

# Stripping the Bark / Fleecing the Sheep: Rethinking *glubit* in Catullus 58\*

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Caeli, Lesbia nostra, Lesbia illa,  
illa Lesbia, quam Catullus unam  
plus quam se atque suos amavit omnes,  
nunc in quadriviis et angiportis  
glubit magnanimi Remi nepotes (Catull. 58).

Caelius, our Lesbia, that Lesbia, that same Lesbia, whom alone  
Catullus once loved more than himself and all others, now jerks off the  
descendants of magnanimous Remus on street corners and in back alleys<sup>1</sup>.

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1 — For the text of Catullus I use Mynors 1958. Translations are my own. While I here use Mynors' reading of *magnanimi* at 58.5, I find the emendation of *magnanimos* a compelling suggestion. As Thomson 1997, 343 notes, *magnanimos* appears to have entered the manuscript tradition in the fifteenth century, with *Ven. Marc.* 12.28 (No. 116), "a Ms apparently of the 1460s" and *Vat. Lat.* 1608, "which is firmly dated as late as 1479". The replacement of *magnanimi* with *magnanimos* would, if anything, further support my argument below that *glubere* mocks not only Lesbia but also her lovers. On this reading and the manuscript tradition, see Hawkins 2014, 577; Muse 2009, 307-

*Glubit* is one of the more infamous words in the Catullan corpus and for good reason. The verb represents a rare (at least in extant literature) piece of Roman sexual slang and it delivers the punch line for an insult poem belonging to the Lesbia cycle<sup>2</sup>. Shocked by its “truly awful salaciousness”, John Bodoh argues that the word “controls the whole” of Catullus 58<sup>3</sup>. Scholarship on *glubere* in Catullus has tended to focus on its vulgarity and which (if any) specific sex act the word denotes. Here, I revisit the word to interpret the implications of its agricultural origins. My own concern is not over which particular sex act the verb signifies but rather for the polysemic meanings imported by the slang metaphor’s literal definition. I do not aim to challenge or supplant the efforts of others to define *glubere* but instead to suggest an additional layer of meaning to its usage. I offer that the verb *glubit* introduces the specter of violence into the poem and serves to intensify and invert dynamics of power, portraying Lesbia as an overly active, dominant, and dangerous sexual being while compromising the masculinity of the Roman men she services.

Scholarship on Catullus 58.5 and its Priapic mockery has obsessed over the actual act signified by *glubit*. For example, Robert J. Penella makes a compelling case (following Lenz) that *glubere* refers to manual stimulation of the genitals (as I have translated above), while J. N. Adams insists that Catullus “provides no clue what form of stimulation he intended”<sup>4</sup>. Others, such as J. G. Randall, argue that *glubere* is at least suggestive of oral sex<sup>5</sup>. Still others question whether the verb implies a

08; Trappes-Lomax 2007, 137; Skutsch 1980, 21; Arkins 1977, 237. Thomson 1997, 343 notes that the “mock-epic language” of *magnanimi Remi nepotes* “enhances the brutality of the picture”. The phrase is thus ironic and a striking contrast with *glubit*.

2 — Depending on whether one reads significance into the ordering of the polymetra and whom one imagines to be the addressee of Poem 60, *glubit* may even deliver the final punchline to the polymetra’s Lesbia cycle itself. Following Hawkins 2014, who makes a compelling argument for reading Poem 60 as a meaningfully positioned farewell to Lesbia, Poem 58 may well be the penultimate Lesbia poem and a fitting prelude to 60.

3 — Bodoh 1976, 628. Battistón 2009, 130 finds the tone of 58.5 “strongly obscene” (*fuertemente obsceno*). Williamson 1969 excises poem 58 from his student edition of Catullus, ostensibly because it cannot “be read and explained without embarrassment” (v). Similar prudishness is evident in Cornish’s 1913 translation (republished in Goold 1995, 67), which renders *glubit* as “serves the filthy lusts”.

4 — Adams 1990, 74, 168; Penella 1976 follows Lenz 1963 in arguing that *glubere* refers to manual genital stimulation. The argument for manual stimulation is supported by Arkins 1979, 85 and Richlin 1992, 249n20. Wray 2001, 45, 88 translates “shucks”, thereby preserving something of *glubere*’s agricultural meaning. Dyson 2007, 265 also translates “shucks” and assumes reference to lurid sex acts. Quiles 2004, 199-200 observes that “*el sentido exacto de la palabra ‘glubit’*” has historically been a primary concern of scholarship on Catullus 58. Lateiner 1977, 17 notes that philologists “have argued for centuries about which obscene act *glubit* denotes”, but argues that the point instead lies in the word’s “obscene sound”.

5 — See Randall 1980 and Randall 1979. Holzberg 2002, 98 seems attracted both to the idea that *glubere* might imply a wide variety of sex acts and, following Randall, the possibility that the verb refers to fellatio. Also, Hawkins 2014 suggests that the repetition of Lesbia’s name in 58.1-2 is

transitive sex act at all, while Kenneth Quinn offers the possibility that *glubit* might only refer to “stripping” lovers of their clothing and, in a financial sense, their money<sup>6</sup>.

Much of the confusion stems from the peculiarity of its usage, since Catullus is the earliest surviving author to use the word in a sexual context. *Glubere* is, in its more literal sense, a technical agricultural term meaning “to strip the bark off a tree”, “to peel the husk off of grain”, or “to skin a sheep”. For example, Cato advises to “cut the willow at the right time, strip the bark and bind it fast” (*salictum suo tempore caedito, glubito arteque alligato; Agr.* 33.5). Varro uses the word to describe stripping bark from olive branches (*Rust.* 1.55.2) and proposes that *gluma* (“husk”) is etymologically derived from *glubere*, “because the grain is stripped from this shell” (*quod eo folliculo deglubitur granum; Rust.* 1.48.2)<sup>7</sup>.

*Glubere* clearly became a sexual metaphor in Roman slang, and it is hardly alone as a Latin agricultural term to do double duty by representing some aspect of sexuality<sup>8</sup>. Perhaps harkening back to Catullus, the Late Antique poet Ausonius uses *deglubere* to mean “manipulation of the penis during masturbation”<sup>9</sup>. As Julia Gaisser suggests, “stripping” or “peeling” the bark likely refers to the foreskin of the penis, indicating sexual arousal and an erection<sup>10</sup>. H. D. Jocelyn therefore notes that *glubit* “possessed an obvious metaphorical potentiality for anyone talking or writing about sex in a community which did not practice circumcision”<sup>11</sup>. Jocelyn observes the importance of *glubere*’s rustic origins, offering that “its use at [Catullus] 58.5 conveyed a tone of urbane contempt for the woman’s present way of life”<sup>12</sup>. Randall also invokes the agricultural meanings of

suggestive of λεσβιάζειν and therefore of fellatio.

6 — Kroll 1923, 103 argues that the verb does not suggest a specific transitive action but instead “the naturally occurring” retraction of the foreskin. Bright 1976, 107n8 finds the word “unquestionably obscene” but does not speculate as to *glubere*’s specific meaning. Quinn 1970, 260: “But perhaps C. means no more than that Lesbia strips her lovers of their clothes (and their cash)”. Focusing on *nepos* and its double meaning as both “grandson” and “spendthrift”, Muse 2009, 310 suggests *glubit* can mean “fleece” in a financial sense. Among the various suggestions, I find Penella’s argument for manual stimulation compelling, though its logic rests upon assumptions that ultimately remain speculative.

7 — See also Paul. Fest. p.98M, which defines *gluma* as: *hordei tunica, dictum, quod glubatur id granum. unde et pecus glubi dicitur, cuius pellis detrahitur* (“the protective coat of barley, so called, because this grain is stripped. From whence also a sheep is said to be flayed (*glubi*), whose skin is stripped off”). See also Sihler 1995, 209.

8 — See, for example Adams 1990, 28-29 and 72 on *ramus* (“branch”, “penis”) and *glans* (“acorn”, as well as “glans” or the penis as a whole).

9 — See Kay 2001, 221 and Penella 1976. Auson. *Ep.* 75.7-8: *deglubit, fellat, molitur per utramque cavernam, / ne quid inexpertum frustra moritura relinquat* (“she [Crispa] jerks off men, sucks them off, and is pounded in both holes, lest she die in vain, leaving anything untried”). Ausonius’ manuscript tradition is complex. In my numbering of the epigrams, I follow Green 1999.

10 — Gaisser 2009, 59; Mulroy 2002, lxxxviii.

11 — Jocelyn 1979, 88.

12 — Jocelyn 1979, 90.

*glubere*, arguing that “just as a human hand is instrumental in stripping the bark off a willow or indeed in divesting an animal of its skin, so the hand of one or the other of the partners is responsible for retracting the man’s foreskin”<sup>13</sup>. Peter Green connects *glubit* with Juvenal’s use of *praeputia ducit* (“leading back the foreskin”), evocative of masturbation, at *Sat.* 6.238 and argues that *glubit* “skins” an uncircumcised male through manual stimulation<sup>14</sup>.

However, as anyone who has ever stripped the bark off an actual tree without the aid of a pressure washer (for the record, I have) can attest, there is hardly a tree that will shed its bark with a gentle caress. Rather, the task is typically performed with a knife, axe, sickle, or similar tool. This was certainly true in Greco-Roman antiquity<sup>15</sup>. The sexual appropriation of the verb therefore invokes the imagery – whatever the sexual act described – of Lesbia taking a sharp tool to a phallic object. This reading is further supported by the etymological origin of *glubere*. The verb is imported from the Greek γλύφω, meaning to carve, cut, or gouge with a knife. So it is that, more than a century ago, William Loring concluded that *glubere* presumes an action performed with a cutting tool of some kind<sup>16</sup>. An incisive tool must also be assumed in skinning a sheep. Even in case skinning, in which the animal’s skin is removed like a sock (perhaps most suggestive of *praeputia ducit* among *glubere*’s agricultural definitions), incision and cutting remain prerequisites. In its third agricultural potentiality, removing the husk from grain, a knife would not have been used. Nevertheless, threshing was a process that involved violent stamping, often by livestock, on the grain. When a threshing board or sledge (*tribulum*) was employed, this implement used sharp stones or iron to remove the glume<sup>17</sup>. The *Iliad* captures the violence of threshing, since

13 — Randall 1980, 21.

14 — Green 2005, 231.

15 — At Hom. *Il.* 1.236-237, Agamemnon offers insight into how his wooden scepter was made, proclaiming that “the bronze blade stripped both leaves and bark” (χαλκός ἔλεψε / φύλλά τε καὶ φλοιόν). The use of a knife to strip bark seems to be assumed by Hanson 1998, 63. Beyond Greece and Rome, McGraill 1987, 90 notes that pre-modern societies around the world harvested bark using cutting tools, including knives and flint.

16 — Loring 1890, 313. Holzberg 2002, 98 gives the literal translation of *glubere* as “*abhäuten, abschälen*” (flaying, peeling), which evokes the implied use of a cutting tool of some kind. Hawkins 2014, 576-78 associates the agricultural definitions of *glubere* with σκύλλειν (“to skin”, “to tear”, “to shave”) and its suggestiveness of sexual stimulation. Hawkins suggests (574, citing O’Hara 1996, 75-79 and Shechter 1975, 358-59) that σκύλλειν is imbedded in the etymology of Scylla, which strengthens the connections he draws between the Scylla of Poem 60 and the Lesbia of Poem 58. If correct, these associations also support my arguments for reading some layer of implied violence in *glubere*.

17 — Var. *Rust.* 1.52: *Id fit e tabula lapidibus aut ferro asperata, quae cum imposito auriga aut pondere grandi trahitur iumentis iunctis, discutit e spica grana; aut ex axibus dentatis cum orbiculis, quod vocant plostellum poenicum* (“This [*tribulum*] is made from a board sharpened with stones or iron, which separates the grains from the stem when it is dragged by yoked beasts with a driver or large

it likens warfare to the threshing and winnowing of grain. Achilles' horses trample the dead like oxen threshing and husking barley while an arrow rebounds from Menelaus' breastplate like beans or chickpeas sent flying by the blade of the winnowing shovel<sup>18</sup>.

As Jeffery Henderson has observed, all three possible agricultural definitions of *glubere* and the word's sexually charged slang usage find earlier precedent in Greek synonyms, such as the various compounds of δέρειν ("to skin", "to flay") and λέπειν ("to peel")<sup>19</sup>. Shane Hawkins notes these agricultural definitions and their earlier Greek attestations, and he argues that "we are not supposed to imagine Lesbia doing any of these things in a literal sense, but ... *glubere* is a double entendre with a sexual connotation"<sup>20</sup>. This is, of course, true, yet the role of *glubere*'s rustic origins in the double entendre can be pushed further; all of *glubere*'s agricultural definitions, as well as the *de* prefix of *deglubere*, conjure not merely retraction but separation<sup>21</sup>. Hence, there is a certain violence to *glubere*'s imagery, and Catullus' sexual use of *glubit* seems to imply an act of violence in addition to whatever lewd act he might suggest, threatening the male bodies of the *magnanimi Remi nepotes* who are its object. As Benjamin Eldon Stevens argues of Catullus' vulgar and vituperative slurs and threats, they contain "literal, physical, and sexual force"<sup>22</sup>. Titillating as its figurative sense might be, *glubit* in its literal sense should make most men at least slightly uneasy. This would have been especially true of Catullus' Roman audience, who found circumcision an abhorrent practice<sup>23</sup>.

Rabelais seems to have understood Catullus 58 in this way, since he connects Catullus' use of *glubere* with a scheme of women to flay men alive, as well as with the Jewish custom of circumcision:

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weight placed on it; or with toothed axles with little wheels, which they call the Punic cart"). Much as sharp stones remove the stalk from the grain, Catullus' Attis performs his own gender transition surgery with a sharp stone (*acuto silice*, Catull. 63.5).

18 — Hom. *Il.* 20.495-503; 13.588-592. See Ure 1955, 225.

19 — Henderson 1991, 167-68. As Henderson (167) notes of Aristophanes' use of ἐκδέρειν at *Wasps* 450, the verb could be used of homosexual rape. This usage perhaps provides earlier Greek precedent for the layers of implied violence and diminished masculinity for which I argue of *glubere* in Catullus 58.

20 — Hawkins 2014, 578.

21 — In addition to the above quoted appearance in Varro and its obscene usage in Ausonius, *deglubere* is attested at Plaut. *Poen.* 1312, where it may well imply circumcision (*deglupta maena*, "skinned fish", discussed below). The violence of *deglubere* is also captured by Var. *Men.* 285: *Pelican Medeae permisisse, ut se vel vivum degluberet* ("Pelias had given Medea permission to skin him alive"). Also Suet. *Tib.* 32.2: *rescripsit boni pastoris esse tondere pecus, non deglubere* ("he replied that a good pastor should shear his flock, not skin it").

22 — Stevens 2013, 281n68. Stevens follows Nappa 2001, 90.

23 — See especially Hodges 2001. Cordier 2001 argues that circumcised men were priapan characters in Roman culture and that Roman *mores* related circumcision to castration.

Les femmes, au commencement du monde, ou peu après, ensemblement conspirèrent escorcher les hommes tous vifz, parce que sus elles maistriser vouloient en tous lieux. Et feut cestuy decret promis, confirmé et juré entre elles par le saint sang breguoy. Mais, ô vaines entreprises des femmes, ô grande fragilité du sexe féminin ! Elles commencerent escorcher l'homme, ou gluber, comme le nomme Catulle, par la partie qui plus leurs hayte, c'est le member nerveulx, caverneulx, plus de six mille ans a, et toutesfoys jusques à praesent n'en ont escorché que la teste. Dont, par fin despit, les Juifz eulx mesmes en circuncision se le couppent et retaillent, mieulx aymans estre dictz recutitz et retaillatz marranes, que escorchez par femmes, comme les aultres nations.

When the world began, or not long after, women got together and decided to skin men alive, because all over the world they wanted to be in the driver's seat. So they all swore this great holy oath – but how silly women are! Oh, the endless fragility of the entire female sex! They did indeed begin to skin men alive (peel them, as Catullus puts it), and they began with the part they liked best, namely, our nerveless, swerveless stick – and here we are, more than six thousand years later, and in all that time they haven't gotten past the head of it. And so, with a wonderful flair for revenge, the Jews actually circumcise themselves, cutting all around the head: they'd rather be called nipped pricks or chopped-off Marranos than be skinned by women the way other people are<sup>24</sup>.

For Rabelais, then, the erotic “peeling” conjured by Catullus' *glubit* functions as a performative symbol of violence, and Rabelais' satire situates this act within gendered struggles for power. If the verb *glubere* represents a “demonstration of male virility”, as David LaGuardia argues, Rabelais obscenely locates its origins with “women's phantasmic desires to skin and emasculate men”<sup>25</sup>. Furthermore, if *glubit* does add a violent layer – even if more symbolic than literal – to the poem, we might connect the Lesbia of Poem 58 with both the Lesbia *rumpens* of Poem 11 and the monstrous Scylla of Poem 60<sup>26</sup>.

In Poem 11, we find a Lesbia in tension, posing a threat to the men with whom she associates, even as she pleasures them (17-20):

cum suis vivat valeatque moechis,  
quos simul complexa tenet trecentos,  
nullum amans vere, sed identidem omnium

24 — Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel* 3.18.112-132 I here use the text of Rabelais 1964 along with Raffen's translation, published in Rabelais 1990. Rabelais' allusion to Catullus 58.5 is briefly noted by Penella 1976, 118n2.

25 — LaGuardia 2008, 141.

26 — On these connections, see Hawkins 2014. As Hawkins notes (562-63), Holzberg 2002, 99-100 connects Poems 11 and 60, while Wiseman 1969, 16 finds Scylla's barking crotch evocative of 58.5.

*ilia rumpens*

Let her live and let her flourish with her adulterers, three hundred of whom she holds in simultaneous embrace, loving none of them truly, but breaking the groins of all of them again and again.

After describing his own prospective travels in terms evocative of sexual penetration (*penetrabit*, 2), Catullus reverses the poem's asymmetrical gender relations. Overly active and rapacious, Lesbia repeatedly "breaks" or "destroys" the groins of her male partners, as *rumpens* suggests destructive consequences well beyond simply bringing to orgasm<sup>27</sup>. As R. T. Scott observes, *ilia* "turns up frequently" in Latin poetry "in descriptions of mortal wounds being inflicted in combat"<sup>28</sup>. Lesbia's "hold" (*tenet, complexa*) on these men degrades their masculine standing and diminishes them to *moechi* (if they weren't already). The danger posed by Lesbia's sexuality to masculine power is reiterated in the poem's final lines. Catullus laments his own alienation and wounded love (*amorem*, 21) (22-24):

qui illius culpa cecedit velut prati  
ultimi flos, praetereunte postquam  
tactus aratro est.

Which by her fault has fallen just like a flower at a meadow's edge,  
touched by the passing plow.

As the aggressive initiator of her many liaisons, Lesbia asserts sexual dominance and cuts down Catullus' masculine standing (with imagery drawn from a traditionally male agricultural activity). Catullus here alludes to Sappho 105c and the poet positions himself, bitterly, as the vulnerable "feminine" party enduring abuse<sup>29</sup>. As David R. Sweet notes, *penetrabit* "gives way to *tactus est*". Catullus "becomes feminine, a virginal flower", while Lesbia becomes "masculine", "conquering", and "mandevouring"<sup>30</sup>. When Lesbia takes or discards a lover, it is she who does the plowing.

Poem 60, which Hawkins convincingly argues is directed at Lesbia, asks whether its addressee is the monstrous child of "Scylla barking from the deepest part of her crotch" (*Scylla latrans infima inguinum parte*, 60.2). As Marianne Hopman has shown, drawing upon a "triple analogy

27 — Thomson 1997, 238 notes that *ilia* is here symbolic of "male sexual potency".

28 — Scott 1983, 40n8. Scott (40-41) also connects this depiction of Lesbia to the monstrous Scylla.

29 — Quinn 1970, 129 notes the Sapphic allusion, as does Scott 1983, 42n17 and Putnam 1974, 78.

30 — Sweet 1987, 518. Sweet (518n13) notes that Lucretius (4.1246 and 1268-1273) "associates in a sexual context both *penetrare* and the image of the plow and furrow".

among mouth, female genitals, and straits” present in numerous classical sources, Scylla is associated with the folkloric archetype of the *vagina dentata* – “the woman whose genitals are covered with teeth and who therefore threatens to castrate or kill her sexual partners”<sup>31</sup>. This allows us to press this connection between the Lesbia of Poem 58 and the Scylla of Poem 60 one step further. For Hopman, Scylla is representative of gender anxieties and tied to “to androgynous females like Clytemnestra, who appropriates male attributes” and – at least symbolically – unmans her male victims through her sexual aggression<sup>32</sup>. If I am correct in my reading of *glubit* and if Lesbia is scorned as a daughter of Scylla, Poems 58 and 60 present in tandem a picture of Lesbia as a femme fatale, who voraciously menaces *Remi nepotes*.

According to conventional interpretations, the proposed sexual definitions for *glubit* would place Lesbia in the position of the passive/penetrated partner. In both manual stimulation and fellatio, the Romans considered the receiving partner to be the active penetrator, particularly with respect to the latter act<sup>33</sup>. Julia Dyson argues that when Lesbia “shucks”, she not only displays “indiscriminate sexual rapacity” but also suffers “added humiliation represented by what the Romans considered the most degrading of sexual acts”<sup>34</sup>. Hence, Gary Dyer reads Catullus’ final picture of Lesbia in Poem 58 as “one of degradation”<sup>35</sup>. This degradation is, of course, amplified by the *quadriuiis et angiportis*, which serve as base, public settings for her trysts and suggest that she performs as a prostitute and services lovers beneath her social station<sup>36</sup>.

However, through the active voice of *glubit* and its perhaps violent connotations, Catullus portrays Lesbia eagerly participating in – yet also exercising power through – sexual acts that should ordinarily control and degrade her. Lesbia is rendered an overly active sexual being, appropriating the dominant role normally reserved for men. This empowering dimension to the vigorous activity of *glubere* is underscored by the word’s agricultural origins, since Cato – an early source for *glubere* – presupposes that the Roman villa is a male administered and male dominated environment, and that the agricultural activities denoted by *glubere* would ideally be performed by males. *Glubere* is thus gender-coded, much as spinning and weaving are feminine activities in Greek and Roman literature. Taken

31 — Hopman 2012, 138. Also Raitt 1980, 426 and 429n7.

32 — Hopman 2012, 139.

33 — See especially Parker 1997; also Skinner 2014, 21-22.

34 — Dyson 2007, 264-65.

35 — Dyer 1988, 7. Also Hawkins 2014, 583, who convincingly argues that Poem 60, not 58, represents the final picture of Lesbia in the polymetra.

36 — Hence the summation by Richlin 1992, 145: “The faithless Lesbia is reduced to the activities of a street whore”.

a step further, we might read the gendered implications of *glubere* in tension with connotations of class: *glubere* may be a male activity on the Roman villa, but it is likely a servile one. *Glubit* thus undermines Lesbia's social standing even as it suggests a masculine performance. Lesbia's active, masculine dominance inverts the normative model of the active/passive dichotomy, constructing the Lesbia of Poem 58 (in conjunction with Poems 11 and 37) as a deviant representation of femininity. For Holt Parker, such an abnormal female becomes "a monster who violates boundaries ... built on a model of aggressive male sexuality"<sup>37</sup>. Catullus thus makes a farce of Lesbia, whose sexual voracity is something of a familiar joke in the Catullan corpus and beyond.

This farcical dimension to *glubere's* sexual dynamics bears something, too, in common with Catullus' use of *cinaediorem* of a woman at 10.24. Lesbia performs as a man, but badly: even while she asserts sexual agency, independence, and dominance, Lesbia actively and aggressively makes herself available as a vehicle for the gratification of male sexual pleasure. Like a *cinaedus*, Lesbia's indulgence threatens to compromise the masculinity of her male citizen lovers, the descendants of Remus<sup>38</sup>. If we understand Lesbia as *cinaedus*-like – even if Catullus does not use this precise word of her – *glubit* helps construct a Lesbia in tension, who prefigures a later imperial "tendency to ascribe aggressiveness ... to the *cinaedus*" as someone who "challeng[es] the paradigm of sexual dominance and submission by ... role interchange"<sup>39</sup>.

In my reading, *glubere's* agricultural, literal definitions go beyond constructing Lesbia as a degraded woman with amplified and deviant sexual appetites. In contrast to other verbs at Catullus' disposal, *glubere* at least hints towards the violent diminishment of her lovers' masculinities and so extends the joke to the men Lesbia services. As Jonathan Walters well notes, the body of a Roman male citizen was supposed to be inviolable. However, adulterers who slept with married women lost this privilege, and Roman poetry suggests castration and anal rape at the hands of slaves as punishments for adultery<sup>40</sup>. Of course, I do not suggest

37 — Parker 1997, 59.

38 — This threat of contagion lurks behind Skinner's 2014, 154-55 comparison of the *kinaidos/cinaedus* with vampires.

39 — Skinner 2014, 327, drawing on Taylor 1997, 349-57. As Taylor 1997, 351 notes, the conflation of "lewdness and effeminacy" "spring[s] full-blown into Latin from Greek". For example, cf. Archilochus 328.1: "One and the same are the minds of the *kinaidos* and of the lowly whore" (ἴσος κιναιίδου καὶ κακῆς πόρνης ὁ νοῦς). In Late Antiquity, Ausonius uses *deglubit* to similar effect of Crispa in the previously discussed *Ep.* 75.7-8: in line 7, Crispa pleasures eagerly with what should be degrading activities (*deglubit, fellat*) and she assumes a more traditionally passive role (*molitur per utramque cavernam*), all out of her own unseemly desire, indicated by the subordinate purpose clause (line 8).

40 — Walters 1997, 39. Walters cites Plaut. *Mil.* 1395-1426 and Hor. *Sat.* 1.2.41-46. Cf.

anal rape as a sexual act implied by *glubere*. However, *glubere* seems to share in the gender and socio-hierarchical dynamics of these Roman folk punishments for *moechi*. *Glubit* humiliates Lesbia's lovers by symbolically evoking the violation of their male bodies by social inferiors and, possibly, pairs a punishment fit for adultery with the act itself.

This interpretation finds support in Plautus' *Poenulus*, in which Antamonides uses *deglubere* to insult Hanno as a "skinned fish" (*deglupta maena*, 1312). The barb is levied amidst a tirade of invectives, dispensed against Hanno because Antamonides believes Hanno to have embraced a woman without the social standing to do so. Wolfgang de Melo reads *deglupta* as "an insult based on Hanno's presumable circumcision"<sup>41</sup>. *Deglupta maena* is but one part of a flood of obscure epithets and insults that systematically debase Hanno's masculinity, non-Roman ethnicity, and social status. For example, Antamonides suggests that Hanno belongs to a "Lotharian race with flowing tunics" (*genus hoc mulierosumst tunicis demissiciis*, 1303), calls Hanno a "man with with long tunics like a tavern boy" (*homo est cum tunicis longis quasi puer cauponius*, 1298) and an "African hussy" (*amatricem Africam*, 1304), and addresses him as *mulier* ("woman", 1305). John Starks argues that *ligula* ("little spoon" or "shoe-tongue", 1309) suggests "the demeaningly unmasculine act of *cunnilingus*" and that "*hallex viri* ('man no better than the residual smut at the bottom of *garum*') certainly means that he is worthless, smelly, disgusting scum, but also may disparage Hanno's sexuality"<sup>42</sup>. A few lines later, Antamonides charges Hanno's Carthaginian relative, Agorastocles (who would also be presumed circumcised), with the worst kind of unmanliness: *nam te cinaedum esse arbitror magis quam virum* ("For I judge that you are a *cinaedus* rather than a real man", 1318), while insinuating that the man is a member of the cult of Cybele, whose male followers were castrated and depicted as effeminate, womanish half men<sup>43</sup>. Whatever

O'Bryhim 2017, 326 and Miller 2007, 148. Valerius Maximus also provides anecdotal evidence of these penalties for adultery (6.1.13). I do not mean to conflate the very different acts of circumcision and castration; my point is rather that *glubere* and *deglubere* seem to suggest and, at least situationally, to have been associated with compromising male bodily integrity.

41 — De Melo 2012, 159n69. Moodie 2015, 197 (quoting Starks 2000, 179) notes that *deglupta maena* "has sexual connotations" and that the phrase "serves as an obscene allusion to Phoenecian/Carthaginian circumcision, which was viewed as perverted for many Greeks and Romans". See also Gazzarri 2015, 256n151. For the text of Plautus, I use de Melo 2012 with my own translation. A similar dynamic is at play in Mart. *Ep.* 11.94. Here, Martial emphasizes a rival poet's circumcision (*verpe poeta*, repeated four times in eight lines) to lament that the rival aggressively penetrates a Roman youth (*pedicas puerum ... meum*, 11.94.6).

42 — Starks 2000, 178-79. Cf. Moodie 2015, 196-97. On these effeminizing and ethnically charged insults, see also Franko 1996, 443-45 and Maurice 2004, 286.

43 — At 1317, Antamonides demands, "Why didn't you use a tambourine while saying that?" (*quin adhibuisti, dum istaec loquere, tympanum?*). Cf. Catull. 63, whose Attis plays the *tympanum* (29) as a "false woman" (*notha mulier*, 27) after undergoing castration (5). The narrator of Apuleius'

else the idiomatic *deglupta maena* implies, Plautus' text associates *deglubere* with the *cinaedus*, an effeminate man who desires to be penetrated. To be a *vir degluptus*, then, is to have one's masculinity (and, perhaps, one's Romanity) diminished. This reading of *glubere* at 58.5 invites associations with Lesbia's presumed lovers of Poem 37, whom Catullus threatens with irrumation<sup>44</sup>. As Maria S. Marsilio reads of the sexual dynamics and role inversions of Poem 37, Lesbia "has abandoned the *pudor* that should characterise the ideal behaviour of the proper *matrona*" and fails to heed social boundaries. Her "action merges the military and the sexual", and, coupled with her denial of "high social rank, fidelity, modesty, restraint and shame", Lesbia reduces "crowds of men ... to her sexual subordinates"<sup>45</sup>.

Quinn observes that the ironically grandiloquent tone of *magnanimi Remi nepotes* insults the men as well as Lesbia herself<sup>46</sup>. Choosing the reading *magnanimos* for *magnanimi*, Muse suggests that the epithet effeminizes Lesbia's customers by casting them as "decadent progeny" and "dandified prodigals"<sup>47</sup>. My reading of Poem 58 would have *glubere* add to this insult. Like the Lesbia of Poem 11 who "breaks the groins" of her men, and her associations with Scylla in Poem 60 (following Hawkins' reading), Lesbia's monstrous sexual voracity threatens the manhood of her clients. If one layer of *glubere's* meaning does introduce the specter of penetrating violence and diminished masculinity into the poem, then *magnanimi* (or *magnanimos*) *Remi nepotes* acquires meaning beyond the grandiloquent irony observed by Quinn and Muse. *Remi* is by no means a haphazard or metrically convenient alternative to *Romuli*. The men whose "bark" Lesbia strips are descendants of Remus, the brother whose body was penetrated, not of Romulus, the brother who wielded the blade.

*Metamorphoses* refers to a band of *galli* as *semiviri* ("half-men", 8.28). Cf. Mart. 3.91.2. Moodie 2015, 198 notes that playing the *tympanum* "suggests sexual passivity". Franko 1996, 445 also connects these Orientalizing insults against Agorastocles with those directed against Hanno.

44 — Catull. 37.7-8: *non putatis ausurum / me una ducentos irrumare sessoros?* ("Do you think I wouldn't dare two hundred of you sitters to suck me off together?"). Wiseman 1969, 16 connects the insults of Poem 37 with 58.5, as does Muse 2009, 302; Thomson 1997, 302; Skinner 1992.

45 — Marsilio 2016, 208-09.

46 — Quinn 1970, 260. Also Muse 2009 and Hawkins 2014. Battistón 2009, 130-31 specifies that *magnanimi Remi nepotes* are "Romans of high class" (*romanos de clase alta*) but that parody is evident in Catullus' epic expression for the aristocrats.

47 — Muse 2009, 311.

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