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Loud and Proud:

The Voice of the *Praeco* in Roman Love-Elegy*

Freeborn elite Roman males confirmed their status through acts of speaking, both formal and informal, and the love-poet constructs a new status partly by subverting those speech-acts, switching registers almost as readily as the satirist. Taking a broad view, one might assume that the elegiac *amator* is a thinly-disguised forensic orator, since so much of his energy is spent on persuasive speech, which we habitually think of as formal rhetoric.¹ Indeed, speech can be at least as ornamented in elegy as in Roman epic.² However, in this chapter I propose a different view, by drawing attention to an alternative model: the *praeco*, a figure that encompassed various kinds of public speakers from employees of the state to deceptive salesmen. *Praecones* had a significant presence in Augustan society and some became very rich and influential.³ A stereotype of a cunning yet charismatic self-promoter emerged. We can only guess at the performance styles and tropes used by this perhaps embarrassing, yet just as distinctively Roman, relative of the formal orator. However, I suggest that there are rewards in seeking traces

* I am grateful to the participants in the *Complex Inferiorities* colloquium, including Vassiliki Panoussi as respondent, for a productive discussion yielding several suggestions that improved this chapter. I also thank the editors for their comments and valuable ideas. All translations are mine unless otherwise stated.

¹ For a detailed study of persuasion as a genre-defining feature of love-elegy, see Stroh (1971).

² Suetonius' Virgil gave one forensic speech in his youth (*egit et causam apud iudices unam omnino nec amplius quam semel: Vita Servii Donati* 8); Ovid's Ovid was trained in rhetoric, although his brother had the aptitude, and died (*Tristia* 4.10.15–40).

³ Bond (2011: 211–21) lists epigraphic evidence for 27 historical *praecones*, many of whom held posts in voluntary associations, though perhaps ex-*praecones* who achieved higher status avoided mentioning their earlier career.

of *praeconium* in the tropes of the love elegists. First I shall describe the role of praecones in Roman social history, then turn to the concept of praeconium and its uses in Roman love-elegy. Next I shall argue that Horace contributed to the development of the poet as praeco, and outline a form of praeconium prominent in both Horace and the elegists: the advertizing of the female body.

1. Praecones in Roman Life and History

The praeco, whose name some ancient sources derived from the verb *praedicare*, ‘recite in people’s presence’,⁴ is adept at getting people’s attention by being always loud and often persuasive. Loudness and persuasiveness both contributed to his distasteful reputation and deserve consideration here, but as we shall see, the latter has much broader implications in Augustan poetry. His activities span the spectrum of social dignity (political assemblies, the *comitia*, funerals, theatrical performances, auction-halls, the open streets), and our evidence does not permit an exclusive division between the civic and the private *praeco*.⁵ He is a combination of announcer and microphone, who can make a single word cut through the noise of a crowd, or even a traffic jam.⁶ Since assertive speech was characteristic of masculine *auctoritas*, it belies the

⁴ *ut praeco praedicat* (Plaut. *Bacch.* 810), *de quo homine praeconis vox praedicat* (Cic. *Quinct.* 50), *praeco iussu tuo praedicasset* (*Verr.* 2.3.40); Nikolaev (2012: 559–62). Maltby (1991) only cites Priscian, who derives the word from *canere* (*a valde canendo*, 3.50.111).

⁵ On the definition and diverse functions of the praeco, see Schneider (1953), Saumagne (1965: 31–6), Hinard (1976), Rauh (1989), Morcillo (2005: 137–56), Bond (2011: 28–85). Saumagne, followed by Rauh and Bond, argues that there were mutually exclusive *privati* and *publici*, but there is no record of such a distinction, and Hinard argues that none existed.

⁶ Crowds: Lucretius 4.563–4; traffic: Hor. *Serm.* 1.6.42–4.

loudhailer's low social status in interesting ways. For example, parsing the differences between the *praeco* and the *praefica*, both paid for public utterances at wealthy people's funerals, reveals much about how speech-acts and gender roles defined one another at Rome. The *praefica* was a professional female mourner who modelled lament for the female slaves, which included a musically accompanied chant (*nenia*). At least in Republican times the *praefica* praised the deceased, but female lament-speech in Roman textual sources is highly artificial (and never attributed to a *praefica*), so we cannot be sure how articulate these vocalizations were, in the Augustan period or any other.⁷ By contrast, the male *praeco*'s role was to communicate prepared words during the funerary procession itself (*pompa*), somewhat like the male relative who (in elite families) delivered a formal eulogy, though both performances may of course have been emotive. During the Republic, funeral processions even took place in the Circus Maximus, where the games themselves were inaugurated by a solemn parade of a different kind (the *pompa circensis*).⁸ Despite his low social status the *praeco* was therefore an instrument of authority even at funerals, potentially addressing large assemblies, just as the state-employed *praeco* did.

Our knowledge of what the historical *praeco* sounded like is limited. We know the short script for proclaiming high-status funerals (*funera indictiva*).⁹ We do not know how he sounded when choosing his own words, but the closest thing available may be the epitaph of a late Republican professional named Aulus Granius:¹⁰

⁷ Plaut. *Truc.* 495–6, Varr. *LL* 7.70, Lucil. fr. 995–6 = Nonius Marcellus 62 M, Lindsay 92. On the *praefica*'s role, see Dutsch (2008).

⁸ Humphrey (1986: 1), Beacham (1999: 11–13, 21–3).

⁹ The hired *praeco* assembled mourners by calling out a traditional formula: see Suet. *Iul.* 84, Fest. s.v. *Quirites*.

¹⁰ *Rogat ut resistas, hospes, te hic tacitus lapis, | dum ostendit quod mandavit quouis umbram tegit. | Pudentis hominis frugi cum magna fide, | praeconis Oli Grani sunt ossa heic sita. | Tantum est. hoc voluit nescius ne esses.*

This mute stone asks you to stop by, stranger. He has something to show you,
as commissioned by the man whose shade he covers.

Here lie the bones of Olus Granius the praeco:
modest, discreet, and honourable.

That is all: he wanted you to have the information. Have a good day.

Aulus Granius Stabilio, freedman of Marcus,
the praeco

Even in the formulaic language of an epitaph, a certain *urbanitas* may be detected.¹¹ It is not surprising that Rome's wealthy elite, who disliked the city's noise (and smell), scorned those who made a living through loud or coaxing voices.¹² Written sources emphasize the harshness of those voices, activating the stereotype that plebeians and rustics had obnoxious manners, and perhaps also protesting resistance to their charms. Cicero makes the low status of *praecones* very clear, and his charges against the execrable Piso include being the grandson of such a man.¹³

Vale. | A. Granius M. I. Stabilio | praeco: CIL I², 1210 = CIL VI, 32311 = CLE 53 = ILS 1932 = ILLRP 808 = AE (1998) 189b; cf. Massaro (1998), Bond (2011: 28–9). We might compare the patter of the slave-dealer at Hor. *Epist.* 2.2.1–19.

¹¹ On *urbanitas* and the stereotype of the *praeco*, see Barbieri (1987).

¹² On Rome's street noise, see Juv. 3, esp. 235–46. Martial implies that a dimwit can become wealthy if he trains to be a *praeco* (*si duri puer ingeni videtur, | praeconem facias vel architectum*: 5.56.7–8).

¹³ Cic. Pis. 62 & fr. 11 = Asconius 4. Cicero is outraged that a king should be put into the hands of a public crier (*praeconi publico subiceretur*: *Sest.* 57), Martial that a rich *praeco* should be thought a more eligible bachelor than praetors, tribunes, lawyers, and poets (*Epig.* 6.8); Juvenal considers theirs a disgraceful activity (3.33, 7.5–6). There

Cicero jokes that when Piso hears the cockcrow, he thinks his raucous grandfather has come back to life.¹⁴ Petronius' Habinnas has a slave who recites Virgil in the harshest voice Encolpius has ever heard; this resulted from the unorthodox apprenticeship of listening not to conventional educators (grammatici and rhetores) but to street-pedlars (circulatores), a group not sharply distinguishable from auction-crier praecones.¹⁵ This may be a jibe at Nero, who showed off his voice in the theatre by performing and even announcing himself the winner, which Cicero says not even an official praeco would normally do.¹⁶ We hear of *praecones* prospering from the second century BC into the early empire, and they may have profited as a group from the political turmoil of late Republican and early Augustan Rome, when auctions were used to liquidate large estates. One or two were celebrated wits, though in the judgement of the elite,

are unpleasant praecones in Apul. Met. 2.21–3 and 8.24–5 (in which an attempted livestock sale involves mocking and duping the crowd).

¹⁴ *Ubi galli cantum audivit, avum suum revixisse putat; mensam tolli iubet* (Cic. Pis. 68).

¹⁵ *nullus sonus umquam acidior percussit aures meas... 'ego ad circulatores eum mittendo erudibam. itaque parem non habet, sive muliones volet sive circulatores imitari'* (Petron. 68). The muleteer, or rather mule-dealer (cf. Suet. Vesp. 4), implicitly used an equally strident voice in plying his own humble trade. Cicero implies that the activities of praecones and circulatores were not fully distinct. He calls a praeco a 'street-pedlar of auctions' (circulatorem quendam auctionum, Fam. 10.32); conversely, he refers to Calvus Licinius' poem attacking Tigellius, which began with a pretend pedlar's cry of 'Stinking Sardinian Tigellius for sale!', as a 'Hipponax-style *praeconium*' (*Hipponacteo praeconio*, Fam. 7.24; *Sardi Tigelli putidum caput venit*, Porph. Hor. Serm. 1.3.1). Calvus was an orator as well as poet. Horace's Volteius Mena, a *praeco* by profession, sells cheap trinkets (*vilia...scruta*, Epist. 1.7.65), making him also a *scrutarius*.

¹⁶ *victorem autem se ipse pronuntiabat; qua de causa et praeconio ubique contendit* (Suet. Nero 24); cf. Cic. Fam. 5.12.8 (*praecones ludorum gymnicorum, qui, cum ceteris coronas imposuerint victoribus eorumque nomina magna voce pronuntiarint, cum ipsi ante ludorum missionem corona donentur, alium praeconem adhibeant, ne sua voce se ipsi victores esse praedicent*).

somewhat extrovert and lacking in taste or decorum.¹⁷ The same elite prejudices operate in a separate Roman stereotype of annoying prolixity: the barber (*tonsor*). Whereas the wealthy were groomed privately at home by slaves, who could not speak freely, people loitered and gossiped in barbershops: Volteius Mena, the *praeco* whom Horace describes in the *Epistles* (discussed below), is first seen idly cleaning his own nails with a knife under a barber's awning even though he is already shaven.¹⁸ Barbers themselves were thought talkative, if not necessarily loud; their other *praeco*-like traits include plying an ignoble trade outside in the street (even some of those with their own premises worked outside), and in some instances becoming very wealthy, which did nothing to erode elite scorn at the profession.¹⁹ However, the *praeco* appears in Augustan poetry far more frequently than the *tonsor*, as if his attention-grabbing voice and personality intruded more forcefully into the imaginations of contemporary authors. Loudness, in all its senses, is what defines *praecones* as well as those who imitate them.

The scornful attitude behind the negative stereotype of the *praeco* might derive in part from anxiety that low-status skilful speaking might infect an elite society unified by oratory. The Greeks and Romans considered salesmanship and small-time trading vulgar, mainly because it involved deception.²⁰ It is therefore logical that the late Republican conservative elite considered

¹⁷ Goldberg (2005: 144–6). See Wiseman (1971: 72), MacMullen (1974: 72, 140).

¹⁸ Hor. *Epist.* 1.7.49–51.

¹⁹ On Roman barbers, barbershops, and the source material, see Toner ((2015). Some barbers offered hygiene services such as depilation and hangnail trimming which, though not the same as working at funerals and hence near dead bodies, was equally abhorrent to the dignity of the Roman nobility.

²⁰ 'To dream that one's forehead is made of brass, iron, or stone is auspicious only for tax collectors, retail dealers, and others whose lives involve shamelessness. For, to others, it indicates hatred.' (Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 1.23,

political campaigning a distasteful type of begging.²¹ The ‘touting’ of the Roman love elegists is not exactly comparable to the respectable political activity of *petitio*, but a certain Lucius Aelius might make us think otherwise. He was a *praeco*’s son, posthumously known as ‘*Praeconinus*’, who not only taught Varro and Cicero but wrote speeches for members of the elite.²² According to Pliny, the *praeco* father—clearly a state employee—had taken to wearing the broad-stripe toga, normally the uniform of senators.²³ It is tempting to see in Aelius ‘*Praeconinus*’ the prototype used-car salesman transforming into the prototype spin-doctor.

There is dispute over why the Julian law of 45–4 BC disbarred *praecones* from several municipal offices; it is unlikely to have reflected mere distaste for their activities.²⁴ But the public functions of the *praeco* did little or nothing to legitimize the private ones, which probably drew more income and certainly more attention from the elite. The first indications of an

trans. White). Cicero implies that auction-criers hide the faults and exaggerate the value of the goods on sale (*Quid autem tam absurdum quam si domini iussu ita praeco praedicet: ‘domum pestilentem vendo?’*, *Off.* 3.55).

²¹ Tatum (2007).

²² *orationes nobilissimo cuique scribere solebat* (Suet. *Gram.* 3.2).

²³ *quamquam et hoc sero, vulgoque purpura latiore tunicae usos invenimus etiam praecones, sicut patrem L. Aelii Stilonis Praeconini ob id cognominati* (Plin. *HN* 33.29). An inscription that is probably Augustan in date mentions a Cornelius Surus who was both a *praeco* and ‘*magister scribarum poetarum*’, clearly enjoying relatively high social status (More 1975, Panciera 1986).

²⁴ Tab. Heracl. 54 = *CIL* 1.206, with Cic. *Fam.* 6.18. Since the stipulations apply collectively to masters of funeral ceremonies, undertakers, and *praecones*, it probably reflects their involvement in the funeral trade, though other explanations include their status as civil contractors (with the risk of conflict of interest) and their implication in the financial ruin of elite citizens: see Lo Cascio (1975–6), Damon (1997: 197), David (2003), and Bond (2011: 33–4, with citations).

emerging stereotype appear in the late Republic.²⁵ In the mainstream opinion of conservative Romans, for which Cicero is our best source, professional praeconium is a tawdry business that reduces everything to a sale, not least a man's own voice.²⁶ This is how Cicero blackens the name of Sextus Naevius, when suing him on behalf of his ex-partner:²⁷

Gaius Quinctius was the brother of this Publius Quinctius, generally a wise and attentive head of the family. He was less shrewd in one thing only: that he entered into business with Sextus Naevius, a good man, but not well versed in the rules of fair dealing and the duties of a good head of the family. This is not to say that he was unintelligent: Sextus Naevius has never been thought a less-than-witty parasite or an uncultured barker (*praeco*). What is he, then? Since nature gave him nothing better than a voice, and his father left nothing to him besides free birth, he turned his voice to profit, and used his freedom to crack wise without getting into trouble.

The self-promotion that defined the stereotypical praeco has a natural affinity with speaking voice of the elegiac amator. Indeed, the connection between literal and metaphorical self-marketing had already been recognized by Catullus in a humorous epigram that transforms a desire-object from 'goods' into customer:²⁸

²⁵ For a 'sociotextual' portrait of this period drawing attention to many relevant topics, including social status, erotic relationships, and self-promotion, see Stroup (2010).

²⁶ *vocem in quaestum contulit* (Cic. *Quinct.* 11), *vox in praeconio quaestu prostitit* (95).

²⁷ Cic. *Quinct.* 11.

²⁸ *Cum puero bello praeconem qui videt esse | quid credat nisi se vendere discupere?* (Cat. 106). The epigram has often been misunderstood: on the idiom *se vendere*, 'ingratiate oneself', see Bushala (1981).

When a man sees an auction-crier with a pretty boy,

He can only think that the crier is desperately advertizing himself.

The stereotypical *praeco* is a cunning yet charismatic persuader adding charm to his wares—the embarrassing cousin, as it were, of the forensic orator, whose less mannered and more playful style offered a more appealing model for the love-elegist’s persuasive skill.

2. Praeconium in Roman Love-Elegy

The elegiac amator is in the persuasion business.²⁹ Sweet-talk, *blanditiae*, is a tool of his trade, as much as it is for the pimp and prostitute (*leno* and *meretrix*), whom I shall claim to be closely related stereotypes.³⁰ This arguably makes *blanditiae* a subaltern analogue of formal rhetoric, employed by people of both sexes who exert influence by offering not force but pleasure, whether it is physical and sensory, or intellectual and emotive in the form of pride and

²⁹ Stroh (1974) demonstrates the centrality of persuasion and promotion to the genre.

³⁰ Keith (19994: 32) draws the connection between lovers’ talk and elegiac verse as *blanditiae*. The elegiac amator engages in *blandiri* and *blanditiae* at Prop. 1.16.16; Ov. Am. 1.6.16 (*tibi blandior uni*), 8.103 (*lingua iuuet mentemque tegat: blandire noceque*), 2.1.21 (*blanditias elegosque leves, mea tela, resumpsi*), 3.1.46 (*haec est blanditiis ianua laxa meis*); Ars am. 2.527; Rem. 35, 507; cf. Met. 14.18–19, 707. For *blanditiae* as an instrument of prostitutes see e.g. Plaut. Cas. 585–6, Phaedr. 29.1, Sen. Contr. 1.2.5, Apul. Apol. 98. If we take *Tristia* 2.303–4 literally we might imagine ourselves reading the *Ars Amatoria* alongside actual ancient Roman prostitutes, since Ovid claims he wrote it—presumably meaning Book 3—‘for working girls only’ (*solis meretricibus*), whatever they might be.

self-worth.³¹ The pseudo-Virgilian Copa, in describing a hostess and her venue, performs a sample of the sweet-talk that is her specialism.³² In love-elegy, one of the amator's most important tactics is to publicize the value of the puella both to herself and to others, thus promoting himself as both lover and poet. Such publicity occupies the significant, even pivotal, middle ground between the male who desires and competes, and the author who describes and composes. This might be expressed using the Girardian concept of mimetic or triangular desire, with authorial persona and desire-object at two corners, and at the third, the reader as mediator.³³ The elegiac amator, vying with individual rivals for the beloved, assumes that he is gradually communicating his desire to readers, making them into additional rivals. In fact, all of his utterances presume that the reader shares his viewpoint: indeed, armed with generic expectations, the reader already sees the beloved as desirable. Ostentatiously imitating this desire, through promoting self to beloved and beloved to reader, is what fashions the amator persona.

Ovid calls this elegiac activity of publicizing *praeconia* (the singular *praeconium* is always pluralized for metrical reasons) in three key passages, one from the *Amores* and two from the *Ars Amatoria*. In my view his repeated use of the word is quite understandable, since it reveals the salesman as a distinct ingredient of the elegist persona.³⁴ The following passage is especially striking:

³¹ The flattering *praeco* and *leno* confer status on others by offering intellectual pleasure in the form of an advantageous purchase; the forensic orator may flatter, but is generally more authoritative and claims status for himself, by wielding intellectual force in the form of arguments and character-portraits.

³² See Henderson (2002).

³³ Girard (1965: 1–17).

³⁴ *Fallimur, an nostris innotuit illa libellis? | sic erit—ingenio prostitit illa meo. | et merito! quid enim formae praeconia feci? | vendibilis culpa facta puella mea est* (*Amores* 3.12.7–10); *Nec faciem, nec te pigeat laudare*

Am I deceived, or was she made famous by my books?

So be it—my genius is what sold her.

As I deserved! After all, I did advertise her looks (*formae praeconia feci*).

It is my fault that the girl has become marketable.

In this expression of the rivalry that, according to Girard, often arises out of mimetic desire, Ovid uses the language of the sex trade (*innotuit...prostitit...vendibilis*), and in the next line even berates himself for playing Corinna's pimp (*me lenone placet*).³⁵ He goes on to argue that poets are all too adept at convincing the reader even with supernatural myths, which are attractive but fantastical, and declares that he has unthinkingly convinced his readers of Corinna's genuine charms. This gives the pimp-language ironic resonance, not only for love-elegy but potentially for almost all poetry featuring myth, which is reimagined as worthless goods from sweet-talking salesmen. *Amores* 3.17 is about selling poetry books, which metonymize both the 'goods' (the *puella*) and the poet's voice—both of the things that the *praeco* is so notoriously talented at selling.

capillos | *Et teretes digitos exiguumque pedem*: | *Delectant etiam castas praeconia formae*; | *Virginibus curae grataque forma sua est* (*Ars Amatoria* 1.621–4); *Nos facimus placitae late praeconia formae*: | *Nomen habet Nemesis, Cynthia nomen habet*: | *Vesper et Eoae novere Lycorida terrae*: | *Et multi, quae sit nostra Corinna, rogant* (3.535–8).

³⁵ The perceived connection between Ovid's playful authorial persona and his comparatively explicit treatment of sexual themes may explain late antique reports that his works were declaimed in the theatre by women (Fielding 2014).

In two further passages from the Art of Love, a text that introduces even more mercantilism into the elegiac scenario, Ovid praises the object of his desire as a way to further his own ends: to the puella herself in the first case and to his readers in the second. The identical phrase reappears in both cases:

Don't balk at praising her looks, her hair,

Her smooth fingers and slender foot.

Even modest women like having their good looks publicized (*praeconia formae*);

Even inexperienced girls care about, and like, their looks.

We [poets] give wide publicity to the good looks we like (*praeconia formae*):

Nemesis is a famous name, and so is Cynthia.

Both West and Eastern lands know about Lycoris,

and many ask who my Corinna is.

If we set the term *praeconium* in its social and cultural context, and especially in its limited pattern of usage in Roman poetry, we can see that Ovid's adoption of this phrase is a very logical development for the specific cultural moment of Augustus' later reign.

3. Praeconium in Other Contexts

The term *praeconium* ('proclamation', 'touting', 'barking' etc.) has a very restricted distribution pattern in classical Latin, which reflects the accidents of history and can only be used

speculatively, but can shed further light on its relevance to love-elegy.³⁶ It is rare in prose, and poetic attestations are also somewhat limited: Propertius uses it once, Ovid then uses it repeatedly, and it recurs a few times in post-Ovidian epic.³⁷ As mentioned above, the term *praeco* denoted a state employee at public assemblies, and authors mention this perfectly legitimate civic function. Indeed, *praeco* was the Latin equivalent for the Greek word ‘herald’ (κήρυξ), which could include the charismatic crowd-managing performer as well as the mouthpiece of dignitaries, and when used in that sense it lacked negative overtones.³⁸ But by the time of Augustus, the ‘huckster’ stereotype had emerged, meaning that when Propertius and Ovid first begin to mention *praeconium* in verse one might already suspect a subversive effect,

³⁶ The following discussion is necessarily limited by the size of the sample and our uncertainty over the literalism or ‘liveness’ of the *praeco* metaphor in any given instance: Silk (1974: 33–56) provides a full framework for such analyses.

³⁷ ‘*praeconium* is rare in prose (Cic. *or.* 2x, *rhet.* 1x, *ep.* 5x; not in Caes., Liv., Tac.) and absent from the Republican and the other Augustan poets apart from Prop. 3.3.41 (also [Tib.] 3.7.177). In Silver Latin poetry it occurs only at Luc. 1.472, 4.813, Stat. *Theb.* 2.176, Sil. 2.336. Ovid himself employs *praeconium* comparatively often, particularly in his exile poetry: 1 x *Am.*, *Met.*; 2x *Ars*, *Ep.*; 3x *Pont.*; 4x *Tr.* For metrical reasons, *praeconium* occurs in Republican, Augustan, and Silver Latin poetry only in the nominative and accusative plural (*TLL* s.v. 504.17)’ (Gaertner 2005: 123 *ad Ov. Pont.* 1.1.55).

³⁸ E.g. *atque is tamen, cum in Sigeo ad Achillis tumulum astitisset: ‘o fortunate,’ inquit, ‘adulescens, qui tuae virtutis Homerum praeconem inveneris!’* (Cic. *Arch.* 24, cf. *Fam.* 5.12.7). Livy (38.20) explains that it is customary in Greece for a crier to introduce tragic performances ritually. The *praeco*’s crowd-management for Roman comedies was apparently playful (Gilula 1993, Marshall 2006: 30–31), and Apuleius calls the *praeco* at a magistrate’s assembly ‘talkative’ (*praeconis vox garrula*, *Flor.* 9); a *praeco* might even have charmed and cajoled the crowd at funerals, where the impersonator of the deceased sometimes played the role for laughs (see Sumi 2002). The Greek word κήρυξ also denoted the disreputable auction-crier (κήρυττειν, Theophr. *Char.* 6.10) and irritating street-crier (Dio Chrys. 7.123, 34.31).

which Ovid merely extends further by applying it to the elegist's own activities. Propertius employs it in differentiating civic from elegiac values. Calliope tells him not to go off to war, but be a poet instead:³⁹

May it not be your business to sound the charge
on the harsh bugle, or stain Helicon's grove with war.

Sounding 'the charge', more literally 'the battle-signal declaration' (*praeconia classica*), is an act of aural violence implicitly contrasted with the more pleasing sounds of love-poetry. Propertius is indeed supposed to haunt the grove of Helicon, but only in a poetic, not a military sense, and the same applies to making proclamations. When made with the voice and not the bugle, *praeconium* meant public praise or encomium, for example the panegyric of Messalla in a poem ascribed to Tibullus.⁴⁰ Ovid, too, uses *praeconium* in this more literal and traditional sense.⁴¹ But Ovid, as we have seen, also created a new usage for the term *praeconium* to refer to the skill of the love-poet. This development, which reflects his habitual testing of what is politically acceptable, casts an ambiguous light on his three new exilic definitions of the word—all of which occur in pairs that link the *Tristia* with the *Letters from Pontus*. In the first pair, he applies it to the reputation he has created for his wife in the *Tristia* (as he did for Corinna in the

³⁹ *nil tibi sit rauco praeconia classica cornu | flare, nec Aonium tingere Marte nemus* (Prop. 3.3.41–2).

⁴⁰ *non ego sum satis ad tantae praeconia laudis* ([Tib.] 4.1.177 Luck).

⁴¹ Ov. *Met.* 12.573–4 (Nestor of Hercules). In the doubtful *Heroides* it is used slightly differently, to describe the effects of *rumor* (16.141) and *fama* (17.207, cf. *famae...opus*, Ov. *Pont.* 3.1.46).

Amores), up to which she must now live.⁴² In the second pair, he applies it to his poetic accounts of his downfall.⁴³ This is one of many signs that his exile-poetry is an extended inversion of elegiac tropes: he remains in the business of self-promotion and sweet-talking, despite the change of stakes and emotional merchandise. Third but not least, Ovid applies it to his own poetic praises of his imperial patrons Augustus and Germanicus.⁴⁴ At this point there is room for doubt whether *praeconium* is honest proclamation, or the less reliable ‘touting’ of the salesman-poet, as Ovid defined it in his love-poetry. If it is the latter, then Ovid’s adoption of the *praeconium* concept in the exilic poetry fits other, more explicit avowals of humility—which the Augustan trope of *recusatio* (poets refusing to attempt grand epic, declaring themselves suited to a different genre) primes us to second-guess as covert bragging. This is a weighty narrative to rest on so few selected instances of a word, and may combine what Silk has called ‘patent’ and ‘latent’ effects;⁴⁵ but it makes sense of the term’s comparative frequency in Augustan elegiac metre, and coheres with Ovid’s more programmatic uses of the term as discussed above.

4. Horace

Reading Augustan literary culture through the figure of the *praeco* takes us beyond love-elegy to Horace, the other great first-person poet of the Augustan period. The love-elegists

⁴² *quantumcumque tamen praeconia nostra valebunt, | carminibus vives tempus in omne meis* (Ov. Tr. 1.6.35–6); *magna tibi inposita est nostris persona libellis: | coniugis exemplum diceris esse bonae. | hanc cave degeneres, ut sint praeconia nostra | vera; vide Famae quod tuearis opus* (Pont. 3.1.43–6).

⁴³ *subiti perago praeconia casus* (Ov. Tr. 5.1.9–10). Likewise, the gods are said to enjoy Ovid’s lamentations because it proves their power (*talia caelestes fieri praeconia gaudent*, Pont. 1.1.55–6).

⁴⁴ Ov. Tr. 2.1.63–6 (Augustus), Pont. 4.8.45–6 (Germanicus).

⁴⁵ Silk (1974: 63–4).

struggle with the abased-abasing pimp (the female lena and sometimes male leno), who is usually an enemy but sometimes an ally or even a second self.⁴⁶ Horace has an equally rich and conflicted relationship with his own abased-abasing comic stereotype, the urban buffoon-parasite (*scurra*).⁴⁷ Despite their very diverse functions, both pimp and parasite share common ground with the crier: all three survive by catching the ear of their wealthy social superiors, and all three were thought eager to profit through deception.

Recent work on Horace has shown that he casts himself, however ironically, in the role of *scurra* to his wealthy patron Maecenas.⁴⁸ But we might well see an overlap between the stereotypes of the *scurra* and the *praeco*, because both were outspoken jokers. The differences were that *praecones* profited by winning a plurality of ears rather than just one; were not so directly constrained by economic and social dependency; and could openly acknowledge their mercantile motives.⁴⁹ Otherwise, the two figures had much in common. In fact, that of the pimp (*leno*) discussed above might be seen as bridging the other two, through the transition from public advertisement to discreet and private communication once the client is attracted.⁵⁰ One wealthy *praeco*, Quintus Granius (perhaps a kinsman of Aulus Granius?), was a friend of Cicero

⁴⁶ '[T]he role of lena is taken over by Propertius (4.5) and Ovid himself in *Amores* 1.8.40' (Fantham 1993: 32); cf. Myers (1996).

⁴⁷ The standard study of this figure is Corbett (1986).

⁴⁸ For a recent discussion of Horace as *scurra*, see Habinek (2005).

⁴⁹ Cicero's Sextus Naevius is called both a *praeco* and a *scurra* (Quinct. 11); in a fragment of Lucilius, the *scurra* Coelius socialises with the *praeco* Gallonius, both playing games with him and 'playing games with him' (Coelius conlusor Galloni *scurra*, *trigonum* | *cum ludet scius ludet et eludet*, Lucil. 211–12 Warmington). On the two roles in Horace as contiguous, see Oliensis (1998: 164).

⁵⁰ I thank Sebastian Matzner for this triangulation.

remembered both for witty banter and for aiming clever quips at powerful politicians; Cicero laments that by the middle of the first century, not even Roman knights had that kind of freedom.⁵¹ A fragment of Lucilius reports that at least one of Granius's dicta served as content for his own verses; according to Cicero, Lucilius said much about Granius.⁵² Horace, of course, is not even a knight like Lucilius was, and negotiates a sensitive political landscape, mounting a much more diplomatic mode of satiric attack that does not confront real targets. I suggest that *praeconium* is the underlying model for the Lucilian satiric voice, which Horace—in life not just a friend, but a self-proclaimed son of a *praeco*—commutes into the contiguous but less strident tones of the *scurra*. Lucilius' high social rank is undoubtedly what granted him the freedom to make potentially offensive remarks, yet his subject-matter reflects the decidedly low-status milieu of the iambic poets, Old Comedy, and especially Menippean satire. In a post-interneecine Rome where the facetious banter of a Lucilius or Granius was impossible, least of all for Horace, the witty banter and low-status milieu of verse satire was still safe. Horace simply finds indirect and ironic ways to do it, trading stridency for a more self-effacing mode of persuasiveness.

The *praeco* occupies a significant portion of Horace's *scurra* complex, emerging both through his own family background and as a series of background characters. Horace calls his father a *praeco*, which probably means 'auctioneer', as well as a *coactor* or 'auction broker',⁵³ in

⁵¹ *ego memini T. Tincam Placentinum hominem facetissimum cum familiari nostro Q. Granio praecone dicacitate certare* (Cic. *Brut.* 172); *ille L. Crassi, ille M. Antoni voluntatem asperioribus facetiis saepe perstrinxit impune* (*Planc.* 33).

⁵² *conicere in versus dictum praeconis volebam | Grani* (Lucil. *Sat.* fr. 11.411 Marx); [*Granius*] *de quo multa* (Cic. *Brut.* 172).

⁵³ *nec timuit, sibi ne vitio quis verteret, olim | si praeco parvas aut, ut fuit ipse, coactor | mercedes sequerer; neque ego essem questus* (Hor. *Serm.* 1.6.85–7), with Gowers (2012: 239 *ad loc.*)

defiant tones that imply that these trades would, and did, attract the sneers of his enemies. Gowers rightly emphasises that Horace's education and career is not the result of his own pushiness, but that of his *praeco* father.⁵⁴ He thereby casts himself as a benign embodiment of his father's skill in marketing a product and creating added value. Like Lucilius and Cicero before him, Horace criticises the extravagance of the millionaire auctioneer Gallonius;⁵⁵ in the *Ars Poetica*, once again echoing Lucilius, he compares a wealthy poet attracting flatterers to an auction-crier attracting potential buyers.⁵⁶ In *Epistles* 1.7, the role of the *praeco* is profoundly implicated in Horace's own poetic persona. He declares that Maecenas knows the value of the gifts he has bestowed, unlike the man who presses a guest to take pears before mentioning that they will be pig-feed otherwise.⁵⁷ In a second parable, a skinny fox sneaks into a grain-bin and cannot escape once full; Horace says that he is all too grateful to stay fat, and has lavished words of praise on Maecenas, who calls him modest.⁵⁸ In other words, the subtext of the poem is that gifts are not always as valuable as they seem, yet Maecenas and Horace have successfully sold clientship and patronship to one another. Horace then tells the story of a *praeco* called Volteius Mena to illustrate once again the problems that gifts from patrons can cause: this town-mouse

⁵⁴ 'H. makes his father responsible for his upward mobility and any pushiness in the operation' (Gowers 2012: 239 on Hor. *Serm.* 1.6.86).

⁵⁵ Hor. *Serm.* 2.2.46–8. See Damon (1997: 203–4), with references. It is tempting to see 'Gallonius' as a soubriquet alluding to the raucous cockerel (*gallus*), as in Cicero's joke at *Pis.* 68.

⁵⁶ Hor. *Epist.* 419–21. Marx notes the similarity when commenting on Lucil. fr. 1282, in which a trinket-seller (*scrutarius*) deceitfully touts worthless junk.

⁵⁷ This joke is very similar to two in Martial (1.85, 6.66) involving *praecones* who go too far in their efforts to sell, ruining the sale.

⁵⁸ *Saepe verecundum laudasti, rexque paterque | audisti coram nec verbo parcius absens* (*Epist.* 1.7.37–8).

gains a wealthy patron and the means to live in the country, but find that his urban lifestyle suited him better after all (1.7.46–98). In the final poem of a collection in which self-promotion is a recurrent theme, Horace turns to the promotion of his own poetry in a striking way. He bids farewell to his poetry-book in the tones of a pimp or slave-dealer: Epistles 1 will exhibit itself before the crowds, depilated with pumice and despising the modesty of keys and seals, only to regret its decisions when it gets hurt, and be left on the shelf when its satisfied ‘lover’ gets tired.⁵⁹ As I have argued in connection with love-elegy, the *praeco* and the pimp or prostitute are conceptually similar not only because of their mercantilism, but because of their inviting yet wheedling voices. In his communications to patron and readership, Horace reflects on the public performance embodied by the *praeco*, the individual attention embodied by the *scurra*, and the *leno* who transitions from one to the other. In aligning his poetic persona with such inferior figures Horace empowered himself, very like his elegist contemporaries and successors. The *praeco* and *leno* were already features of humorous writing in Latin, including Lucilian verse satire; for Horace, self-described son of a freedman auctioneer, they proved attractive models for the author’s low social status combined with the talent to amuse and flatter (whether directly, or through third parties such as Gallonius or Volteius Mena). The figure of the *scurra* in particular enabled Horace to promote his client-patron friendship (*amicitia*) with Maecenas in an ironized, self-effacing manner. The elegists obtain similar empowerment when casting their persuasiveness as *praeconium*: love-as-salesmanship, like love-as-slavery, claims a subaltern

⁵⁹ *Epist.* 1.20.1–8, esp. 7–8 (*‘quid volui?’ dices, ubi quis te laeserit, et scis | in breve te cogi, cum plenus languet amator*). The phrase *in breve cogi* means both ‘be rolled up’ (of a scroll) and ‘suffer financial hardship’. The classic treatment of Horace’s book/boy (*liber*) is Fraenkel (1957: 356–63).

position that is paradoxically assertive, in that it makes desire explicit. The difference is that slavishness is passive and plaintive, but *praeconium* is active and boastful.

5. Itemized praise of the female body

In the context of erotic verse, the concept of marketing a product coincides with the misogynistic treatment of women as goods or livestock by itemizing their physical features. Importantly, the elegiac *amator* often seeks to banish materialism from the erotic relationship, since it turns *puella* into *meretrix*.⁶⁰ But measuring value by turning sight into words, despite its often dehumanizing and commodifying effect, is an obvious procedure for assessing any aesthetic object whether in praise or blame. In Roman love-poetry a girl's physical charms may be assessed independently of her personhood,⁶¹ a treatment that no right-minded man would invite upon himself.⁶² There are several elegiac examples, especially in Ovid, most obviously *Amores* 1.5.⁶³ Horace's second satire has been convincingly read as an antidote to the

⁶⁰ On gift-giving in Roman elegy, see Coffee (2013), Konstan (2013). Importantly, the disgrace of a male citizen's attraction to a *meretrix* is founded more on material than moral values; as comic plots indicate, gaining her yet keeping money validates the connection.

⁶¹ Horace, declaring he is objectively able to appreciate the charms of a slave-girl, lists them in brief (*bracchia et vultum teretesque suras | integer laudo, Carm. 2.4.21–2*).

⁶² Barrus, who wants girls to examine his face, calves, feet, teeth and hair, is 'sick' (*ut siqui aegrotet quo morbo Barrus, haberi | et cupiat formosus, eat quacumque, puellis | iniciat curam quaerendi singula, quali | sit facie, sura, quali pede, dente, capillo, Hor. Serm. 1.6.30–3*).

⁶³ For commodifications of the female body in Ovid, see *Ov. Am.* 3.3.6–10, *Ars am.* 3.771–88, *Met.* 1.500–2; cf. *Ars am.* 1.252; cf. Sharrock (1991). Ovid of course also uses lists of bodily features as a way to narrate metamorphosis, e.g. *Met.* 5.429–37 (Cyane becomes water), 5.546–8 (Ascalaphus becomes a *bubo*), 11.793–4 (Aesacus becomes a bird). Cf. *Hor. Carm.* 2.20.9–12 (poet becomes swan).

squeamishness of such idealizing portraits which, in Gowers' words, 'homes in directly on the *medium corpus*'.⁶⁴ Horace argues that a woman or boy of low social status is as good as any when it comes to sex, and rejoices that women on sale (i.e. prostitutes) can be judged for a bad leg or an ugly foot and measured by eye.⁶⁵

This is how kings go about buying horses: they inspect them covered,
In case (as often happens) an attractive front,
Supported by a weak foot, takes in the mesmerized buyer,
Because the haunch is fine, the head short and the neck steep.
They are right to do this: you shouldn't examine the best parts of the body
with the eyes of Lynceus, but the bad parts as if
you were blinder than Hypsaea. 'What legs!' 'What arms!' In fact
she is arseless, big-nosed, with a stout middle and big feet.

Itemizing by body-part is how men evaluated livestock (of either gender), as shown in the following portrait of the ideal ox, as quoted by Columella:⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Gowers (2012: 86). See Baldwin (1970); also Clark (1983), with further references.

⁶⁵ Hor. *Serm.* 1.2.86–93. The comparison with women is explicit: *ne crure malo, ne sit pede turpi | metiri possis oculo latus* (102–3).

⁶⁶ *parandi sunt boves novelli, quadrati, grandibus membris, cornibus proceris ac nigrantibus et robustis, fronte lata et crispa, hirtis auribus, oculis et labris nigris, naribus resimis patulisque, cervice longa et torosa, plearibus amplis et paene ad genua promissis, pectore magno, armis vastis, capaci et tamquam inplente utero, lateribus porrectis, lumbis latis* (Silanus, *versio Latina Magonis* fr. 41 Speranza = Colum., *Rust.* 6.1.3).

The oxen you should buy are young and square-set, with large limbs and tall, blackish, sturdy horns. The brow is broad and curly, the ears shaggy, the eyes and lips black, the nostrils snub and wide, the neck long and muscular, the dewlaps full and hanging almost to the knees. The breast is large, the shoulders massive, the belly large and pregnant-looking, the flanks long, the loins broad [etc].

Just as the poets of archaic Greece sometimes applied horse imagery to *hetairai*, Horace intentionally and explicitly moves the description of women's bodies into the territory of commerce.⁶⁷ It is tempting to suppose that in antiquity, as now, *praecones* performed an especially energetic auction chant or 'cattle rattle' at livestock auctions. In Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* (8.24–5), a *praeco* tries to sell Lucius in a lively performance filled with jokes and falsehoods. We might also think of the bride-auctions described by Greek ethnographers, which reflect a much wider commodification of female bodies.⁶⁸ Elegy provides at least one case in which the lover, criticising cosmetic artifice just as vehemently as Horace, addresses the *puella* herself and inverts the argument to reject the mercantile approach to sex. All the same, the praise of female beauty is still an attempt to elicit bodily display, and the male viewer is both admonishing and objectifying the object of his desire.⁶⁹ The merchandizing of female beauty is

⁶⁷ On comparisons of *hetairai* to livestock, see Kurke (1997). For itemized descriptions of the perfect horse, see Varr. *RR* 2.7.4–6, Colum. 6.29.2, Verg. *G.* 3.75–88, *Geoponica* 16.1.

⁶⁸ Herodotus ascribes bride-auctions to the Babylonians (1.196), a tale that reflects Greek rather than Babylonian values: see McNeal (1988). Aristobulus (reported at Strab. 15.1.62) ascribes them to the people of Taxila in modern Pakistan, perhaps misinterpreting the etiquette of marriage contracts through a reading of Herodotus.

⁶⁹ Prop. 1.2; the very different attack on cosmetics as damaging to beauty in Ov. *Am.* 1.14 nonetheless contains praise of the *puella*'s beauty in terms of display.

implicit in *praeconium* as a trope in elegy where, as in Horace, it is mainly about promoting one's own interests.

6. Conclusion

Many contributions to this volume draw attention to the paradox that, within context, inferiority is empowering.⁷⁰ Ovid's explicit uses of the term *praeconium* should be counted among his habitual exposures of elegiac tropes. The *amator* as *praeco* occupies a socially inferior position from which to speak, crossing a boundary of decorum involving both class and genre. Poetic adoptions (or co-options) of *praeco* status arguably reflect an Augustan *Zeitgeist*. They depend on an emergent stereotype of the late republic that is based in turn on a real historical phenomenon of prosperous *praecones*. They might also be seen as a means of tactful self-assertion in times of ongoing political uncertainty. Horatian satire and Roman love-elegy were born together in the thirties BC; linking them with the stereotype of the *praeco* seems to reveal new common ground between them, and may help us to contradistinguish Roman love-elegy against the undeniably formative work of Catullus.

Roman poets occupied a position of privilege in at least three obvious ways: in a heavily stratified society, they were freeborn adult males with social connections in the empire's capital; they were beneficiaries of an expensive private education (like all their readers); and they enjoyed the patronage of wealthy and powerful individuals. These preconditions of authorship underscore all the subaltern poses adopted in self-dramatizing genres such as lyric and satire. In love-elegy, the two most obvious poses are the constrained slave and the suffering soldier, though one might also see a feminine pose in the rejection of certain masculine norms: the

⁷⁰ See the contributions by OOO, OOO, OOO.

amator's impassioned and conflicted outbursts can resemble the soliloquies of dramatic heroines. It is notable that all such poses involve lower rather than higher status, reducing the risk of giving offence, just as Horace does in his various strategies of self-humbling. However, such tropes are not to be read as truly subaltern, any more than Ovid's *Amores* 3.7 is to be read as a true admission of erectile dysfunction. Their inherent appeal is that they are playful, however transgressive, and the possibilities of disavowing decorum in various ways are deliberately explored. The elegiac adoption of the *praeco* persona generally, and the *praeconium* trope specifically, should be seen in this context. It may have had special relevance in Augustan Rome owing to the prominence of individual *praecones*, and of the loud and boastful yet witty and persuasive stereotype. It facilitated a mode of self-assertion for the *amator* that was both frank and disarming, especially by contrast with formal oratory, and brought out the embeddedness of self-promotion—to the desire-object and to the reader—at the core of the elegiac genre.

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