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**Autor:** Cowan, Robert

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## Boring Ipsitilla: Bilingual Wordplay in Catullus 32

By Robert Cowan, Sydney

*Abstract:* The name of the addressee of Catullus 32, whether Ipsit(h)illa, Ipsimilla or Ipsicilla, contains a bilingual wordplay on the Homeric hapax ἴψ, a woodworm which bores through materials just as Catullus' unfulfilled erection does at the end of the poem.

*amabo, mea dulcis Ipsitilla,  
meae deliciae, mei lepores,  
iube ad te ueniam meridiatum.*

...  
*uerum si quid ages, statim iubeto:  
nam pransus iaceo et satur supinus  
pertundo tunicamque palliumque.*

Please, my sweet Ipsitilla,  
my darling, my sweetie,  
tell me to come to you for a "siesta".

...  
But if you'll be busy then, tell me to come straight away:  
for I'm lying, fed and full, on my back,  
and I'm boring through both my tunic and my cloak.  
Catull. 32.1–3, 9–11

The name of Catullus 32's addressee has long been the subject of considerable controversy.<sup>1</sup> This note will not rehearse the complex palaeographical and philological arguments which have been made, let alone make a substantial contribution to the debate other than to support, by proposing that the name includes a bilingual pun, the case that the MS tradition is correct at least about the first three letters.<sup>2</sup> My suggestion would not be affected if we were to read Ipsithilla, Ipsimilla or Ipsicilla instead of Ipsitilla, but it would not be reconcilable with

- 1 Some scholars do not even consider it a name. D.F.S. Thomson, *Catullus, Edited with a Textual and Critical Commentary* (Toronto 1997) *ad loc.*, for instance, prints lower-case *ipsimilla* as an actual diminutive superlative of *ipsa*, rather than a play on such a formation "considering the onus of proof to lie with those who would see a name here". *Contra* W. Kroll (ed.), *C. Valerius Catullus, herausgegeben und erklärt* (5<sup>th</sup> ed. Stuttgart 1968 [1<sup>st</sup> ed. Leipzig 1923]) *ad loc.*: "die Bildungsweise wäre immerhin absonderlich. Es müsste dann ein spezifischer Dirnenname sein." Much of my case for a bilingual pun would still apply to a reading such as Thomson's, though not the proposed parallels with conventional forms of hetaira name.
- 2 *ipsi illa O, ipsi thili G, ipsi thila R.*

more radical emendations such as Septimilla or Iphathylla.<sup>3</sup> The very oddity of the name, whatever it is, invites readers to find a (more-or-less) hidden meaning in it. One such meaning has long been noted, but I wish to propose another which would coexist with it. With any of the four forms of the name beginning *Ips-*, there has been a consensus dating back at least to Bücheler (*ad Petron.* 63), that it is a diminutive of *Ipsa* in the sense of “mistress”, which Gratwick memorably rendered “Miss bossy-wossy”.<sup>4</sup> The combination of the affectionate but condescending diminutive with the servile focalization of an address to “Herself” perfectly encapsulates the paradoxes of the power relationship in a poem where Catullus can, with equal paradox, use imperatives of *iubeo*, commanding Ipsitilla to command him.<sup>5</sup> However, critics have also looked for additional or alternative significance in the name, some toying with the notion of puns on Greek words. Such bilingual wordplay would be entirely in Catullus’ manner, and one need think only of his choice of *lepidus* to render the sound and the associations, but not the lexical meaning, of the Callimachean λεπτός/λεπτολέος, the way in which Arrius’ overaspirating pronunciation of the Ionian sea at 84.12 renders it “snowy” (*Hionios* ~ χιονέους), or the play on *Eros* (“Masters”) at 68.76 and ἔρως (picking up *amore* in line 73).<sup>6</sup> Fink’s emendation of the addressee’s name to Iphathylla, argued with palaeographical rigour, leads to his suggestion that, by transposing the central two syllables, the contextually appropriate name Ithyphalla can be produced.<sup>7</sup> This is attractive and ingenious, but perhaps a little too much so, and parallels for such a syllabic anaclysis would be needed to support it. More persuasive is Gratwick’s 1967 suggestion (which he recapitulated but recanted in 1991) that Ipsithilla might suggest the Greek ψίθιος, a kind of vine, appropriately enough for the sympotic associations of courtesans.<sup>8</sup> I also propose a bilingual

- 3 Septimilla: L. Tromaras, “Catullus 32.1”, *Hellenica* 31 (1979) 332–341; Iphathylla: R.O. Fink, “Catullus, *Carmen* 32”, *CW* 76 (1983) 292–294. Numerous other conjectures have, of course, been made (a useful list in A.S. Gratwick, “Catullus XXXII”, *CQ* 41 (1991) 547–551, at 547 n. 1). To avoid the tedious repetition of ‘vel sim.’ after every reference to the addressee of poem 32, I shall refer to her by what can fairly be called the modern vulgate, Ipsitilla, without in any way implying my preference for that form over Ipsicilla, Ipsimilla or Ipsithilla.
- 4 Gratwick (n. 3) 332. See J. Ingleheart, “Ovid’s *scripta puella*: Perilla as Poetic and Political Fiction in *Tristia* 3.7”, *CQ* 62 (2012) 227–241, at 230 n. 20 for a possible Ovidian creative comment on Catullus’ formulation.
- 5 H.P. Syndikus, *Catull. Eine Interpretation. Erster Teil: Die kleinen Gedichte (1–60)* (Darmstadt 1984) 191 interprets the tone as one of conventional playfulness: “Die gespielte Unterwürfigkeit des auf den Wink seiner ‘Herrin’ wartenden Liebhabers paßt so ausgezeichnet zu den Schmeicheleien des Beginns.” Nevertheless it is possible, and perhaps preferable, to detect a little more seriousness in the powerplay of Catullus’ sexual manoeuvring.
- 6 *lepidus*: B. Latta, “Zu Catullus *Carmen* 1”, *MH* 29 (1972) 201–213, T.P. Wiseman, *Clio’s Cosmetics: Three Studies in Greco-Roman Literature* (Leicester 1979) 169–170. *Hionios*: E. Harrison, “Catullus, LXXXIV”, *CR* 29 (1915) 198–199. *Eros*: R. Hunter, *The Shadow of Callimachus: Studies in the Reception of Hellenistic Poetry at Rome* (Cambridge 2006) 107 n. 21.
- 7 Fink (n. 3).
- 8 A.S. Gratwick, “Ipsithilla: A Vulgar Name. Catullus, xxxii”, *Glotta* 44 (1967) 174–176, at 176; id. (n. 3) 548 n. 2.

wordplay, but one which does not necessitate the addition of an extraneous I at the beginning of the name, and which does not evoke the general and unstated sympotic resonances of the vine, but rather links with the specific and memorable image at the end of the poem where the sexually-frustrated Catullus “bores through” (*pertundo*) his tunic and cloak. Indeed the activation of the pun in the last line could even be taken as a sort of proto-Martialic *Aufschluss* satisfying the *Erwartung* set up by the addressee’s enigmatic name.<sup>9</sup> The wordplay I suggest is on a creature which, like Catullus’ erect penis, bores through materials: the woodworm, or ῥψ.<sup>10</sup>

Before looking at the ῥψ itself in a little more detail, it is worth establishing clearly that the final image of poem 32 is indeed one of “boring” as opposed to some of the other senses which *pertundo* has been thought to have. Unlike the simple verb *tundo* and its other compounds such as *contundo*, *obtundo* and *retundo*, *pertundo* does not seem to carry connotations of beating or striking and, *pace* Heath, is not really “a violent word meaning ‘to strike through’.”<sup>11</sup> It is true that, as Heath notes, Ennius uses it to describe a lance piercing a side with a strong hand.<sup>12</sup> However, that is its *only* extant use in a martial epic context, so that it seems probable either that this was an early sense which died out in the second century BCE (though the evidence of Cato and Plautus tells against this) or that Ennius is extending its usual sense, perhaps even with a suggestion of metaphor.<sup>13</sup> It is by no means impossible that a trace of Ennius’ usage would fall on the ear of some readers of Catullus 32, but it seems unlikely that the force of a (perhaps unique) metaphor would be predominant in such an ostensibly literal usage, and one where a quite different metaphor is implied. Many scholars have made the connection with the goddess of defloration, Pertunda, whose existence is attested in three very similar passages of Arnobius, Tertullian and Augustine, and Skinner’s unpacking of the implications is particularly attractive and amusing: “Catullus’ last line suggests the image of an eager bridegroom lying on the connubial couch. Lacking a virgin, he must penetrate whatever is available.”<sup>14</sup> However, there is something to be said for Rosivach’s skepticism as to whether Pertunda was in fact known outside a small private cult, even if one

9 The terms are Lessing’s. For discussion, see J. P. Sullivan, *Martial: The Unexpected Classic* (Cambridge 1991) 223–224.

10 On the ῥψ, see L. Gil Fernández, *Nombres de insectos en Griego Antiguo* (Madrid 1959) 116–117, M. Davies and J. Kathirithamby, *Greek Insects* (London 1986) 97 and, on “borers of wood” more generally, 96–99.

11 J.R. Heath, “The Supine Hero in Catullus 32”, *CJ* 32 (1986) 28–36, at 30.

12 *ingenio forti dextra latus pertudit hasta*, *Enn. Ann.* 410 Skutsch.

13 O. Skutsch (ed.), *The Annals of Q. Ennius* (Oxford 1985) *ad loc.* is oddly silent on the unusual use of *pertundo*, though he does note the difficulty of committing suicide with a *hasta* (assuming *ingenio* is correct and the fragment refers to King Epulo’s suicide). Perhaps *pertundo* reflects an unorthodox use of the *hasta* in circumstances where a conventional thrust or throw is impossible.

14 Tert. *Nat.* 2.11.12; Arn. *Nat.* 4.7, 4.11; Aug. *CD* 6.9; M. Skinner, “*pertundo tunicamque palliamque*”, *CW* 73 (1980) 306–307, at 307.

could be confident that Arnobius and the others were citing Varro rather than the mischievous inventions of earlier Christian polemicists.<sup>15</sup>

Rosivach's own suggestion, based on the way in which Catullus foregrounds the Greekness of the situation by his reference to the *pallia*, is that the reader is invited to translate, not the overall sense of the compound *pertundo*, but that of its prefix and root separately, *per* + *tundo* = *διὰ* + *κροτέω* = *διακροτέω*, which has the sense of “gang-rape” at Euripides *Cyclops* 180. This is ingenious and attractive, but not ultimately convincing. The uniqueness of this instance of a sexual sense of *διακροτέω* and the extreme rarity of the word in any sense are not insuperable objections, though they certainly do not help the case.<sup>16</sup> Far more problematic is the fact that the most common usage of *pertundo* makes reasonable sense in the literal context of what one might conceivably do to a piece of fabric (albeit not usually with an erect penis). While, for example, the very novelty of the Horatian coinage *recantatis* at *Carm.* 1.16.27 is likely to prompt the reader, aided by some Stesichorean hints elsewhere in the ode, to analyse it into *re* + *canto* = *πάλιν* + *αἰείδω/αἰοιδιάω* and hence recognize it as a calque on *παλινφδέω*, there is no such stimulus in the case of an existing and even fairly common word being employed (on one level) within its usual semantic range. If there is no oddity, the reader is less inclined to look for an elaborate solution to a (non-)enigma, so that the use of the (in itself common) word *pallia* hardly seems enough to drive her into the complex operation of breaking up, translating into Greek, reconstituting and giving a sexual meaning to the word which, for example, Plautus' Ballio uses of the cutpurses whom he must be wary do not “bore a hole in” his moneybag.<sup>17</sup>

The overwhelmingly dominant sense of *pertundo* in Latin is that of creating a small hole, generally by slow, laborious and/or careful means rather than a forceful thrust (contrary to what one might expect from the combination of prefix and simple verb). This meaning is well-attested in 2<sup>nd</sup>-century BCE Latin, with the Elder Cato instructing his ideal farmer to bore holes in all manner of agricultural implements from the handle of an oil mill (*Agr.* 21.1) to the pot in which a fruit tree is to be planted out (52.1), while in his description of grafting (41.3), as in a fragment of Plautus' *Astraba* (fr. 6), the nature of the action is made even clearer, since it is to be carried out with an auger (*terebra*). Contemporary with Catullus, Lucretius similarly connects the verb with *terebrare* and also *perforare* (5.1268), and even when he extends the image towards metaphor, it is applied to the slow – auger-like rather than spear-like – erosion of rock by dripping water

15 V.J. Rosivach, “Sources of Some Errors in Catullan Commentaries”, *TAPhA* 108 (1978) 203–216, at 207. J.N. Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary* (London 1982) 148 succinctly adds a skeptical “allegedly” to his reference to her existence.

16 The only other pre-Catullan extant instance is Pl. *Cra.* 421c, where by a strange but irrelevant coincidence it means “resolve a word into constituent elements”. Even after Catullus, it only occurs once before the fourth century CE, at Plu. *Mor.* 2.304b.

17 *i, puere, prae; ne quisquam pertundat cruminam cautiost.* Plaut. *Pseud.* 170.

(4.1286–1287). We have already noted in the example from *Pseudolus* how the boring can also be enacted on fabrics as well as harder materials, and it is perhaps worth remembering that Ballio was Roscius' signature role, evidence that the play and its use of *pertundo* could be heard in Rome in the late Republic. Most importantly for our purposes, it is used – albeit only once and long after Catullus – of the actions of grubs, in this case, bookworms, when Juvenal ironically tells the naïve poet who looks for patronage from any source other than the emperor that he might as well “lay aside his little books and bore through them with bookworms” (*positos tineae pertunde libellos*.726). This usage is paralleled in Greek where, although the action of boring insects is often conceptualized as eating (as, for example, in the *Odyssey*), Theophrastus uses τετραίνω to describe what is done to wood by another woodworm, the θρίψ and the larvae of the fig-eating beetle, the κερύστης (*HP* 5.4.5).

Although we have been skeptical about the shadowy figure of the goddess Pertunda, there remains one other instance where *pertundo* may have an erotic sense. Housman proposed such a reading, with Edwardian euphemism, of Lucilius fr. 1071 Marx: *nemo istum uentrem pertundet*. (“No one will bore into that belly.”)<sup>18</sup> The lack of context makes it impossible to be certain, but *uenter*, which often means “womb”, could easily stand for “vagina” by an *a fortiori* application of Adams' principle that “the sexual organs may be referred to by the name of a nearby part of no sexual significance”, since the womb has more sexual significance than, say, the bladder.<sup>19</sup> Indeed we might even take the line as a boastfully hyperbolic declaration about the range of the penetrating penis. Nevertheless the uniqueness, obliqueness and uncertainty of *pertundo*'s erotic usage here strongly suggests that it remained a live metaphor which strongly evoked the parallelism between vaginal penetration and drilling into wood, as opposed to having the primary erotic sense which the goddess Pertunda might suggest. This is paralleled, if not necessarily corroborated, by the use of τετραίνω in Greek, which is always used in double entendres rather than as a metaphor, and in contexts which put strong emphasis on the “literal” sense.<sup>20</sup> Probably the most interesting example is in *Thesmophoriazousae*, when the Scythian Archer ironically suggests (in his pigeon-Greek) that, if Euripides wants to bugger the old man so much, he should “bore through the plank [to which Mnesilochus is bound] and bugger him” (τὴ σανίδα τρήσας ἐξόπιστο πρόκτισον. *Ar. Th.* 1124). Here the boring is not strictly even a double-entendre or metaphor, but rather

18 “It appears to me that the subject of conversation is some Brimo or Brynhild, whose indomitable virginity is vaunted by one of the speakers,” A.E. Housman, “Luciliana (continued)” *CQ* 1 (1907) 148–159, at 156.

19 Adams (n. 15) 91–93.

20 J. Henderson, *The Maculate Muse: Obscene Language in Attic Comedy* (Oxford 1991 [1<sup>st</sup> ed. Yale 1975]) 141–142. The example from *Lys.* 680–681 is not entirely convincing and, like some other passages cited in *Maculate Muse*, is not treated as erotic in Henderson's Oxford 1987 commentary on the play.

a necessary preliminary to penetration, though it of course has the strong force of being a symbolically parallel action. In both Latin and Greek examples, then, “boring” is a live metaphor which forces the reader (or spectator) to visualize any penetration in terms of its similarity to an act of drilling. It is thus quite clear that Catullus is conceptualized, not as thrusting a weapon through, deflowering or gang-raping his tunic and cloak, but rather as boring through it as one would with a *terebra* and, by extension, as a woodworm might. In the frustrating absence of “Little Woodworm”, Catullus has to do the boring himself.

Catullus may act like a woodworm, but is that enough for us to detect one in Ipsitilla’s name? One of the main objections to seeing a play on ἵψ in Ipsitilla is the word’s rarity. It is a hapax at *Od.* 21.395, when the disguised Odysseus inspects his bow before the contest “in case woodworms should have eaten the horns while its lord was away” (μη̄ κέρα ἵπες ἔδοιεν ἀποιχομένοιο ἄνακτος) and the only other occurrences earlier than Catullus are four mentions in the technical writings of Theophrastus.<sup>21</sup> After Catullus, there is an interesting reference in Strabo (13.1.64), to which we shall return, and then the word appears more or less exclusively in lexicographical and other grammatical contexts, generally being used only to be defined. It may thus be questioned whether such a word would be familiar enough even to the most learned of Catullus’ readers for them to pick up such an oblique wordplay. However, the word’s very rarity, and in particular its status as a Homeric hapax, might paradoxically support the case for Catullus’ use of it. The importance of Homeric hapaxes in Alexandrian scholarship and their creative use in Alexandrian poetry is well established, and there is some evidence for a comparable interest among Alexandrianizing poets at Rome.<sup>22</sup> While the general sense of ἵψ is hardly as obscure or controversial as some of the hapaxes which were the subject of heated and creative debate, there are some indications of uncertainty about its precise meaning and an anxiety to differentiate it from other boring insects. It is clear from the way in which so many of the lexicographers seem to define it that both their interest in and their knowledge of the ἵψ is entirely based on what can be deduced from the *Odyssey* itself. When Ammonius asserts that “ἵπες is the name of tiny creatures which eat through horns” (ἵπες μὲν γὰρ λέγονται θηρίδια τὰ διαβρωτικὰ τῶν κεράτων· *Diff.* 244 s.v. ἵπες), it is conceivable that he is using extra-Homeric sources, though it is notable that, unlike Herodian the grammarian (Περὶ παθῶν *GG* 3.2 p.185)

21 *Lap.* 49.6, *HP* 8.10.5, *CP* 3.22.5.

22 Alexandria: A. Rengakos, “Homerische Wörter bei Kallimachos”, *ZPE* 94 (1992) 21–47, P. Kyriakou, *Homeric hapax legomena in the Argonautica of Apollonius Rhodius: a Literary Study* (Stuttgart 1995), E. Sistakou, “Glossing Homer: Homeric Exegesis in Early Third Century Epigram”, in P. Bing & J. S. Bruss (edd.) *Brill’s Companion to Hellenistic Epigram Down to Philip* (Leiden 2007) 391–408; Rome: J. Wills, “*Scyphus*, a Homeric hapax in Virgil”, *AJPh* 108 (1987) 455–457, R. Cowan, “Passing over Cephisos’ grandson: literal *praeteritio* and the rhetoric of obscurity in Ovid *Met.* 7.350–93”, *Ramus* 40 (2011) 146–167, at 159 (on *véποδες* at *Od.* 4.404 and *nepotis* at *Ov. Met.* 7.388).

and Hesychius (s.v. ἵπες) he does not include the additional information, already attested by Theophrastus (*HP* 8.10.5), that they also eat wood. However, when Apollonius the sophist in his *Homeric Lexicon* states that it is “a creature which is destructive of bows” (θηρίον τι λυμαντικὸν τῶν τόξων, *Lex.* s.v. ἵπες), it is hard to credit him with any knowledge of the creatures beyond what can simply be extrapolated from that single line of *Odyssey* 21. Several of the later authors who mention the ἵψ are also very concerned to differentiate it from other boring insects, particularly the σής, the θρίψ, the ἕξι (mentioned in Alcman, fr. 93 *PMG*) and the κίς.<sup>23</sup> This is precisely the sort of scholarly interest (possibly reflecting scholarly controversy) which might well draw a particular Homeric hapax to the attention of a *doctus poeta* like Catullus, and encourage him to use it creatively in his poetry.<sup>24</sup>

This brings us back to the passage of Strabo mentioned earlier, and a possibility which it must be admitted is based on total, but not implausible, speculation. As part of a discussion of Chryse, a mention of Sminthian Apollo prompts a brief excursus on heroic (and divine) epithets derived from unheroically small creatures (13.1.64):

παραμυθοῦνται δὲ τὴν ἀπὸ μικρῶν ἐπίκλησιν τοιούτοις τισί· καὶ γὰρ ἀπὸ τῶν παρνόπων, οὓς οἱ Οἰταῖοι κόρνοπας λέγουσι, κορνοπίωνα τιμᾶσθαι παρ’ ἐκείνοις Ἡρακλέα ἀπαλλαγῆς ἀκρίδων χάριν· ἰποκτόνον δὲ παρ’ Ἐρυθραίοις τοῖς τὸν Μίμαντα οἰκοῦσιν, ὅτι φθαρτικὸς τῶν ἀμπελοφάγων ἰπῶν.

They justify the formation of epithets from small animals with some examples like these: for it is from locusts, which the Oetaeans call *kornopes*, that Heracles is honoured among them as *Kornopion* for his deliverance of them from locusts; he is called *Ipoktonos* among the Erythraeans who inhabit Mimas, because he was the destroyer of the vine-eating *ipes*.

At the very least we have evidence here that the ἵψ had a life outside a single line of Homer and the technical works of Theophrastus, and it is safe to assume that Strabo’s sources date back considerably earlier, perhaps to the Hellenistic era (or beyond). More speculatively, the obscure aetiology of an equally obscure cult title for Heracles is exactly the sort of subject-matter which would appeal to an Alexandrian scholar and even an Alexandrian scholar-poet. Moreover, the paradoxical heroic victory over tiny animals has a very strong flavour of Alexandrian, and especially Callimachean, reinvention of the nature of heroic poetry. Though it is not a precise parallel, it is hard not to think of the *Victoria Berenices* which opened *Aetia* 3, and the setting of Molorcus’ heroic victory over the mice

23 Ptol. *Gramm. Diff.* 1 74, σ 144, Ammon. *Diff.* 244.

24 For Catullus’ learned and scholarly use of Homer (though not hapaxes), see J.E.G. Zetzel, “A Homeric reminiscence in Catullus”, *AJPh* 99 (1978) 332–333, A. Pardini, “A Homeric Formula in Catullus (c. 51.11–12 *gemina teguntur lumina nocte*)”, *TAPhA* 131 (2001) 109–118.



against Heracles' over the Nemean lion.<sup>25</sup> There is no evidence, but many aspects of the story of Heracles and the ἵπτεος of Mimas, both its obscure aetiology and its miniaturization of epic themes would make it far from surprising if it appealed to a Hellenistic scholar and even a scholar poet. I would not go so far as to posit some kind of direct allusion by Catullus to a hypothetical Heracles Ipoktonos episode in some lost sub-Callimachean aetiological elegy, but if the creature itself and its name had the cachet of a place in Alexandrian poetry, that would increase the likelihood that Catullus would be familiar enough with it to evoke it, and his readers to recognize it.

As a final point, it must be said that the relationship of Ipsitilla (vel sim.) to ἴψ might not be simply that of paronomasia.<sup>26</sup> The hetaira names attested in comedy (directly or through Lucian and Athenaeus), vases, inscriptions and a range of other literary and non-literary sources are frequently derived from those of animals, and are also often diminutives.<sup>27</sup> Examples of diminutive animals include Ἀηδόνιον ("Little Nightingale"), Βοίδιον ("Little Ox"), Χελιδόνιον ("Little Swallow"), Ἐλάφιον ("Little Deer"), and Μοσχάριον ("Little Calf"). It will be noticed that not all of the animals used are the most obviously endearing (or even, for the more submissive client, exciting, like Λεόντιον, "Little Lion", or Τίγρις, "Tiger"). This also applies to the subset of names which, significantly for our purposes, are derived from insects. The sweetness of honey easily accounts for Μέλισσα ("Bee") but no such obvious association can explain the choice of Μυῖα ("Fly"). Most intriguing of all is the use of a type of woodworm itself, Τερεθρόν, as a hetaira name.<sup>28</sup> Schneider designates it a "Place-name" ("Ortsname"), presumably referring to the Greek name for modern Basra (Strab. 16.3.2, Ptol. 5.19.5), which would certainly fit another common pattern of hetaira names such as Megara and Olympia. However, when we consider the equal oddity of Μυῖα as

25 Callim. *Aet.* fr. 54c Harder = SH 259 = 177 Pfeiffer. See A. Harder, *Callimachus, Aetia: Introduction, Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Oxford 2012) *ad loc.* and M. Fantuzzi and R. Hunter, *Tradition and Innovation in Hellenistic Poetry* (Cambridge 2004) 85 for discussion and further bibliography.

26 Cf. Gratwick's *Ipsithilla* from ψίθιος, which I characterized above as wordplay, but could also be taken as etymology (two categories which frequently overlap). This final point assumes that Ipsitilla is a meretrix, but much of the force of the pun would still apply if she were an adulterous matrona.

27 There is an extensive list, from which I have drawn my examples, in K. Schneider, "Hetairai", *RE* 8.1351.30–1372.29, at 1362.35–1371.29. Schneider draws his data from (and directs the reader for further details to) F. Bechtel, *Die attischen Frauennamen nach ihrem Systeme dargestellt* (Göttingen 1902), K. Schmidt, "Die Griechischen Personennamen bei Plautus I, II & III", *Hermes* 37 (1902) 173–211, 353–390, 608–626, W. Pape and G. Benseler, *Wörterbuch der griechischen Eigennamen*, (Braunschweig 1884).

28 It is also worth noting that the boy-musician who accompanies Euripides (disguised as a procuress) and the hetaira Elaphion at the end of *Thesmophoriazousae* is called Terephon. C. Austin and S.D. Olson (edd.), *Aristophanes, Thesmophoriazousae* (Oxford 2004) *ad* 1175 take it as a *redenden Namen*, which "alludes to the elaborate character of the boy's music, which resembles the intricate patterns left in wood by boring insects".

a name, it is at least worth allowing for the possibility that this courtesan went by the *nom de lit* of “Woodworm”. In general, it would seem safe to assume that, in the case of insect hetaira names, the tone of endearment which the diminutive form contributes is already inherent in the choice of a diminutive creature, so that Catullus’ further (perhaps double) diminution of the already minute ἴψ might be entirely the product of his parodic intent. Parody there certainly is, but there is a parallel example in Greek. The Κωνώπιον (“Little Mosquito”) who is the addressee of a paraclausithyron controversially attributed to Callimachus (*AP* 5.23.1 = Callimachus 63 Gow-Page) could fall with Μυῖα into the category of apparently unprepossessing insects, though the sting of its bite could conceivably have erotic connotations comparable to those of the gadfly.<sup>29</sup> In any case, she provides a precedent (or at least a parallel, if Pfeiffer is correct in assigning the epigram to Rufinus) for the use of a diminutive. For Catullus to call his courtesan addressee “Little Woodworm”, even if that is only the name’s secondary connotation, is undeniably parodic, but his parody is grounded in the practice of deriving Greek hetaira names from animals, including insects, and in particular diminutive forms, even when they are already minute.

Correspondence:

Robert Cowan

School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry

The University of Sydney

NSW 2006

Australia

bob.cowan@sydney.edu.au

29 A. S. F. Gow and D. L. Page (edd.), *The Greek Anthology: Hellenistic Epigrams* (Cambridge 1965) *ad loc.* call it “a characteristic type of name or nickname for a hetaera” and note that the name Κωνώπη in *IG* 12.9.413 may also be a hetaira name. For the erotic connotations of the gadfly, see R. Cowan, “Alas, Poor Io! Bilingual Wordplay in Horace *Epode* 11”, *Mnemosyne* 65 (2012) 753–763, at 759–60, with further references.

## Clytemestra's deception and glory (Seneca, *Agamemnon* 108–124)

By Chiara Battistella, Genève

*Abstract:* In the following pages I will try to isolate an etymological moment in Seneca's *Agamemnon*, showing how Clytemestra's name in *Ag.* 108–124 strikingly recalls the same etymology as for Medea. This contributes to bringing the two heroines' ethos closer and to unveiling a complex etymological verbal pun in the queen's name.

### CLYTEMESTRA

*Quid, segnis anime, tuta consilia expetis?  
quid fluctuaris? clausa iam melior via est.  
licuit pudicos coniugis quondam toros* 110  
*et scepra casta vidua tutari fide;*

*periere mores ius **decus** pietas fides  
et, qui redire cum perit nescit, pudor;  
da frena et omnem prona nequitiam incita:  
per scelera semper sceleribus tutum est iter.* 115

*Tecum ipsa nunc evolve femineos **dolos**,  
quod ulla coniunx perfida atque impos sui  
amore caeco, quod novercales manus  
ausae, quod ardens impia **virgo** face  
Phasiaca fugiens regna Thessalica trabe:* 120  
*ferrum, venena – vel Mycenaeas domos  
coniuncta socio profuge furtiva rate.*

*quid timida loqueris furta et exilium et fugas?  
soror ista fecit: **te decet maius nefas**.<sup>1</sup>*

The scene of Clytemestra's first appearance in Seneca's *Agamemnon* evokes – at least at the outset – the statutory uncertainty of other mythic heroines who share the commonality of being abandoned or betrayed by a male character: the queen's hesitation expressed by *fluctuaris* at line 109 (and iterated at 138 *fluctibus variis agor*) seems to reflect an emotionality analogous to that of Ariadne in *Cat.* 64.62 *prospicit et magnis curarum fluctuat undis* and of Dido in *Verg. Aen.* 4.532 *saeuit amor magnoque irarum fluctuat aestu*.

However, amongst the heroines selected as paradigmatic models for her imminent revenge, Medea could obviously not be omitted (*virgo*, 119). The as-

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1 I print the text established by R.J. Tarrant, *Seneca. Agamemnon* (Cambridge 1977).