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Reading Catullus 113 as the Vilification of Pompey's Ex-Wife Mucia

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(Received 11 January 2021; accepted 17 February 2021)

Abstract

Written in 55 BCE, *carmen* 113 seemingly uses the first two consulships of Pompey to measure a decline in moral standards, with one unfortunate woman as the yardstick of sexual profligacy. It closes with a focus on marital infidelity. The epigram should be read as a savage attack upon Mucia, the one-time wife of Pompey. This paper affirms her identity by postulating a punning wordplay on Mucia and C(a)ecilia that made this identification clear to the poet's readership. No textual emendation is required. It is also proposed that the observation regarding adultery, no mere aphorism, queried the legitimacy of one or more of Pompey's children.

Keywords: Catullus; Maecilia; Mucia; Pompey; Caesar; adultery

The fifties BCE saw an escalation of public disorder that by the end of 56 and the beginning of 55 had resulted in the paralysis of governmental process.¹ The situation would only deteriorate. Political corruption was – in traditional Roman thinking – coupled with moral degeneration. So it was in Catullus' thought.² For all that the poet was ready to thumb his nose at conventional strictures (5.2; 7.8), he professes outrage. *Quid est, Catulle? quid moraris emori?*³ One epigram (113) seems to me to distil that (righteous) indignation.⁴ It is not as playful as it might first appear.

¹ A convenient narrative is provided by Dio Cass. 39.27–37 (grim reading); cf. Plut. *Cat. Min.* 42.1–7; 43.2–6; *Pomp.* 52.3; 53.2–4; App. *B Civ.* 2.17.64.

² See, e.g., Skinner (2003) 137; Tatum (2007) 337.

³ Catull. 52; cf. 54. On Catullus' attitude to the world of politics, see, e.g., Deroux (1970); Tatum (2007); Konstan (2007) 80–1.

⁴ Tatum (2007) 342, suggesting that in this poem Catullus inscribes 'the coincidence of sexual betrayal and the enormities of 55'. I would take it further. Cf. Skinner (2003) 138–9, observing

Consule Pompeio primum duo, Cinna, solebant
 mecilia(m);⁵ facto consule nunc iterum
 mansuerunt duo, sed creuerunt milia in unum
 singula. fecundum semen adulterio.

Debate has attached to the clause *duo ... solebant mecilia*, not prompted by a conflicted textual tradition but the proliferation of editorial conjecture concerning the word *mecilia*.⁶ Understanding *solebant* to be a euphemistic reference to carnal familiarity and *Mecilia* to be a name, the epigram can be seen to trace one woman's progression over a specific fifteen-year period (70–55 BCE) from two partners to a hyperbolic two thousand.

When Pompey first was consul, Cinna, two used to be accustomed
 to *Mecilia*; now (that he is) elected consul a second time,
 two remain, but each of them a thousand-fold.
 Fecund the seed from adultery.

The content and point of the defamation contained therein has been the subject of less debate than the text itself, perhaps because the comic overstatement did not invite serious contemplation (the hyperbole of line 3 is possibly formulaic),⁷ perhaps because of the unfamiliarity of the *gentilicium*.⁸ In his 1829 edition, Lachmann left *Mecilia* in the text but offered – in his *apparatus criticus* – the tentative suggestion that the name was *Maecilia*,⁹ thus adopting a spelling sufficiently attested in the republican period (and, at the same time, affirming an individual's name as the object of *solebant*). But the woman remained virtually unidentified and prosopographical interest was rarely piqued in the modern reader. The *Maecilii* were respectable, but scarcely of historical significance, and the woman's misdemeanours, however prodigious, were insufficiently specific. The poem seemed garbed with an almost anodyne quality, uncharacteristic of Catullan epigrams.¹⁰

that the epigram's allusion to Pompey's first two consulships frames this period of excrescent misconduct (*my* inelegant words) as 'an age of Pompey'.

⁵ For this textual variation, see the Appendix.

⁶ This is elaborated in the Appendix. The text offered above is that generally agreed to be the text of the now lost archetype of all surviving *mss*, the *Veronensis deperditus*, though I follow the correction (now conventional) of *singulum* in the last verse as made in the *editio Veneta* of 1472. The textual variation (in v.2) between *mecilia* and *meciliā* [sc. *meciliam*] will also be treated in the Appendix.

⁷ Compare the *res gestae* of a certain Euplia of Pompeii: *Euplia hic / cum hominibus bellis / MM* (CIL 4, 2310b [= EDCS-ID: 29300277]); cf. Guzzo and Scarano Ussani (2009) 144; Hunink (2011) no. 538. The twofold excess, however, serves to keep attention on the initial duo – and that was of the essence. The initial two were possibly more closely connected to the closing three words of line 4 than is generally realized. This will be elaborated below.

⁸ Only one *Mecilius* is given a discrete entry in the *Real-Encyclopädie* and his name is now customarily 'adjusted' (to *Maecilia*). Münzer (1931) col. 17, 38–51; cf. Broughton (1951) 1, 31.

⁹ It was hardly an emendation, given the contemporary slippage in orthography and pronunciation (see below), merely a slight 'graphic' adaptation (Fusi [2013] 103, n. 119).

¹⁰ Cf. Lateiner (1977) 25 [= (2007) 275].

Lachmann's quiet intervention, however, took the debate to a new plane. The name *Maecilia* was embedded in many texts (and/or translations),¹¹ and the only debate that continued has revolved around affirmations, rejections, or recreations of the woman's name.¹² A significant shift came in 1849 with Pleitner's proposal that the text read *Mucillam* and that *Mucilla* be understood as a diminutive of *Mucia*. The woman was to be identified as the third wife of Pompey whom the latter divorced in 62 BCE on the grounds – according to the historical tradition – of her *impudicitia*.¹³ The proposal was followed by Schwabe, offering one of the longest discussions of the poem (before, that is, the lengthy analysis by Agnesini).¹⁴ The diminutive, it was suggested, followed the pattern of those found amongst the list of women (Tertulla, Terentilla, Rufilla and Salvia Titisenia) whom Antony jokingly imagined as possible distractions for the young Caesar beyond the arms of Livia, whom he calls in that very context *Drusilla* (Suet. *Aug.* 69.2).¹⁵ If the diminutive emanated from *Mucia*'s own family, it was affectionate (in the sense that Catullus addresses his *sodalis* Veranius as *Veraniolum meum* at 12.17).¹⁶ There was, of course, nothing affectionate in Catullus' assault here, and diminution might serve contempt just as well.¹⁷

The identification brings an extra degree of drama to the epigram and the suggestion has proved understandably popular.¹⁸ *Mucia*, who was, in all likelihood *Lesbia*'s cousin, or perhaps half- (or step-)sister (discussed below), suffered from a reputation tarnished by virulent rumour (at least *after* her divorce from Pompey) and the poem was at any rate framed to diminish

¹¹ The reading *Maeciliam* was followed in a number of editions (e.g., Merrill (1893); Ellis (1904 [note the radically pruned *apparatus vis-à-vis* his 1878 edition]); Kroll (1923); Cazzaniga (1940); Neudling (1955) 111; Mynors (1958, for the OCT); Fordyce (1961); Copley (1964); Michie (1972, *sequens* Mynors); Thomson (1978); Smith (2018); and is now taken as a given by many authorities, see, e.g., Adams (1981) 122; Wiseman (1985) 133–4; Konstan (2007) 77; Tatum (2007) 342.

¹² Cf. Agnesini (2012) 48.

¹³ Pleitner (1849) 22–3. On the divorce, Ascon., p. 20C; Plut. *Pomp.* 42.7 (recording that Pompey never made the grounds public). Cf. Cic. *Att.* 1.12.3; Suet. *Iul.* 50.1–2; Dio Cass. 37.49.3. On *Mucia* more generally, Fluss (1933); Haley (1985) 50–3; Bauman (1992) 78–81.

¹⁴ Schwabe (1862) 211–21. Many scholars have found the emendation attractive: e.g., Rostand and Benoist (1882) 1.330–1 and 2.802–3; Riese (1884); Ellis (1889) 495; Goold (1983), though he refrained from altering the text of the revised Loeb edition; Green (2005), following Pleitner's *Mucillam* in his text and providing 'little *Mucia*' in translation; cf. his commentaries on 268–9 and notes on 299. *Mucilla* was, it was noted, a *hapax* and had strayed somewhat from the received text. It was left to others to massage solutions: cf. Agnesini (2012) 57, citing, *inter alia*, Baehrens (1885) 603 and Friedrich (1908) 547–8.

¹⁵ It is unnecessary to suppose that these were real women, though there has been speculation; see Wardle (2014) 443.

¹⁶ One thinks also of *mea uita Septimille* at 45.13, though one of the anonymous readers judiciously warns against the possible ambiguities in poem 45.

¹⁷ On the derisive element in diminutives, see below, n. 45.

¹⁸ Writing in 1908, Postgate could pronounce that 'no-one now doubts who is the subject of this epigram. It is *Mucia* ... the third wife of Pompey' (p. 260); cf. Herescu (1941–2). Even the redoubtable Münzer (1933b) 450, 35–38 seems to have followed the reading *Mucilla* and favoured the association. Cf. Whigham's (1966) deft allusion to *Mucia* as 'The First Lady [in Pompey's First Consulship]'.

Pompey's name.¹⁹ The poem is firmly and pointedly located; *nunc* in the second line firmly dates the diatribe to 55, the year of Pompey's second consulship.²⁰ The poem opens with his first. This is hardly coincidental – and he is as much the target as is the excessive libido or passivity of 'Mecilia'. Even if he had not been personally associated with the woman, he would bear the shame by association with the degradation that has allegedly occurred within the framework of his *honores*. The other consul (Crassus in both instances) is not named;²¹ the blot is on Pompey's record – and Pompey's alone.²² But the attack could be seen as even more pointed. Morelli sees 'an amusing (*divertente*) contrast' between her former husband's triumphant *cursus honorum* – which the allusion to the iteration of his political positions underlines – and Mecilia's activity, 'which does not duplicate, but multiplies (as in a parallel *cursus*) her lovers'.²³

The gossip, groundless or otherwise, was possibly 'hot'. August/September 54 BCE saw the trial on a charge *de repetundis* of Mucia's next husband, M. Aemilius Scaurus (praet. 56), on which occasion Pompey's lukewarm support for his erstwhile ally (sc. Scaurus) was put down in part to the latter's seeming disregard for Pompey's (implicitly) negative moral judgment regarding the woman when he divorced her.²⁴ Scaurus, on the other hand, was caught wrong-footed on that score, thinking that he had secured politically and socially advantageous *ad finitas* via the marriage (and, apparently, unaware of the offence taken by Pompey).²⁵ Perhaps *carmen* 113 re-ignited sensitivities.²⁶

Müller and Baehrens endorsed the identification with Mucia, but suggested a play on words, proposing that *Moecilla* was a vulgar pronunciation (*forma plebeia*) of Mucilla and that it allowed an allusive aural association

¹⁹ Plut. *Pomp.* 42.7; Suet. *Iul.* 50.1; Zonar. 10.5; Jer. *Adv. Iovinian.* 1.316, going characteristically over the top. Mucia's reputational standing may not have been under a cloud prior to the divorce in 62. See Haley (1985) 51–2, drawing on Cic. *Fam.* 6.2.

²⁰ Epigrams rarely come to us so precisely placed; this noteworthy datum is picked up by Hartz (2007) 162–3. Like all datable Catullan pieces, it belongs to the mid-fifties.

²¹ M. Licinius Crassus is virtually 'effaced': 'This is a significant exclusion in a poem that otherwise foregrounds duality' according to Skinner (2003) 138.

²² It might be suggested that the first two lines were governed by the need for concision, demands of metre or the observation that Pompey was, in both years, the *prior consul*, but it remains difficult to concede to the argument that the consular references are 'inserted purely for dating' (Thomson [1997] 550, guided by the lectures of his former tutor R. G. C. Levens); cf. Marmorale (1957). Konstan (2007) 77 observes, with considerable understatement, that the double-reference to Pompey, if he was not a target, 'renders the reference rather flat'; cf. Schmidt (1985) 66; Tatum (2007) 342; Agnesini (2012) 46.

²³ Morelli (2001) 78; cf. Fusi (2013) 103 n. 119.

²⁴ Ascon., p. 18C (for the date); 19–20 (for Pompey's tepidity). It 'seemed' (*uidebatur*) that '[Scaurus] had given no little offence to Pompey, in that, by estimating Mucia worthy of marriage, he had made light of Pompey's adverse judgment against Mucia when he repudiated her *crimine impudicitiae*.'

²⁵ Ascon., p. 19C, 15–19 (for evidence of Scaurus' miscalculation).

²⁶ There are those who would argue – *against* the identification of M(a)ecilia with Mucia – that the infidelity which allegedly lay behind Pompey's divorce of Mucia was, by 55, 'history'. See, e.g., Fordyce (1961) 400; Syndikus (1987) 134 n. 2; Thomson (1997) 550. Not so. The old wounds were festering.

with *moecha*.²⁷ We may suspect the siren call of earlier emendations (to which I allude in the Appendix). In 1928, Lenchantin suggested *Moeciliam* (allowing the proposed text to slide closer to the one transmitted),²⁸ and these variations have proved popular.²⁹ I believe that the identifications with *Mucia* are correct, but emendations of the text, no matter how attractive or compelling, must leave a question mark hanging over any hypothesis. Solutions that rely on them will, at best, be classified as more or less convincing.³⁰ As much as it is agreed that the text of Catullus might be ‘notoriously corrupt’,³¹ alterations to the text will command only so much allegiance. *Mucilla*, *Moecilla* and *Moecilia*, as allusions to *Mucia*, remain vulnerable to challenge.³² As it stands, variation prevails.³³

But is emendation necessary? The name M(a)ecilia stands, I suggest, as a portmanteau, a wordplay such as Postgate suspected – writing more than a century ago – but not in the strained way that he conjectured. In a defence of the transmitted text’s integrity, Postgate discerned a biting allusion to both *Mucia* and Pompey’s second wife *Aemilia* (the latter name corresponding,

²⁷ Müller (1870) p. xxxviii and Baehrens (1874). See also Baehrens (1876); cf. Baehrens (1885) 602–3. On the slippage between *oe* and *u*, see Allen (1965) 62.

²⁸ Cf. Bardon (1970) who, in that spirit, provided ‘*Moeciliam*’ in the text (and translated ‘*Moecilia*’).

²⁹ Mandruzzato in Traina and Mandruzzato (1997) provides *Moecillam* in his text, though acknowledging the manuscripts have *Mecilia(m)*. He suggests in a note that *Moecilla* was derived from a diminutive of *Mucia*, could be a play on *moecha*, and supposes this was a reference to Pompey’s wife; Nuzzo (2015) offers *Moeciliam* as the textual reading (following Lenchantin), translates ‘*Mecilia*’ (sic) and, in a note, takes the name as a variant of *Mucilla*, the diminutive of *Mucia*. (Lenchantin, by the way, suggested that ‘Catullus evidently adopted the pet name [il *vezzeffiato*] for *Mucia* used by her intimates.’ Presumably, in writing this, he had rejected the association with *moecha*; otherwise, it was a case of ‘with intimates like that, who needed enemies.’)

³⁰ Thus de Verger and Zoltowski (2006) consign Green’s (2005) acceptance of *Mucillam* to the ‘less convincing proposals’; cf. Agnesini (2012) 56–7.

³¹ Nisbet (1978) 92 [= (1995) 76]; cf. Reeve (1980) 179.

³² Some retreat altogether. Gardini (2014) returns to *Mecilia* (and, in an accompanying note [435], comments that the woman is otherwise unknown and that the name itself is uncertain). He is not the first – and *Maecilia* seems preferable to many who wish to avoid more dramatic emendations. After Baehrens’ death, Schulze revised the Teubner text and returned *Maeciliam* in Baehrens (1893).

³³ By way of examples, Casaus (1905) 376–7 offered *Mecilia* in the text and ‘*Mucila(s)*’ as a translation; Lenchantin (1928), as we have seen, supplied *Moeciliam* which he pronounced a diminutive of ‘*Mucia*’ and explained the spelling *Mecilia* as due to the fact that *e* in manuscripts can represent *oe* ‘which occurs sporadically in literary and epigraphical texts’ and *Moecilia* as an idiomatic pronunciation of *Moecilla*; Lafaye (1932) provided *Moecillam* in his text, suggesting (in his lexicon) that this was, according to *l’opinion la plus accréditée aujourd’hui*, ‘*Moecia*’ or *Mucia*, the third wife of Pompey; similarly, D’Arbela (1951) provided *Moecillam* in the text, translated *Mecilla*, and read this as a diminutive of *Moecia* (or *Mucia*), identifying the woman as ‘probably’ *Mucia Pompeii*; likewise, Dolč (1997 [1963]) supplied *Moecillam* in his text (following the authority of Baehrens), provided a relatively thorough apparatus, registering the manuscript tradition and the alternative emendations of Pleitner and Schwabe, and translated ‘*Mecila*’ (in the ‘Index Nominum’, under ‘*Moecilla*’, he enters: ‘*Mecila*, a diminutive that apparently designates *Moecia* or *Mucia*, Pompey’s third wife’); Hartz (2007) 162–3 recognizes the speculation concerning the reading *Mucilla*, and deems the issue unclear; Ceronetti (2019) gives the text as *Maeciliam*, and translates ‘*Mucilla*’.

he emphasised, 'syllable for syllable' with Maecilia), recalling Pompey's callous readiness to engage in the dictator Sulla's marriage politics – and the rather distasteful circumstances in which Pompey became free to marry Mucia.³⁴ No-one, so far as I can see, has been ready to follow Postgate down that particular path, but in his bold attempt to read an allusive meaning into the word M(a)ecilia and reluctance to stray too far from the received text he might have been on the right track. The wordplay that Postgate offered, however, was not compelling and the contextualizing hypothesis stretched.

I would rather suggest that the two interlocked *gentilicia* were Mucia and Caecilia. Mucia Tertia was the daughter of a Mucius Scaevola (Ascon., p. 19C), whom most scholars presume was Q. Scaevola 'the Pontifex' (cos. 95).³⁵ With regard, however, to Mucia's most immediate kinship, there is certainty. Mucia was the 'sister' of the Metellan brothers, Q. Celer (cos. 60) and Q. Nepos (cos. 57),³⁶ being unambiguously referred to as such in a letter to Celer (Cic. *Fam.* 5.2.6: *uestra sorore Mucia*) and at Dio Cass. 37.49.3 (τὴν ὀδελφὴν αὐτοῦ [sc. of Metellus Celer]). The designations could mean that she was a sister (ruled out, it would seem, by the nomenclature), a half-sister or a cousin in the first degree. Perhaps, even a stepsister. (Again, we may pause to register the fact that – given the sons of Appius Claudius Pulcher [cos. 79] accounted themselves *fratres* of the Metelli and one of their sisters was married to Celer – a close degree of cousinage and/or *adfinitas* existed between Mucia and 'Lesbia').³⁷

³⁴ Postgate (1908) 260–2. This was, Postgate believed, a taunting reminder to Pompey of the hapless and helpless Aemilia, Sulla's stepdaughter, already in marriage (and pregnant) to another, when she was – by Sullan fiat – transferred to Pompey; she died in childbirth soon after entering his house (Plut. *Pomp.* 9). As I understand him, Postgate was suggesting that Mucia was a 'replacement-Aemilia', and that Pompey received the comeuppance he deserved in Mucia's infidelity.

³⁵ Presuming she was the daughter: Münzer (1933a); Fluss (1933) 449, 9–11; Syme (1939) 32 n. 2; Badian (2016); Bauman (1992) 78; Tansey (2016) 104; 108 (following Münzer – though see Tansey's caution at 140 n. 575); cf. 116–17. Expressing caution, Marshall (1985) 126: 'Her father is usually taken to be the consul of 98 (*sic*)'; 'she was the daughter of a Mucius Scaevola, presumably the consul of 95.' The cautious would seem to be in the minority – and often reluctant. Wiseman (1971) does not specify the identity of her father.

A statue base from Ephesus (*I Eph.* 630a [inv. No. 3650] = PH 24897; McCabe *Ephesus* 1249) is usually read as honouring Caelia M.f., wife of Qu[intus Mucius] Scaevola. The stone, for some time lost before rediscovery in 1969, no longer allows verification of the original reading of the woman's name and it has been suggested, on slender grounds, that she was a Caecilia M.f., daughter of Metellus Delmaticus (cos. 115), a match more worthy of Mucius Scaevola; Eilers and Milner (1995) 83–4, esp. nn. 47–50; cf. Eilers (2002) 137, 234 [C90]; rejected by Tansey (2016) 117 n. 498 (advancing arguments that do not put paid to the matter). If the Scaevola was cos. 95, and if his wife was a Caecilia who was, *in turn*, the daughter of a Metellus (note the series of suppositions), Mucia was the daughter of a Caecilia. In what follows, I avoid conjecture and deal with 'hard' data.

³⁶ Wiseman (1971) plausibly argues that Q. Celer (cos. 60) and Q. Nepos (cos. 57) were the sons of the Q. Metellus Celer encountered at Cic. *Brut.* 305, possibly *tribunus plebis* in 90 (*RE* 85). Sumner (1973) 132 was not persuaded by Wiseman's argument. I am. Even that genealogical argument aside, the following observations in the text above are uncontentious.

³⁷ This holds true whichever of the *Claudiae* is to be identified with Lesbia. Apuleius (*Apol.* 10.3) reveals that the latter was a Clodia and Catullus 79 indicates that her brother was one of the

In whatever particular familial circumstances Mucia was raised, she probably considered her Metellan brothers to be amongst her closest kin – and the relationship was strong. Modern prosopographers often regard the marriage of Pompey and Mucia as the former's political alliance with the Metelli.³⁸ When Pompey repudiated her in 62, Metellus Celer took it as a personal insult to his sister and to the family, becoming a vigorous opponent of Pompey 'in all things' (Dio Cass. *loc.cit.*).³⁹ Mucia was, then, to all intents and purposes, a Caecilia Metella. Would Catullus' politically aware readership, given the opening cue of Pompey's consulship (*consule Pompeio primum*), have missed the reference to Mucia in the name 'Maecilia'?⁴⁰

Why, laying aside the opportunity for a wordsmith's wit, might Catullus have chosen to disguise Mucia's name, however thinly? It was hardly timidity; poems 11, 29, 57 and 58 demonstrate his readiness to attack the politically powerful or a woman who might have felt entitled to deference.⁴¹ Affecting the high moral ground (however scurrilous his medium), Catullus did not pull punches and his squibs were all the more venomous for his readiness to

Pulchri. Beyond that, we need not speculate here; for a summation of the debate (which will doubtless continue), Hemelrijk (1999) 337 n. 125. For discussions of the relationship between Mucia, the Caecilii Metelli and the Claudii, see Shackleton Bailey (1977) and (1983); Wiseman (1985) 15–18; and Tatum (1999) 33–6. For a close analysis of the evidence and a defence of something closer to Münzer's original reconstruction, see Tansey (2016) 119–40. It can be noted in passing that when Mucia's brother, Q. Metellus Nepos, died (sometime after 54), his will was considered contrary to community expectation because it did not benefit his own family or the Claudii to whom he was bound by the closest links of blood (*Claudiorum ... familia, quam artissimo sanguinis uinculo contingebat*, Val. Max. 9.8.3). The observation of close kinship between Mucia and the Claudiae (and therefore 'Lesbia') is not, of course, novel; see, e.g., Della Corte (1976) 252 n. 6.

³⁸ E.g., Syme (1939) 32 sees the connection between Pompey and the Metelli as prolonged by the marriage to Mucia, 'another woman of that house'; Syme (1986) 255; cf. Gruen (1974) 58, 63; Ward (1977) 11; Bradley (1991) 166–7; Seager (2002) 29; Marshall (2016) 116 n. 24.

³⁹ Cf. Gruen (1974) 93, 130–1.

⁴⁰ I note in passing that Herrmann (1958) recognized a Caecilia here, but that was as part of a hypothesis that identified this woman as the historical identity behind the Canidia of Horace's *Epodes*, for whom Herrmann constructed a colourful career. To my knowledge, this is not a theory that has won converts.

Another earlier observation may be revisited here. Postgate (1908) 260–3, esp. 262–3, whose hypothesis regarding Maecilia was discussed above (note 34) made a case that, at Martial 1.73.2, the vocative *Maeciliane* (to the addressee of that poem) was more compelling than *Caeciliane* (both are attested in the manuscripts of Martial, but *Maeciliane* is certainly the *difficilior lectio*), the point being that the much-cuckolded husband in Martial's epigram was being dubbed a 'Maecilia-man', and that an allusion was being made to Catullus 113 (with which Martial's epigram has some affinity). Howell (1980) 275–6, with 64–5, found that implausible, though Fusi (2013) 100–3 has taken up the cudgels, reminding us that, if Postgate was correct in his supposition that Martial draws inspiration here from Catullus, as Fusi believes Martial to have done (though Fusi is inclined to allow that what Martial read at Catull. 113, 2 was the name 'Maecilia [or Moecilia]'), Martial's text provides a confirmation of the textual transmission of Catullus that is chronologically closer to the time of composition (p. 103 n. 119). *Maeciliane*, by the way, is the reading preferred at Martial 1.73.2 by Shackleton Bailey (1993) 1, 94 and (2006). Cf. note 46 below.

⁴¹ For invective against women more generally, usually as a means of attacking the men with whom they were associated, see Hillard (1989). For references to subsequent discussions, Tatum (2011) 178 n. 26.

name names. His use of metrically equivalent aliases was, in fact, rare.⁴² Catullus' social standing gave him a certain licence – and women, as Wiseman notes, 'were fair game too'. Some women, at least. With regard to this particular epigram, Wiseman (1985) 133–4 (assuming that no major emendation of the text is required but presuming that we are dealing here with an actual Maecilia) remarks that the woman came from 'a family as respectable as [Catullus'] own' – but that she was not on that score immune from his venom. By my understanding of the context, the target was more than a single notch above the poet. If we are dealing here with Mucia Scaevolae f. *quondam uxor Pompeii*, the epigram is instantly transformed – and becomes shocking. She was a woman of 'quality', with a standing that came close to that of her Claudian cousin (or *soror*) 'Lesbia', and it is conceivable that in these circumstances even the audacity of Catullus found some 'cautious covering of tracks', however disingenuous, advisable.⁴³ If so, Catullus steps back only by a fraction; if Mucia regarded herself as one of the Caecilii (and was so regarded by them), here was the most translucent of veils. But it seems equally probable to me that Catullus deliberately took aim in this fashion at her whole family. His targets were multiple.

While a precise parallel for this type of wordplay in Catullus escapes me, it does not seem alien to the times or to contemporary rhetorical practice. The author of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 4.29–34 defines *adnominatio* (*paranomasia*) as a figure in which the resemblance of a given word or name is produced by the change of a sound or letter – in particular, he says (4.29), the alteration, *inter alia*, of a word by the addition, deletion, or switching of letters. (He offers examples.) Of interest here is an example that Cicero (*De or.* 2.256), provides – while discussing *ambigua* – of 'a slight change in spelling' (*paruam uerbi immutationem*) where Cato referred to a Fulvius Nobilior as *mobilior* (*In Fulvium Nobiliorem*, fr. 151 Malc. = fr. 106 Cugusi), thereby replacing the claims to a superior *nobilitas* with, no doubt, the charge of fickleness and/or inconstancy, rather than agility.⁴⁴ And this form of the name (Maecilia) offered the ancillary

⁴² It was generally assumed that pseudonyms of identical metrical value were used to 'protect' the identities of individuals (Apul. *Apol.* 10.3; cf. Pseudo-Acro on Hor. *Sat.* 1.2.64–6: *eodem numero syllabarum commutationem nominum facit*, p. 24 in Keller [1904] where Villius is seen for Annius). *Lesbia* was one such, though Catullus' protective impulses, if such they were, had clearly worn thin by *carmen* 79; cf. Wiseman (1985) 131–2 and n. 7. Sonnenburg (1882) 163–4 pointed out that Clodia, Clodius, and Mamurra are the only three historically known personalities in Catullus' poems for whom pseudonyms are clearly used, whereas Caesar and Pompey and presumably others (like Cinna, the addressee of this poem) are designated by their names. The same topic is addressed in useful detail by Wiseman (1985) 130–7.

⁴³ For the 'cautious covering', see Wiseman (1985) 130–1; cf. Neudling (1955) 111.

⁴⁴ Cf. Wölfflin (1887) 188–93. On Cato's sport, see Sblendorio Cugusi (1982) 134–5, 298–9. Not all authorities endorsed the efficacy of name-play, e.g., Quint. *Inst.* 6.3.53. For wordplay in Catullus and Cicero, Holst (1925); Traina (1972) 3, 99–114 [= (1975) 136–42]; Seager (2007) 26–27 and 37 (on puns); Ferriss (2009); Agnesini (2012) 52–5; Ingleheart (2014). For a possible pun on Caesar's name (at Catull. 64), Konstan (2007) 83 (tentatively). On name puns, though of a very different kind, Hawkins (2014) 570 (and n. 26).

advantage of having the resonance of a diminutive, allowing – despite the familiar tone of affection – a diminution of respect.⁴⁵

Nor is Lachmann's modest emendation (from *Mecilia* to *Maecilia*) strictly necessary.⁴⁶ Varro (*Ling.* 7.96) indicates that the slippage between the *æ* diphthong and *e* was relatively common, and – though clearly audible to Roman ears – slight. It has been characterized as a feature of the Umbrian language, though Varro suggests – more simply – that the shorter syllable was favoured by *rustici*.⁴⁷ More interestingly here, when he illustrates this point, Varro adduces a fragment of Lucilius, who clearly thought that the slippage may be common, but *infra senatoria dignitate*: *Cecilius pretor ne rusticus fiat* (1130 Marx = 5. 232 Warmington), 'Let us not make the bumpkin *Cecilius* pr(a)etor!'. We know that Lucilius made attacks on one of the sons of Macedonicus (cos. 143),⁴⁸ and this item is thought to be an attack on C. Caecilius Metellus Caprarius (cos. 113), whose *cognomen* 'Goat Man', for reasons of which we cannot be sure, might suggest a certain rusticity. The peculiar spelling of the *gentilicium* and similarly countrified rendering of *praetor* further indicate a lack of *urbanitas* on the part of Caprarius or the Metellus whom Lucilius was pillorying.⁴⁹ Has Lucilius picked up on a verbal affectation of the clan and did *Mucia* refer to her brothers as *Cēciliū*?⁵⁰ If so, *Mecilia* may be allowed

⁴⁵ On diminutives in Catullus, see Ronconi (1956) 107–41, who traces innumerable gradations from good-humoured irony to bitter sarcasm, and Leach (2001) 354 on the power of reductive language unleashed in invective. Note in passing the *puellulae* who are the victims of Caesar's voracious sexual appetite at Catull. 57.10. I have elsewhere noted, see Hillard (2019) 314 nn. 49–50, that the language of diminution utilized the vocabulary of childhood and servitude.

⁴⁶ Putting to one side, of course, the recognition of the proper noun (which is essential). It is perhaps apposite to revisit at this point Martial 1.73.2 and its address to M(a)ecilianus rather than Caecilianus (discussed above in note 40); one of the oldest codices of Martial carrying this name (T) has *Meciliane*, not *Maeciliane*.

⁴⁷ Cf. Allen (1965) 60; Ramage (1973) 48. For the Umbrian connection, Lindsay (1963) 42–3 [§ 41].

⁴⁸ Porphyrio, Schol. Hor. *Sat.* 2.1.67 (pp. 123–4 Keller); cf. Hillard and Beness (2012) 820.

⁴⁹ For the identification with Caprarius, Müller (1876) 40; Cichorius (1908) 87–8; 277–8; Ramage (1973) 47–8; Gruen (1992) 287; cf. 286–9 (for the context); Dench (1995) 94; Damon (2018) 245. A son of Q. Metellus Macedonicus (cos. 143) might well have aspirations to the first place among the praetors, as *praetor urbanus*, in which case, the word *rusticus* further plays on the inappropriate expectations of the Metellan candidate. Müller (1876) 40 thought that Lucilius was exercised (or, at least, affected to be) by the fact that this crude and obtuse individual would become the *praetor rusticus* rather than the *praetor urbanus*. For rusticity as the antithesis of *urbanitas*, Quint. *Inst.* 6.3.17. The candidate was apparently successful; in another fragment, he is the praetor-designate and the injunctions are more urgent: 'don't look upon the *rostrum* nor feet of the praetor-designate!' (*ne designati rostrum praetoris pedesque spectes*). The pun is upon the speaker's platform on which he stood and (not the beak but) the snout or muzzle of the praetor-to-be: Nonius 455, 9 [= Lucil. 5. 233–4 Warmington]; cf. Damon (2018) 250 n. 66 for further references. See, in this light, Scipio Aemilianus' gibe about the diminishing intelligence of the Metellan brothers turning on the metaphor of farm animals; Cic. *De or.* 2.267. A verbal stoush between Servilius Glaucia and a Metellus who, it was insinuated by the former, kept his animal pen on the Palatine (*De or.* 2.263) might also be a reference to Caprarius; cf. Morgan (1974) 314–19 (presuming, fairly enough and as do most, that the Metellus was Numidicus, cos. 109).

⁵⁰ It is interesting that when Pseudo-Acro discusses Lucilius' attacks on an (otherwise unnamed) son of Macedonicus (Schol. Hor. *Sat.* 2.1.72), he refers to the latter as *Cecilius Metellus consularis*; cf. Beness and Hillard (2012) 280; Hillard and Beness (2012) 820–1, for text and translation. The Caecilii

to stand (and Catullus seen to have enjoyed an additional exercise of wit at her expense).⁵¹

In either case, I suggest that readers saw a distinct reference to Mucia.

Fecundum semen adulterio

I hope to have shown that there are good reasons for accepting both the manuscript tradition and for identifying the named target of *carm.* 113 as Mucia, one-time wife of Pompey, and – at the time of the poem's composition – the wife of consular aspirant, M. Aemilius Scaurus. But before leaving the subject, I would like to consider the sting in the poem's tail. The epigram is wrapped up with what seems to be a gnomic declaration (*fecundum semen adulterio*), the last word confirming the theme which may have been suspected but which had not yet been technically articulated.⁵² On the face of it, a sententious aphorism that can seemingly stand alone,⁵³ it has produced a rich variety of versions, those adhering more closely to Catullus' text capturing, I believe, the message that the poet wanted to convey.⁵⁴ If we allow that, at one level, the last line served as a resonating adage,⁵⁵ it would be along the lines of 'adultery breeds apace', that is to say, that this moral delinquency had 'gone viral'; it propagated itself, incongruously usurping marriage's role.⁵⁶ Possibly Catullus intended to plant that as the idea first coming to his readers' minds (a reference to the excess underlined in v. 3). Yet on reflection, another thought beckoned. Read as affirming the point of the epigram, the line is pregnant (each of the last three words essential); the poem's theme (marital infidelity rather than licentious promiscuity) is tightly controlled, opening with *consule Pompeio primum* and closing with *adulterio*.

The charge was both gross and oddly specific. Mucia had been married in both 70 and 55 but to two different husbands, firstly (and most importantly) to Pompey from around 80 until 62, and then from sometime before 54 to Scaurus.⁵⁷ A wife's infidelity might cast doubt on the paternity of all children

were proud of their Latin/Praenestine roots: Farney (2007) 43, 49, 62–3, 254–5; cf. van Ooteghem (1967) 18–20. On Lucilius here aping the language habits of his victim, Poccetti (2018) 111; 129.

⁵¹ See here the comments of Dench (1995) 94 on the derision directed at a 'rustic' accent, which she suggests might be a differentiation between the 'urban Roman accent' and other Latin accents in the context of the demographic challenges of the first century. There was also a Roman inclination to highlight Praenestine pride (see preceding note) and deride their dialect, see Dench (1995) 74–6 and Farney (2007) 75. On Catullus' consciousness of rusticity, see, e.g., Watson (1990) and (2012).

⁵² I have ruled out any hypothesis conjecturing a play on the theme of *moecha* or cognates in v. 2 (for which see the Appendix).

⁵³ The verb is understood – though Trappes-Lomax (2007) 294 finds the omission of *est* in the last line 'dubious' and proposes *adulterios* (cf. p. 8 for his discussion of Catullus' prodelision). On the importance of moralistic epilogues, see Peden (1987) 95–104. I am heading in another direction.

⁵⁴ Space precludes a comprehensive survey of the sometimes highly creative interpretations.

⁵⁵ Hartz (2007) 162–3. At the other end of this spectrum, though similarly spying a maxim, Quinn (1970) 452 sees a mock-proverb.

⁵⁶ Cf. Schmidt (1985) 67; Ruiz Sánchez (1996) 2.356.

⁵⁷ Ascon, p. 19, 17–8C. She had a son from that marriage by July 54.

in the household – or so malicious gossip might insinuate (Plut. *Cic.* 26.6).⁵⁸ Mucia was the mother of Pompey's three children, all born within the two decades either side of 70 (*consule Pompeio primum*): the eldest, Gnaeus, in the early 70s; Pompeia and Sextus a good deal later. Was there something more specific underlying Catullus' gibe revolving around Pompey's first consulship? The question of Sextus' birthdate is vexing, the available evidence being contradictory, but one modern hypothesis put his birth in 69/68,⁵⁹ a calculation apt to send shivers down the spine of anyone reading this epigram in that light. Most recent scholarship, however, would be inclined – with good reason – to place the birth later.⁶⁰

I would suggest that, in 55, if readers of Catullus' innuendo drew a sharp breath and reached for their abacus, it was likelier the teenaged Pompeia that sprang uncomfortably to mind. The evidence concerning her birthdate teases, but inferences may converge. In 59, Pompeia was promised to a certain Servilius Caepio though she was betrothed at the time to Faustus Sulla.⁶¹ Faustus had been born c. 85 and was therefore, in 59, in his mid-twenties.⁶² The marriage was not, then, being delayed on Faustus' account; it is likely that Pompeia had been considered too young for marriage before 59. If under twelve, she was born *after* 71 (which is also the earliest appropriate date after Pompey's return from his prolonged campaign against Sertorius). Her engagement may, of course, have been further prolonged; the offer to Caepio does not prove she was *nubile* in 59.⁶³

An item in Plutarch's *Moralia* might be helpful. Upon Pompey's return to Rome from 'the Great Command' (sc. in 62), Pompeia's tutor had her read to her father some lines of Greek, as a display of proficiency (*Quaest. conv.* 3 [= *Mor.* 9.737B]). The incident was remembered because the *didaskalos*' choice of a starting point fell on Homer's *Iliad* 3.428 (Helen's words of disdain to Paris, suggesting that it would have been preferable he had died on the

⁵⁸ On this cross-cultural anxiety, Gardiner (1989) 53; for its formulaic presence in Catullus' world, Catull. 61.214–18.

⁵⁹ Schnaiter's (1938) hypothesis, suggesting an error in the transmission of Appian's text, was rehearsed by Miltner (1952) col. 2214 and Gabba (1970) 238 (textual note on App. *B Civ.* 5.144.598).

⁶⁰ Previous scholarship is cited by Welch (2012) 4–15, 38–9 nn. 61–63, who believes it 'most probable' that Pompeius was born in 'the early sixties' but prefers a date 'closer to 66'; followed by Marshall (2016) 116. A fuller exploration of this question must be left to a later study, see Benes and Hillard, 'The Birthdate of Sextus Pompey' (in preparation).

⁶¹ Plut. *Caes.* 14.4; *Pomp.* 47.6.

⁶² Birthdate: Sumner (1973) 88; Marshall (1987), 99.

⁶³ A complication follows from Suetonius' seeming report (*Iul.* 27.1) that Pompeia was still engaged to Faustus Sulla (*Fausto Sullae destinata*) in the latter half of 54, allowing the supposition that she might have been born 'as late as 68 or 67' (Marshall [1987] 100), though that Suetonian *datum* is open to question and alternative interpretation. Space precludes a full elaboration of the multiple options vying for consideration, including the suggestion that Suetonius was simply wrong when he labelled Pompeia *destinata* at this point (rather than Faustus' wife); Gelzer (1968) 151 n. 1. Suetonius' implicit chronology, offered in a chronologically jumbled narrative (*Iul.* 26–27) might also mislead or have been misled.

battlefield); inopportune, to say the least. The story may well be apocryphal,⁶⁴ but it was predicated on Pompeia being of roughly a certain age. She is described as a *pais* and her level of education suggests to Hemelrijk a child around the age of eight or nine. That brings us back to a birthdate c. 70.⁶⁵ The coincidence remains conjectural but gives pause.

Chronology was not the only specificity in the poem's first line. The *duo* introduced here formed a shockingly exclusive club – or so, I believe, Catullus wanted his readers to think (and it is appropriate to reiterate that we are not dealing here with the disinterested record of the past, but with what was rumoured, or, perhaps even more to the point, with what Catullus wished to *be* rumoured). Pleitner spotted Caesar and Mamurra, the 'abominable pair' of *carm.* 57, *morbosi pariter, gemelli utriusque*, their pathetic qualities (as ascribed by the poet) belying their appetite for adultery.⁶⁶ From the allegation, however, that in 70 only two individuals 'frequented' Mucia, a very particular scenario materialises. One of the two was engaged in a legitimate conjugal exercise; the other, an illicit liaison.⁶⁷ For the latter, ancient testimony supplies a name (and Pleitner had rightly followed that clue); Suetonius reports that Caesar was, at one time during her marriage to Pompey, a paramour of Mucia (*lul.* 50.1), and this is registered as common gossip; *constans opinio est*. Caesar is back in the frame, but in a distinctly contrapositive fashion.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ It was almost too good to be true – and harder to believe if the 'tutor' was the presumably astute grammarian and rhetorician, Aristodemos of Nyssa, who was charged with the education of Pompey's children; Strabo 14.1.48 [650C]; cf. Hemelrijk (1999) 231 n. 22. Perhaps, the *didaskalos* (whoever he was) played a dangerously subversive game in a household from which Mucia, the girl's mother, had just been expelled. Surely too dangerous. It might also be worth remarking that Plutarch did not include the incident in his *Pompey*, though that biography was almost certainly written after the *questiones coniuales*; Jones (1966) 67–9, 72–3 (on the dates of composition) – and though the spirit of the verse was highly apropos to the theme which Plutarch imposed on the *Life* (46.1).

⁶⁵ Hemelrijk (1999) 22, 231–2 nn. 23–24, 236 n. 54. Cf. Rawson (2005) 199 ('probably no more than 9 years old'); with a contradictory note at 248–9 n. 107.

⁶⁶ Pleitner (1849) 23; cf. Schwabe (1862) 212–13, 220–1; Dettmer (1997) 219. The idea is attractive (in one manner of speaking), and it is easy to see why Pleitner was drawn to the hypothesis – though, again, I discern the siren call of earlier emendations, such as *duo ... solebant moechi illi ah* – which, as we have seen, is invalidated once a woman's name is recognized at the beginning of v. 2.

⁶⁷ I note in passing the very different, but diverting, sixteenth-century proposal by Alessandro Guarini Ferrariensis (as cited by Agnesini [2012] 57 n. 49) that here was the *hetaira* Flora, with whom both Pompey and his friend Geminius were familiar.

⁶⁸ This dangerous counterpoising has been noticed by others; see, e.g., Deroux (1970) 615–16; Green (2005) 268–9; Agnesini (2012) 60, 72. Perhaps this is the reason why Catullus' friend Cinna, who was also a friend of Caesar (Plut. *Caes.* 68.2; Val. Max. 9.9.1 [*adfinis Caesaris*]; Dio Cass. 54.50.4), is the addressee. Was Catullus tweaking his friend's nose with regard to the company he chose? As Lindsay Watson emphasised at the symposium, the choice of addressees was not random. It was, however, often cryptic, and I do not propose to extend the discussion here, when I doubt the solution is at hand. On Cinna, Neudling (1955) 78–82; Deroux (1970) 615–16 (putting a rather different spin on Cinna's attitude to Caesar at this particular time); Wiseman (1974) 44–58; and Della Corte (1976) 250–2. Cf. Skinner (2003) 137 on the address, and Agnesini (2012) 56, 61–2, 72 who, likewise, sees Cinna's erudition as the key, in this case, his ability to decode wordplay.

The social world of the elite was a small one. I can discern no significance here in Pompeia's later marriage – no earlier than 45 BCE – to L. Cinna (praet. 44).

Multiple targets of Catullus' venom now emerge, all linked by close ties of political alignment and *adfinitas* (we can admit M. Scaurus and, by association, Mucia's brother Q. Metellus Nepos into this circle);⁶⁹ but it is Pompey's discomfort that Catullus is most likely to have savoured (as I have suggested above) and Pompey who is foregrounded in the poem's opening lines.⁷⁰ The latter's personal feelings can only be guessed, but he was diminished by the allegations of Caesar's liaison with Mucia. He had not published his reasons for divorcing Mucia (*Pomp.* 42.7) and – if infidelity was the reason for the divorce (which is not to be carelessly assumed)⁷¹ – we can understand why; yet he was said to have 'customarily' made reference to Caesar's invasion(s) of his household, with accompanying groans (*Suet. Iul.* 50.2).⁷² Far from exacting retribution (according to this derisory version of events), Pompey had forged a political bond and marriage alliance with the man, making his putative tormentor his father-in-law. This 'fact' was highlighted by those who wished him ill.⁷³

[T]here is no doubt that Pompey was taken to task by the elder and younger Curio, *as well as by many others*, because through a desire for power he had afterwards married the daughter of a man on whose account he divorced a wife who had borne him three children ...

Suet. Iul. 50.1, trans. Rolfe [my italics].

This challenges – as noted earlier – the argument (by some who would dismiss the identification of *Mecilia* with Mucia) that the affair was (at the time Catullus composed this broadside) 'an old story' (or 'a lampoon [that] could hardly hurt Pompey now').⁷⁴ If considered potent in 59, four years after the divorce, we might presume potency in 55. It may, indeed, have been in (or later than) 59 that Mucia's delinquency – in the form that we 'know' it – was 'created'.⁷⁵ The multiple incongruities in the marriage alliance between Caesar and Pompey clearly lay beneath Catullus' coupling of the two as *socer generque* at *carm.* 29.24 (usually dated to late 55 or early 54).⁷⁶ More to the point, we have seen that the allegations of Mucia's liaison(s) were current in 54, and circulating gossip judged them (and Pompey's sensitivity on the subject) to have cost her second husband dearly.⁷⁷

⁶⁹ In the period following the conference at Luca, these ties were as important and as brittle as ever.

⁷⁰ Cf. above nn. 4 and 21.

⁷¹ The divorce could have been based on political considerations; see, e.g., Tatum (1999) 63, 270 n. 13.

⁷² I am cognizant of the warning that the very word ('cuckold') is an anachronism: Treggiari (1991) 311–12 and (2019) 108–9, 112, 292–97. Cf. Beness-Hillard (2016) 90 n. 46. The point is, as Treggiari observes, that someone in Pompey's position ought to have sought justice for the injury done to his household. Cf. Fantham (1991) 275. Pompey did not, markedly following a different path.

⁷³ Cf. Agnesini (2012) 60–1.

⁷⁴ See above, n. 26. See also Skinner (2003) 138.

⁷⁵ Malcovati (1953) 511–12 dated the younger Curio's allegations to 50; Manuwald (2019) 375 n. 1 demurs.

⁷⁶ Fordyce (1961) 159–60; Green (2005) 221.

⁷⁷ See above, nn. 24–26.

Linking this scuttlebutt to the nativity of any particular child of Pompey might seem too adventurous, but the fact remains that the birth of Pompeia possibly fell in 70 or 69.⁷⁸ I would suggest that the apparent aphorism has a close link to the body of the epigram; it was not intended to stand apart.⁷⁹

If it was Catullus' hope to seed doubts about the paternity of Pompey's children, there is no evidence that the idea gained any traction. Nor was the shaming of Mucia ultimately successful.⁸⁰ She lived on to be regarded, particularly as Sextus' mother, as something of a senior stateswoman.⁸¹ And her stature outlived her sons by Pompey – and saved another. We may close with Dio's report (51.2.5) that after Actium, 'Marcus Scaurus, half-brother of Sextus [Pompeius] on his mother's side, had been condemned to death, but was released for the sake of his mother Mucia.'

Acknowledgements. Before presentation to the Catullus in the Treehouse Conference (University of Newcastle, 9/11/2018), this paper had been in local circulation for more than a decade; versions were read to colleagues at Macquarie University and the University of Sydney. I would like to acknowledge in gratitude the remarks made on those occasions and subsequently by Lea Beness, Bob Cowan, Trevor Evans, Edwin Judge, Elizabeth Minchin, Kit Morell, Leah O'Hearn, David Peterson, the late Martin Stone, Patrick Tansey, Lindsay Watson, and Kathryn Welch. Sincere thanks are also owed to the anonymous referees for both specific corrections and valuable suggestions. None of the above should be assumed to be in agreement with my particular arguments.

⁷⁸ Such an insinuation would have been daring – but not beyond Catullan temerity. It has been argued, drawing upon Cicero's surviving speeches, that allegations of bastardy were seemingly beyond the pale: Syme (1960) 323–6; (1980) 424 [= (1984) 1238]; (1986) 18, followed by Edwards (1993) 49–50 (contrasting Attic and Ciceronian oratory); Treggiari (2019) 112–13. Evidence suggests the contrary; such insinuations were *not* beneath late republican aspersion. This has been discussed at greater length elsewhere: see Beness and Hillard (2016) 94–7, 105–6. Plut. *Cic.* 26.6 has already been cited. See also the contemporary gossip that attached to the paternity of Brutus; Affortunati (2004) 50 and Tempest (2017) 102, 278 nn. 107–8, for further references.

Allow me to float one more thought. If Suetonius (*Jul.* 27.1) reliably reports a rumour that Caesar contemplated marrying Pompeia, and if it be entertained that the item belongs to the period more immediately following the conference at Luca, rather than to 54 (where Suetonius' jumbled chronology implicitly places it [see above, n. 63]), the ramifications dazzle – and not only because the father-in-law was to become the son-in-law, and vice versa. Did Catullus discern an enormity well beyond those envisaged by Tatum (above, n. 4)? Could Roman polemic project such a transgression? Yes. See Ascon. 91–92C, quoting Cicero, *In toga candida*, fr. 19 Crawford (an allusion to Catiline wedding the daughter produced by his own adultery).

⁷⁹ As, indeed, was seen by Ruiz Sánchez (1996) 2.356, though with a different argument in mind.

⁸⁰ Space precludes a discussion of the problematic item at Val. Max. 9.1.8 (where the superior manuscripts refer to a certain, otherwise unknown, Munia involved in scandalous behaviour). More adventurously, Agnesini (2012) discerns a Catullan 'Mucia cycle', modest in quantity if not in claims (*un piccolo ciclo di Mucia*), based on his synthetical comparison of *carm.* 94 and 113 and reading *Moeciliam* (which he sees as a clear reference to Mucia, playing on the Greek *μοιχή*) rather than *Mecilia(m)* in v. 2 and introducing *χίλια* in place of the Latin *milia* in v. 3. Again, space does not allow a full engagement with this argument, except to note that it runs counter to my own, for which I hope I have underlined the economy and textual caution.

⁸¹ That also cannot be covered here. For sources, see Fluss (1933) 450, 8–28; for discussion, Bauman (1992) 80–81, 90, 238 n. 2; Welch (2012) 242, 248; Kunst (2016) 204; cf., by way of contrast, the scepticism of Haley (1985) 52–3.

Appendix: *duo ... solebant mecilia*

Some of the earliest modern readers struggled with this clause (presumably because of the unfamiliarity of the word *mecilia* and because *solebant* seems to beg, if not a clearer direct object, an elaborating infinitive); others found it a challenge to their ingenuity. For some, the uncertainty obfuscated the whole poem.⁸²

Uncertainty was not the product of any significant divergences found in the text's transmission, where the one variation of moment between the authoritative manuscripts is whether we have *mecilia* or *meciliā* at the beginning of v. 2 – a divergence that does not affect the argument advanced in this paper. One of our earliest surviving manuscripts, the Germanensis Parisinus 14137 or Codex Sangermanensis (G), dating to 1375, offers a stroke above the *a* (*meciliā*) thus rendering the word an accusative, *meciliam*, the direct object of *solebant*. That cue has been followed in many subsequent editions.⁸³

It is, rather, editorial speculation with regard to the reading of *mecilia* that has muddied the water.⁸⁴ Taking a cue from the last word of the poem (a reference to adultery), a number of variations on *moechus* and *moechor/moechari* (ushering in an infinitive after all) were offered as alternatives to *mecilia*, allowing such interpretations as 'there used to be two adulterers', 'there used to be those two adulterers – shame! (*moechi illi ah*)', 'there were two born in adultery (*moechidii*, playing on the Greek *moichidíos*)', 'there used to be two little adulterers (*moechilli*)' and 'two used to commit adultery (*moechari*).'⁸⁵ The range of occasionally bizarre submissions is worth registering here because, as has been said above, one suspects that variations on the theme had an ongoing effect – even if in some cases subliminally – on hypotheses concerning *mecilia* even after that word was recognized as a name.

The verb *soleo* struck some readers as inadequate. Emendations were suggested (*sedebant* and *molebant* were both proffered), though these suggestions found no traction – and are unnecessary. The verb is 'knowing', but evasive; the sentence appears to pull up short to avoid an indelicate word. Various techniques were available for such a rhetorical manoeuvre, but Catullus eschews such a coy tactic as aposiopesis here – though his sidestep is labelled

⁸² See the captivating remarks by Muret, in a commentary on Catullus printed by the Aldine Press in October 1554, as transmitted by Gaisser (1993) 156.

⁸³ For a more complex *stemma codicum*, see Thomson (1978) 69 and (1997) 93; cf. Butrica (2007) 25–30. Thomson himself helpfully reduces the complexity, allowing us to see that, of the authoritative surviving mss, only the fourteenth-century O (the Codex Oxiensis Canonicus) and G are relevant at this point. It is not impossible that such a *siglum* (the stroke above the *a*), one of the few such abbreviating marks common in literary texts of antiquity (West [1973] 27), was a genuine fossil, in which case G might need to be awarded a certain independent textual authority here.

⁸⁴ Cf. Agnesini (2012) 49–50, supplying a valuable history of earlier readings.

⁸⁵ These and other suggestions will be found in Schwabe (1862) 211; Ellis (1878) 215 (in the apparatus). For an even wider range, see Agnesini (2012) 47 nn. 11–14, 57 n. 54. More to the point, Agnesini (57–9) embraces the possibility of reading *moechilia* here in a most creative way, taking a cue from the fifteenth-century text and commentary of Palladius Fuscus, who cited the suggestion of a certain Ioannes Phosphorus that *chilia* replace *milia* in the third line. I respectfully contest that reading.

so by Lateiner (1977) 25 [= (2007) 275].⁸⁶ There will be no disingenuous affectation that the poet *qua* moralizing critic cannot bring himself to continue; that would run counter to the tone of proclamation being affected, and that proclamatory resonance is very much part of the epigram (as I hope to have shown). Elliptical euphemism is sufficient, allowing the word *solere* to say more than it technically does, the word having long taken on the secondary meaning intended here.⁸⁷ In Plautus' *Cistellaria*, one of the *meretrices* whose dialogue opens the play observes that the women of Sicyon resent them for obvious reasons: *uiris cum suis praedicant nos solere*, 'they declare that we are accustomed (to have our way)/are familiar with their husbands' (39).⁸⁸ Catullus' readership was in no doubt about the carnality embraced by that euphemism of familiarity and routine.

In registering the Plautine verse, Adams acknowledges the Ablative of Association in this context, and notes also the parallel of the *graffito* quoted in note 7. With *duo ... solebant mecilia* in mind (if that is the correct reading of the text), we might ask: did such an ablative require the preposition *cum*? Not necessarily; see Gildersleeve and Lodge (1895) 251–2 [392]. In military phrases, the troops who accompany a commander are put into the *ablatius sociatius* with or without *cum*. The question of whether the first word of line two in our epigram was in the ablative or accusative, important though it is in its own right, is as I have said above not germane to my argument. The meaning is clear.⁸⁹ The prose translation, supplied at the beginning of this article, offers neither more nor less than Catullus chose to write.

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⁸⁶ For the ploy of the dramatically left-unfinished sentence (*praecisio*), *Auct. ad Her.* 4.41.

⁸⁷ On elliptical euphemism, Adams (1982) 202–5.

⁸⁸ On this usage, see Adams (1981) 122, with reference to this very epigram (Catull. 113) and to the line of Plautus cited above. He concludes that 'the idiomatic use of various auxiliaries with an improper sense had some currency in ordinary speech' (128). Adams assumes what is now the prevalent reading of the poem, that *Mecilia* is a proper noun and further transmits it, without argument, as an accusative, presumably following the text of the OCT (*Maecilian*), noting that the use of the accusative with *soleo* possibly had 'a colloquial or slangy flavour'. If we are seeking a rough English equivalent, we could then render these lines as saying that the nameless two 'frequented' *Mecilia*; cf. Whigham 1966 and 1969.

⁸⁹ I particularly thank Lindsay Watson, who remains committed to the latter (i.e., that an accusative is required), for discussions on this matter.

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Cite this article: Hillard T (2021). Reading Catullus 113 as the Vilification of Pompey's Ex-Wife Mucia. *Antichthon* 55, 74–93. <https://doi.org/10.1017/ann.2021.1>