquos,} \]
\[ \text{participes irae quos deus unus habet,} \]
\[ \text{exstimate, precor, cessantia fata meique} \]
\[ \text{interitus clausas esse vetate fores!} \quad 30 \]

Ah, me! So many times I have knocked on the door of my tomb but at no time was it opened! Why have I escaped so many swords and why have no threatening gales crushed my unlucky head? Gods, whom I find immovably cruel, participants in a rage that one god has, urge on, I pray, my sluggish fate and forbid the doors of my destruction to be closed!

But even in craving death, Ovid knows that it is his works that will make him live forever, he has not completely lost that aspect of his former bravado. After he tells his wife what to put on the inscription of his tomb he says (Tr. 3.4.77-80):

\[ \text{. . . etenim maiora libelli} \]
\[ \text{et diurna magis sunt monimenta mihi,} \]
\[ \text{quos ego confido, quamvis nocueres, daturos} \]
\[ \text{nomen et auctori tempora longa suo.} \]

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149 See also Tr. 3.8.39-40: “tantus amor necis est, querar ut cum Caesaris ira, / quod non offensas vindicet ense suas” (“There is such love of death that I complain of Caesar’s anger because he does not avenge his offenses with the sword”).
As a matter of fact my books are a greater and longer lasting memorial for me, books which I am confident that, although they have harmed me, are going to give a name and long season to their author.

Ovid oscillates between wishing for death and voicing his claim to immortality. And, in many ways, he does seem to portray himself as a man who belongs to the circle of elite and successful poets.

Ovid maintains some autonomy in what could be construed as digs to Augustus—if he were a great man, his wrath could be appeased: “If a man is greater, the more his anger may be placated” (*quo quisque est maior, magis est placabilis irae*, Tr. 3.5.31). He also lessens his crime, stating again that a “mistake was the beginning of my crime” (*principiumque mei criminis error habet*, Tr. 3.6.26) and “stupidity is what my crime ought to be called” (*stultitiamque meum crimen debere vocari*, Tr. 3.6.35). His writings are the one thing that gives him power over Augustus (*Tr. 3.7.47-52*):

... *ingenio tamen ipse meo comitorisque fruorque*:

Caesar in hoc potuit iuris habere nihil.

*quilibet hanc saevo vitam mihi finiat ense,*

*me tamen extincto fama superstes erit,*

*dumque suis victrix septem de montibus orbem*

*prospiciet domitum Marta Roma, legar.*

Yet I myself accompany and delight in my talent: Caesar is able to have no jurisdiction over this. Whoever may end this life with violent sword, nevertheless with me gone my fame will be surviving. And while Martian Rome looks out, victorious, from the seven hills of the city, I will be read.

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150 For Ovid’s exile as a “living death” see Grebe 2010.
And while he claims that his talent is deteriorating, he is drawn to the Muses and compares his situation to that of the lover, who was the central figure of his earlier works (Tr. 4.1.29-36):

\[
\text{sed nunc quid faciam? vis me tenet ipsa sacrorum,}
\]

\[
\text{et carmen demens carmine laesus amo. 30}
\]

\[
\text{sic nova Dulichio lotos gustata palato}
\]

\[
\text{illo, quo nocuit, grata sapora fuit.}
\]

\[
\text{sentit amans sua damna fere, tamen haeret in illis,}
\]

\[
\text{materiam culpae persequiturque suae.}
\]

\[
\text{nos quoque delectant, quamvis noccere, libelli,}
\]

\[
\text{quodque mihi telum vulnera fecit, amo. 35}
\]

But now what should I do? The power of those sacred enterprises holds me, and, mad, I love song although harmed by song, just as the strange lotus flower, tasted by Odysseus’ men, was a pleasurable taste though it caused harm. Often a lover knows his own condemnations, nevertheless he clings to them, and follows the matter of his own crime. Books also please me, although they have harmed me, and I love the weapon that made my wound.

The claims of immortality alternate with assertions of Augustus’ potency. Ovid writes (Tr. 4.8.45-52):

\[
\text{nil adeo validum est, adamas licet alliget illud, 45}
\]

\[
\text{ut maneat rapido firmius igne Iovis;}
\]

\[
\text{nil ita sublime est supraque pericula tendit}
\]

\[
\text{non sit ut inferius suppositumque deo.}
\]

\[^{151}\text{See, for example Tr. 3.14.33-34, 45-46; 4.1.1-2; 5.7.21-22; 5.7.31-32.}\]
Nothing is so powerful, although bound with steel, that it may remain stronger than the lightning bolt of Jove. Nothing is so high or reaches so far above dangers that it would not be inferior and subject to a god. For although by my sin I caused part of my punishment, nevertheless there is more disaster given by the anger of a god. But you also be warned by my plight, be worthy of the man equal to the gods.

Although Augustus’ divinity is constantly reasserted and despite the fact that Ovid emphasizes that the punishment is just, the poet’s claims to immortality are what win throughout the Tristia. At the end of Book 4 after his autobiography he says that of all the poets throughout the whole world he is read most of all ( . . . et in toto plurimus orbe legor, Tr. 4.10.128). And in the last poem of Book 5, addressed to his wife, he tells her that in writing of her he has given her an immortal name (perpetuum nomen, Tr. 5.14.13). Ovid’s “assertion of his own lasting renown carries with it implicit diminution of the emperor’s secular power” (Williams 2002: 240).

What marks the period of the end of Augustus rule and years of Ovid’s exile (8-17 CE) is the increasing visibility of Augustus and his family in all facets of the imperial discourse (McGowan 2009: 24). As McGowan writes (2009: 24-25),

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152 This statement directly conflicts with Met. 15.981-82, where Ovid claims immortality for himself that may surpass the gods and Augustus himself.

Almost unavoidably, the increasing visibility of the emperor, or rather the increased amount of space Augustus and his family appear to occupy in virtually all forms of imperial discourse comes at a price: other, perhaps divergent ways of expressing what it means to be Roman—including, for example, Ovid’s eroto-didactic voice in the *Ars*—will eventually lose their place in Rome. In the most basic metaphorical terms, the non-Augustan will inevitably be pushed out of the city, figuratively marginalized from the center of imperial discourse, and compelled to seek refuge in another, perhaps non-Roman space.

This power struggle is something that has been detailed in relation to earlier Ovidian works, including the *Metamorphoses*. In Ellen Olienis’s 2004 article, she interprets the discussion of Minerva and Arachne from the *Metamorphoses* as an allegory for the exile poetry: Ovid cannot confront Augustus in the same way that Arachne does Minerva. When Ovid writes about himself, Olienis has to think of Augustus, and we read the same “antagonism, envy, rivalry, usurpation” in the exile poetry that were in the story in the *Metamorphoses* (Olienis 2004: 296). During the time the exile poetry was written, *libertas* for Roman men was rapidly changing. The subversiveness, the gender fluidity, of the invective speakers of the Republic and before the battle of Actium was no longer possible by the time we get to exiled Ovid. In the exile poetry, Olienis argues, “Ovid oscillates between representing himself as the squashed victim of Augustan *ira* (sometimes known as *clementia*) and as Augustus’ superpotent double and rival, a figure readily capable of squashing the emperor in turn” (Olienis 2004: 296). *Tristia* 2 describes the decree by Augustus of Ovid’s banishment. Ovid writes, “Having attacked me with harsh words, as befits a ruler, you yourself took revenge, as is appropriate, for
the offense committed against you” (*tristibus invectus verbis* *ita principe dignum* *ultus es offensas, ut decet, ipse tuas*, *(Tr. 2.133-34)*). This line shows that the meaning of *Tristia* is “disambiguated by the juxtaposition with *invectus*: these are not sad words but words of attack, of invective, therefore ‘austere’ or ‘grim’ words, punishing words that sadden their target” (Oliensis 2004: 297). Oliensis uses these lines as a basis to translate the *Tristia* as not just Sorrow, but rather “Soberings” or “Rebukes.” (Oliensis 2004: 297).

As McKeown notes, when he wrote the *Fasti*, Ovid “must have realized that *libertas* was dead” (McKeown 1984: 177 qtd. in Feeney 2006: 472). Dennis Feeney has recently (2006) argued that large parts of the *Fasti* were edited in exile, and through that editing Ovid makes readers aware of the censorship affecting his work. Prior to the disgrace of Augustus’ daughter, Feeney argues, there was tolerance and *comitas*, and that the severe curbing of free speech does not happen until later in Augustus’ reign. He writes (Feeney 2006: 475):

> What we are dealing with, then, is not straightforward repression or straightforward tolerance, but, as always, a developing and shifting relationship without any precedents, where all the parties involved are feeling their way; habits and patterns of behavior firm up as time goes on, of course, but it remains an essentially provisional and improvisatory atmosphere.

Ovid’s writing was neutered by the Augustan curbing of *libertas*. It was the *princeps* who was responsible for his exile, as well as the forced reimagining of his poetic subjectivity as an imperial subject in exile.
The Lover in Exile: Ibis

The *Ibis* was probably written in 11 CE,\(^{154}\) three years after Ovid had been exiled. Just like the *Tristia*, Ovid’s subject position is very different from that of his love poetry. Ovid is now an imperial subject, and after three years of pleading with Augustus to relegate him to a less harsh place of exile, he is used to a more deferential position; however, the *Ibis* is a text of harsh, almost unending invective that I argue is ultimately directed at the *princeps*. The *Ibis* serves as an answer to the end of *Tristia* 2, directed at Augustus (Schiesaro 2011). The obscurity of the poem suggests that his target is one who cannot be named, and the parallels between the target and his own situation constantly remind the reader of who put Ovid in the exilic position in the first place. If Augustus is the target, Ovid is limited in the kind of invective he can use. His only option, as a result of his imperial (exilic) subject position is one that includes deferential and apologetic posturing. I will first discuss, following Schiesaro 2011, how the *Ibis* is an answer to the end of *Tristia* 2. Next I will consider Ovid’s appeals to his discomfort with the iambic strain of the work and how this self-deprecating stance mirrors his self-presentation in the *Tristia* overall. Then I will discuss the moments in the catalog that reinforce this interpretation and the likelihood that Augustus is the main target of the poem. Finally, I will argue that the performance of invective in the *Ibis* is deployed through a queer position—the only one available to the exilic subject.

In his 2011 article, Schiesaro asks (79–80),

Could *Ibis* really be anyone but Augustus? Could such an astonishing barrage of insults and curses be inspired by or directed against less prominent a character?

\(^{154}\) On dating the *Ibis* see Williams 2006: 454-55.
Could Ovid’s resentment, festering unrelieved at the margins of civilization, concentrate on anybody but the one and only cause of his exile?

He argues that in all of the exile poetry, there is only one letter that comes close in scope and size to the *Ibis*—*Tristia* 2 (Schiesaro 2011: 80). There are structural features shared between *Tristia* 2 and *Ibis*—they are almost equal in length, the two longest single pieces in the exilic poems, directed to an addressee, and are closely focused on a well-defined goal, apology in *Tristia* 2 and attack in *Ibis* (Schiesaro 2011: 86). At the end of *Tristia* 2 Ovid makes the claim, often repeated, that his work has caused no harm to others but seems to indicate that there is a threat that he can do this in the future (*Tr*. 2.563-68):

> non ego mordaci destrinxi carmine quemquam,
> nec meus ullius crimina versus habet.
> candidus a salibus suffu sis felle refugi:
> nulla venenato littera mixta ioco est.
> inter tot populi, tot scriptis, milia nostri,
> quem mea Calliope laeserit, unus ego.

I have never harmed anyone with a biting poem, nor does my verse contain the crimes of anyone. Innocently I have fled from wit covered in gall: no letter of mine is mixed with poisoned jest. Among so many people, so many writings, thousands of my own, it is I alone whom my Calliope has injured.

The opening of the *Ibis* answers the call made in this section of the *Tristia* (*Ib*. 1-7):\(^{155}\)

> Tempus ad hoc, lustris bis iam mihi quinque peractis,
> Omne fuit musae carmen inerme meae:
> Nullaque quae possit scriptis tot milibus extat

\(^{155}\) The text of the *Ibis* is Ellis 2013.
Littera Nasonis sanguinolenta legi:
Nee quemquam nostri nisi me laesere libelli, 5
Artificis periit cum caput Arte sua.
Unus—et hoc ipsum est iniuria magna—perennem
Candoris titulum non sinit esse mei.
Up to this time, now that I have gone through fifty years, all the poetry of my
Muse has been unarmed. And no letter of Naso, out of so many thousands that
have been written, exists that is able to be read as blood-stained. Nor have my
books hurt anyone except myself when my own life was destroyed by my Art.
One man—and this itself is the greatest injury—does not allow me the title of an
honest man.
The fact that Ovid cites his accuser as one man (unos, Ib. 7) is significant, Schiesaro
suggests, because it can betray a monarchical context (2011: 101). Ovid will not give a
name to his target, but, taking after Callimachus, uses “Ibis” as a stand in. As an
Egyptian bird the ibis is consequently related to Augustus’ desire for power over that
country (Schiesaro 2011: 109-12). Further, coins circulating in the years before the Ibis
were created with Augustus on one side and an ibis on the other (Schiesaro 2011: 114).
Ovid’s direct reference to Augustus is ambivalent at best (Ib. 23-26):
Di melius, quorum longe mihi maximus ille est,
 Qui nostras inopes noluit esse vias.

156 Trying to hold Ibis up to Callimachus is provisional because we do not have that Ibis; Ovid’s Ibis also
“resists pressure to conform to a literary tradition which contains its own inner diversities, and to which
Ovid came some three centuries after its inception. Why should we suppose that a curse-poem composed in
imperial Rome (or Tomis) need correspond to the same artistic norms as its Hellenistic precursors? And
given that Ovid never wrote a ‘typical’ poem about anything, how safe is it to assume that the Ibis yields
straightforward evidence of the Hellenistic state of art?” (Williams 1996: 8-9).
Huic igitur meritas grates, ubicumque licebit,

Pro tam mansueto pectore semper agam.

May the gods be more willing, of whom that one [Augustus] is the greatest by far for me, who did not wish for my road to be one of poverty, to grant that I always give to him therefore deserved thanks, whenever it will be possible, on behalf of so merciful a heart.

Yet, Augustus has not been merciful. It is clear from *Tristia* 2 that Ovid criticizes Augustus’ harsh punishment for, what he argues, was a blameless work and innocent mistake. Despite this appeal in the opening of the *Ibis*, however, Ovid makes it clear that the invective poem is a riddling work, obscure in its target and meanings: “Like that one [Callimachus] I will wrap my poem in secret stories, although I myself am not accustomed to follow this style” (*Utque ille, historiis involvam carmina caecis, / Non soleam quamvis hoc genus ipse sequi, Ib. 57-58*). The *Ibis* is a puzzle that asks the reader to figure out the target’s name, which he has been forbidden to use.

The speaker of the *Ibis* asserts that he is operating in an unaccustomed genre. He has been forced to take up arms (*tela sumere*, 10) because of his unnamed target’s attack. The arms that Ovid had put aside at the beginning of his first extant collection (*arma gravi numero violentaque bella parabam, Am. 1.1.1*) are embraced in the *Ibis* but deployed through the same meter of his earlier poetry, elegiac couplets. The speaker himself admits “Indeed I will undertake these first battles in the verse form with which I began, although wars are not accustomed to be waged in this meter” (*Prima quidem coepto committam proelia versu / Non soleant quamvis hoc pede bella geri, Ib. 45-46*) and he promises future abuse in iambics later in the poem (*Ib. 53-54, 643-44*). So from
the beginning of the poem, Ovid leaves the reader waiting for me, building up anticipation as the poem progresses. This is similar to what Ovid did in his earlier, erotic poetry (see *Am* 1.5 and 2.19). Williams writes (1996: 16),

The *Ibis* presents the sadistic converse of erotic anticipation, for in both cases Ovid revels in the fantasies associated with preparing the ‘victim’ (Ibis or Corinna) for ‘treatment.’ The iambic threat in the *Ibis* offers an early example of the phenomenon in the curse: If Ovid merely fires an elegiac warning-shot, as if a soldier warming to his task by throwing his first shaft short of the enemy (47-48), the reader is left to shudder with nervous anticipation at the prospect of an iambic onslaught whose Archilochean reputation precedes it.

Thus Ovid is continuously reframing the persona of the love poet, much in the same way as he does throughout the *Tristia*.

The *Ibis* has been read as impotent invective that reflects poorly on the masculinity of the speaker. I argue, however, that Ovid’s positioning does not show a lack of masculinity but an alternative masculinity that is made available by his exilic circumstances and Augustus’ imperial regime. His emphasis on his discomfort with the genre places him in a more passive position, one that runs counter to the hypermasculine speakers discussed earlier in this project. As a result of this weak posturing, the poem has often been reduced by critics to the result of an unstable persona that embodies Ovid’s deteriorated psychological state (Williams 1996: 32; See also 33, 81, 101) or a literary exercise in erudition (Housman 1920: 318; Kenney 1982: 454; Mack 1988: 42; Wilkinson 1995: 356-57).
Ovid’s invective is a product of the changing expectations for masculine behavior in the new Principate. In the *Ars Amatoria* Ovid spoke with a lot of bravado about the future impact of his works, but in the *Ibis* he begins and often reasserts his discomfort with what he is doing while at the same time launching an effective attack. By the time the *Ibis* is published, Ovid has been in exile for a few years, cut off from his family, friends, and everything familiar in Rome. The Roman political system is now under a sole ruler, Augustus, and elite Roman men are no longer able to move through the ranks with the hope of being a first man in Rome. Roman manhood has fundamentally changed. Ovid, in exile, is an imperial subject, and he deploys the only kind of invective that is possible in the new regime—one that is self-deprecating and vague in its target(s)—but one whose insults continue to signify.

In the only recent full-length study of Ovid’s *Ibis*, Gareth Williams’ (1996) *The Curse of Exile*, the *Ibis* is argued to be a reflection of the Ovidian poetic-persona’s deteriorating mental state in exile. Previous scholarship, although explaining individual couplets, had largely relegated the *Ibis* to a realm of Alexandrian erudition, something that was to be enjoyed by a select few, and written for Ovid’s own self-entertainment (Williams 1996: 2). Williams, on the other hand, suggests that the curse “takes on a special significance as the expression of a manic, desperate and inevitably futile frustration” (Williams 1996: 5). He notes that Ovid says that he has the potential to destroy *Ibis*, but in keeping his victim’s identity unknown, his catalog of curses appear “impotent” and asks, “How can a poem which is designed to attack a specific target be viewed as anything other than an exercise in futility if it fails to establish, if by nothing more than supposedly clear ‘hint’ and innuendo, who that target is?” (Williams 1996:
Ovid vows a second piece, which he never writes—so, Williams asks, what would make Ibis change his behavior (Williams 1996: 16)? Yet, there is no way that Ibis knows Ovid will not write the additional work of invective. If the reader imagines historical figures as enemies within the Ibis, Williams says that the psychological interest of the poem is lost and that “the irrational excesses of the curse are far more plausibly explained by Ovid’s paranoia—his suspicion in lonely exile that he may be under attack at Rome—than by the certainty that he is attacking various known enemies” (Williams 1996: 20).

For Williams overall, the Ibis is “an expression of a highly strained psychological condition” as Ovid’s “inconsistent imprecations, almost all of which are launched with urgent compression in a single couplet or less, betray an obsessive state of mind” (Williams 1996: 81).

Williams’ study is important because it is the first modern book to provide a full reading of the Ibis and consider the psychological implications of the poem; however, I contend that a reading that understands a real enemy, Augustus, and one that considers the psychological effects of exile are not mutually exclusive. In considering the meticulously crafted nature of the Ibis, I think Williams overreaches in his declaration of Ovid’s incredibly deteriorated mental state and the ultimate inefficacy of the poem—the Ibis is too well-structured, too detailed to be the outpouring of an unstable mind. If we keep Augustus in view throughout the Ibis, the attack becomes not impotent, but powerful—and one made possible by a unique subject position that is deferential and hyperaggressive at the same time.

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157 “Ovid’s illusion of omnipotence must . . . face up to the harsh fact that the ‘omnipotent’ poet is powerless to control his own fate, that Ibis has nothing to fear from Ovid’s distant fury, and that if the Pontic shore will resound with praises of Augustus . . . the poet will scream his curse into the same empty breezes” (Source?1999: 128-29).
In *Tristia* 4.10 Ovid marks Augustus as the one who turned Ovid from a poet of peace into a poet of war (Oliensis 2004: 306 ad *Tr.* 4.10). He used to be an elegiac love poet, but his exile has made him turn to heavier themes. This is an inversion of the poet who turned from epic themes of war to those of love under the power of Cupid in *Amores* 1.1. This complaint is foregrounded in the beginning of the *Ibis* where Ovid accuses Ibis that he as enemy has made the poet whose work was harmless, *inerme*, take up weapons, “tela sumere” (Ib. 10). Ovid asserts that he will wage this war in an unaccustomed meter, elegiac couplets. He recasts himself from the love poet to the exiled poet, compelled to still create but to be wrathful under duress. It is the unnamed enemy (“for now I will keep silent as far as your name,” *nam nomen adhuc utcumque tacebo*, Ib. 9) that “compels unaccustomed hands to take up arms” (*Cogit inassuetas sumere tela manus*, Ib. 10). Thus Ovid emphasizes his novice status right at the beginning of the poem. This is not the way that hypermasculine invective attacks usually begin (cf. Catullus 16.1-2). The positioning of Ovidian invective is wholly new, demanded by his exilic circumstances and situation of the new Principate. This space is markedly queer—the *Ibis* is shrouded in the garb of elegiacs, waged for a position of self-proclaimed *impotentia*, but marked for subversion.

When Ovid says that his previous works can’t be read as hostile, he uses the word *sanguinolenta*, blood-soaked, and bloody shafts of words are picked up later in the poem when he threatens that if Ibis doesn’t stop harming his good name he will produce an iambic threat. He says (*Ib.* 45-54),

Prima quidem coepto commitam proelia versu, 45

Non soleant quamvis hoc pede bella geri.

Utque petit primo plenum flaventis harenae
Nondum calfacti militis hasta solum;
Sic ego te nondum ferro iaculabor acuto,
Protinus invisum nec petet hasta caput:
Et neque nomen in hoc nec dicam facta libello,
Teque brevi qui sis dissimulare sinam.
Postmodo, si perges, in te mihi liber iambus
Tincta Lycambo sanguine tela dabit.

First I will join battle in the verse I have begun, though wars are not accustomed
to be waged in this meter. And just as the spear of the soldier who is not yet
warned up/excited buries itself deep in the yellow sand, so I will not yet hurl my
sharpened steel at you just yet, my spear will not immediately seek your hated
head. And I will speak neither your name nor your deeds in this work and for a
brief time I will allow who you may be to be concealed. And afterwards, if you
proceed, my free iambic will hurl shafts against you, stained with Lycambean
blood.\textsuperscript{158}

Ovid, as in the poem’s opening, voices his discomfort with his subject matter. This new
work diverges in subject matter from his earlier poetry, but Ovid cannot shake his
identity of a love poet, and his use of elegiac meter in the \textit{Ibis} connects the piece to his
earlier poetry. As in his earlier love poetry, Ovid compares himself to the soldier, but this
time via the threat of iambic attack. As in the \textit{Tristia}, he is recasting his earlier erotic
persona for new purposes. Ovid is in an ironic position. His threat is embedded within his

\textsuperscript{158} Williams argues that Ovid’s repetitive threats of future abuse builds up anticipation and fear in the
reader: “If Ovid merely fires an elegiac warning-shot, as if a soldier warming to his task by throwing his
first shaft short of the enemy (\textit{Ib.} 47-48), the reader is left to shudder with nervous anticipation at the
prospect of an iambic onslaught whose Archilochean reputation precedes it” (1996: 16).
appeal to novice status and he is cautiously submissive but still aggressive. This is the position that has been created by his exilic circumstances—one that speaks with multiple, conflicting voices.

The multifaceted voice of the poet is reflected in the scattering of deities and forces that Ovid invokes before he starts his catalog (Ib. 67-86):

Di maris et terrae, quique his meliora tenetis
    Inter diversos cum Iove regna polos,
Huc precor huc vestras omnes advertite mentes,
    Et sinite optatis pondus inesse meis. 70
Ipsaque tu tellus, ipsum cum fluctibus aequor,
    Ipse meae aether accipe summe preces.
Sideraque et radiis circumdata solis imago,
    Lunaque quae numquam quo prius orbe micas;
Noxque tenebrarum specie reverenda tuarum,
    Quaeque ratum tripli pollice netis opus;
Quique per infernas horrendo murmure valles
    Inperiuratae laberis amnis aquae;
Quasque ferunt torto vittatis angue capillis
    Carceris obscuras ante sedere fores; 80
Vos quoque plebs superum fauni satirique laresque,
    Flumniaque et nymphae semideumque genus,
Denique ab antiquo divi veteresque novique
    In nostrum cuncti tempus adeste chao;
Carmina dum capiti male fido dira, canuntur,

Et peragunt partes ira dolorque suas.

Gods of the land and sea, and you who hold better places than these, between opposing poles ruled by Jove. Turn all your minds here, here I pray you, and allow weight to be in my wishes. And you earth itself, and ocean itself with its waves, and the highest air itself, receive my prayers; And stars and that likeness surrounded by rays of the sun, you moon, which never twinkles more than in your previous orbit, and Night honored by the sight of your shadows, and you who by triple thumb spin your fixed work;\(^{159}\) and you the river of waters by which no one swears falsely, who glides through infernal valleys with dreadful murmurs;\(^{160}\) and you who they say sit before the dark doors of the prison, your hair bound by twisted snakes;\(^{161}\) and you also the plebeians of the gods—fauns and satyrs and household gods, rivers and nymphs, and the race of demigods, and, finally, be present all you gods, old and new, from out of ancient chaos into our time, while fearsome spells are sung against that faithless head and rage and grief complete their parts.

Williams argues that this invocation shows the poet’s weak positioning—instead of a proper *defixio* that invokes only the necessary deities, he calls on them all, almost haphazardly (Williams 1996: 42). Ovid, unlike witch figures who curse, is different inasmuch as he calls on every god that ever existed. In evoking all the gods, even the lesser ones, Williams argues, he is diluting the power of his invocation, even though he wants to set it up so that the entire universe is against Ibis. Williams asserts that “Ovid’s

\(^{159}\) The three Fates.

\(^{160}\) The Styx.

\(^{161}\) The Gorgons.
is the truer isolation here, for his invocation of such a huge, indiscriminate range of deities merely emphasizes his loneliness as a supplicant who lacks allies of any sort” (Williams 1996: 42).

However, if these lines are read along with Ovid’s own idiosyncratic speaking position, the deferential yet aggressive invective speaker, the multitude of divine forces invoked reflects the status of the speaker: Ovid is a subject in limbo, isolated from Rome and the former markers of his identity. The instability of the invocation reflects the instability of his subjectivity. It is also worth noting that Ovid does not invoke Jove, whom Augustus is often compared to in other works, but non-Olympian deities. Ovid draws on the lower class, moving away from monarchical power with the “plebeians of the gods” (*plebs superum, I. 81*). The emphasis is placed largely on feminine lower deities (Night, the Fates, the Gorgons), who predate Jupiter’s ascension to power. These feminine deities, who are also goddesses of vengeance in the *Eumenides* and *Aeneid* are appropriate for invective. The opening invocation does not indicate ineptitude but rather provides a parallel to the status of the invective speaker, while at the same time showing primacy of lesser, feminine deities, over the monarchical Jupiter and his incestuous Olympian family.

The long catalog that follows reduces figures and myths to single couplet scenes, in which Ovid almost appears to draw on a lot of different figures and events from mythology, cursing Ibis with everything from castration, to tortures experienced by ancient sinners, to loss, to a death unlamented and a corpse defiled by wolves. Like Arachne’s seemingly limitless supply of fodder for her tapestry, noted by Oliensis, Ovid hurls mythological curses at top speed (Oliensis 2004: 291). Yet, after these initial curses,
Ovid starts over, changing his speaking position yet again to one of the Fates (Ib. 241-50):

‘Tempus in immensum lacrimas tibi movimus istas, Quae semper causa sufficiente cadent.’

Dixerat. At Clotho iussit promissa valere, Nevit et infesta stamina pulla manu.

Et ne longa suo praesagia diceret ore, 245

Fata canet vates qui tua, dixit, erit. Ille ego sum vates, ex me tua vulnera disces,

Dent modo di vires in mea verba suas, Carminibusque meis accedant pondera rerum,

Quae rata per luctus experiare tuos. 250

‘For time without end we have incited those tears for you, which always will fall for just cause,’ she had said. But Clotho commanded her promises to be strong, and she spun the dark wool with dangerous hand. And lest she had to speak your long fate with her own mouth, there will be a bard, she said, who will sing your fate. I am that bard, and from me you will learn your wounds, may the gods grant their strength to my words, and the weights of facts add to my songs, whose fulfillment you will experience with your sorrow.

As Stephen Hinds has noted, the fact that this section begins with the same word that opens the poem, tempus, means that the Ibis is in many ways starting anew (1999: 64). The Muses, who are absent from the poem, are replaced with “a mixed-up pair for triplicate sisters, ambiguously analogized Fury-Fates” (Krasne 2012: 8). The first

\[162\] Ovid also calls himself a priest (sacerdos) at Ib. 97.
exemplum of the catalog is the fate of the Trojans (Ib. 251-52), which plays with epic themes (Krasne 2012: 8). Just like the opening of the poem with war, here the Ibis is repositioned for attack. Ovid takes over for Clotho, a feminine figure, taking on yet another persona in the poem. So, we have an aggressive invective speaker who claims to be speaking from the mouth of a feminine fate.

Although many of the myths and figures appear disjointed, and temporally contradictory and obscure, there are groupings that reference one another and flow better than would first appear. Darcy Krasne’s two recent articles (2012 and forthcoming) sort through the maze of many instances in the catalog to argue for thematic coherence amid what often seems random and disconnected. One such theme is dismemberment, which echoes how Ovid feels in his current situation. Ovid curses Ibis with dismemberment at several points in the Ibis. At Ib. 185 he says that someone “will give your severed limbs to the snakes of Tartarus” (Altera Tartareis sectos dabit anguibus artus); later, he asks that someone hack Ibis’ limbs like Saturn’s castration of his father Uranus (Ib. 273-74); he curses Ibis to have his limbs scattered like Apsyrtus by Medea (Ib. 435-36); to the self-castration of Attis (Ib. 453-56); to be ripped apart like the historian Cinna (Ib. 540); torn apart like Actaeon by his own hounds (Ib. 595-96); and, finally, limbs ripped by Bacchants like Orpheus (Ib. 599-600). Krasne sees these instances of dismemberment as a reflection of the post-exilic “mutilation” of Ovid’s own corpus, as well as a metaphor for Ovid’s own exile (forthcoming). What Augustus did to Ovid, in essence, was sever him from Rome, much like the body parts of the mythic figures discussed in this section of the catalog. As Miller notes:

163 For time in Ovid’s Ibis, and its relationship to temporal structure in other Ovidian works, see Hinds 1999.
164 He again demands that Ibis’ limbs be food for snakes at Ib. 287-88.
For Ovid, exile marks the moment of fissure in which the subject’s Imaginary identification with the state, and the Symbolic community thus constituted, is definitively cut off. Tomis, as he argues in *Tristia* 3.9.27-28, derives its name from the Greek *témnō* and refers to the spot where Medea butchered her brother to slow her father’s pursuit. Tomis therefore is the place of dismemberment where reunion with the father (*pater patriae*, Rome, etc.) is once and for all made impossible (2004: 222).

In a way, in reprocessing his former works in the *Tristia* and *Ibis*, Ovid is dissecting them, like the body parts listed in the catalog. In these scenes of dismemberment, Ovid is mirroring his exile and wishing on Ibis the fate that he has suffered, cut off from the markers and parts that made him who he was. He even wishes upon Ibis the same longing for death (see, e.g. *Tr*. 4.6.43-44) that has preoccupied his exile (*Ib*. 123-26):

Causaque non desit, desit tibi copia mortis,

Optatam fugiat vita coacta necem.

Luctatusque diu cruciatos spiritus artus

Deserat et longa torqueat ante mora.

May you not lack cause for death, but lack the means of dying, may your life be forced to flee wished for death. And may your spirit struggle for a long time before it leaves your tortured limbs and twists you with long delay.

Ovid’s curses reflect his own exilic situation, severed from Rome and everything familiar and longing for an end to his suffering.
Ovid also recalls stories from mythology and his *Metamorphoses* that have to do with sexual perversion, particularly infidelity, that lead to death and incest. He threatens Ibis with an unchaste mother, spouse, sister, and daughter in turn (*Ib. 349-64*):

Nec tibi contingat matrona pudicior illa,

Qua potuit Tydeus erubuisse nuru,

Quaeque sui venerem iuncxit cum fratre mariti,

Locris, in ancillae dissimulata nece.

Tam quoque di faciant possis gaudere fideli

Coniuge, quam Talai Tyndareique gener,

Quaeque parare suis letum patrueilibus ausae

Belides assidua colla premuntur aqua.

Byblidos et Canaces, sicut facis, ardeat igne,

Nec nisi per crimen sit tibi fida soror.

Filia si fuerit, sit quod Pelopea Thyesti,

Myrrha suo patri, Nyctimeneque suo.

Neve magis pia sit capitique parentis amica,

Quam sua vel Pterelae, vel tibi, Nise, fuit.

Infamemque locum sceleris quae nomine fecit,

Pressit et inductis membra paterna rotis.

Nor may it happen that your mother is more chaste than she whom Tydeus would have blushed to have as a daughter-in-law;\(^{165}\) or the Locrian who, disguised as a

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\(^{165}\) Aegiale, wife of Diomedes, who had many lovers (Henderson 1979: 262n3).
murdered slave-girl, joined in love with the brother of her husband.166 And also, may the gods make it so, may you be able to rejoice in a faithful spouse, as did Talaus’ or Tyndareus’ son-in-law;167 or such a wife as the daughters of Belus, who prepared the death of their cousins and whose necks are pressed down forever with carrying water.168 And may your sister burn with fire, just as Byblis and Canace did, and may she not be proved faithful to you through her crime.169 And if you have a daughter, may she be what Pelopea was to Thyestes, Myrrha to her own father, and Nyctimene to hers.170 Nor may she be a greater pious friend to the head of her father than yours was to you, Pterelas, or to you, Nisus, or than she who made the place infamous by the name of her crime, crushing the limbs of her father beneath her wheels.171

The specific mention of female family members transgressing sexually has ironic overtones. The moral legislation of Augustus in many ways sought to regulate female bodies, and these exempla are the very worst limits of inappropriate female desire—infidelity to husbands that leads to death, incest, and betrayal of fathers (all rulers) because of passion for another man. And although there is a lot of speculation, Augustus’ own daughter and granddaughter were rumored to have transgressed sexually (Green

166 Arisnoe, who was the wife, in order, or Lysimachus, Ptolemy Ceraunus, and Ptolemy Philadelphus. The last two spouses were her brothers, and Ceraunus was still alive when she married Philadelphus. When Seleucus attacked her, she escaped by disguising a handmaid as herself, and the handmaid was killed (Henderson 1979: 263n4).
167 Amphiarus in Eriphyle, Talaus’ daughter who caused his death. The son-in-law of Tyndareus is Agamemnon, who was killed by an unfaithful Clytemnestra (Henderson 1979: 263n5).
168 The Danaids who slew their husbands, who were also their cousins and the sons of Aegyptus. Their punishment was to carry sieves of water (Henderson 1979: 263n6).
169 Both women fell in love with their brothers (Henderson 1979: 263n7).
170 Thyestes slept with his own daughter Pelopea, Myrrha and her maid tricked her father into sleeping with her for several nights, and Nyctimene also slept with her own father.
171 Pherelas’ golden lock assured him immortality, and Comaetho cut it off; Scylla cut off Nisus’ purple lock to give Minos’ and his men advantage, and Tullia, Tarquinius Superbus’ wife, drove a cart over the body of her father, and the place was called “vicus sceleratus” (Henderson 1979: 264n1).
2005: xxii *ad* Suet. *Div. Aug.* 19.64-65). The *Ars Amatoria* was published in the immediate wake of Augustus’ exile of his only daughter, Julia, to Pandataria on charges of adultery “with an assortment of wealthy, high-born and politically suspect lovers” (Green 2005: xxi-xxii *ad* Vell. Pat. 1.100; Suet. *Div. Aug.* 19.64-65; Dio Cass. 55.10). The publication of *Ars Amatoria* during the wake of this scandal was unfortunate and, as Peter Green notes, “duly noticed” (2005: xxii). The deteriorating morality of the female family members in the *Ibis* curse takes female sexual transgression to the limits. Ovid’s fate is rhetorically juxtaposed with different authors who suffer bad fates. These writers’ unfortunate ends are connected with what he has suffered as a result of his own talent (*Ib.* 519-26):

`Inclususque necem cavea patiar is, ut ille`

`Non prefecturae conditor historiae.`

`Utque repertori nocuit pugnacis iambi,`

`Sic sit in exitium lingua proterva tuum.`

`Utque parum stabili qui carmine laesit Athenas,`

`Invisus pereas deficiente cibo.`

`Utque lyrae vates fertur perisse severae,`

`Causa sit exitii dextera laesa tui.`

And locked in a cage may you suffer death, like that one\(^{172}\) who wrote histories to no profit. And as it harmed the creator of pugnacious iambus,\(^{173}\) thus may your wicked tongue be your destruction. Or as that one who harmed Athenis\(^{174}\) with

\(^{172}\) Callisthenes, an historian who wrote on Alexander’s wars who Alexander accused of conspiracy and had mutilated, imprisoned, and poisoned (Henderson 1979: 279n6).

\(^{173}\) Archilochus.

\(^{174}\) Hipponax.
endless song may you perish, hated, through a lack of food. And as the poet of the grave lyre who is said to have perished, may a wound of your right hand be your destruction.

He also mentions C. Helvius Cinna, who was torn apart because he was thought to be one of the conspirators in Caesar’s murder, whose body was “found in countless parts of the city” (Urbis in innumeris inveniare locis, Ib. 540). Ovid, as he mentioned throughout the exile poetry, is punished for his own Art, his ingenium. The mention of these writers in this invective work highlight his own predicament, tying the author’s talents with their violent demises.

One would think that after these detailed charges deployed at rapid speed that there would be no fate worse for Ibis. Yet, at the end of the poem, Ovid asserts that this piece was just a warning. He calls this 644 line poem a “work sent suddenly” (subito . . . missa libello, Ib. 639) that he believes is “truly brief” (Pauca quidem fateor, Ib. 640). He ends with a threat: “Later you will read more, containing your true name, and in that meter in which bitter war ought to be waged” (Postmodo plura leges et nomen habentia verum, / Et pede quo debent acria bella geri, Ib. 643-44). This presumably would be the liber iambus, “free iambic,” from line 53—and it is Ovid’s exilic circumstances and the Augustan Principate that have curbed such acts of free speech.

As Sergio Casali has noted (1997), Ovid’s choice of the name Ibis refers back to Augustus’ own banishing verb, “ibis,” “you will go” (1997: 107). He argues that Augustus is the one who is the unnamed target in the exilic poetry, no matter how vehemently Ovid denies it (1997: 107). At the close of the Ibis, as Oliensis notes, Ovid compares himself with Remus jumping over the walls (“Just as Remus dared to jump

\[175\] Possibly Timocreon (Henderson 1979: 279n9).
over the new walls,” *Utque Remo muros auso transire recentes, Ib. 635*), putting his target in Romulus’ position or, she says, as he came to be known, Augustus. Oliensis writes,

> no publicity involving Ovid can in the end be good publicity. Especially when Ovid is acting as his own publicist. Whether he wins or loses, vaunts or grovels, still, insofar as he remains present to the imagination, keeps his image before our eyes: he wins (Oliensis 2004: 317).

Ovid wins because his poetry has, in fact, kept him read at Rome. The *Ibis* is not ineffective because its insults, and the author, have been made immortal through writing. What this reader of the *Ibis* is left with is a curse that continues to signify and a nagging feeling that Ibis may be an amalgamation of representations of Augustus at large.

**Conclusion**

The Ovidian corpus deserves to be read as a whole, as there are echoes and cross-references between multiple works. In focusing on the *Ars Amatoria, Tristia*, and *Ibis*, it is evident from my discussion that the exilic poetry both calls back to his erotic works and stands together as a closely knitted unit. I would argue that in all of these works, Ovid seeks to create an image, as do the other writers in this study. The image Ovid seeks to create is necessarily shaped by the political circumstances of his surroundings and, thus, changes from life at Rome and his time in exile. Throughout the works studied here, he is, in many ways, in a conversation with Augustus. In the *Ars Amatoria*, Ovid digs at Augustus, showcasing writing that challenges the moral program that the *princeps* was establishing throughout his reign. Throughout the *Tristia*, and in *Tristia 2* most of all,
Ovid seeks to reframe his identity as a love poet. He is still drawn to the meter and tenets of his erotic poetry, but his position shifts from one confident and full of bravado to one that is deferential and self-deprecating, constantly disowning his previous work that had established him as a love poet. By the time that the reader gets to Ibis, Ovid has been submerged in the exilic subject position for three years and, because of the looming threat of the emperor, has no choice but to deploy invective that is shrouded in riddles. The way Ovid achieves such biting invective is through subversion, and this subversiveness is made possible by his queer positioning.

As discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, queer space exists outside of operative discourse. It is a place marked by subversion, one that calls the dominant power structures into question and facilitates an area in which the speaker is able to subvert those power structures. In exile, Ovid is backed into a corner. He has learned the hard way that he cannot challenge Augustus and the imperial family. Although the Ars Amatoria was in circulation for several years before his exile, it was the catalyst for his exile, while the error was the final straw. Ovid in exile exists in a different time and space, away from Rome, and must mark out a new identity and shape the reception of his earlier work. This space is marked for subversion and queerness, something between actual Ovid and his self-representation, as “. . . queer genders profoundly disturb the order of relations between the authentic and the inauthentic, the original and the mimic, the real and the constructed . . . there are no true accounts of ‘passing lives’ but only fictions, and the whole story turns on the production of counterfeit realities that are so convincing that they replace and subsume the real” (Halberstam 2005: 45). From the Ars Amatoria to the Tristia to the Ibis, Ovid is manufacturing an identity. It is in the Ibis that
a disjunct is created between Ovid’s identity as a love poet and the invective he hurls at his target. Ovid’s use of elegiac meter and his voiced discomfort with the invective mode reinforce his identity as a love poet, but the intensity and rapidity of insults produce an effective invective threat.

The *Ars Amatoria* and the *Tristia* create the space in which *Ibis* is possible. The *Ars Amatoria* shows the poet in a position of bravado, and the *Tristia* seeks to control the reception of his work, alternating between deference and appeals to immortality. In the *Ibis*, Ovid oscillates from a power position, in voicing himself as the *vates* who will sing Ibis’ fate, to one that belies self-doubt and inefficacy. By the end of the poem, Ibis is still unnamed, and Ovid undercuts the threats that come before the closing by saying that he will, eventually, write a work that can actually cause harm. This back and forth posturing and self-referentiality creates a new kind of invective speaker. The invective is neutered, dismembered like so many victims in the *Ibis* and Ovid himself, so that the threats at surface level are impotent. Nevertheless, the *Ibis*, which purports itself to be a puzzle for the reader to figure out, has a target figure that looms large over the entirety—Augustus, the ultimate symbol of masculine authority wrapped up in his description as Jupiter in the *Tristia*. The only way that Ovid can reach that target is to subvert everything he knows about Roman masculinity, about his previous self-description as love poet and *praeeceptor amoris*. In invective from earlier periods in Rome, conventions of speech and gender could be manipulated in stark and accusatory ways. In Catullus’ poetry, written in a Rome that was collapsing, he is able to write with gender fluidity and attack his enemies directly. Cicero’s invectives operate in a similar way, tied intimately with the Roman state. For Horace, the *Epodes*, written early enough during Augustus’ rise to power, have
the same levels of expressed doubt as Catullus and Cicero. However, in the new imperial subject position, Ovidian invective must function within new rules for free speech. Despite the staunch parameters, and his appeals to inefficacy, the invective still bites the man who enacted these rules in the first place. In this way, Ovid embodies a new kind of invective drag, one that is more complex, more obscure, and wrapped in riddles.

Historically, invective works have not been given much serious scholarly attention. This study has shown that, in looking at invective as an important stage for the performance of Roman manhood, one can really challenge the presumed modalities of behavior for elite male Roman citizens. Often, studies of Roman masculinity hold the speaking subjects up to the prescribed rules for masculine behavior in ancient Rome (Richlin 1984, Williams 1999, Gunderson 2000) or discuss how texts function within social norms (Corbeill 1996). Invective problematizes such readings because it shows masculinity to be labile, dependent on socio-historical circumstances, and rooted in masculine anxiety. The authors in this study all participate in masculine self-fashioning, and, through their invectives, they rarely adhere to codified norms for behavior. Catullan invective, though undeniably hyper-masculine, is fueled by anxiety over his self-presentation as a love poet and the power imbalance in his love affair with Lesbia; Cicero’s invective speeches violate the manly prescripts he lays out in *De Oratore* in their hyperbole and performativity; the invective of Horace’s *Epodes* exaggerates the speaker’s *impotentia* at the same time he denigrates female targets; Ovidian invective is the product of the circumscription of free speech and deferential subject positioning.

What all these authors have in common is their deviation from and subversion of normative modalities of Roman masculine behavior. Each author, as the result of
different social circumstances and anxieties, is crafting a self-image, and, in doing so he operates in a queer space in that his performance must break the accepted modalities of masculine behavior. While the circumstances that force this space to emerge differ for each writer, Catullus, Cicero, Horace, and Ovid all manipulate what it means to be “good at being a man” from this limbo. If all these successful men, in invective, were not following the socially sanctioned prescriptions for masculine behavior, it means that Roman masculinity is most flexible in its most hyper-masculine articulations.

In evaluating Roman invective through the lens of queer theory, one can see how the invective speakers extend the category of maleness, rather than oppose it. These performances are not simply gender inversion but rather symptoms of the strangling nature of prescriptive gender norms in the first place. Even as normative modalities for masculine behavior changed from Republic to Principate to Empire, developing a self against the backdrop of the norms required constant renegotiating and divergence, as the authors of this study have shown. This renegotiation and divergence comes in the form of invective drag, as these speakers, in order to perform masculinity, have to do so outside of normative standards.
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