

### *Ego Maenas: The Construction of Female Sexuality in Catullus 63*

#### I. Attis' emasculation (63. 4-7)

stimulatus ibi furenti rabie, uagus animis,  
deuolsit ili acuto sibi pondera silice,  
itaque ut relicta sensit sibi membra sine uiro,  
etiam recente terrae sola sanguine maculans,...

(translated by Cornish-Gould, adapted)

there, goaded by raging madness, roaming in his mind,  
he cut off with a sharp flint the weights of his groin,  
so when she felt her limbs to have lost their manhood,  
still with fresh blood staining the surface of the ground,...

#### II. Attis' rite

##### a. Attis' frenzied speech (63. 19-26)

'...simul ite, sequimini  
Phrygiam ad domum Cybebes, Phrygia ad nemora deae,  
**ubi cymbalum sonat uox, ubi tympana reboant,**  
tibicen ubi canit Phryx curuo graue calamo,  
**ubi capita Maenades ui iaciunt hederigerae,**  
**ubi sacra sancta acutis ululatus agitant,**  
**ubi sueuit illa diuae uolitare uaga cohors,**  
quo nos decet citatis celerare tripudiis.'

'...go together, follow  
to the Phrygian house of Cybele, to the Phrygian forests of the goddess,  
where the noise of the cymbal sounds, where tympana re-echo,  
where the Phrygian flute-player blows a deep note on his curved reed,  
**where the Maenads ivy-crowned toss their head violently,**  
**where they shake the holy emblems with shriek yells,**  
**where that roaming company of the goddess is wont to rove,**  
whither it is fitting for us to hasten with rapid dances.'

##### b. Attis' ritual act (63. 27-32)

**simul** haec comitibus Attis cecinit notha mulier,  
**thiasus repente linguis trepidantibus ululat,**  
**leue tympanum remugit, caua cymbala recrepant,**  
uiridem citus adit Idam properante pede chorus.  
**furibunda simul anhelans uaga uadit animam agens**  
comitata tympano Attis per opaca nemora dux,...

so soon as Attis, woman yet not true one, sang these to her companions,  
**the thiasus suddenly with quivering tongues yell aloud,**  
**the light tympanum rings again, clash again the hollow cymbals,**  
swiftly to green Ida goes the chorus with hurrying foot.  
**Then too frenzied, panting, uncertain, wanders, gasping for breath,**  
attended by the tympanum, Attis, through the dark forests their leader,...

Attis as Ulysses bride

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**III. Attis as a heifer (63. 33-34)**

ueluti iuuenca uitans onus indomita iugi;  
rapidae ducem sequuntur Gallae properipedem.

as a heifer unbroken shunning the burden of the yoke;  
fast follow the Gallae their swift-footed leader.

**IV. Attis' separation from his family (63. 58-59)**

egone a mea remota haec ferar nemora domo?  
patria, bonis, amicis, genitoribus abero?

I, shall I from my home be borne far away into these forests?  
Shall I be absent from my fatherland, my possessions, my friends, my parents?

**V. The virgin's separation from the maternal household**

a. Catullus 61. 76-85

claustra pandite ianuae.  
uirgo adest. uiden ut faces  
splendidas faciunt comas?

Open the bolts of the door.  
The virgin is here. Don't you see  
how the torches make her hair shine brilliantly?

...  
tardet ingenuus pudor.  
quem tamen magis audiens,  
**flet quod ire necesse est.**

...  
noble shame delays.  
Yet listening rather to this  
**she cries because she must go.**

b. Catullus 62. 59-66

et tu ne pugna cum tali coniuge, uirgo.  
non aequom est pugnare, pater cui tradidit ipse.  
ipse pater cum matre, quibus parere necesse est.  
uirginitas non tota tua est, ex parte parentum est,  
tertia pars patrist, pars est data tertia matri,  
tertia sola tua est: noli pugnare duobus,  
qui genero sua iura simul cum dote dederunt.

And you, virgin, do not resist such a husband.  
It is not right to resist him, to whom your father himself gave you.  
The father himself with your mother, whom you must obey.  
Your virginity is not all your own, a part belongs to your parents,  
a third is given to your father, a third to your mother,  
only a third is yours: do not resist the two,  
who have given their rights to their son-in-law along with the dowry.

c. Catullus 64. 117-19

...ut linquens genitoris filia uultum,  
ut consanguineae complexum, ut denique matris,  
quae misera in gnata deperdita laeta <batu>...

as the daughter is leaving the face of her father.  
as she [is leaving] the embrace of her sister, of her mother last,  
who unhappy <was rejoicing> in her lost daughter...

Conington: *lamentata est*

VI. The bride's forceful separation

a. Catullus 61. 3-4

Collis o Heliconii  
cultor, Uraniae genus,  
qui **rapis teneram** ad uirum  
uirginem...

o haunter of the Heliconian mount,  
Urania's son,  
who takes away to her bridegroom the tender  
virgin...

b. Catullus 61. 56-57

tu **fero iuueni** in manus  
**floridam ipse puellulam**  
dedis a gremio suae  
matris,...

you yourself gave to the hands of the fierce youth  
the blooming maiden  
from her mother's bosom...

c. Catullus 62. 20-24

Hesperes, qui caelo fertur **crudelior ignis?**  
qui **natam possis complexu auellere matris,**  
**complexu matris retinentem auellere natam,**  
et iuueni ardenti castam donare puellam.  
**quid faciunt hostes capta crudelius urbe?**

Hesperus, what fire more cruel is borne from the sky?  
you who are able to tear away the daughter from the embrace of her mother,  
from her mother's embrace to tear away the clinging daughter,  
and to give the chase maiden to the blazing youth.  
What more cruel than this do enemies when a city is captured?

**VII. Cybele's yoke (63. 76-84)**

ibi iuncta resoluens Cybele leonibus  
laeuumque pecoris hostem stimulans ita loquitur.  
'agedum' inquit, 'age ferox <i>, fac ut hunc furor <agitet>,  
fac uti furoris ictu reditum in nemora ferat,  
**mea libere nimis qui fugere imperia cupit.**  
age caede terga cauda, tua uerbera patere,  
fac cuncta mugienti fremitu **loca retonent,**  
rutilam ferox torosa ceruice quate iubam.'  
ait haec minax Cybebe religatque iuga manu.

there Cybele untying the fastened yoke from her lions  
and goading that foe of the herd who drew on the left, thus speaks:  
'come now,' she says, 'come, <go> fierce one, let madness <drive> him,  
let him by stroke of madness return to the forests,  
him who would be too free, and desire to run away from my power.  
Come, lash back with tail, endure your own scourging,  
make all the places around resound with your bellowing roar,  
shake fiercely on brawny neck your ruddy mane.'  
Thus says Cybele threatening, and with her hand unbinds the yoke.

**VIII. Attis' permanent state (63. 86-90)**

ferus ipse sese adhortans rapidum incitat animo,  
uadit, fremit, refringit uirgulta pede uago.  
at ubi umida albicantis loca litoris adiit,  
teneramque uidit Attin prope marmora pelagi,  
**facit impetum. illa demens fugit in nemora fera;**  
ibi semper omne uitae spatium famula fuit.

and the wild lion stirs himself and rouses fury in his heart,  
he speeds away, he roars, with roaming foot he breaks the brushwood.  
but when he came to the watery stretches of the white-gleaming shore,  
and saw tender Attis by the smooth space of the sea,  
he rushes at her. And she, frenzied, flees to the wild mountains;  
there evermore she was a servant for all her life's course.

peremunt inq. Subj: 3 Attis h  
~~permanet Attis~~  
a permanent liminal state