

SOURCES OF SOME ERRORS IN CATULLAN COMMENTARIES

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It is a valuable experience to read through the early commentaries of classical authors to see where our present understanding of our texts has come from and to realize how much we owe to past generations of scholars whose names most of us have forgotten or never learned. The development of a standard interpretation is often a slow process built up bit by bit of individual contributions over the years, along with a good deal of misinformation and misdirection which the scholarly tradition must eventually winnow out. A simple example of this is Catullus 105:

Mentula conatur Pipleium scandere montem:
Musae furcillis praecipitem eiciunt.

It is obvious to us as we read this poem in our editions annotated by Kroll, Quinn *et al.* that Catullus is mocking the poetic pretensions of Mamurra whom the Muses thrust down from their sacred mount. This interpretation was not always so obvious. Parthenius,¹ Catullus' first commentator (1485), entitled the poem *De eius mentula* and interpreted it in a strictly sexual sense, as the poet's account of a failed attempt which he had made at intercourse with a virgin. Parthenius identifies the Pipleian mount with an element of female anatomy (*eugium quod est quaedam pars media inter muliebria genitalia*, paraphrasing Nonius Marcellus 107, s.v. *eugium*), though he never explains why Catullus chose this particular metaphor, and he quotes a fragment of the mimographer Laberius (*quare tam arduum ascendas, an concupisti eugium scindere?*, 24–25 Ribb. *apud* Non. l.c.) to illustrate the use of the climbing image in *scandere* (105.1) to describe intercourse. Palladius² (1496) likewise entitles the poem *De eius mentula* and gives the same sexual interpretation as Parthenius (without citing

¹*Carmina Catulli, Tibulli et Propertii c. commentariis Antonii Parthenii, Bernardini Veronensis et Domitii Calderini* (Brixiae 1485); I quote from a copy with a colophon dated 1486.

²*Catullus una cū commentariis eruditi uiri Paladii Fusci Patauini* (Venetiis 1496).

Laberius), but he also notes an alternative explanation, that in the poem Catullus admits that he had wished to write obscene verses, but the Muses prevented him from doing so. The linking of the Pipleian mount and the Muses with the writing of poetry is an important advance, for, as Guarinus³ (1521) argues, a simple sexual interpretation does not explain the choice of the metaphor of the Muses' mount. Guarinus accounts for the Muses and is still able to interpret the poem sexually as Catullus' tale of his rejection by a *docta puella uel puer* to whom he wished to make love. While Gaurinus prefers this modified sexual interpretation, he also offers an alternative, that *Mentula* was the proper name or nickname of someone who wished to be a poet but was rejected by the Muses because of his lack of talent. The final step comes with the identification of Mamurra as the would-be poet Mentula, an identification made, albeit tentatively, by Muretus⁴ in 1552, sixty-seven years after Parthenius. For two generations, then, some form of sexual interpretation of our poem held the field, and even after Muretus we find in the commentary of Achilles Statius⁵ (1566):

Ineptum hominem, ac peni deditum, uersus etiam facere temptantem, inridet . . . nisi quid significatur, quale illud Laberii apud Nonium Marcellum in uerbo Eugium: Quare tam arduum ascendas, an concupisti Eugium scandere (*sic*)?

Indeed, late into the next century we find Vossius⁶ (1691) arguing for *scindere* (the reading of *V*) in place of *scandere* in 105.1, claiming that the verb is to be understood *obscaena significatione* and citing as support for the obscene use of *scindere*, *inter alia*, the same fragment of Laberius (24–25 Ribb.).⁷ The misleading citation of Laberius does eventually disappear from the commentaries, but not until it had been around for over two hundred years buttressing false interpretations of our poem.

But at least the citation of Laberius was finally purged from the scholarly tradition. This has not always been the case, and much false or misleading information continued to be handed down from generation to generation,

³Alexandri Guarini Ferrariensis in C.V. Catullum Veronensem per Baptistam patrem emendatum expositiones cum indice (Venetiis 1521) CXI^r–CXII^r.

⁴Catullus et in eum commentarius M. Antonii Mureti (Venetiis 1552); I quote from the Lyons edition of 1559, p. 257; the identification of Mentula = Mamurra (using the evidence of poem 29) is made *ibid.*, p. 246, in Muretus' discussion of poem 94.

⁵Catullus cum commentario Achillis Statii Lusitani (Venetiis 1566) 404–05.

⁶C. Valerii Catulli opera, ex recensione Isaaci Vossii cum eiusdem notis ac obseruationibus (Lugduni Bataurorum 1691²) 334.

⁷I must confess that I do not really understand what Vossius is getting at here unless he means that Mamurra sexually assaults the Muses' mount, which strikes me as quite improbable; earlier (*op. cit.*, p. 317) Vossius had agreed with the identification of Mentula with Mamurra.

copied from commentary to commentary, particularly in illustrative material like the Laberius citation which obscures more than it illustrates.

A good example of this sort of thing is found in the commentaries to Catullus 32. The poet writes to a woman, asking her in some detail to prepare for him an afternoon of sexual gratification (32.10–11):

nam pransus iaceo et satur supinus
pertundo tunicamque palliumque.

Given the general context of the poem, this last verse rather obviously describes the poet's state of sexual arousal as he anticipates the afternoon's activities. On this verse Scaliger ⁸ (1577) comments:

Ultimum autem uersiculum pene (*sic*) ad uerbum exprimit ille in Cyclope Euripidis: ἐπεκπιῶν γάλακτος ἀμφορέα πέπλον κρούω.

Vossius⁹ (1691), Ellis¹⁰ (1876), Baehrens¹¹ (1885), Kroll¹² (1923) and Lenchantin de Gubernatis¹³ (1928) all follow Scaliger in citing the Euripidean passage (*Cyc.* 327–28) to illustrate *pertundo*. At *Cyc.* 327–28, however, the Cyclops is describing a scene of self-sufficiency and contentment, not one of ardent desire. There is nothing in the wider Greek context (*Cyc.* 320 ff.) to suggest any sexual meaning for πέπλον κρούω. Rather, the Cyclops boasts of rivaling the thunder of Zeus (*Cyc.* 327–28):

ἐπεκπιῶν γάλακτος ἀμφορέα, πέπλον
κρούω, Διὸς βρονταῖσιν εἰς ἔριν κυτῶν.

In view of Διὸς . . . κυτῶν, the Greek κρούω must here correspond to the Latin *oppedo*,¹⁴ not to *pertundo*, and *Cyc.* 327–28 is therefore quite irrelevant as an illustration of Catullus 32.11. One is tempted to believe that Vossius, Ellis *et al.* relied simply on Scaliger's brief citation (i.e., without Διὸς . . . κυτῶν) and never bothered to check the full text of the *Cyclops* themselves, but this is clearly not the case at least with Kroll who does say

⁸*Iosephi Scaligeri Iul. Caes. fili castigationes in Catullum, Tibullum, Propertium* (Lutetiae 1577) [= part 2 of *Catulli, Tibulli, Propertii noua editio. Iosephus Scaliger Iul. Caesaris f. recensuit. eiusdem in eosdem castigationum liber* . . . (Lutetiae 1577)] 31.

⁹Vossius (above, note 6) 79; Vossius does not cite Scaliger as his source.

¹⁰R. Ellis, *A Commentary on Catullus* (Oxford 1876) 88; Ellis does not cite Scaliger as his source here, but he does cite him in his second edition (Oxford 1889) 114.

¹¹Aem. Baehrens, *Catulli Veronensis Liber*, vol. 2 (Lipsiae 1885) 197, citing Scaliger.

¹²W. Kroll, *C. Valerius Catullus* (Leipzig and Berlin 1923) 61; Kroll does not cite Scaliger as his source.

¹³M. Lenchantin de Gubernatis, *Il libro di Catullo Veronese* (Torino 1928) 63, with no mention of Scaliger.

¹⁴N. Wecklein, *Euripides: Kyklops* (Leipzig and Berlin 1903) *ad* 327 f.

that the Cyclops describes his condition after an ample meal.¹⁵ It is impossible, however, to tell from Kroll's commentary whether he believed that *pertundo* . . . *palliumque* in poem 32 is to be understood as πέπλον κρούω (i.e., as *oppedo*) or whether πέπλον κρούω is to be understood in the sexual sense of *pertundo* . . . *palliumque*. Neither interpretation is likely for the reasons given above, and it would seem that in either case the misinterpretation arises from Kroll's attempt to relate to the Catullus text before him the irrelevant Euripidean "illustration" handed down to him in various earlier commentaries.

This misdirection of the scholarly tradition is somewhat unfortunate, since through the particular linking of *tunicamque palliumque* Catullus has intentionally cast his poem in a Greek setting, probably as a device to show that the poem is not autobiographical. The Latin word *pallium* is used to describe (1) an item of Greek clothing; (2) a Roman bedspread.¹⁶ The closely bound parallel of *tunicamque palliumque* suggests that like the *tunica* the *pallium* here is also an item of dress, in the Greek fashion as in a *comoedia palliata*. If Catullus has cast his poem in a Greek setting we should do him the courtesy of citing the proper Greek equivalent which exists, down to the prefix δια- / *per-*, in the verb διακροτέω also used by Euripides in the *Cyclops* (179–80):

οὔκουν, ἐπειδὴ τὴν νεᾶνιν εἴλετε,
ἅπαντες αὐτὴν διεκροτήσατ' ἐν μέρει;

The verb διακροτέω here has the sense of "sexually assault."¹⁷ While this is the only extant example of διακροτέω used in this way, apparently verbs of banging were commonly used in Greek comedy to describe sexual intercourse.¹⁸ If *pertundo* in poem 32 = διακροτέω in a sexual sense, then the poet says that he is (literally) beating through his clothing and (metaphorically) sexually assaulting his clothing from the inside out.¹⁹

¹⁵"Der Kyplos nach einer reichlichen Mahlzeit" (Kroll [above, note 12] 61). In his second edition (Leipzig and Berlin 1929) Kroll added a question mark in parentheses after the Greek quote, suggesting that he had some second thoughts on the appositeness of the *Cyclops* passage, but not enough to eliminate the quote from his text.

¹⁶Cf. Lewis and Short s.v.

¹⁷Cf. LSJ⁹ s.v. I.

¹⁸J. Henderson, *The Maculate Muse: Obscene Language in Attic Comedy* (New Haven 1975) 171.

¹⁹Reference to the Greek enhances our understanding of this double entendre and may perhaps even be necessary since it is not certain that the verb *pertundo* had an immediately recognized sexual connotation in Latin. Apart from our passage and the material related to the goddess Pertunda discussed in the text above, W. Goldberg, "Kraftausdrücke im Vulgärlatein," *Glotta* 20 (1932) 103–04, cites as illustrations of a sexual use of *pertundo* only two medieval glossaries which equate *ueretrum* and *pertusorium* (CGL 4.295.34, 5.488.58; in

Commentators from Statius²⁰ (1566) to Quinn²¹ (1970) also cite a goddess Pertunda in connection with this last verse. It is worth noting that our knowledge of Pertunda comes exclusively from three Christian apologists (Tert. *Nat.* 2.11.12; Arn. *Nat.* 4.7, 4.11; Aug. *CD* 6.9) who include the goddess on lists of sexually oriented deities which the apologists use as easy targets to ridicule paganism. The lists are similar enough, and the deities on them obscure enough, to suggest that they were excerpted from a single common source which is usually assumed to be Varro, although the possibility that the original list arose only in the polemical climate of the early Christian centuries is not to be excluded. Yet even if the apologists' common source is Varro, all this tells us is that in the first century B.C. Varro was aware of a private cult to Pertunda, i.e., a cult involving some, not all, Romans, and perhaps only a relatively small number of people. Varro would have recorded Pertunda along with other equally obscure sexual deities who were the objects of private cults, and his list was later taken over by the apologists for their own polemical purposes. The absence of any evidence outside the three apologists suggests that knowledge of Pertunda was never widespread, and certainly there is no evidence that she was ever the object of any public cult. Our commentaries may mislead us then if they give the impression that knowledge of the goddess was widespread in Catullus' day. Indeed, it may well be that thanks to the commentaries on poem 32 we are more aware of Pertunda when we read this poem today than Catullus' original readers were in the first century B.C.

The same elements of misleading information and non-parallel "parallels," including another Greek mistranslation by Scaliger, come together in commentaries to the closing words of Catullus 104, but here interpretation has been even further complicated by a problem of textual corruption:

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

In the first three lines of this poem Catullus replies to someone who had

both cases *pertusorium* may be a corruption for *percussorium* [cf. *CGL* 5.252.8]) and Lucilius 1071–72 Marx (*nemo istum uentrem pertundet . . .*) which F. Marx, *C. Lucilii Carminum Reliquiae*, vol. 2 (Lipsiae 1905) 341, does not interpret in a sexual sense but which A. E. Housman, "Luciliana," *CQ* 1 (1907) 156–57, does, incorrectly I believe: whether *uenter* means "stomach" or "womb" in the Lucilian passage, it is not *quod pertunditur* in sexual intercourse.

²⁰Statius (above, note 5) 98.

²¹K. Quinn, *Catullus: The Poems* (London 1970) 189.

accused him of speaking ill of Lesbia by saying that he could not have done so because of his great love for her. In the final verse Catullus turns from himself to the addressee: *sed tu cum Tappone omnia monstra facis*. *Cum Tappone*, the reading of *V*, has been followed by most editors since Scaliger²² (1577). Earlier editors, however, based their texts on manuscripts which read *cum caupone*, and this variant, though now universally rejected, still effects, as we shall see, interpretation of the poem's conclusion, *omnia monstra facis*.

One interpretation begins with Parthenius²³ (1485) who explains the final verse:

. . . sed inuidus ipse cum sordido caupone non discordias, sed monstrosas libidines facit.

The echo of Suet. *Cal.* 16.1 in *monstruosas libidines* suggests that Parthenius thought that by *monstra* Catullus meant homosexual acts. This line of interpretation has been followed, among modern commentators, by Kroll who also sees *omnia monstra facis* as an accusation of homosexual acts, albeit of a different sort,²⁴ and by Lenchantin de Gubernatis,²⁵ while Fordyce and Quinn see the charge as a more general one: "you shrink from no enormity."²⁶

The lack of any expressed logical connection between vv. 1–3 and v. 4 in our poem is a weakness in this line of interpretation, and some commentators sought a tighter union between vv. 1–3 and v. 4 by having v. 4 refer back to the charge implied in v. 1, that Catullus had spoken ill of Lesbia. Thus Guarinus²⁷ (1521), using a text which read *cum caupone*, developed a scenario which has the poem's addressee gossiping with the

²²Scaliger (above, note 8) 104. Scaliger actually reads *cum caupone* in his text but argues for *cum Tappone* in his commentary.

²³Parthenius (above, note 1).

²⁴Kroll (above, note 12) 277 identifies *omnia monstra facis* with ἀρρητοποιεῖν, referring the reader to Cat. 80, but it is difficult to see why he makes this identification since there is no justification for linking *monstra* with τὰ ἀρρητα, and while the range of the word *monstrum* is certainly broad enough to include the sexual behavior described in poem 80, there is no reason why it should be limited to this, and only this, vice.

²⁵"Ogni specie di enormità, di carattere sessuale," Lenchantin de Gubernatis (above, note 13) 262 (Lenchantin de Gubernatis favors this interpretation but he also discusses the "exaggeration" interpretation).

²⁶C. J. Fordyce, *Catullus* (Oxford 1961) 392; "you stop at no enormity," Quinn (above, note 21) 444. Cf. "you shrink from nothing as too shocking," Ellis (above, note 10) 384 (Ellis seems to favor this interpretation but he discusses the "exaggeration" interpretation as well); "perversion is your stock-in-trade," F. O. Copley, *Gaius Valerius Catullus: The Complete Poetry* (Ann Arbor 1957) 116.

²⁷Guarinus (above, note 3) CXI.

barkeep—*caupones* are notorious gossips according to Guarinus—and fabricating stories:

non tantum fingitis hoc quod est incredibile sed etiam multa alia quae sunt ueluti monstra et praeter naturam²⁸ quae nullo pacto fieri possunt.

Likewise Muretus²⁹ (1552) has the addressee gossiping with the barkeep and telling tales about different people:

. . . interdum nullo pacto uerisimiles, planeque monstrosos (sc. sermones). . .

such as saying that Catullus had spoken ill of Lesbia. The same idea is also found in Statius' paraphrase³⁰ (1566):

. . . itaque legendum suspicabar, sed tu cum turpi ore³¹ omnia monstra facis: id est, turpissima quaeque atque incredibilia confingis, et loqueris isto impolluto ore.

This interpretation became firmly established with Scaliger³² (1577) who saw the addressee (with Tappo) taking seriously some jesting remark of Catullus and relating it to Lesbia, creating the impression that Catullus had transferred his affections elsewhere:

Hoc negat Catullus: et contra, illum *τερατολογεῖν* ait. Nam illud, *omnia monstra facis* nihil aliud est, quam πάντα *τερατολογεῖς* ad uerbum, uel *τερατοποιεῖς*. Est ergo Hellenismus.

This interpretation was adopted by Doering³³ (1788) who gives Scaliger as his source, by Riese³⁴ (1884) who supports the interpretation by citing Cic. *Att.* 4.7.1 (also cited earlier by Statius³⁵ [1566] and *Tusc.* 4.24.54 for parallel uses of *monstra*³⁶—Riese does not mention Scaliger however³⁷—,

²⁸Guarinus probably depends here on Palladius (above, note 1) who cites Donatus *ad Ter. Eun.* 656: 'monstrum' est omne contra naturam.

²⁹Muretus (above, note 4) 256.

³⁰Statius (above, note 5) 404.

³¹Statius' emendation of *caup(p)one* / *tap(p)one* / *tripone*.

³²Scaliger (above, note 8) 104.

³³F. G. Doering, *C. Valerii Catulli Carmina*, vol. 2 (Lipsiae 1788) 129.

³⁴A. Riese, *Die Gedichte des Catullus* (Leipzig 1884) 270.

³⁵Statius (above, note 5) 404.

³⁶It is uncertain who first cited the two Ciceronian passages as illustrations of Catullus 104.4 unless it was Riese himself. In all events, both passages were easily accessible, having been cited in both Facciolati-Forcellini's *Lexicon* and Freund's *Wörterbuch*, together with Lucr. 4.591 (which is never cited in Catullan commentaries although it most closely parallels Scaliger's *τερατολογεῖς*), as illustrations of the idiom *monstra dicere, loqui* = *incredibilia narrare*.

³⁷On the other hand, Scaliger is cited by Ellis (above, note 10) 384, who does not cite the Ciceronian passages.

and by Baehrens (1885) who cites Scaliger, Doering and the two Ciceronian passages.³⁸ And even while Kroll and Fordyce reject this *monstra* = "exaggerations" line of interpretation as far as poem 104 is concerned, they still include in their commentaries the Ciceronian passages apparently for no other reason than that they found this material in the commentaries of their predecessors.³⁹

The "exaggeration / lies" interpretation deserves some further consideration since it is the one adopted by Merrill⁴⁰ (1893), and it is probably to Merrill that we owe the popularity of this interpretation in English language translations.⁴¹ The interpretation arose, it will be recalled, from Guarinus' attempt to make sense out of the variant *cum caupone*, a reading now rejected by all editors. But after the "gossiping barkeep" variant was eliminated from our texts the "exaggeration" interpretation which it had spawned still carried on on its own, buttressed now by Scaliger's Greek translation and by the two Ciceronian "parallels." Yet in neither Ciceronian passage does *monstra* really mean "exaggerations" or "lies." *Monstra* is a word taken from the sphere of Roman religion and was originally used to describe phenomena which were contrary to the normal workings of nature and which were therefore taken as signs that the *pax deum* had been broken or was in danger of being broken.⁴² In a transferred sense *monstrum* is used without this religious connotation to describe any thing, person or action which deviates radically from the expected pattern

³⁸Baehrens (above, note 11) 593. Combining both interpretations Baehrens also sees an underlying homosexual implication in the words *omnia monstra facis*.

³⁹"*omnia monstra facis* kann nicht heissen 'du übertreibst alles' (*monstra dicere, nuntiare* Cic. Tusc. 4, 54. Att. 4,7,1)," Kroll (above, note 12) 277. Fordyce (above, note 26) 392 cites only Att. 4.7.1, "his story was sheer sensationalism" (but *omnia monstra facis* does not mean "you make a sensation out of anything."). Quinn (above, note 21) 444 also cites Att. 4.7.1 to illustrate Catullus 104.4; since Quinn does not follow the "exaggeration" interpretation of 104.4 (see above, note 26), presumably he does not take *monstra* as "exaggerations" in the Ciceronian passage either, but the choice of this illustrative example would still seem to depend on its citation in earlier commentaries (albeit to a different purpose) since there are numerous other passages in Cicero and elsewhere which would better illustrate Quinn's "terrible things" interpretation.

⁴⁰E. T. Merrill, *Catullus* (Cambridge, Mass. 1893) 217.

⁴¹E.g., F. W. Cornish, "The Poems of Gaius Valerius Catullus," in *Catullus, Tibullus and Pervigilium Veneris* (LCL, Cambridge, Mass. 1913) 175; H. Gregory, *The Poems of Catullus* (New York 1956) 170; R. A. Swanson, *Odi et Amo: The Complete Poetry of Catullus* (New York 1959) 107; R. Myers and R. J. Ormsby, *Catullus: The Complete Poems for American Readers* (New York 1970) 165. The same interpretation is also followed by the most recent commentators on the poem, P. Y. Forsyth, "Tu Cum Tappone: Catullus 104," *CW* 70 (1976) 21, who paraphrases Merrill without attribution or discussion.

⁴²H. J. Rose, "Prodigia," *OCD*²; cf. G. Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus der Römer* (München 1902) 328.

of nature. In particular, *monstrum* is used pejoratively to describe a wide range of human actions, but these different uses of the word all cluster around the central idea of “aberration,” “deviation,”⁴³ not that of “exaggeration” or “lie.” This is true specifically of the two Ciceronian passages. In the first of these Cicero thanks Atticus for news about his nephew Quintus:

Nihil *εὐκαιρότερον* epistula tua, quae me sollicitum de Quinto nostro, puero optimo, ualde leuauit. uenerat horis duabus ante Chaerippus, mera monstra nuntiarat.

Cicero clearly implies that Chaerippus’ report was exaggerated gossip, but this implication comes particularly from the contrast which he makes between Atticus’ letter and the report of Chaerippus, and to a lesser extent from the word *mera* (“nothing but”). The idea of exaggeration does not depend on the word *monstra* which simply describes the wicked things which Chaerippus alleged that Quintus had done. This use of *monstra nuntiarat* in *Att.* 4.7.1 is paralleled in *Att.* 9.11.4⁴⁴ where Cicero says of Pompey’s reported plans in early 49 B.C.:

nuntiant Aegyptum et Arabiam *Εὐδαίμονα* et *Μεσσοποταμίαν* cogitare, iam Hispaniam abiecisse. monstra narrant quae falsa esse possunt . . .

Quae falsa esse possunt implies that the reports can also be accurate. Thus the words *monstra narrant* do not imply exaggeration, and *monstra* is used simply as a strong negative term describing Pompey’s plan to move to the remote East as an aberration, since in the natural course of things he should defend the Republic in the West. In the second alleged parallel, *Tusc.* 4.24.54, Cicero, speaking of the Stoic paradox *omnis insipientis insanos esse*, says *remoue perturbationes maximeque iracundiam, iam [Stoici] uidebuntur monstra dicere*, i.e., if *iracundia* and the other *perturbationes* are excluded from the definition of *insania* the Stoic paradox becomes a *monstrum*. The modified paradox may be an “exaggeration,” but it is also “something unnatural, inconsistent with human experience,” in other words, “a deviation, aberration.” The latter translation agrees with the

⁴³E.g., a eunuch committing rape (Ter. *Eun.* 656), homosexual marriage (Juv. 2.122, 143), Oedipus’ incest (Stat. *Theb.* 1.235). In terms of human actions the range of the word *monstrum* extends well beyond this sexual sphere however, also embracing, to cite some extremes, cannibalism (Juv. 15.121, 172) and the “inhuman” crimes of Medea and Procne (Juv. 6.645) on the one hand, and the excess of Appius in Cilicia (Cic. *Att.* 5.16.2), Verres’ self-serving manipulation of public grain purchases (Cic. *Verr.* 3.73.171) and Cicero’s own exile (Cic. *Sest.* 24.53) on the other.

⁴⁴Cf. Cic. *Att.* 9.11.4.

other examples of *monstrum* used in this pejorative sense⁴⁵ and is therefore likely to be the correct one.

Cic. *Att.* 4.7.1 and *Tusc.* 4.24.54 are thus not really examples of *monstrum* used in the sense of “exaggeration.” Nor is Scaliger’s *τερατολογεῖς* / *τερατοποιεῖς* an accurate translation of *monstra facis*, at least as far as poem 104 is concerned. *Monstrum* and *τέρας* do mean much the same thing in a religious sense, but in the compounds *τερατολογέω* and *τερατοποιέω*, *τέρας* has only the non-religious and non-pejorative meaning “strange phenomenon,” “marvel,” “wonder.”⁴⁶ *Monstrum* in Latin is also used occasionally in this non-pejorative sense, and the idiom *monstra fingo* (Lucil. 480–81 Marx, Plin. *NH* 29.72, Min. Fel. *Oct.* 10.54⁴⁷) closely approximates *τερατολογέω* in the sense of “make up / tell fantastic stories.”⁴⁸ Clearly, however, in poem 104 *monstra* has a pejorative connotation, and while *monstra* may be untrue “fantastic stories” there is no evidence that the word can also mean untrue or exaggerated “horror stories,”⁴⁹ the pejorative sense which would be required in the present context. Indeed, the only pejorative sense which *monstrum* can have is that of “aberration,” “deviation.” Scaliger’s *πάντα τερατολογεῖς* is therefore not an accurate translation of Catullus’ *omnia monstra facis* which cannot mean “you make up stories” or “you exaggerate everything,” but must rather mean “you do all sorts of terrible things.”⁵⁰

In summary then, the Ciceronian passages *Att.* 4.7.1 and *Tusc.* 4.24.54 first entered the tradition when they were misread in the light of Catullus 104.4 as interpreted by Scaliger. Scaliger’s interpretation relies in turn on his mistranslation of the Latin into Greek. And the whole “exaggeration / lies” interpretation of the verse began with Guarinus’ scenario, gossiping with the barkeep, a scenario based on a reading, *cum caupone*, which no one accepts anymore.

⁴⁵See above, note 43.

⁴⁶See LSJ s.vv. *τερατολογέω*, *τερατοποιός*.

⁴⁷Cf. Lucr. 4.590, Plin. *NH* 9.91, Val. Max. 4.7.4.

⁴⁸For examples see LSJ s.v. Scaliger’s second verb, *τερατοποιέω*, is not listed in LSJ, and the related words *τερατοποιία* and *τερατοποιός* involve the very different ideas of quackery and wonder-working (cf. LSJ s.vv.).

⁴⁹On Cic. *Att.* 4.7.1 see above. At Cic. *Att.* 9.13.7 (*nos quae monstra cottidie legamus intelleges ex illo libello qui in epistulam coniectus*) the *monstra* are likely to be political proposals which are outrageously unconstitutional and hence “aberrations” (cf. Cic. *QF* 2.4.5).

⁵⁰J. Whatmough, *Poetic, Scientific and Other Forms of Discourse* (Berkeley 1956) 51–52, begins with the assumption that Tappo is a “scurrilous gossip-monger,” and constructs an etymology which relates the name Tappo, ultimately, to the Homeric *τέθηπα* = “marvel.” Since this etymology depends on the assumption that the “exaggeration” interpretation of poem 104 is correct, it would be circular reasoning to defend this interpretation on the basis of the etymology.

My final example of misinformation also arose from a now rejected variant reading. LSJ⁹, s.v. *σκορπίος*, include the following:

II. a sea-fish, prob. *Scorpaena scofa* . . . used (like the *mugilis* in Catull. 15.19, Juv. 10.317) to punish adulterers, Pl. Com. 173.21.

But modern texts of the Plato passage indicate nothing of the sort. In the Plato passage (quoted by Athen. 1.5b-d) speaker A. is reading to B. from the *Banquet*, a hexameter poem on food by Philoxenus of Leucas.⁵¹ At the end of the passage (173.13–21) A. quotes at length Philoxenus' comments on a variety of fish including the great sea-perch, the octopus and the red mullet (*τρίγλη*), and he is about to read what Philoxenus has to say about the scorpion-fish (*σκορπίος*) when he is interrupted by B. (173.19–21):

A. τρίγλη δ' οὐκ ἐθέλει νεύρων ἐπιήρανος εἶναι·
παρθένου Ἀρτέμιδος γὰρ ἔφν καὶ στύματα μισεῖ.
σκορπίος αὖ—B. παῖσιε γέ σου τὸν πρωκτὸν ὑπελθών.

Speaker A. means *σκορπίος* in the sense of “scorpion-fish,” but speaker B. uses it in the sense of “scorpion” for a vulgar put-down of Speaker A. whom B. would see entered and stung by the scorpion.⁵² There is nothing here to justify the idea that scorpion-fish were used to punish adulterers. To see where this idea came from we must first go back to the passages of Catullus and Juvenal cited by LSJ.

In poem 15 Catullus warns Aurelius to have nothing to do with a *puer* of whom Catullus is fond, for if Aurelius should ignore this warning (15.17–19):

a tum te miserum malique fati,
quem attractis pedibus patente porta
percurrent raphanique mugilesque.

The mention of radishes in v. 19 is certainly meant to recall *raphanidosis*, a well attested form of punishment for adulterers in Greece,⁵³ though not at Rome. Catullus thus threatens Aurelius with a humiliating punishment usually reserved for adulterers if he should have relations with the poet's *puer*, i.e., having relations with the *puer* is tantamount to adultery since the *puer* is as dear to Catullus as a wife would normally be.⁵⁴ The close coupling of *raphani* and *mugiles* in v. 19 would indicate that mullets were also used

⁵¹J. M. Edmonds, *The Fragments of Attic Comedy*, vol. 1 (Leiden 1957) 542–43, says that it is probably a parody of Philoxenus, but Athenaeus apparently does not take it as such.

⁵²Speaker A. is the “straight man” of the pair, speaker B. is the comedian; cf. vv. 6–8.

⁵³For *raphanidosis* see, e.g., Aristoph. *Nub.* 1083, schol. *ad* Aristoph. *Plut.* 168, Luc. *Peregr.* 9.

⁵⁴Or at least this is the fiction of the poem; cf. the common sense remarks of C. W. MacLeod, “Parody and Personalities in Catullus,” *CQ* 23 (1973) 294–303.

for punishing adulterers. There is no evidence in any Greek source for this use of mullets, but in Latin Juvenal, describing the punishments which husbands exact from adulterers, says (10.316–317):

. . . necat hic ferro; secat ille cruentis
uerberibus; quosdam moechos et mugilis intrat,

which is explained by the scholiast *ad loc.*:

mugilis piscis grandī capite postremus exilis qui in podicem moechorum
deprehensorum solebat immitti.

Since the scholiast's description of how the punishment was administered is not an amplification of anything in Juvenal it must depend on an outside source, but this outside source could be nothing more than Catullus 15.18–19, and Riese, followed by Kroll and Quinn, raises the possibility that Juvenal himself also depends on Catullus.⁵⁵ Thus while Greek *raphanidosi*s is well attested, we have very limited evidence, perhaps only Catullus 15.18–19, for a similar use of mullets (*mugiles*) for punishing adulterers. Moreover, it is uncertain whether this form of punishment was Greek, Roman, or both,⁵⁶ and it is even possible that the *mugiles* are merely a euphemism for *membra uirilia* and not even fish at all.⁵⁷ I dwell on the tenuous nature of this evidence for the use of mullets for punishing adulterers since it is the reference to mullets in Catullus and Juvenal which is in part responsible for the notion that scorpion-fish were also used for a similar purpose.

Our present text of the Plato passage goes back only to Elmsley (1809) who first distinguished the speakers in the last verse and read *παίσειέ* for *παύσειέ* in the same verse. These changes, proposed by Elmsley in an addendum to his commentary on Aristophanes' *Acharnians*,⁵⁸ were

⁵⁵Riese (above, note 34) 37; Kroll (above, note 12) 34; Quinn (above, note 21) 142.

⁵⁶Juvenal's scholiast does not specify; Juvenal's scene is Roman, but the linking of radishes and mullets in Catullus suggests that the punishment is Greek. There is no other evidence for either *raphanidosi*s or the use of mullets in Latin sources. Hor. *Sat.* 1.2.133 (*ne nummi pereant aut puga aut denique fama*), first cited by Statius [1566] (above, note 5) 61–62, refers to something quite different (cf. *dedit hic pro corpore nummos; hunc perminxerunt calones*, *Sat.* 1.2.43–44). Ter. *Eun.* 955 ff., first cited by Vulpius, *C. Valerius Catullus Veronensis, et in eum Jo. Antonii Vulpīi . . . nouus commentarius* (Patauī 1737) 59–60, speaks only of *id quod moechis solet* (956) which could refer to anything including castration (cf. Eugraph. *ad loc.*); in all events, the setting of *Eunuchus* is Greek and hence cannot be used as evidence for Roman practice.

⁵⁷S. L. Richardson, Jr., "*Furi et Aureli, Comites Catulli*," *CP* 58 (1963) 101. Richardson does not prove his case, but to my mind he does present enough evidence that the possibility must be left open.

⁵⁸Ἀριστοφάνους Ἀχαρνῆς. *Aristophanis Comoedia Acharnenses*. . . (Oxonii 1809) 116, *ad* 93.

accepted by Dindorf in his edition of Athenaeus⁵⁹ (1827), and have been part of the orthodox text since then. Before these corrections, however, vv. 19–21 read as follows:

τρίγλη δ' οὐκ ἐθέλει νεύρων ἐπιήρανος εἶναι.
παρθένου Ἀρτέμιδος γὰρ ἔφν καὶ στύματα μισεῖ.
σκορπίος αὖ παύσειέ γε σοῦ τὸν πρωκτὸν ὑπελθών.

Gesnerus cites this version of the Plato text as the last item s.v. *scorpius* in his *de piscium et aquatiliū natura*⁶⁰ (1558):

σκορπίος αὖ παύσειέ γε σοῦ τὸν πρωκτὸν ὑπελθών, Plato Comicus apud Athenaeum. talis autem poena adulteris apud Athenienses decreta erat; quam et Iuuenalis insinuat:—quosdam moechos et mugilis intrat. Vide supra in Mugilibus, Corollario IIII. E. pag. 662.

On p. 662 Juvenal's mullets are linked through Catullus' radishes and mullets with *raphanidosis* in Aristophanes and his scholiast. The process is all quite logical. Fish are not normally found τὸν πρωκτὸν ὑπελθόντες. If this is the way one fish (the *mugilis*) is used to punish adultery, and if another fish (the *scorpius*) is applied in the same manner, certainly it must be used for the same purpose, Gesnerus says, viz. to punish adultery. But as Elmsley later realized, it was not the fish but the arachnid τὸν πρωκτὸν ὑπελθών, and its purpose was to halt loquacity, not to punish adultery.

The notion that scorpion-fish were used on adulterers thus has no basis in fact, but arose merely from an attempt to make sense of the corrupt and mispunctuated text of Plato by reading it in the light of the mullets of Juv. 10.317 which are in turn connected through Catul. 15.18–19 with Greek *raphanidosis*. Essentially the same misinformation on the scorpion-fish is also found in the commentaries on Athenaeus by Casaubonus (1600) and Schweighäuser (1801), both of whom cite Gesnerus⁶¹ and both of whom still read the Plato text in its uncorrected form. Meineke, in his *Fragmenta comicorum graecorum*⁶² (1840), adopts Elmsley's punctuation and the

⁵⁹*Athenaeus ex recensione Guiliemi Dindorfii*, vol. 1 (Lipsiae 1827) 10–11. It should be noted that Dindorf still takes the σκορπίος as a fish used to punish adulterers.

⁶⁰K. Gesnerus, *Historiae animalium liber IIII. qui est de piscium et aquatiliū animantium natura* . . . (Tiguri 1558) 1023.

⁶¹*Isaaci Casauboni animaduersionum in Athenaei Dipnosophistas (sic) libri XV* . . . (Lugduni 1600) [= part 2 of ΑΘΗΝΑΙΟΥ ΔΕΙΠΝΟΣΟΦΙΣΤΩΝ ΒΙΒΛΙΑ ΠΕΝΤΕΚΑΙΔΕΚΑ. *Athenaei Deipnosophistarum libri XV. Isaacus Casaubonus recensuit* (Heidelbergae 1597)] 11 (Casaubonus does not cite Gesnerus in his commentary as the source of his information, but he does mention him in a marginal comment on Dalechamp's Latin translation of the Plato passage); J. Schweighaueser, *Animaduersiones in Athenaei Deipnosophistas post Isaacum Casaubonum* (Argentorati 1801) 68.

⁶²A. Meineke, *Fragmenta comicorum graecorum*, vol. 2, pars 2 (Berolini 1840) 674.

corrected text as published by Dindorf (1827), but he still cites Gesnerus, though indirectly through Schweighäuser, as the authority for the statement that the *scorpio* was used to punish adulterers:

. . . recte Elmsleius ad Aristoph. Acharn. 92 orationem ab altero interpellari uidit. Sequutus est Dindorfius. Scorpionem moechis subditum esse monuit laudatus a Schweighauesero Gesnerus Aquatil. p. 851.

Liddell and Scott understood *scorpionem* here to refer to the arachnid, not the fish,⁶³ whence the entry is LS¹ (1843):

σκορπίος, ὁ, a *scorpion* . . .; used to punish adulterers, Plat. Com. Φα. I. 21.

The same entry was reprinted in LS²⁻⁸, but for LSJ⁹ (1936) the entry was rewritten in the form quoted above to include the references to Juvenal and Catullus, and to shift the σκορπίος in Plato's text back from an arachnid to a fish.

In summary then, the notion that scorpion-fish were used to punish adulterers is a house of cards built on one shaky leg—for, as we have seen, the evidence for the punitive use of mullets is rather tenuous—and on an irremediably flawed second leg, namely, a now rejected Greek text. The house of cards should have collapsed at least when the text of Plato was correctly edited, but it did not. Instead, the misinformation continues to be passed on in the authoritative LSJ⁹.⁶⁴

There is a rather obvious lesson to be drawn from all this *Quellenforschung*, that we philologists are more than occasionally an incestuous and lazy lot, too ready to rely on our predecessors' commentaries instead of checking their sources ourselves. It would be folly to ignore the work of earlier scholars, but it is equally wrong to accept that work uncritically as, particularly in the case of minor details, we too often do.⁶⁵

⁶³ For Liddell and Scott's dependence on Meineke see the Preface to LS¹, p. vi.

⁶⁴ Needless to say, the same misinformation is also found in early commentaries to Catullus (e.g., Vossius [above, note 6] 42), but it has disappeared from the more recent ones. The mistake lasted longer in the case of Juvenal and is found, e.g., in J. E. B. Mayor, *Thirteen Satires of Juvenal*, vol. 2 (London and Cambridge 1878) 166.

⁶⁵ I wish to thank Yale University's Beineke Library, Columbia University's Butler Library, and the Library of the New York Academy of Medicine for allowing me access to the early texts cited in this paper.