

Horace and Tibullus sitting in a tree: a queer reading of Horace's Odes 1.33 and Epistle 1.4

Read alongside Tibullus' pederastic elegies (1.4, 8, 9), Horace's Tibullan poems (*Odes* 1.33, *Epistles* 1.4) explore Horace's relationship to Roman masculinity. By reading these poems with pederastic tropes, and in light of the erotics of *amicitia*, the relationship between the two poets can be read as queer, where Horace explores the positions of beloved and lover. By queer, I mean a non-normative relationship (insofar as pederasty was a normative category which is then subverted).

By testing the bounds of pederastic propriety (with respect to his age) with Ligurinus in *Odes* 4.1, Horace explores the implicit hierarchies that age creates in a pederastic relationship (McCarter 2018). Similarly, the anxieties which underlie Horace's relationship to pederasty, his own age and his own *virtus*, highlight the inherently hierarchical relationship between himself and Maecenas (Oliensis 2007). It is through this exploration of pederasty and production of masculinity that Horace constructs the 'erotics of *amicitia*,' the eroticization of the client/patron relationship (Oliensis 1997). This rigid hierarchical relationship, McCarter says, is slowly transgressed upon, blurring the lines between the lover and the beloved, particularly in the *Epodes*.

Horace links *Odes* 1.33 to Tibullus' pederastic elegies by referencing Pholoe, the beloved of Marathus; Horace then links *Epistle* 1.4 to the ode by beginning with similar grammatical constructions at its beginning, imparting advice through jussives (Ball 1994). Further, the tone ascribed to the Horatian poems is one of castigation, humorous detachment, and superficial appreciation. Namely, the relationship follows the bounds of propriety; Horace teases Tibullus about his love life in *Odes* 1.33 and, in turn, admires him in *Epistle* 1.4 (Putnam 1972).

This paper will follow the intertextual references shown by Ball and read Horace's Tibullan poems as pederastic. However, as Putnam points out, the tone of 1.33 puts Horace into a position of power. Horace shows to the inferior Tibullus that love triangles are inevitable, with reference to Marathus' loving one already involved in a love triangle (i.e. Pholoe, Cyrus, and Lycoris); then, he reinforces the inevitability of the realities of love with his own experience with the *acrior Myrtale*, a *libertina*. She, who by virtue of her more-stern freedwoman status, again reinforces Horace's own higher social position in matters of love, specifically in matters of being bound to someone 'lesser,' the nominal subject of elegiac. Further, in *Epistle* 1.4, Horace sets up Tibullus as an admired figure, both in terms of Tibullus' intellectual prowess and physical beauty. In essence, Horace is setting himself up as an inferior.

This superior/inferior relationship with Tibullus, while read through a pederastic lens, allows Horace to explore the limits of what a non-normative pederastic relationship could be, namely one which explores his own position within the known and accepted framework of Roman masculinity.

Bibliography

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