

Moechos arrogantes: Roman Comedy and Elegy in Horace *Carm.* 1.25

In *Carm.* 1.25, Horace uses the word *moechus* for the first and only time in the *Odes*. As *moechus* is more common in genres like satire and comedy, its single appearance in his lyric collection is somewhat surprising. However, *moechus* has not received much attention in discussions of *Carm.* 1.25, which tend to focus more on Horace's description of the aging Lydia. These interpretations range from reading the poem as an illustration of the consequences of time passing or of Horace's distaste for the desire of aging women (Boyle 1973; Ancona 1979), to seeing Horace as a former *exclusus amator* (Catlow 1976), to focusing on common literary *topoi* in the poem (Johnson 2004). In this paper, I will approach *Carm.* 1.25 from a different angle by examining how the unusual use of *moechus* informs Horace's broader project in the poem.

First, I will discuss *moechus* and its derivatives in Latin literature up to and including Horace. I will begin with Roman comedy, where *moech-* words appear sixteen times—more than in any other Latin literature until Martial. Given the relative frequency of *moechus* and its variants in Plautus and Terence, I will argue that these words carried comic associations for later authors. My first example will be Catullus and poem 42 in particular, where *moecha* appears five times (v. 3, 11, 12, 19, 20). Sander Goldberg (2000) has noted Catullus's imitation of Plautus in this poem and I will argue that the repetition of *moecha* contributes to its comic tone. I will then turn to the generation following Catullus, where *moech-* words appear only in the poetry of Propertius and Horace. Propertius uses *moecha* once while referring by name to Menander (4.5.43-44). His use of the word in this context suggests that Propertius too saw a connection between *moech-* words and comedy. Horace uses *moech-* words seven times, six of which appear in the *Satires* (1.2.38, 49; 1.4.4, 113; 2.7.12, 72). I will demonstrate that in all six cases these

words appear in poems that allude to Roman comedy, and that for Horace as well *moechus* and its variants had comic associations.

I will then return to the appearance of *moechos* at *Carm.* 1.25.9. Horace follows *moechos* here with another unusual word: *anus*, which appears only twice in the *Odes* (1.25.9; 4.13.2). However, *anus* is very common in Roman comedy, where it appears fifty times. *Moechos* and *anus* together, then, strongly suggest a reference to Roman comedy. I will next demonstrate that Horace also alludes to Roman elegy in *Carm.* 1.25 using specific vocabulary like *flebis* (10), *levis* (10) and *questu* (16). *Questu*, for example, calls elegy to mind because it is formed from the same verb as *querela*, a word used by the elegists to describe their own poems. I will argue that Horace alludes to both comedy and elegy in this poem to highlight elegy's roots in Roman comedy, which have been discussed by Sharon James (2012). In this light, the *paraclausithyron* in the first two stanzas of *Carm.* 1.25 takes on an aspect of literary criticism. The *paraclausithyron* plays a central role in love elegy, but its earliest examples in Latin literature are in comedy. By opening the poem with a *paraclausithyron* and then using specific vocabulary to allude to both Roman comedy and elegy, Horace allows the song before the door to cut both ways and serve as an allusion to both comedy and elegy, highlighting the relationship between the two. The Roman elegists were eager to underscore the influence on their poetry of prestigious models like Callimachus and Philetas, hence Propertius's famous boast that he was the "Roman Callimachus" (4.1a.64). In *Carm.* 1.25, Horace highlights the influence of a lower, less fashionable genre on Roman elegy, undercutting the elegists' claims about their elegant Hellenistic models. An examination of the *moechos arrogantes* of *Carm.* 1.25 thus reveals a poem as focused on literary criticism as it is on Lydia's old age.

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