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Pliny's Catullus: The Politics of Literary Appropriation*

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Pliny the Younger wrote, recited, and published short poems modeled after those of Catullus. In a number of letters, he describes his engagement with this poetry as a leisure-time activity and classifies it under the rubric of *otium*. At the same time he consistently deprecates it, explicitly and implicitly, in comparison to activities that fall under the rubric of *negotium*, the primary activities through which he cultivates his reputation and by which he measures his value among his peers. These *negotia*, which include serving as a legal advocate, discharging a magistracy or other high official post, and being a member of the senate, had for centuries been the most valued and prestigious activities open to aristocrats. They are the defining and characteristic activities, moreover, of what Riggsby has called the "engaged public figure."[1] Pliny can

*I am grateful to Eleanor Winsor Leach, Andrew Riggsby, *TAPA* editor Marilyn Skinner, and two anonymous referees for their engaged and thoughtful readings of various drafts—especially for clarifications of their own views and for bibilographical guidance. I should note that, despite a titular resemblance, this article is not a response to Gunderson's piece in last year's *TAPA* (127). Gunderson is concerned with the erotics of a literary form he calls the "love-letter," examples of which he finds in Catul. 50 and Plin. *Ep.* 1.15. While he argues for certain congruences between Pliny's epistolary project and Catullus' poetic one (e.g., 216–22), he does not (and need not) contend that Pliny's erotics directly engage or respond to those of Catullus. I do argue that Pliny directly engages Catullus, but in a different respect.

[1]It is specifically the orator whom Riggsby 1998 categorizes as an "engaged public figure" (75–77 and *passim*). On Riggsby's account, the word "public" in this locution signifies that this figure takes actions that are visible to the community as a whole and also consequential for it (77). Since the orator in Roman society typically occupies himself, and practices his craft, precisely as a magistrate, an advocate, and a senator, these figures are all "public" in the required sense; other activities too might satisfy this definition. This figure's "engagement," meanwhile, resides in his ethical orientation toward the community under whose gaze he acts, and for which his actions are consequential. In Pliny's case, this ethical orientation consists in seeking praise from the community for fulfilling his public social roles in the most appropriate manner; that is, he measures his own worth by the reputation he wins as a consequence of his activities as an advocate, senator, magistrate, and so on (89–90). This characterization of Pliny is helpful for the current discussion because, when he describes the objections to which his production of Catullan poetry is subject, and when he seeks to neutralize these objections, at

be placed in this category, for he was a highly successful aristocrat who filled all these roles in the course of his career.[2]

Since Pliny himself belittles his poetic production, it is perhaps not unreasonable that scholars who have studied his engagement with this poetry describe it as a private, depoliticized, perhaps even anti-political activity.[3] Over the first century or so of the empire, however, as old channels of power and locations of authority gave way to new ones, aristocrats increasingly occupied themselves with activities that were not within the canon of *negotia* mentioned above, and did so with increasing visibility. For example, they began to appear in the arena as gladiators, though gladiators were traditionally slaves. Declamation, moreover, a school exercise of a sort long taught to elite adolescents by freedmen *rhetores*, now began to command the attention of and bestow prestige upon elite adults, as did *recitatio*, the reading of literary works in various genres to audiences assembled for the purpose—a practice also associated, though not exclusively, with the rhetoric teachers and their schools in the late republic.[4] In view of these emerging elite social practices and their

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issue are both the social role(s) he occupies in society and the question of whether writing such poetry is appropriate to that role (i.e., whether he displays the proper ethical orientation toward the community, in the eyes of his peers).

[2]Pliny first appeared as an advocate in the centumviral court at age 18, and over the years took part in many high-profile cases in that forum. Upon undertaking the senatorial career, he had the support of several senior consulars. Although he was a *novus homo* and seems to have started his career a year or two late, he was chosen as a *candidatus Caesaris*, and therefore was elected without contest to the quaestorship, tribunate, and praetorship, furthermore gaining a year's *remissio* at the praetorian stage. He was subsequently *praefectus aerarii militaris*, then *praefectus aerarii Saturni*, leading to a suffect consulship in 100. Thereafter he was *curator Tiberis*, *augur*, and finally *legatus Augusti* in Bithynia, starting in about 109. Thus he held many of the major posts open to the senatorial aristocrat and apparently enjoyed unwavering support from both Domitian and Trajan. Successful both in the senatorial career and as an advocate, Pliny also competed in the literary field: he published and circulated a number of speeches, and also collected and edited a body of letters constituting a highly self-conscious and favorable account of his activities: books I–IX of the *Epistulae*. For an overview of Pliny's life and public career, see Sherwin-White 72–82; on the positions he held in the last years of Domitian's reign, see Shelton 130–33 and 138–39. On the self-aware and self-serving qualities of individual letters and of the collection as a whole, see section III and n. 29 below.

[3]E.g., Hershkowitz 169, 179; Leach 33–34; Prete 1948a: 14.

[4]See, e.g., Hopkins 120–23, 171–92 on the changing conditions for pursuing and exercising traditional magistracies, the creation of new administrative posts, and the changing demographics of the elite. Barton 25–40 discusses the circumstances and aims of early imperial aristocrats who became gladiators. Dupont 44–45 describes imperial recitation as a mode of competitive verbal performance substituting for republican *oratio*, which had

cultural provenience as activities of the socially marginal (slaves, freedmen, children), the ready categorization of Pliny's poetic leisure activity as "private" and "non-political" is questionable: for we may wonder whether the distinction between elite *negotium* and *otium*, as described above, is at this time identical to that between public and private or between political and non-political (if indeed these distinctions were ever identical). The last polarity is particularly problematic in today's scholarly climate, when "politics" is often taken to encompass not merely governmental administration and associated activities but rather a wide variety of strategies and structures by which power is distributed in society.[5]

In this paper, I will argue that Pliny's engagement with poetry in the style of Catullus is, among other things, an effort to create a new arena of aristocratic competition. As such his poetic activity is indeed political, at least in the broader sense, even though it remains explicitly a "leisure" activity for him. I will also seek to locate this activity in relation to the categories of "public" and "private." With these ends in view, I begin with two philological sections (I–II) that attempt to recover the character of Pliny's poetry, the circumstances of its production and consumption, and its particular affiliation with some of the poetry of Catullus.[6] In the two subsequent sections (III–IV), I examine the criticisms Pliny receives for producing poetry of this sort and his responses to these criticisms. These sections in turn lay the groundwork for an analysis (V) of Pliny's political stake in reciting and otherwise publicizing his poetry in the Catullan mode.

I. Pliny's poetry: terminology and formal features

In several letters Pliny explicitly declares his fondness for the poetry of Catullus and Catullus' contemporaries, and he presents their poetry as the model for his own poetic production and that of his friends. At 1.16.5 he approvingly

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essentially disappeared. Bloomer 110, 133–35 makes virtually the same argument for imperial declamation, adding that it provided a route to distinction for the new aristocracy. On the prehistory and emergence of declamation, see Bonner 1–31; on that of recitation, see Sen. *Con.* 4 pr. 2 with Dalzell, and Suet. *Gram. et Rhet.* 1–2 with Kaster 54, 60–61.

[5]Habinek 166 and Kennedy 30 are two classicists who note and take advantage of this widening of the scope of the "political," though this widened scope has had currency in many fields of the humanities and social sciences in recent years.

[6]Some of the material discussed in sections I and II is relatively familiar; for this I apologize. However, I have encountered no discussion of this material that is detailed enough for my purposes. Moreover, not all the observations that my argument requires have been made elsewhere.

compares Pompeius Saturninus' verses to those of Catullus and Calvus, attaching to Catullus the endearment *meus*; at 4.27.1–5 he is similarly pleased to be told that his own poetry surpasses that of Calvus and Catullus. We can articulate in greater detail the common elements that Pliny attributes to these two corpora—the poems of himself and his friends, and those of Catullus and his contemporaries—by examining the terms used by the poets in question to label the poetry they write, along with the usage of these same terms elsewhere.

First, then, for Pliny and his friends. In *Ep.* 4.14, a cover letter for a collection of poetry, Pliny offers an avalanche of terms which he says are acceptable designations for the accompanying poems:

> tu fortasse orationem, ut soles, et flagitas et exspectas; at ego quasi ex aliqua peregrina delicataque merce lusus meos tibi prodo. accipies cum hac epistula hendecasyllabos nostros, quibus nos in vehiculo in balineo inter cenam oblectamus otium temporis. his iocamur ludimus amamus dolemus querimur irascimur.... sed quid ego plura? nam longa praefatione vel excusare vel commendare ineptias ineptissimum est. unum illud praedicendum videtur, cogitare me has meas nugas ita inscribere 'hendecasyllabi,' qui titulus sola metri lege constringitur. proinde, sive epigrammata sive idyllia sive eclogas sive, ut multi, poematia seu quod aliud vocare malueris, licebit voces; ego tantum hendecasyllabos praesto. (4.14.1–3, 8–10).
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> You perhaps both demand and await a speech, as usual: but I am offering you my *lusus*, as though from some exotic foreign store of goods. You will receive with this letter my *hendecasyllabi*, on which I while away my leisure time when on the road, in the bath, or at dinner. In these I joke, I play (*ludimus*), I love, I grieve, I complain, I grow angry...but why go on? For either to excuse or to recommend *ineptiae* in a long introduction is most inappropriate (*ineptissimum*). This one thing seems worth saying in advance: I am thinking to entitle these *nugae* of mine "hendecasyllabi," a title limited only by the constraints of the meter. Consequently, whether you prefer to call them *epigrammata* or *idyllia* or *eclogae* or (as many do) *poematia*, or anything else, you may: I offer them only as *hendecasyllabi*.

On this account, the terms *lusus*, *hendecasyllabi*, *ineptiae*, *nugae*, *poematia*, *epigrammata*, *idyllia*, and *eclogae* are all acceptable, and apparently interchangeable, designations for the set of poems that this letter introduces. Now, in §5 of this letter Pliny quotes four verses of Catullus 16 (5–8). Here he is overtly interested in the content, not the form, of these verses, as I discuss below (section IV). But, given that Pliny is entitling his collection *hendecasyllabi*, and that these verses of Catullus are themselves hendecasyllabic, it seems likely

that they are being presented implicitly as a model for form as well as content: indeed, Catullus here refers to his own verses as *versiculi* (16.6), which is therefore another term for the kind of poetry in question. There are four other letters in which one or more of the terms listed in *Ep.* 4.14 appear alongside examples or descriptions of the poetry they label; from these passages it is possible to recover further formal characteristics of this kind of poetry. These passages are the following:

> **(1)** At *Ep.* 7.9.9–11 Pliny describes the process of composition leading to the kind of poem called the *lusus*, which he says is "a poem not sustained and lengthy, but sharp and short"; he then provides an example of such a poem—one consisting of four elegiac couplets.[7]
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> **(2)** At *Ep.* 3.21.5 Pliny quotes a selection from a poem of Martial (=10.19.12–21) written in hendecasyllables. Elsewhere in the letter he refers to this poem as *versiculi* (3.21.2, 4).
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> **(3)** In *Ep.* 4.27 Pliny discusses a collection of poems written by Sentius Augurinus, a collection which he says the author has entitled *poematia* (§1). In §4 he records one poem from this collection, a poem consisting of eight hendecasyllabic verses, whose subject, Pliny says, is Pliny's own "play" at writing poetry (*nam lemma sibi sumpsit quod ego interdum versibus ludo*, §3). In this poem, Sentius refers to his own poetic production as *versus minuti* in the manner of Catullus and Calvus, and he goes on to praise Pliny's *versiculi* as superior to everyone's. Sentius' poem itself presumably exemplifies the *versus minuti* of which it speaks, and, in mentioning Pliny's *versiculi* (which I take here as synonymous with *versus minuti*), implies that Pliny writes poetry of the same type. This is the activity which Pliny has just characterized as "play" (*ludere*).[8]
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> **(4)** In *Ep.* 7.4 Pliny undertakes to explain how he, a man who is *severus* and *non ineptus* (§1), began to write *hendecasyllabi* (§§1,

[7] 7.9.9–10: *fas est et carmine remitti, non dico continuo et longo...sed hoc arguto et brevi, quod apte quantaslibet occupationes curasque distinguit. lusus vocantur....*

[8] Pliny also refers to some of his own poems as *versiculi* at 5.3.1–2. On *versiculi*, *versus minuti*, and related terms see also Dahlmann 169, 173. For discussions of Sentius' poem, see Dahlmann and Courtney 365–66. Cf. 9.19.6, where Pliny refers to Verginius Rufus' epitaph, a single elegiac couplet (quoted in §1), as *versiculi duo.*

> 3, 8), a book of which he has already sent to the same addressee. His explanation takes the form of a thirteen-verse hexameter poem of his own composition (§6), which he says was inspired by an *epigramma* or *lusus* (§§3, 6) of Cicero. Presumably Pliny's poem is itself an example of an *epigramma* or *lusus*, like its Ciceronian model.[9] Moreover, his self-description as *non ineptus*, despite his production of *hendecasyllabi*, has particular point if poems of this sort can also be called *ineptiae*, and indeed *ineptiae* appears at *Ep.* 4.14.8 (quoted above) as a possible alternative to the title *hendecasyllabi.* However, it is not clear whether Pliny counts the hexameter poem itself as an instance of *hendecasyllabi.*[10]

These four passages seem to confirm that at least some of the terms presented as interchangeable in *Ep.* 4.14—namely *lusus*, *versiculi*, *epigrammata*, *poematia*, *ineptiae*, and (perhaps) *hendecasyllabi*—do indeed refer without differentiation to short poems in various meters, including hendecasyllables, elegiacs, and hexameters.[11]

These terms, attested in texts from the late republic onward, are used to label a variety of non-epic poetic forms. Momentarily leaving Catullus and Martial aside, we find that these terms also occur in texts as diverse as Vergil's bucolics, Horace's epodes and epistles, Ovid's elegiac poetry, Seneca's tragedy

[9]Two letters addressed to Arrius Antoninus, 4.3 and 4.18, speak of *epigrammata* that Arrius writes in Greek; these poems may also therefore be of the sort under discussion here. In the latter letter Pliny says he has translated some of these into Latin, and Courtney 369–70 notes the conjecture that *Anth. Lat.* 710 Reise, a poem in two elegiac couplets attributed to Pliny, may be one of these (quoted below, n. 26).

[10]Pliny appears to say at *Ep.* 4.14.8 that the term *hendecasyllabi* is metrically descriptive (*'hendecasyllabi,' qui titulus sola metri lege constringitur*), implying that poems not in this meter cannot be so labeled (thus Prete 1948b: 333). On the other hand, one might imagine naming a collection of poetry *hendecasyllabi* even if the collection includes poems not in that meter (especially if all poems in the collection share a range of content: see section II below); in this case a hexameter poem could be referred to as *hendecasyllabi* by virtue of being included in a collection of that name.

[11]Two other letters, *Ep.* 9.16 and 9.25, further confirm the interchangeability of some of these terms. The former promises to send the addressee some *versiculi*, while the latter says that the same addressee has read some *lusus et ineptiae*; it seems likely that these terms refer to the same collection of poems. Also in *Ep.* 7.2.2 Pliny speaks of sending *nugae* to his addressee, but gives no further indication what kind of work this is: we can only infer from 4.14.8, and from usages of this term in other authors (see below), that it is short poetry. Likewise the *poemata* of 9.10.2, written en route to his Tuscan estate and described as *non nulla leviora statimque delenda*, may be poems of this sort (see Sherwin-White *ad loc*).

and Statius' *Silvae.* Often, but not always, the terms refer to the poems in which they appear; they also appear in prose texts to refer to non-epic poetry of various sorts. In and of themselves, all of these terms (except *hendecasyllabi* and *epigrammata*) connote play, frivolity, or insignificance, and the contexts in which they occur often give this frivolity or insignificance some concrete dimension: opposition to "serious" poetry, or association with leisure activities such as bathing, sex, or public festivals. A fuller discussion of this broad tradition of usages can be found in the "Appendix" at the end of this article. Here it suffices to observe that Pliny's usage of these terms generally coincides with their usages in the texts just mentioned: he thereby links his poetry to a diverse set of poetic forms (including elegy, lyric, bucolic, and other hexameter poetry) that present themselves as insignificant in various ways.

Within this diverse tradition, however, Pliny connects himself most closely to a narrower tradition of writing short poems in lyric and elegiac meters, a poetic form surviving to us (in Latin, at least) only in the works of Catullus and Martial, along with a variety of fragments. Pliny's particularly close engagement with Catullus is easy to demonstrate. Besides praising Catullus by name and quoting him (*Ep.* 1.16.5, 4.14.5, 4.27.1–5), Pliny also shares with Catullus no less than six of the terms by which he labels his own poetry—far more than he shares with any other earlier poet whose works survive (see the "Appendix"). For Catullus speaks broadly of his poetry as *nugae* (1.4), *ineptiae* (14b.1), and *versiculi* (16.3, 6); in poem 50 he uses the verb *ludere* (2, 5) to describe the process by which he and Calvus produce *versiculi* (4), and he calls poem 50 itself a *poema* (16). This latter term also labels the poetic production of Suffenus (22.15–16), though it is not clear what kind of poetry Suffenus is writing. Also, in two poems (12.10, 42.1) Catullus threatens his addressees with a blast of *hendecasyllabi* if objects taken from him are not returned; these two poems, themselves written in hendecasyllables, simultaneously communicate and execute the threat. Catullus, then, like Pliny, appears to use these terms more or less interchangeably (again with the possible exception of *hendecasyllabi*, which may be metrically descriptive) to refer to short poems in a variety of meters.[12]

[12]The terms in question occur exclusively in the polymetrics (poems 1–60; though *ludere* in other senses occurs elsewhere in the Catullan corpus), and the self-referentiality of at least some of these occurrences suggests that it is specifically the polymetrics, and poems like them (such as the ones Catullus says in poem 50 that he and Calvus were writing on wax tablets) that these terms label: for this view see Ross 109–10. However, these terms could be thought to describe the short elegiac poems (69–116) in addition to the polymetrics, given the

The significance of this shared pattern of usage is brought out more clearly by comparing it to Martial's usage of these same terms. Martial commonly labels epigrammatic poems (usually, but not always, his own) as *nugae* (15 times, e.g., 9 pr. 5–8, where he expressly notes their insignificance) and *lusus* (6 times, e.g., 6.85.9, 11.16.7; cf. 4.49.2), and he uses *ludere* to label the process of composing such poems (9 times, e.g., 4.23.7, 11.6.3). He also calls them *epigrammata* 31 times, a term he shares with Pliny but which is unattested in Catullus. Remarkably, however, Martial never uses the term *hendecasyllabi* at all: despite his corpus containing 238 poems in this meter, and the convenient fact that the word *hendecasyllabi* itself fits into the meter, he never names any of these poems as such (in contrast to Pliny, Catullus, and Statius).[13] Also, he uses *poema* only once (3.50.9), *ineptiae* only twice (2.86.10, 11.1.14), and *versiculi* only thrice (3.9.1, 3.50.2, 6.64.23). Moreover, the three occurrences of *versiculi*, and the single instance of *poema*, label the poems of malicious or incompetent rivals. Martial, then, plainly prefers some of these terms to others, while no such pattern of preference is

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similarities in length and content of the poems in each group. Pliny and Martial may have thought so, for they include elegiac poems within the kind of poetry they designate by these terms—though of course Catullus' distinction (if he is indeed making one) may not have been made by Calvus, Domitius Marsus, or other lost poets of this sort whom Pliny and Martial read. Also, among extant poets, Ovid uses *lusus* and *versiculi* to refer to poems in elegiac meter (see the "Appendix"). Whether Catullus in fact distinguished the polymetrics from the short elegiac poems, either conceptually or in the arrangement of the corpus, is much debated, but not crucial to my argument here: see Thomson 6–10 for a brief overview and bibliography of this debate (also, e.g., Ross 91–95 on the distinctive features of the short elegiac poems, and 104–12 on those of the polymetrics). Pliny and Martial also diverge from Catullus in allowing hexameter poems into this category of poetry: Pliny implicitly classifies his hexameter poem (*Ep.* 7.4.6) as an *epigramma* or *lusus*, and Martial's corpus contains four hexameter poems (1.53, 2.73, 6.64, 7.98)—a very small number, however, relative to the size of the corpus. Indeed, in 6.65 an interlocutor is made to object to writing epigrams in hexameters, a pointless objection unless this meter were at least unusual for this poetic form. Within the *Satyricon*, however, and among the other poems attributed to Petronius (Baehrens *PLM* iv.74–108), are a number of short hexameter poems: see Siedschlag 129–31 for further discussion. On the use of these terms for poetry in Pliny and Catullus, and for other poetic congruences between these authors, see Fitzgerald 44–46, Gamberini 97–98, Prete 1948a: 16–18, Wheeler 50–60.

[13]According to Swann 51 n. 45 (citing numbers given by J. Wight Duff, *Literary History of Rome in the Silver Age*[2] 408), out of 1561 poems in Martial's corpus, 1235 are in elegiacs, 238 in hendecasyllables, and 77 in choliambs. On the remaining 11 (4 of them in hexameters), see Siedschlag 130–31. While the word *hendecasyllabi* never occurs in Martial, in 10.9.1–3 he describes himself as *undenis pedibusque syllabisque...notus*, apparently referring to hendecasyllables and elegiacs respectively.

discernible in Pliny or Catullus (though admittedly any such pattern would be more difficult to detect in these authors because the terms occur less frequently). He also gives *poema* and *versiculi* a pejorative sense that is absent in Pliny and Catullus.[14] Martial thus shows that the pattern of usage shared by Pliny and Catullus is not universal, further suggesting that Pliny's usage constitutes an imitation and appropriation of Catullus in particular.

II. Pliny's poetry: occasion and subject matter

The use of *versiculi*, *lusus*, *nugae*, *ineptiae*, and *poematia* to label these poems implicitly devalorizes the engagement with such poetry in comparison to other activities, for these terms, as noted above, suggest an essential "non-seriousness." Pliny and his friends specify aspects of this non-seriousness when they discuss the production, consumption, and subject matter of these poems. Regarding production, Pliny affirms (4.14.2) that he writes them in brief intervals of *otium*—time not occupied with more important activities—in the course of the day, and that they give him pleasure and delight (*hendecasyllabos nostros, quibus nos in vehiculo in balineo inter cenam oblectamus otium temporis*).[15] Similarly, Sentius Augurinus' poem (4.27.4) separates Pliny's production of *versiculi* from the (implicitly more important) business he conducts in the forum (*mavolt versiculos foro relicto*), and at 9.25.3 Pliny promises Mamilianus that he will write more such poems when his current obligations in court (*actus rerum*) come to an end—implying the greater importance of the latter activity.[16] Turning next to the consumption of this poetry, at 3.21.5 Pliny partially quotes a poem of Martial (10.19.12–21) in which Martial instructs the muse Thalia to bring Pliny a collection of Martial's poems to read—not during the day, when Pliny is at the centumviral court producing speeches to rival Cicero (14–17), but rather by torchlight, at the hour

[14]Some of Martial's divergent usages have precedents elsewhere, however. The contemptuous tone with which he uses *versiculi* is reminiscent of Horace's usage (*S.* 1.2.109 and 1.10.32: see the "Appendix"), as opposed to the mere modesty, or even endearment, that it conveys in Pliny and Catullus. The affective range of a diminutive is potentially wide, conveying emotions ranging from delight to modesty to deprecation to contempt: cf. Kühner–Stegmann I^2 982–83. Thus *versiculus* is used by different authors to convey different affective stances toward the poetry in question. On Martial's terminological convergences with and divergences from Catullus, see Swann 47–64.

[15]For similar claims that short periods of freedom from more pressing business (labeled *remissio*, *otium*, or the like) afford the opportunity for writing this poetry, see 7.4.8, 7.9.9–10, 9.10.2. That these poems provide pleasant diversion, relaxation, or enjoyment to their authors: 4.3.1–3; 5.3.2; 7.4.4, 6 verses 4–6; 7.9.9, 12; 9.25.2. Cf. Tac. *Dial.* 10.3.

[16]For *actus rerum* as "the pleading of cases in court," cf. Suet. *Aug.* 32.2; Quint. *Inst.* 11.6.1.

for *convivia* (18–20). Thus Martial sharply distinguishes Pliny's daytime, Ciceronian occupations from his night-time, sympotic ones, and he places the reading of these epigrammatic poems among the latter.[17] Similarly in 8.21, having asserted that he intersperses his more serious work with fun and games (*graviora opera lusibus iocisque distinguo*, §1),[18] Pliny says that he chose a dinner party in July, the quiet month in the courts (cf. 9.40.1), as the proper occasion for reciting some short poems, "so that they might grow accustomed to being heard by people at leisure, in a dining room" (*ab otiosis et in triclinio*, §2). Unexpectedly called to speak in court on the very day of the dinner (§3), he excuses himself to his guests for mixing these activities (*...quod recitaturus ...foro et negotiis non abstinuissem*) by stating that *seria* must take precedence over *iucunda* (likewise 8.9.2). Again at 7.2, Pliny refuses to send *nugae* to his addressee Iustus, a military commander, until winter, when the latter will have his nights free: for now, during the busy summer season (*aestas inquieta*), he has no *otium* (cf. 9.25.1). Turning finally to the subject matter of these poems, at 4.14.3 Pliny says that his short poems give expression to a variety of emotional experience: *his iocamur ludimus amamus dolemus querimur irascimur....*[19] He goes on (§4) to concede that these poems may be thought to be rather frivolous (*petulantiora*), noting their contrast with the serious demeanor of the engaged public figure (*summi et gravissimi viri, severiores*).[20] At 7.9.13 he ascribes to these poems an even broader range of subject matter, potentially including one's activities in the courts and forum, the domain of *negotia*: he writes *recipiunt...amores odia iras misericordiam urbanitatem, omnia denique quae in vita atque etiam in foro causisque versantur*. Here, however, the words *atque etiam* mark this final claim as surprising and suggest

[17]Presumably Mart. 10.19, which Pliny calls *versiculi* (*Ep.* 3.21.2, 4), is representative of the collection (book 10?) that it accompanies: Pliny speaks of this poem as part of a collection (§4), as do the first two verses of the poem itself (not quoted by Pliny).

[18]Poetic *lusus* are further contrasted with unspecified *seria* at 5.3.4, 7.4.6, 7.9.10.

[19]The poems of Pompeius Saturninus—which, like his own, are said to be like those of Calvus and Catullus—convey a similar variety of emotional experience: *quantum illis leporis dulcedinis amaritudinis amoris!* (1.16.5; cf. 3.1.7, 9.22.2). For *varietas* as an organizing stylistic principle in Pliny's poetry and life, see the excellent discussion of Boccuto (32–36), along with Skinner 1981: 14–16 and 17 n. 7, Gamberini 113–14, Hershkowitz 174–75, Fitzgerald 25 and 245 n. 27.

[20]Virtually the same comparison occurs at 5.3.2–3, where Pliny again contrasts the emotionally light quality of short poetry (*facio...versiculos severos parum...praeterea rideo iocor ludo*) with the appropriately severe public demeanor of other men who have written such poetry (*talia doctissimos gravissimos sanctissimos homines scriptitasse*). Similarly at 4.3.1–2, 8.21.1–3; Mart. 1.4, 11.16; see also sections III–IV below.

that these activities are not among the expected subject matter for this poetry.[21] In these passages, then, Pliny associates the production, consumption, and content of this poetry with the devalorized members in a series of ethically structured oppositions relating to times, places, and activities:[22] not only do these poems constitute "play" and "joking" as opposed to "serious" activities, but their province moreover is night as opposed to day, July as opposed to busier months in court (or winter as opposed to busier seasons in an army camp), the triclinium as opposed to the forum, and—ubiquitously—*otium* as opposed to *negotium*.[23]

Particularly prominent among the subjects of Pliny's poetry is *amor*—a theme stated or implied almost everywhere his poems are discussed.[24] The last three verses of Sentius Augurinus' poem (4.27.4), despite some textual and

[21]Cf. Catul. 53, the occasion for which is a joke made at the expense of Calvus as he speaks in court. Perhaps, then, activities and events that normally count as *negotia* are legitimate subjects for this poetry precisely on those extraordinary occasions when they also fall under the rubrics of *iocus* and *lusus*.

[22]For a similar collection of oppositions, cf. Sen. *Con.* 9.2.27: *serviebat forum cubiculo, praetor meretrici, carcer convivio, dies nocti*. The issue in this declamation is the appropriateness of Flamininus' executing a condemned criminal, at the request of a prostitute, during a dinner-party: here, as for Pliny and his Catullan poetry, the matter of proper times, places, and motives for the action in question (manifestly an aspect of a legate's *negotium*, yet done under circumstances strongly marked as *otium*) is paramount.

[23]*Negotium*, one's business or activity, need not imply specifically public or civic business, but in Pliny's usage it almost always carries this specific sense: *in toga negotiisque* (1.22.6), *rei publicae negotia* (7.15.2), *urbana negotia* (7.30.2), *amicorum negotia* (8.9.1), *negotium publicum* (1.10.10, 10.81). The arena of civic activity that Pliny most commonly designates with this term is the lawcourts, especially the activities of the *advocatus* or *iudex*: e.g., 1.10.10, 1.22.6, 2.14.1, 5.9.4, 6.2.8, 7.7.2, 7.30.2. However, he also uses this term to refer to the issue of debate in the senate (9.13.18), a magistrate's duties (4.22.2), or the duties of a military commander (9.25.1). Occasionally, however, he predicates *negotium* even of literary activities (1.3.3, 8.12.3, cf. 1.9.6) to indicate the importance the latter can take on under certain circumstances. *Otium*, meanwhile, is regularly contrasted with or opposed to the civic business of the city: it may be spatially located in the country (e.g., 5.6.45, 6.14.1, 7.3.4, 9.40.1; cf. 2.8), or may be temporally located as intervals of open time in the course of a day filled with *negotia* (3.5.10, 4.14.2, 7.4.8), festival days or other quiet periods (8.21.2, 9.6.4, 9.40.1), or one's retirement from public life (3.1.12, 3.7.3, 4.23.1, 4.24.3, 9.3.1). At 9.33.3 it characterizes the life of a boy, and at 7.24.5, that of a woman. However located, *otium* for Pliny is most importantly the domain of *studia*, literary activities (1.9.6, 1.22.11, 2.2.2, 3.7.3–6, 4.14.2, 4.23.1, 6.20.5, 7.2.1, 7.4.8, 7.7.2, 7.13.2, 7.25.2, 8.9.1, 9.6.4, 9.25.1), including specifically recitation (1.13.4, 8.21.2: see section V below), philosophical discussion (1.22.6, 7.27.1) and, as we have seen, the production of Catullan-style poetry. Cf. Bütler 41–57, Gamberini 103–10.

[24]See also Gamberini 84–86, Prete 1948a: 21–23.

interpretive difficulties, clearly point to erotic content in Pliny's poetry.[25] Moreover, the hexameter poem that Pliny relates at 7.4.6 is programmatic for the production of short poems with erotic content. Here Pliny says that he came across a *lascivus lusus* written by Cicero, lamenting kisses withheld by Tiro; this poem inspired Pliny to try his hand at writing something similar (*his ego lectis / 'cur post haec' inquam 'nostros celamus amores...?', 9–10*). Elsewhere in this letter (7.4.1, 3, 8), Pliny says that this poem inspired him to write further *hendecasyllabi*—some of which, therefore, may also have erotic content. Still another suggestion of such content occurs in *Ep.* 9.25, where Pliny announces to his addressee Mamilianus that he is enclosing a set of *passerculi et columbuli* (§3)—evidently poems of the sort under discussion, for at the beginning of the letter (§1) he calls these same poems *lusus et ineptiae*, and in an earlier letter to the same addressee (9.16) he promises a collection of *versiculi.* But Martial's usage of *passer* shows that this word can be understood alternatively, or punningly, to designate not only the bird itself, but also Catullus 2, the Catullan polymetric poems as a group, and the penis. In using the word *passerculus*, then, Pliny probably gestures specifically at Catullus' polymetrics, but also at poems with sexual content in general. The suggestion of sexual content here is also strengthened by the word *columbuli*, for the dove too has erotic associations.[26]

[25]Verses 6–8: *et quaerit quod amet, putatque amari. / ille o Plinius, ille quot Catones! / i nunc, quisquis amas, amare noli.* Verse 6 is particularly vexed: see Dahlmann 175–76, Courtney 365–66.

[26]On *passer*: in Mart. 1.109.1 *passer Catulli* is apparently the bird, while in 1.7 and 4.14.14 *passer* seems to designate a collection of Catullus' poems. At 11.6.16 *passer Catulli* may punningly evoke both the sense of "erotic poem" (possibly with specific reference to Catul. 2) and "penis." For *passer* as an ancient designation for Catul. 2–60, see Skinner 1981: 11–16; for the double-entendre of *passer* as bird and penis in Catul. 2 and 3 see, e.g., Giangrande 1975 and 1992. Thomas demonstrates similarly sexualized usages of στρουθός in Meleager, supporting Giangrande's contention that this double-entendre was available to Catullus and to the contemporary readership of poems 2 and 3. Most scholars now seem to accept that *passer* can carry this sexualized sense, despite Jocelyn's famous objection (also Adams 32–33). On *columba*: Mart. 7.14 compares the grief caused by the loss of a *passer*, *columba*, and *mentula*, thus drawing *columba* into the pattern of signification traced above for *passer* (cf. Howell 122–23). Moreover, *passer* and *columba* are paired as erotic birds in Mart. 1.109.1–2 and Pl. *Cas.* 138; see also Plin. *Nat.* 10.107. The *convivium*, noted above as one context for consuming this poetry, is closely linked with *amor* in a short elegiac poem attributed to Pliny in a manuscript tradition independent of the letters (*Anth. Lat.* 710 Reise = Baehrens *PLM* IV.112; Courtney 369–70): *huc mihi vos largo spumantia pocula vino / ut calefactus Amor pervigilare velit. / ardenti Baccho succenditur ignis Amoris, / nam sunt unanimi Bacchus Amorque dei.*

Pliny's positioning of the production, consumption, and subject matter of his short poetry firmly apart from the *negotia* of an engaged public figure is congruent in many respects with Catullus' practice. Many Catullan poems, like those of Pliny, involve erotic, convivial, or other situations that can be classified under the rubric of *otium*—whether they are explicitly so classified (e.g., 10.2, 50.1, 51.13–15) or not. But as a number of scholars have suggested, the Catullan persona does far more than simply direct his attention to the activities that constitute the realm of *otium*: he also makes this a realm of ethically significant action. As Buchheit (1976a: 164–68) argues regarding poem 50, Catullus allocates positive moral value to activities designated as *lusus* and *otium*; he also points out that the words *delicatus*, *lepos*, and their cognates are terms of approbation in Catullus.[27] Meanwhile, Minyard claims that Catullus entirely rejects the form and content of the aristocratic public career, the traditional location for ethically valued action among Roman aristocrats: he argues (24–27), inter alia, that poem 45, which approvingly depicts a man choosing his lover over military adventurism, thereby implicitly rejects that traditional mode of enhancing status. Catullus also pillories many specific individuals who pursue such a career successfully: Skinner 1979 notes that in a series of poems the speaker inveighs against the abuses and inequities that high-ranking aristocrats of privileged birth perpetrate upon their subordinates, and upon the state as a whole, in their tenure of high office. In 28 he reviles the governors Piso and Memmius for mistreating their staff members (cf. 47); in 29 his invective is directed against Mamurra's greed and the complicity of the triumvirs Caesar and Pompey (cf. 57). Finally, Fitzgerald 117–20 suggests that the surprising appearance of "the language of aristocratic obligation"—terms such as *fides*, *foedus*, *amicitia*, *pietas*, and so on—in the elegiac Lesbia poems effectively links the degeneration of Catullus' relationship with Lesbia with the degeneration of the long-standing republican political and social arrangements during the 50s B.C.E. One need not go as far as Minyard and others, who see a full-scale rejection of public life, to find the general direction of these arguments convincing: Catullus valorizes activities that are associated with *otium* and largely excluded from the public sphere; at the same time, not being an engaged public figure himself, he repudiates many

[27]For more on the Catullan ethical/aesthetic vocabulary, see section IV below.

aspects of the public life of his day as it is conducted by prominent, contemporary engaged public figures.[28]

Pliny, however, is precisely such a figure, successfully pursuing a public career and modeling himself explicitly on Cicero (cf. Riggsby 1995). How can Pliny reconcile his self-presentation as a successful senator in the Ciceronian mold with his avowed fondness for Catullus, and with his production of poetry modeled in form and content on Catullan polymetrics, given that Catullus himself represents the social values of his poems as opposed to, or as alternatives to, the values of the engaged public figure? *Prima facie* it appears that Catullan poetry must present formidable ideological difficulties for someone with Pliny's commitments. In the next two sections, I examine the objections that Pliny says are raised against his polymetric poems, and his efforts to defuse these objections, with the aim of identifying some reason for him to embrace this problematic poetic form.

III. The reception of Pliny's Catullan poetry

In discussing the reception of his poetry, Pliny describes himself as subject to both praise and blame. The praise, as he describes it, accrues on the ground that his poems are excellent examples of their kind. Sentius Augurinus places Pliny's *versiculi* above all others in the competition to write *versus minuti* in the style of Calvus and Catullus (4.27.4). At 7.4.8–9 Pliny notes the enthusiastic reception of his book of *hendecasyllabi*: it has been set to music, and even inspires Greeks to learn Latin. At 9.25.1 he describes his addressee Mamilianus as being so enthusiastic about Pliny's *lusus et ineptiae* that he badgers Pliny to send him more of the same. Even when addressing criticism of his writing and recitation of such poetry at 5.3.1, he insists that these poems received no criticism in and of themselves (see the quotation below). Thus Pliny presents himself as a success on fairly narrow formal and aesthetic grounds: in the judgment of his peers, he is a skilled practitioner of this poetic form.

[28]Marilyn Skinner reminds me that Catullus' use of invective need not imply a rejection of or disengagement from public life: she points to Syndikus I.4–6, who argues that Catullus expresses a typically aristocratic disdain for the triumvirate and deploys the standard invective resources of aristocratic public discourse in an effort to contain those who are complicit in and benefit from it (on invective as a controlling device, see, e.g., Edwards 91–92, Corbeill 19 and *passim*). But since he is an outsider to the world of elite *negotia*, it is unsurprising that he valorizes other activities.

The criticism to which Pliny describes himself as subject for writing this poetry, however, is grounded in broader considerations. He defines the scope of this criticism in *Ep.* 5.3.1, a letter addressed to Titius Aristo:

> cum plurima officia tua mihi grata et iucunda sunt, tum vel maxime quod me celandum non putasti, fuisse apud te de versiculis meis multum copiosumque sermonem, eumque diversitate iudiciorum longius processisse, extitisse etiam quosdam, qui scripta quidem ipsa non improbarent, me tamen amice simpliciterque reprehenderent, quod haec scriberem recitaremque. (§1)
>
> Your many services to me are pleasing and sweet, but most pleasing is the fact that you did not think it should be concealed from me that there was much wide-ranging discussion at your house about my *versiculi*, and that it went on at some length because of the diversity of opinions, and that there were even some people who, while they did not disapprove of the works themselves, nevertheless chided me in a friendly and frank way for writing and reciting these works.

The ground for this objection, specified in the following sections and elsewhere, is that the content of this poetry is broadly inconsistent with the expected public bearing of a high-ranking Roman aristocrat. Thus at 7.4.1 Pliny writes, *ais legisse te hendecasyllabos meos; requiris etiam quemadmodum coeperim scribere, homo ut tibi videor severus, ut ipse fateor non ineptus*. Since Pliny elsewhere calls his short poems *ineptiae* (4.14.8) and describes them as *parum severi* (5.3.2)—precisely the opposite qualities of those he ascribes to himself—he presents his addressee as querying a perceived disjunction between the public demeanor of the author and the character of his poetry. Similarly, at 4.14.4, Pliny's insistence that being *petulans* and *lascivus*, and even using *verba nuda*, in one's poetry is not necessarily inconsistent with being *gravissimus* and *severus* in other ways, addresses the implicit objection that these qualities are indeed inconsistent. Thus, because he produces *versiculi* on a Catullan model—erotic ones in particular, as 4.14.4 implies—Pliny by his own admission suffers criticism and blame as embracing a poetic paradigm ideologically unsuitable for an engaged public figure.

Now, in examining these objections and Pliny's response to them, it is crucial to bear in mind that the audience of Pliny's letters is apprised of this debate only because Pliny consciously and intentionally included the information in his collection of letters: for he himself selected, arranged, and edited for wide circulation books I–IX of the *Epistulae.* Unlike those letters in the Ciceronian corpus that were written only for the eyes of their addressees,

and through which readers can therefore sometimes glimpse off-stage maneuverings that can be differentiated from the arrangements presented in texts addressed to a broader audience, there is no information given in the first nine books of Pliny's letters that the author did not carefully select for presentation to a wide readership of his peers and to posterity. It is Pliny's own objective that his audience should know that he writes poetry modeled on Catullan polymetrics and is subject to both praise and blame by his peers, on specific grounds, for writing such poetry. Certain consequences of Pliny's tightly controlled self-presentation in books I–IX have been ably explored in recent years by Shelton, Leach, and Riggsby 1995 and 1998. These scholars show that this corpus constitutes a large-scale, systematic act of self-fashioning in the public eye: that is, Pliny seeks through these letters to portray himself as a highly successful, effective aristocrat, and to craft a consistently favorable account of his actions and aims.[29] On this view, it is unsurprising that he discusses in his letters the praise he receives for producing fine poems modeled on Catullan polymetrics. But what does Pliny gain by repeatedly acknowledging, in that same forum, that this genre is ideologically problematic for a traditionalist aristocrat like himself, and that he is subjected to criticism on these grounds? On the one hand, as Prete suggests (1948b: 335–36), because Pliny brings this matter up himself and on his own terms, he can formulate it in a way that admits of effective response (see section IV). But his engagement with this poetry is no mere indulgence, requiring defense while offering no advantage. On the contrary, as I will argue in section V, he also stands to profit concretely from producing and reciting poetry of this sort.

[29]Shelton's minute examination of the rhetoric of Pliny's self-presentation, primarily in *Ep.* 3.11, reveals a number of techniques by which he constructs flattering accounts of his activities (esp. 121, 135–38). Leach argues that Pliny's self-fashioning aims to present "the appearance of consistency in a civic actor through a reliable integration of public persona and private character" (20; see in general 16–23, 28–39), a project she locates in the framework of the "cultivation of the self" that Foucault identifies as emerging by the second century C.E. Riggsby 1998, while seeing traces of this Foucauldian "cultivation of the self" in Pliny's letters, contends rather that Pliny is heavily invested in a conservative ethics based on external mechanisms of praise and blame; his self-presentation in the letters largely constitutes an effort to cultivate his reputation (the perception of himself by others) rather than an inner self. Finally, Riggsby (1995: 131–32) suggests that Pliny's public self-presentation in a Ciceronian mold may have carried specific, concrete advantages in the contemporary political climate.

IV. Pliny's defense

At the beginning of *Ep.* 5.3, quoted above, Pliny identifies two distinct objections raised by the gathering at Aristo's house: that he writes ideologically problematic poetry, and that he recites it (*quod haec scriberem recitaremque*). In this section I trace two strategies by which Pliny defends himself against the first charge. His first response is to adduce precedents: *nec vero moleste fero hanc esse de moribus meis existimationem, ut qui nesciunt talia doctissimos gravissimos sanctissimos homines scriptitasse, me scribere mirentur* (§3). The list that follows includes a number of prominent senators of the late republic and early empire, as well as several *principes.* He also cites several literary figures (Vergil, Nepos, Accius, and Ennius), conceding that their social status is not very high, but insisting that they remain exemplary because their *mores* are beyond reproach (§§5–7). Collectively, he says, these figures are so compelling that not just their *seria* but even their *lusus* are praiseworthy to emulate (§4). Thus, against those members of a contemporary judging audience who question his actions, Pliny invokes the judgment of a more authoritative audience, *maiores* of impeccable status and/or morals, whose own example of writing (sometimes erotic) polymetric poetry indicates that they would have approved of Pliny's practice. Pliny also invokes exempla at 4.14.4, without giving names, to forestall similar criticism: *ex quibus* [sc. *hendecasyllabis*] *tamen si non nulla tibi petulantiora paulo videbuntur, erit eruditionis tuae cogitare summos illos et gravissimos viros qui talia scripserunt non modo lascivia rerum, sed ne verbis quidem nudis abstinuisse* (likewise 7.4.4, 8; 7.9.12; cf. Mart. 8 pr.). Yet again, in the hexameter poem at *Ep.* 7.4.6, Pliny explicitly claims that his inspiration to write erotic poetry came from encountering a short erotic poem by Cicero (*his ego lectis / 'cur post haec,' inquam, 'nostros celamus amores...?'*), insisting however that Cicero too distinguished the writing of such poetry from "serious" activities: [*lascivum lusum Ciceronis*] *quo seria condidit et quo / humanis salibus multo varioque lepore / magnorum ostendit mentes gaudere virorum.*[30] His repeated invocation of exempla is an index of anxiety, an acknowledgment that the objections to writing such poetry are sufficiently formidable that they could adversely affect his *fama*; the evaluations of him

[30]The specific content designated as *sal* and *lepos* in this poem is indicated both previously (*lascivum lusum*) and subsequently: *nam queritur...* "for he complained that Tiro withheld his kisses...." Moreover, the conjunction of *sal* and *lepos* in the same verse probably echoes Catul. 16.7, where these words manifestly point to sexual content.

that are in circulation among his peers, if he does not counter them (cf. Boccuto 31–32).[31]

But Pliny is hardly alone among contemporary engaged public figures in emulating both the serious public engagement and the poetic play of his exempla. At 5.3.5 he refuses to name any living person, aside from himself, who fits this pattern—though he implies such persons exist. In *Ep.* 4.3, however, he portrays his addressee Arrius Antoninus as exactly such a figure. He has, says Pliny, successfully held the highest positions in the state, and his twin consulships explicitly align him with an exemplary ancient pattern (*semel atque iterum consul fuisti similis antiquis*, §1). Yet in his leisure time (*in remissionibus*, §1), he writes epigrams and mimiambs in Greek (§3): both the activity itself and the poems that result from it earn Pliny's highest praise. Likewise, Pompeius Saturninus pleads cases admirably (1.16.2) and produces speeches to rival the ancients (*quas facile cuilibet veterum, quorum est aemulus, comparabis*, §3), yet also writes poems "like Calvus and Catullus," whose content, some of which appears to be sexual, Pliny praises: *quantum illis leporis dulcedinis amaritudinis amoris! inserit sane, sed data opera, mollibus levibusque duriusculos quosdam...* (§5). Finally, Sentius Augurinus, whose poem is preserved and praised in *Ep.* 4.27 (cf. 9.8), is epigraphically attested as a proconsul of Macedonia under Hadrian (*ILS* 5947a), hence a senator of praetorian rank: at the time of his correspondence with Pliny he is quite young (4.27.5–6), but probably nevertheless embarking on a public career.[32] By

[31]Pliny is right, however, that engaged public figures of previous generations wrote short erotic or obscene poetry. Among the figures Pliny lists at 5.3.5–6, surviving erotic poems or fragments are attributed to Q. Catulus (Courtney 70–71, 76–78), to Q. Mucius Scaevola (Courtney 186), and to Calvus (Courtney 107–11 and frr. 17–18, cf. Ov. *Tr.* 2.431–32); also, an obscene invective by Augustus against Fulvia is preserved by Martial (11.20), who refers as well to Augustus' *lepidi libelli* (11.20.9; Courtney 282–83). About seventy short poems are attributed to Seneca—also in Pliny's list—some of which deal with erotic or sympotic themes: see Baehrens *PLM* iv.37–41, 44, 49, 58–62, 68–70. Other figures in Pliny's list lack surviving fragments, but are otherwise attested as producers of obscene/erotic poetry: Lentulus Gaetulicus at Mart. 1 pr., Hortensius and Memmius at Gel. 19.9.7 and Ov. *Tr.* 433–42. Pliny alone attests Cicero as a producer of erotic poetry (7.4.3, 6). See also Sherwin-White ad *Ep.* 5.3.4–6. Other engaged public figures could be added: a number of poems attributed to Petronius are erotic (Baehrens *PLM* iv.98–107); also Mart. 1.7 attributes to his patron, Arruntius Stella (probably cos. suff. 102), a *columba* that surpasses Catullus' *passer*: on one level of meaning, this may imply that Stella has written a poem or collection of poems in the style of Catullan polymetrics (see Howell 122–23 and n. 26 above).

[32]Arrius Antoninus (*PIR*^{2} A 1086): cos. suff. 69, cos. II unknown. Pompeius Saturninus: nothing else is known about his career, though he is portrayed here as an advocate (hence an

praising these men and their poetry in his letters—thereby putting into circulation positive evaluations of engaged public figures who produce polymetric poetry—and by explicitly aligning them as well as himself with the exemplary practice of the *maiores*, Pliny further counters any negative evaluations that may be in circulation about himself.

Intertwined with the invocation of exempla is another, different line of defense against the objection that writing polymetric poetry is inappropriate for an engaged public figure. That defense is that this poetic activity occurs only when the engaged public figure is not performing his characteristic public activities; that his production and consumption of this poetry is in fact contained firmly apart from the public sphere. Central to this defense is the segregation described in section II above, where Pliny and his friends locate their engagement with polymetric poetry in the realm of *otium* rather than *negotium*—night rather than day, the triclinium rather than the forum, and so on. Furthermore, Pliny insists that the exemplary figures he cites as producers of such poetry observe this same categorical distinction themselves: they too limit their engagement with this poetry to a marginalized domain characterized as *remissio* (4.3.1, 7.9.13),[33] *lusus* (5.3.4, 7.4.6, cf. 7.9.10, in each case explicitly opposed to *seria*), or "amusement" (*oblectatio* at 7.4.4; *delectatio* at 7.9.12), and so do not allow it to impinge upon the valorized domain of their *negotia.* Within this marginalized domain, however, Pliny insists that it is valid for him to embrace and explore polymetric values: addressing his critics at 5.3.2, he says, *quibus ego, ut augeam meam culpam, ita respondeo: facio non numquam versiculos severos parum, facio; nam et comoedias audio et specto mimos et lyricos lego et Sotadicos intellego; aliquando praeterea rideo iocor ludo, utque omnia innoxiae remissionis genera breviter amplectar, homo sum.*[34] It is again crucial here that he classifies all such activities under the rubric of *remissio.* For he contends that expressions of eroticism and obscenity, such as may occur in

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aristocrat, perhaps an equestrian: see Sherwin-White 103, 411). Sentius Augurinus: *PIR*^{2} G 135. Prete 1948a: 16–18 lists all the contemporary poets discussed by Pliny.

[33]*Remissio/remittere*, like *otium*, is regularly contrasted with *negotium*, *labor*, *seria*, and the like: e.g., *Ep.* 4.3.1, 6.31.13, 7.9.9, 9.3.2; *Pan.* 49.4, 81.1.

[34]As an anonymous referee suggests, Pliny's phrase *versiculos severos parum* here may vaguely echo Catul. 16.6–8 (*versiculos...parum pudici*). For Pliny's substantial debt to that poem for the terms in which he articulates the character and social stakes of erotic polymetric poetry, see n. 30 above, nn. 40 and 43 below, and the next paragraph.

polymetric poetry and elsewhere, are compatible with being an engaged public figure provided these expressions are strictly segregated from his *negotia*.[35]

In *Ep.* 4.14 Pliny even enlists Catullus 16 to support this line of defense. He notes early in this letter that he writes his own hendecasyllables in moments of *otium* (§2), and that *summi et gravissimi viri* also wrote sexually suggestive poetry (§4). Thus he implicitly sets up the *otium-negotium* distinction just described. Pliny then quotes Catullus 16.5–8, which he calls a *lex verissima* (§5), as follows: *nam castum esse decet pium poetam / ipsum, versiculos nihil necesse est, / qui tunc denique habent salem et leporem / si sunt molliculi et parum pudici*. I take it that Pliny is interpreting the Catullan distinction between the *poeta ipse* who should be *castus*, and his poems which need not be, as identical to Pliny's own distinction between the sphere of *negotium*, where the production and consumption of erotic poetry is unacceptable for the engaged public figure, and the sphere of *otium*, where it is acceptable. While modern scholars often regard Catullus in this passage as distinguishing poet from persona, or life from art, Pliny seems to regard Catullus as distinguishing, like Pliny himself, two domains of aristocratic activity—one admitting expressions of eroticism or obscenity, in poetic or other form, and the other not. Thus Catullus 16, on his interpretation, authorizes his own efforts to banish ideologically threatening Catullan polymetric values from the realm of serious, consequential action, and so to render Catullan polymetric poetry safe for himself and his friends to appropriate.[36]

Pliny not only claims to restrict his polymetric poetry, with its troublesome values, to the sphere of *otium* and thus safely away from public

[35]Leach 34 says of this passage (5.3.2) that "Pliny is defending a right not only to exercise his private self, but also to subject this self to public scrutiny with the aim of presenting a rounded and honest view of his entire personality as an actor in the public world." As she suggests, it is important that Pliny, simply by discussing this activity in his letters, is presenting it to a wide readership for evaluation. However, I think he seeks to subject to public scrutiny not his "private self" but rather his polymetric poetry (see section V below), which is possible only if he ostentatiously walls off the production (and producer) of this poetry in the safely devalorized domain of *otium*.

[36]If I understand Pliny correctly, his reading of these lines is to my knowledge unparalleled in modern scholarship. I cannot discuss here the interpretive knots of Catul. 16, on which the bibliography is vast; but I would point to Selden's recent article that pushes one interpretive strain to its logical terminus, arguing that every claim, threat, and question in the poem is undecidable (476–78, 486–87). Not too far from Pliny, perhaps, is Fitzgerald 249 n. 1, who also sees Catullus here distinguishing between two different social roles—not for an engaged public figure, however, but for a poet (epic vs. polymetric).

life, but he demonstrably abides by this claim in at least one respect: his use of Catullan evaluative terms. It is well-known (e.g., Fitzgerald 87–93) that Catullus fashions a socially exclusive value system in which he uses a single vocabulary, simultaneously aesthetic and ethical, to evaluate poetry and its production on the one hand, and social behavior and personal appearance on the other. These terms include *lepidus*, *venustus*, *sal*, *facetus*, and *ineptus*, along with their cognates and opposites. Like the terms for poetry described above (*versiculi*, *ineptiae*, *hendecasyllabi*, etc.), these aesthetic/ethical evaluative terms occur almost exclusively in the polymetrics: they occur rarely in the short elegiac poems, and never in the long poems. This distribution again appears to mark out the polymetrics as axiologically distinct from the remainder of the collection, implying that the way of life to which these values apply is specifically represented in, and perhaps associated with the production and consumption of, polymetric poetry.[37] Catullus' application of these terms to both poetry and behavior/appearance has been discussed a number of times; there is no need to do so again.[38] The crucial point is that, in the world represented by Catullus in his polymetrics, both one's social, public demeanor and the form and content of one's poetry are evaluated according to the same standard; a single, overarching system of valuation governs both.

Pliny, however, whom we have seen appropriate Catullus' terms for polymetric poetry (*versiculi*, *ineptiae*, *hendecasyllabi*, etc.) and deploy them much as Catullus does, also in his letters appropriates much of the Catullan evaluative vocabulary—*lepidus*, *venustus*, *sal*, *facetus*, *ineptus*—but allows these terms significantly less scope than Catullus does. What he shares with Catullus is the use of these terms to articulate the aesthetics of a very limited

[37]Ross 109–12 argues that the polymetrics are the "proper domain" (109) for this vocabulary, and that in the few short elegiac poems in which these words occur Catullus was "experiment[ing]...with vocabulary belonging properly to the polymetrics and having no precedent in epigram" (110).

[38]Buchheit 1976b: 337–38 discusses Catullus' application of *sal* and its cognates to both of these domains, while Buchheit 1959: 312–22 treats *lepidus*, *venustus*, and their cognates. Ross too (104–12, esp. 106–8) notes the intertwining of Catullan social and literary values. Here, for convenience, is a representative (not exhaustive) list of these words and their applications in Catullus. For each word cluster, references to poetry and its production precede the semicolon, and references to social behavior/personal appearance follow the semicolon (insofar as the social and the literary can be distinguished at all in Catullus). *Lepos/lepidus*, etc.: 6.17, 16.7; 10.4, 12.8, 36.10, 50.7. *Venustus*, etc.: 35.17; 10.4, 12.5, 13.6, 22.2, 86.3. *Sal/salsus*, etc.: 16.7; 10.33, 12.4, 86.4. *Facetiae/facetus*, etc.: 22.14, 36.19; 12.9, 50.8. *Ineptiae/ineptus*, etc.: 14b.1; 6.14, 8.1, 12.4, 25.8, 39.16.

array of verbal expression. In the first place, he uses these terms to evaluate poems modeled on Catullus' polymetrics, and certain other genres (e.g., mimiambs, elegy, and lyric), that he and his friends produce; one or more of these terms appear almost every time he discusses such poetry or its production. At 1.16.5 he attributes *lepos*, among other qualities, to the poems of Pompeius Saturninus, which he says resemble those of Calvus and Catullus. The epigrams and mimiambi of Arrius Antoninus, written in Greek, have *venustas* among other qualities (4.3.4),[39] and Pliny hopes that his Latin versions of Arrius' epigrams preserve this quality (4.18.2). He also attributes *venustas* to the short poems of Sentius Augurinus (4.27.1) and to the mimiambi of Vergilius Romanus (6.21.4), while *lepos* is characteristic of the latter author's comedies (6.21.5). He finds *sal* (3.21.2) in Martial's poems, while in his own programmatic poem defending the production of short, erotic verse (7.4.6), Pliny claims that the sort of poem called *lusus* is the appropriate context in which great men may display *sal* and *lepos* (verses 3–6).[40] Evaluating Passennus Paulus' lyric and elegiac poetry, Pliny says *ludit ut qui facetissime* (9.22.2). Finally, Pliny declares that to praise polymetric poetry, or to be praised in verse, may be regarded as *ineptum* (3.21.4, 4.14.8), and he declares that he is *non ineptus* despite writing *hendecasyllabi* (7.4.1). Aside from the criticism of poetry proper, Pliny additionally uses these terms to evaluate wit and humor, intentional or not. At 1.9.8 he says that Atilius Crescens spoke a witticism *facetissime* (cf. 2.14.2), and at 6.8.7–8 he again refers to Crescens' *suavitas*, *lepos*, and *facetiae*. The phrase *non invenuste* is applied to another witty statement at 5.20.5, as are *venustus* and *non illepidus* at 3.9.3. Meanwhile, Regulus is *ineptus* in reciting his son's *vita*, inadvertently evoking laughter rather than tears (4.7.7).[41] Presumably, the connection between wit or humor

[39]These Catullan terms often appear with clusters of other terms that are not characteristically Catullan: e.g., 1.16.5: *quantum illis leporis dulcedinis amaritudinis amoris!* Also 4.3.4: *quantum ibi humanitatis venustatis, quam dulcia illa quam amantia quam arguta quam recta!* Likewise at 4.27.1, 6.21.4–5.

[40]Catul. 16, verse 7 of which Pliny echoes here with his juxtaposition of *sal* and *lepos*, is also a programmatic poem ostensibly defending the author's production of erotic poetry.

[41]Uniquely at 1.9.7, *ineptus* is applied to one's tasks in the city (*ineptos labores*) in contrast to the desired *otium* of the country (here, explicitly literary activities). *Aptus*, linguistically the simple positive of *ineptus*, has a somewhat different semantic range in Pliny. To be sure, he often uses it of the fitness of verbal expression, whether in poetry (4.27.5, 5.17.2, 6.21.5), speeches (1.16.2, 2.3.3, 3.13.3, 4.9.13), jokes (9.26.1), or an actor's delivery (5.19.3). However, it also occurs in a wide variety of other contexts (e.g., 2.1.5, 3.9.12, 8.2.7, 9.2.4). In Catullus, the only occurrence of *aptus* (28.2) also has nothing to do with verbal expression.

and the kinds of poetry described is that they may have the same emotional register: wit is the locus of *ioci*, *risus*, and *lusus*, as are the kinds of poetry in question (e.g., 5.2.2: *facio...versiculos severos parum...praeterea rideo iocor ludo*).

Pliny's usage of these terms differs crucially from Catullus' usage, however, in that Pliny does not use these terms more widely, as Catullus does, to define a set of proprieties for social behavior and appearance. For the passages cited in the previous paragraph, in which these terms are used almost exclusively to evaluate poetry and jokes, account for every occurrence of *lepos*, *sal*, *venustus*, *facetus*, *ineptus*, and their cognates in the entire corpus of Pliny. In his usage, these terms mark a valued style of verbal expression, but never imperatives for action or behavior more generally. Moreover, in one passage (4.25.3) Pliny expressly denounces an incursion of Catullan values into a "serious" domain of activity. Here he criticizes an anonymous person for writing jokes on secret ballots in the Senate—a person, Pliny says, *qui in tanta re tam serio tempore tam scurriliter ludat, qui denique omnino in senatu dicax et urbanus et bellus est*. The last few words almost certainly echo Catullus 22, where Suffenus is said to be *venustus et dicax et urbanus* (22.2) and *bellus...et urbanus* (22.9).[42] Indeed, Suffenus' self-ignorance—thinking himself most polished when he is writing poetry, when in fact he is *infaceto infacetior rure* (22.14)—is also the self-ignorance of the senatorial jokester, whose wit Pliny says so misses the mark. Pliny's disapproval of this display of Catullan polymetric values in the venue of the Senate during elections is manifest. As noted above, jokes in and of themselves may well gain praise from Pliny in Catullan terms. The specific problem here is the context in which these jokes occur: for in the senate, the domain par excellence of *negotia*, there is a premium on being *severus* and *gravis*.

The character of Pliny's appropriation of Catullus is further revealed in a letter (5.10) in which he reworks an entire poem, Catullus 42. These two texts are similar in overall structure and content: in each we learn that the addressee—Suetonius in Pliny's letter, an unnamed woman in Catullus' text—owes the author some sort of literary debt; in each a legalistic mechanism is

[42]*Bellus* and *dicax* are hapax legomena in Pliny; their uniqueness and close juxtaposition virtually guarantee that this is a Catullan echo (cf. Schuster's testimonial apparatus *ad loc*). *Urbanitas* is another valued Catullan social quality (e.g., 39.8) that Pliny applies to witty statements (2.14.5); at 8.6.3 he expressly declares it inappropriate in the senate. For the association of *urbanitas* with jokes, see Quint. *Inst.* 6.3.102–12; see also Austin 53–54.

presented for extracting what is owed (Pliny's fear regarding the praetor's formula updates the archaic *flagitatio* that Catullus describes); and in each the question is raised whether blandishments or insults will best motivate the debtor (Pliny: *cave ne eosdem istos libellos, quos tibi hendecasyllabi nostri blanditiis elicere non possunt, convicio scazontes extorqueant.* Catullus: *moecha putida, redde codicillos* vs. *pudica et proba, redde codicillos*). Both texts open with sharp imperatives. Verbal echoes mark similar concerns generally: personified *hendecasyllabi* play a significant role in both texts, and Pliny's *efflagitantur* (§1) recalls Catullus' *reflagitemus* (6). There are two telling differences between these texts, however. First, the obscenity of Catullus' invective disappears in Pliny's version, reduced to the bare hint of a threat in the word *convicium.* Second, the nature of the debt differs. For Pliny says that his own poems have announced that a fine literary work by Suetonius is forthcoming, yet it has not appeared: Suetonius has not played his expected role in the economy of producing, circulating, and praising such work. In Catullus' poem, meanwhile, the woman in question has stolen the poet's notebooks; the poem describes and performs a dunning of the thief. The problematics of reciprocal literary production, which concerns Pliny, is absent here (though it is elsewhere a Catullan concern—e.g., in poems 14 and 50). So Pliny creates his Catullus not only by *selection*—eliminating troublesome obscenity, and abstracting Catullus' concern with producing and evaluating poetry (and other forms of verbal expression) from among his many and varied concerns—but also by *construction*, introducing the concern with reciprocal composition into a reworked, epistolary version of poem 42, which does not itself address this matter.[43]

In the passages discussed above, then, Pliny employs various strategies to contain the elements of Catullan polymetric poetry that are ideologically problematic for the engaged public figure and subversive of the system in which he finds his fulfillment. By limiting the applicable domain of Catullan values to a few narrow types of verbal expression (such as polymetric poetry), with which he engages only in periods of *otium*, while implicitly or explicitly

[43]Less clear cases can be made for Plinian imitation of Catullus in other letters. *Ep.* 4.14 has resemblances to Catul. 1. Both, granted, are cover letters and share many tropes of the cover letter; however, Pliny's use of the term *nugae* (4.14.8) may specifically echo its use at Catul. 1.4. Also, *Ep.* 7.4 (as well as the poem included in it, §6) echoes Catul. 16 in some respects. In both cases, at any rate, Pliny has selected for emulation Catullan poems that explicitly present themselves as concerned with producing, circulating, and evaluating polymetric poetry—consistent with his appropriation of Catullus generally.

excluding these values from all other domains of activity, he keeps them safely segregated from the *negotia* of the engaged public figure. This act of containment neutralizes the ideological objection to Pliny's production of poetry in the style of Catullus: Pliny suppresses Catullus the social radical whose values challenge the engaged public figure and the activities he pursues; he appropriates only Catullus the producer and critic of polymetric poetry and jokes, activities that for Pliny are safely restricted within the devalorized zone of *otium.* We might compare Cicero's appropriation of Ennius. As I will argue elsewhere, Cicero seeks to construct an Ennius who will serve as a textual repository of correct, community-oriented aristocratic values and patterns of action—a moral canon for engaged public figures. To this end, he quotes Ennius' *Annales* and tragedy more than one hundred times in the philosophica, rhetorica, and orations, but almost never quotes his comedy, satire, or other works. Cicero thus tailors his Ennius, by careful selection, to be as serious and weighty as possible. Pliny's tailoring gives Catullus a different cut, but is no less ideologically invested.

V. A new arena for aristocratic competition

The second charge that Pliny says was leveled at him by the gathering at Aristo's house (5.3.1)—the first being that he writes ideologically unsuitable poetry—is that he also recites it: *me...reprehenderent, quod haec scriberem recitaremque.* This objection, and Pliny's response to it, is central to understanding the purpose of his self-representation as a skilled producer of polymetric poetry in the Catullan mold. For I will argue in this section that, in reciting this poetry, Pliny is attempting a small but significant innovation. He, perhaps along with the other contemporary producers of such poetry, is seeking to move its production and consumption out of the realm of largely concealed, if widespread, dilettantism among aristocrats, and into a more visible, public, competitive realm. If he can engineer widespread acceptance of this move, he can legitimately display his prowess as a poet of this sort, enhancing his status and augmenting his prestige among his peers. Moreover, Pliny's attempt to change the status of this poetry provides us an opportunity to reexamine the proprieties and distinctions associated with the categories "public" and "private" in Roman society.

In *Ep.* 5.3 Pliny says outright that his practice of reciting polymetric poetry is a novelty for an engaged public figure. For after citing exempla to defend his practice of writing such poetry (§§3–6), Pliny directly addresses the second criticism, that he actually reads these poems aloud to an audience

gathered for the purpose (§7): *recito tamen, quod illi an fecerint nescio. etiam: sed illi iudicio suo poterant esse contenti, mihi modestior constantia est quam ut satis absolutum putem, quod a me probetur*. The contrast between the bare statement *quod illi an fecerint nescio* and the copious list of exempla given just above is striking: he has no precedents to adduce for the practice of reciting polymetric verse. Yet the subsequent, disarming claim that he recites because he (in contrast to those exemplary figures who wrote but did not recite) cannot rest content with his own judgment, in effect presents this poetry as a legitimate object to submit to the scrutiny of a judging audience of his peers. Indeed, I will argue below that the stakes could be high for a poet who presented his work in a *recitatio*—for the *recitatio* was in at least some respects an occasion for competitive status-building, in which both the reciter and members of the audience stood to gain or lose standing depending on how the recitation was received.

I turn, then, to the practice of *recitatio* generally, and Pliny's practice in particular. *Recitatio*, the oral reading of a pre-composed text to an invited audience, was a common practice within the early imperial aristocracy. Among poetic genres, readings of epic, drama, elegy, and lyric poetry were commonly given not only by men who had given their lives over to writing poetry—professional poets like Martial and Statius, along with erstwhile public figures who had retired or withdrawn from public life, like Silius Italicus or the Maternus of Tacitus' *Dialogus*[44]—but also, as Pliny reports, by men such as himself, Octavius Rufus, Calpurnius Piso, and Sentius Augurinus, who were currently or would soon be engaged in public careers.[45] Prose genres were also presented this way: *recitationes* of biography, historiography, and oratory are

[44]For Martial reciting, see, e.g., 12 pr.; for Statius reciting from the *Thebaid* see Juv. 7.82–87. On Silius' activities in retirement (which Pliny calls *otium laudabile*, 3.7.3), including composing and reciting poetry, see *Ep.* 3.7.4–5 and Mart. 7.63. In Tac. *Dial.* 10.3–8 Aper criticizes Maternus for abandoning his career as an advocate and choosing to seek fame through his poetry instead. On the recitation of the specific poetic genres mentioned here, see *Ep.* 7.17.3 and the discussion below; on the prevalence of poetic recitations in general, see 1.13.1, 7.17.3, and Juv. 1.1.1–14.

[45]In 2.10 Pliny urges Octavius Rufus, who is possibly cos. suff. in 80 (Sherwin-White 101, 754), to recite a poem or poems of unspecified genre (possibly epic: cf. 1.7.5). In 5.17 he praises Calpurnius Piso's *recitatio* of elegiac poetry. Piso is quite young here, but is presumably aiming for a public career and may be cos. ord. 111 (Sherwin-White 349). Finally, in 4.27.1–2 he praises the short poetry recited by Sentius Augurinus, also a young man but eventually a senator of praetorian rank (see section IV and n. 32 above).

attested as early as the Augustan age, and Pliny mentions several such readings by himself and his contemporaries.[46]

Pliny regularly places the *recitatio* under the rubric of *otium.* When inviting friends to a recitation of his *Panegyricus*, he urges them to attend only "if convenient" and "if they really have time" (3.18.4); also, he himself keeps free of *negotia* on days when he gives recitations (8.21.3), as well as on days when he attends them (8.12.1). Elsewhere he complains that, during a busy period for poetry recitations, even people completely at leisure (*otiosissimus quisque*) fail to attend, or arrive late, or leave early (1.13.2–4). Since the defining activities of the engaged public figure—forensic and judicial oratory, the pursuit and execution of magistracies, and so on—take place in the sphere of *negotia*, and since (as discussed above) *negotium* and its associated activities are invariably privileged over *otium* and its characteristic activities, then the *recitatio*, as Pliny presents it, is implied to have less social significance and lower stakes than the activities associated with *negotium.*

There are varied representations, however, of just what the social stakes of the *recitatio* are. I first examine the viewpoint of the audience, for, on Pliny's account, audience members seem to regard the *recitatio* as an opportunity for participants to enhance their status and build their reputations through the mechanisms of praise and blame. In 6.17.2 Pliny expresses annoyance at several audience members who conspicuously fail to applaud a reciter's efforts; he then lays down the precept (§4) that, when one attends a *recitatio*, one should always bestow praise: for whether one's own skill is greater, less, or equal to that of the performer, one's own reputation will ride up with his.[47] This precept seems to address specifically those audience members who themselves give recitations from time to time. It implies that an audience member's applause for the performance he is witnessing locks his own reputation as a reciter into a fixed

[46]For *recitationes* of these prose genres, see 1.5.2–4, 3.18.4, 5.12.1, 7.17, 8.12.4, 9.27; also, e.g., Sen. *Con.* 4 pr. 2, Suet. *Aug.* 89.2, *Tib.* 61.3. At 7.17.2–4 Pliny says that he has been criticized for reciting his orations: he insists on the practical advantages of doing so (§§7–15 with 3.18.4–9; cf. 2.19, a discussion of the disadvantages), and notes that this is a long-established practice, hence by no means his own innovation (§§3–4). This claim is certainly correct; see, e.g., 1.5.2–4 and Suet. *Aug.* 89.2. On the practice of reciting *orationes* as Pliny presents it, see Prete 1948a: 69–73; also *RE* Ia.441.52–442.1 (Funaioli).

[47]*Ep.* 6.17.4: *denique sive plus sive minus sive idem praestas, lauda vel inferiorem vel superiorem vel parem: superiorem quia, nisi laudandus ille, non potes ipse laudari; inferiorem aut parem quia pertinet ad tuam gloriam quam maximum videri quem praecedis vel exaequas.*

relation with that of the performer, and a rising tide of praise lifts both reputations at once. It follows that the reputation of an audience member is at stake in how he responds to the performance he is currently witnessing, for he is as much on display to other members of the audience (and indeed on display to the performer) as the performer himself is.[48] Pliny's own behavior when attending a *recitatio*, as he describes it elsewhere, appears consistent with his precept at 6.17.4. On the one hand, he praises others for the excellence of works recited (3.15.3–4, 4.27.1–2, 5.17; perhaps 1.16.6) or confidently predicts the bestowal of praise, if only the addressee can bring himself to recite (2.10.6–7); never in the letters does he evaluate someone else's recitation negatively.[49] On the other hand, he disapproves of audience members who either conspicuously fail to praise the reciter (6.17) or who wittily insult him (6.15). In the latter case, Pliny describes the wit, Iavolenus Priscus, as follows (§3): *est omnino Priscus dubiae sanitatis, interest tamen officiis, adhibetur consiliis atque etiam ius civile publice respondet: quo magis quod tunc fecit et ridiculum et notabile fuit.* That is, Priscus, because he takes part in the normal *negotia* of an engaged public figure, should have known better than to behave as he did at this *recitatio*—implying that the social stakes and proprieties of the *recitatio* are comparable to those of *negotia* (cf. Bütler 67–68). In fact, Pliny's judgment here recalls his condemnation of the anonymous jokesters in the senate (*Ep.* 4.25, section IV above), who also, on his account, behaved inappropriately by deploying wit in a social context marked as *negotium.* The use of insults and other kinds of negative evaluation, however, introduces a further competitive dimension to the *recitatio*: for the combination of blame with praise allows reciters to be torn down and built up relative to one another; that is, a relative ranking of reciters can be established and rearranged. Indeed, Pliny concedes at 6.17.4 that an audience member's negative judgment on a reciter does establish a hierarchical relationship—but not necessarily the one that the critic supposes: *disertior ipse es? tanto magis ne invideris: nam qui invidet minor est.*

[48]Thus, in *Ep.* 6.17, those audience members who do not applaud are evaluated negatively by another audience member, namely Pliny; Pliny also suggests (§3) that the performer himself will notice: *quae...amentia, in hoc totum diem impendere ut offendas, ut inimicum relinquas ad quem tamquam amicissimum veneris.*

[49]In *Ep.* 4.7, Pliny speaks ill of Regulus for reciting his son's *vita*: he implies that the topic is ludicrous (4.7.2: *de vita pueri, recitavit tamen*) and he portrays Regulus as a poor speaker in general (§4). But Pliny does not appear to have been in the audience for this recitation himself, so the incentive to praise the reciter in the sight of the other members of the audience, described above, is lacking. Moreover, Pliny's unique antagonism toward Regulus perhaps makes any situation involving Regulus an exceptional case.

By contrast, when Pliny describes the reciter's point of view, he tends to minimize the *recitatio*'s status-building aspect, hence its social stakes. At 7.17.7, he says that he seeks praise for his speeches only when they are published, not when they are recited: *nec vero ego dum recito laudari, sed dum legor cupio* (cf. §15). Likewise at 8.21.4–5 he says that, when reciting his poems, he reads out everything so that everything can be corrected by the attentive recommendations of his audience: for the aim, he insists, is to produce the best possible book, and the audience is obliged to assist in this process. According to this presentation, the published version of the work in question—not the recited version—is the object for which praise and blame actually matters; it is here that the author gains or loses status depending on the reception of the work. The role of the audience attending the *recitatio*, therefore, is to give the reciter a candid preview of how the future audience of readers is likely to receive the work. The audience is free, indeed expected, to communicate secretly—i.e., within the confines of the performance-space—recommendations and evaluations that could potentially damage the reciter's reputation if given wide public circulation. With these recommendations in hand, the reciter can revise in such a way as to avoid or limit such damage later, when he performs for a wider audience by publishing a book: for then, evaluations of the performance will assuredly receive wide circulation and may significantly impact his standing in the community (cf. *Ep.* 5.12, Tac. *Dial.* 3, Dupont 48–49). In fact, a further strategy for revision that Pliny both employs and discusses repeatedly—asking individuals to read the text of a work and make comments (e.g., 5.12.4, 7.17.7, 8.21.6)—has the same aim of providing a candid preview of the work's broader reception. As Pliny says to Paternus (4.14.10), to whom he is sending a draft of a book of *hendecasyllabi*, *a simplicitate tua peto, quod de libello meo dicturus es alii, mihi dicas*.[50]

[50]Habinek (170–78 and *passim*) argues that, within the republican aristocracy, candor is usually thought to characterize the relationship between socially unequal *amici*, who are never in direct competition for magistracies (etc.): it is the role of the *amicus minor* to give his superior friend a candid, honest preview of how his actions will be received by a wider public. Meanwhile, the personal relationship between social equals, who may directly compete with each other, normally entails a cautious, reserved distance, hence an absence of candor. The social configurations Habinek describes are not quite parallel to the situation of the *recitatio*, where status distinctions among participants do not seem to be a primary issue. Nevertheless, his idea that candor may be present in noncompetitive situations, but absent in competitive ones, is suggestive for the social dynamics of the *recitatio*.

Pliny, then, presents two different views of the purpose and social stakes of the *recitatio.* When he speaks as an audience member, he presents the *recitatio* as a competitive arena in which the standing of all the participants is at stake in one way or another. For the auditor sees the *recitatio* as an arena in which he is on display and subject to the evaluations of his fellow audience-members as well as the reciter. But when Pliny speaks as a reciter, he denies that the reciter's own standing is significantly in play at this event. For while the reciter plainly subjects himself to the evaluations of others, he holds or claims to hold that the evaluative comments he receives are provisional and relatively secret, inasmuch as widely circulating judgments upon his work are reserved for the published version, whose reception is the "real" arena of competition.[51]

Yet if reciter and audience in theory have differing and to a degree opposed aims, it goes without saying that a man who both recites and attends recitations is fully aware of this difference. Thus, in *Ep.* 5.3.9 Pliny assigns to the reciter a more complex task: he must extract a candid evaluation despite his audience's reluctance to give him one. Here he notes again that the audience's suggestions are helpful for the reciter who wishes to revise (*multa etiam a*

[51]This asymmetry in the aims and expectations of the participants has a parallel in the ideology of gift-exchange in Roman and other societies. Here, the giver is supposed to forget immediately that he has bestowed a gift and not look for reciprocation, while the receiver is never to forget that he has received, and always to look for the right opportunity to reciprocate (see, e.g., Dixon; compare also Plin. 1.13.6, 3.18.4 (he does not wish others to feel obligated to attend his recitations, even if he attended theirs) with 8.12.2–3 (he feels obligated to attend the recitation of someone who has attended his): in each case he presents himself as having the "correct" point of view for his situation). Just as these asymmetrical viewpoints of giver and receiver are essential to maintaining both the circulation of goods and services and the hierarchical social bonds forged by gift-giving (even though each party is fully aware of the other's point of view), so the asymmetrical aims and expectations of reciter and audience may be essential to the social functioning of the *recitatio* as I have described it. For if the reciter shared the audience's view of the occasion (high competitiveness, low candor), the *recitatio* would lose its progymnastic character altogether, ceasing to serve its useful function as an intermediate stage in the preparation of a book; meanwhile, if the audience shared the reciter's view (low competitiveness, high candor), auditors who are social equals of the reciter would be lending too much aid to their rival. Hence the utility of differing views of the event. Mart. 8.76, in fact, portrays this same asymmetry; the poem gains its point from probing a conflict that these differing views create. Caught between a reciter's insistent demand for a candid evaluation (8.76.1–5) and the implied expectation that this evaluation will be positive (6), Martial tells him something "truer than true": that the reciter does not, in fact, want to hear the truth (7–8). For, while Pliny at 6.17.4 baldly states that an auditor should praise the reciter even if he is bad, Martial cannot quite bring himself to do so.

multis admonetur)—but then he suggests a strategy for divining their "true" feelings even when they fail to give suggestions: *et si non admoneatur, quid quisque sentiat perspicit ex vultu oculis nutu manu murmure silentio; quae satis apertis notis iudicium ab humanitate discernunt.* Precisely by suggesting a strategy for disentangling the audience's *iudicium* from its *humanitas*, Pliny counters the audience's strategy of giving only praise, articulated in *Ep.* 6.17. Moreover, there are several passages in which Pliny describes his efforts to modulate the tone of the event through careful selection of audience and venue, so as to get the performance he desires from himself as well as the response he seeks from his audience.[52]

But Pliny more clearly calls into question his claim that the praise and blame received by the reciter are simply means to the end of producing a polished book when he reports in his letters that his own recitations were favorably received. In 3.18.9, he implies that the reception of the published text of his *Panegyricus* matters more than the audience's response to the *recitatio*, since the audience for the published version will be larger (*memini quidem me non multis recitasse quod omnibus scripsi*). Yet he goes on to report that the auditors at the recitation were enthusiastic: thus, even as he relegates the *recitatio* to secondary importance as an occasion for reputation-building, he increases its importance after the fact by re-presenting it, and its positive reception, to the wider readership of his letters. Similarly, at 4.5.2, 4.19.3 and 7.4.7 Pliny reports that works he recited were warmly applauded by the audience. Now, it is not inconsistent for Pliny to report to the readership of his letters that his recitations were well-received, while also maintaining that the praise so garnered was given candidly. But to make such a report does reveal that more is at stake for

[52]Pliny suggests that a large audience inspires greater fear in the reciter, causing him to prepare and perform better—fear, presumably, for his reputation, which implies a competitive action in the public eye. Meanwhile a smaller audience of carefully selected people will provide more candid evaluations, and so perhaps better serve the reciter's project of revision (thus 5.12.1: *advocavi aliquos ut vererer, paucos ut verum audirem*; cf. 5.3.8, 7.17.7–12). He also seems to link candor with intimacy, for he suggests that those who are present as *amici* of the reciter are obliged to give some sort of constructive response (6.15.2–3, 6.17.2–3, 7.17.11, 8.21.5). Venue also matters: at 8.21.2–3 he speaks of holding a recitation *in triclinio* for *amici pauci*, and at 5.3.11 he contrasts reciting to *amici in cubiculo* with reciting to the *populus in auditorio.* Also, the description (1.13.2–5) of rude auditors hanging around in public places and coming and going from recitations at will may or may not imply that the recitations in question are themselves being held in public places (e.g., the *atrium Libertatis*: cf. Dalzell 26–28): at any rate, these auditors are presented as inattentive (indeed, absent from much of the recitation) and therefore can hardly be giving well-considered, helpful criticism. On the locations of *recitationes* see *RE* Ia.442–43 (Funaioli), Dupont 46 and n. 5.

the reciter than simply obtaining suggestions for revision. For it shows that the evaluations made by the audience *do* potentially have wider play; they are not contained entirely within the performance space after all. In this respect, the reciter is actually well-served if the audience is disposed to bestow only praise (as at *Ep.* 6.17), even as he seeks, for the sake of revising effectively, to divine what his auditors "really" think. However, he also has the incentive to secure praise from the audience by any means possible, precisely in order to be able to report, afterwards and to a different audience, that this praise was received (and candidly given, of course).[53]

The question of how to locate the *recitatio*, and Pliny's engagement with polymetric verse generally, with respect to the categories of public and private has been in the background of the current discussion, and has figured prominently in other recent discussions of Pliny's recitations and the relationship he thereby creates between himself and the community (Riggsby 1998: 81–82; Dupont). In her stimulating study of the *recitatio* in the early empire, Dupont begins by observing (45, 48, 49) that the *recitatio* is not a public event insofar as it has no official place in the civic calendar or in the city's space; it is also private in the sense that its audience is normally composed of people who are specifically invited. The work recited is therefore "private" discourse until it is published, at which time it becomes "public." Later, however, she writes (52) "*Recitatio* in the imperial period... [situates] itself in a social space that transcends the limits of purely private pleasures. Located between the public and the private realms, the discourse performed at a *recitatio* partakes of the intimacy of a conversation among friends at a country estate as well as of the extended publicity of a published book." Finally, she states (57) that the fruit of the *recitator*'s labor is "the social prestige linked to the exercise of public discourse"—that is, it shares the social stakes of a public activity. These quotations suggest the difficulties of classifying the *recitatio* with respect to the public-private distinction: Dupont counts it as public in some respects, times, places, and consequences, but private in others.

I believe that this complex picture is correct, but may be articulated more clearly with reference to an explicitly relational model of the public-private distinction. One such model is proposed by Weinstein 34 (followed by Cohen

[53]Thus, passages in Juvenal (7.43–44) and Suetonius (*Nero* 20) describe measures taken by reciters to assure that they receive applause at their *recitationes.* These passages, at least, suggest the view that the stakes for the reciter's reputation and status are too great to be left to chance.

74), namely an onion: any given layer may be regarded as private in relation to the layers outside it, which represent variously-defined public realms, or public in relation to inner layers, which correspond to various private realms. Riggsby 1997: 49 adapts this model for Roman use by observing that the onion must be understood not as layered outward around a fixed core of essential, unambiguous privacy—for there is no such realm in Roman society—but inward from an outer layer of essential, unambiguous publicness, the realm of activities that (e.g.) have a place on the civic calendar, or are classified as the *negotia* of engaged public figures. Dupont is right, and Pliny himself makes clear, that this incontestably public realm is not the home of *recitatio*, which is a private activity in relation to the activities that constitute this outermost layer of the onion. Now, it was suggested above (n. 1) that "publicness" may be understood as some combination of "visibility" and "consequentiality." However, these latter categories are themselves linked: highly consequential activities (e.g., discharging magistracies), also tend to be highly visible, and so perhaps, by the same token, an activity's relative degree of visibility may create the expectation among observers that it is of commensurate consequence. To recite polymetric poetry is to make one's engagement with it more visible that if one does not recite it, and this visibility, as we have seen, is to some extent consequential for both performer and audience: it puts their relative standing and reputations into play. A recitation can therefore be regarded as a "public" event insofar as the participants take social risks under one another's scrutiny: at any rate it is "public" in relation to activities that take place in realms of lower visibility (hence of less social consequence for the participants), at the very same time that it is "private" in relation to the most visible and consequential activities of all, *negotia.*

The specific innovation of Pliny and several of his friends, then, consists in moving the aristocratic engagement with short, sometimes erotic or obscene, Catullan-style polymetric poetry outward toward the surface of the onion. On Pliny's account, engaged public figures had long written such poetry (as fragments and attestations corroborate) but did not recite it. Instead, they retained it in domains of comparative secrecy, perhaps keeping it largely to themselves or presenting it to only a small circle of intimates. By reciting his poems of this sort—which he claims is an innovation—Pliny moves the consumption of this poetry into a more visible domain, so that his standing relative to his peers is more significantly in play and the social stakes of his poetic activity are increased. Perhaps, however, an even finer nuancing is possible. The ideology of the *recitatio* seems to mark it as a more "public"

event for the audience than for the performer, since the latter maintains the claim that the evaluations he receives from the audience are candid, secret, and provisional, while the audience members more or less overtly compete for status with one another, as well as with the performer. Thus *attending* a recitation may be regarded as located further toward the surface of the onion than *giving* a recitation (see n. 51 above). Also, publishing a book, by virtue of its wide circulation and irrevocability, is a more public action than simply reciting. In practice, however, the *recitatio* may be more "public" for the reciter than he overtly admits, inasmuch as he is happy to report his successes to a wider audience through other media. But in no case does the recitation of polymetric verse break through to the outermost layer of the onion, into the domain of *negotia*: Pliny invariably classifies any sort of engagement with polymetric poetry as *otium*, and he always classifies *recitatio* in the same way.

Pliny's recitations of polymetric poetry, which I have argued are an attempt to make the aristocratic engagement with this poetry more visible, consequential, competitive, and therefore "public" than it had previously been, may also be seen as part of a larger trend in the early empire to open up for aristocratic competition activities that had not been available for this purpose in the republic. As noted earlier, such activities include gladiatorial combat by aristocrats, engagement with declamation into adulthood, and the recitation of literary works in various genres. In appropriating polymetric poetry for this project, then, Pliny is swimming with the tide, though his task is complicated by the need to neutralize the ideologically problematic content of this genre, a complication not presented (or not to the same degree) by other literary genres. Indeed, the content of the genre apparently poses its difficulties *only* for the engaged public figure, and not for others.[54]

VI. Conclusion: the politics of Pliny's Catullan poetry

Although Pliny does not, by reciting his polymetric poems, thereby insert them into the realm of *negotia*, which is the most valorized realm of aristocratic activity, he does nevertheless invest them with some of the same social stakes that *negotia* carry, the stakes associated with performing competitively before a judging audience of one's peers. Specifically, Pliny says in *Ep.* 9.25.2 that he

[54]Martial, at any rate, never defends or apologizes for reciting his poetry. He speaks of recitations of his own poetry, or poetry of the same sort written by others, at (e.g.) 2.71, 11.52.16–18, 14.137 (142). Cf. 1.29, 1.38, 1.52, 1.63, and 12.63 on plagiarists who recite his poems as their own.

hopes to gain *gloria* from his *lusus et ineptiae*. Elsewhere he claims that other engaged public figures have either bestowed praise and positive renown on others who produced such poetry (7.4.4: *maximos oratores hoc studii genus...in laude posuisse*) or have gained such renown themselves for producing it (7.9.9–10: *fas est et carmine remitti...hi lusus non minorem interdum gloriam quam seria consequuntur*). The latter passage, moreover, suggests that the positive renown in question is the same sort of renown that the engaged public figure gets for properly discharging his *negotia*.[55] Why does Pliny aspire to give polymetric poetry this status? As noted above (section III), he indicates in several letters that his poems are praised as fine examples of their kind, even as he himself is criticized for producing poetry whose content is inappropriate to the expected bearing of the engaged public figure. Pliny's struggle to assign this poetic activity exclusively to the domain of *otium*, and so to distinguish it sharply from the activities counted as *negotia*, is aimed at defusing this objection, leaving the praise he receives for producing formally good polymetric poems as pure gain. The required balancing act, however, is difficult and delicate: as he says to Arrius Antoninus in 4.3.2, who like Pliny writes light verse in his *otium* while his *negotium* consists of discharging high office, *nam severitatem istam pari iucunditate condire summaeque gravitati tantum comitatis adiungere non minus difficile quam magnum est*. He could equally apply these words to himself. The potential benefits of achieving this difficult balance are great, however: for the more visibility and consequentiality he can attach to producing these poems, provided the objection is overcome, and the greater the competitive stakes they therefore carry, the higher he ranks among his peers. Indeed, he may earn praise (such as he bestows upon Arrius) precisely

[55]*Gloria* implies widespread positive renown, *fama bona*. It is the objective counterpart to the subjective usage of *laus* ("praiseworthiness," "a cause of praise"): see, e.g., 4.12.6. For the phrase *in laude ponere* ("to deem/categorize as praiseworthy," *Ep.* 7.4.4), cf. Cic. *Top.* 71. A survey of occurrences of *gloria* and its cognates in Pliny indicates some of the arenas of aristocratic competition in which success could earn one praise, hence positive renown among one's peers. These arenas include warfare (e.g., 2.1.2, 2.7.5–7, 6.10.3, 10.14), one's conduct in office (3.7.3), elections (6.6.1), forensic oratory (3.9.8, 6.22.5, 6.29.3, 9.13.5), dedicating buildings or other public works (1.8, 5.11.2, 10.41), and various kinds of literary activity (1.16.6, 2.3.8, 3.21.6, 5.17.6, 6.17.4, 7.20.4, in addition to the passages cited above); also one's ability to secure benefits for one's clients (3.8.3, 10.4.6), and even filial piety (5.17.5, 8.18.10). Moreover, the quest for *gloria* looks not just to one's contemporaries, but to future generations (explicitly at 3.16.6, 6.16.1, 9.3.1, 9.19.3–4; implicitly *passim*). On the semantics of *gloria* in general, see Hellegouarc'h 369–83, esp. 375–77. My analysis of Pliny's aspiration to gain *gloria* from his polymetric poetry differs sharply from Gamberini 100–103 and Hershkowitz 175–77.

for maintaining the required balance—itself a virtuoso performance—in addition to the praise he gains for writing poems that are good of their kind.[56]

It does not seem to me, then, that Pliny is being "ironic" or "off-handed" (Hershkowitz 177, 179) in his claim to seek *gloria* from his polymetric poems. Nor do I accept the claim that his engagement with this poetry constitutes a "depoliticized leisure activity" (*ibid.* 179, cf. 169) *tout court.* If "politics" here is taken in the narrow sense to refer to governmental administration and its associated activities, this claim is at least superficially correct: Pliny consistently and emphatically segregates his poetic activity from the realm of his *negotia.* But if "politics" is understood in the broader sense, to refer (in addition to government) to a range of other strategies for controlling the distribution and flow of power in society, then Pliny's Catullan poetry is highly political: he seeks to make this poetry into a legitimate, accepted arena of aristocratic competition, and through it aims to elevate his status among his peers. Moreover, the concrete manifestations of this enhancement of status—a wider and more positive reputation, greater deference paid to him, more clients (hence more appearances, on more important cases, in the centumviral court), for example—might in turn yield results that are "political" in the narrower sense: he might, perhaps, speak earlier in senatorial debate, or play a larger role within the emperor's *consilium* (see, e.g., *Ep.* 6.31), or receive more favorable consideration for further magistracies or other posts in the government. Pliny's appropriation and display of Catullan polymetric verse must be seen as one of a number of emerging strategies for reputation-building in the early empire, strategies which are "politically" significant in both senses of the word.

Appendix

Here I examine the terms by which Pliny labels his polymetric poetry as they occur in authors contemporary with him or earlier, omitting Catullus and Martial who receive full discussion in section I above.[57] Most common among this set of terms are *lusus* and *ludere*, by which poets commonly label poetry (of

[56]Similarly Boccuto 32: "Questa gloria per Plinio, in ultima analisi, si deve tributare non tanto o non solo alle qualità intrinseche delle poesie in questione, ma anche e soprattutto alla duttilità mentale dimonstrata dal loro autore per il fatto stesso di cimentarsi in vari generi letterari diversi fra loro...." She then argues that the requisite "duttilità mentale" is both described and manifested in the poem at *Ep.* 7.9.11.

[57]Barta usefully collects occurrences of the terms under discussion, and others, in all major poets as well as in the collections of minor poets and fragments.

many sorts) and its composition. Vergil uses *ludere* to describe the composition of his bucolics (*Ecl.* 6.1; cf. Ov. *Tr.* 2.538), Horace of his lyric (*Carm.* 1.32.2; cf. 4.9.9 regarding Anacreon), Ovid of his erotic elegy (*Tr.* 3.2.5–6, *Fast.* 2.6, *Rem.* 380), the authors of the *Priapea* and *Culex* of these poems (*Priap.* 1.1, 2.1; *Culex* 1–8), the chorus of Seneca's *Agamemnon* of the (non-epic) poem they would like Apollo to sing (*Ag.* 331), and Statius of his poem on Etruscus' bath (*Silv.* 1.5.14), to name just a few. On the semantics of *lusus/ludere*, especially as terms for poetic composition, see Wagenvoort. The other terms are significantly less common. *Nugae*, referring to poetry, occurs in Horace at *Epistles* 1.19.41 as a poet's self-deprecating label for his work, and again at *Ars* 322 to designate drama with melodious verses but poorly-drawn characters. *Inepti* is the label that Ovid, at *Tristia* 2.223, attaches to his (poetic) *lusus*. *Versiculi* commonly occurs in Cicero and Suetonius to indicate a short epigrammatic poem, or a small fragment of a larger poem,[58] but occurs rarely in the poets themselves. Ovid, however, uses it (*Her.* 20.238) to describe an elegiac distich that is to be placed on a dedication, a usage consistent with that of the prose authors (likewise Plin. *Ep.* 9.19.6, of an epitaph). Horace also uses it: once at *Epode* 11.2 to describe his earlier work, and twice in the *Satires* to describe useless bits of versified self-encouragement (1.2.109) and his own earlier efforts at writing Greek verse (1.10.32; cf. 1.10.58). For Horace, this word seems to convey contempt of the poetry so labeled. *Hendecasyllabus* is used by Asconius (*Tog.* 84C) to label a verse of Calvus in that meter, and the elder Seneca (*Con.* 7.4.7) quotes the phrase *salaputium disertum* as coming from among Catullus' *hendecasyllabi* (53.5). The word also appears in Statius in the title of *Silvae* 4.9 (and again at 4.9.55) to describe this poem, itself written in hendecasyllables, which he calls a *iocus* (4.9.1) and associates with the Saturnalia (4 pr.). *Epigramma*, attested before Martial only in prose, refers specifically to an epitaph or other inscription (e.g., Cic. *Tusc.* 5.66, Vitr. 8.3.21–23, Petr. 115.20), but is also used by extension to label other short poems (Cic. *Arch.* 25, Sen. *Ep.* 108.34, Petr. 55.3–4, Quint. *Inst.* 1.5.21, Suet. *Aug.*

[58]Cicero: e.g., *Pis.* 75, *de Orat.* 2.327, *Tusc.* 1.115, *Fam.* 9.10.1 (= Suet. *Gram. et Rhet.* 14); further citations may be found in *OLD*. Suetonius: *Iul.* 73 (Catullus' poems on Caesar and Mamurra), *Tib.* 59, *Cal.* 8 (two times, referring to an elegiac distich), 27; *Gram. et Rhet.* 11 (hendecasyllabic verses of Valerius Cato); 16 (a hexameter verse of Domitius Marsus). Similarly, Columella 9.2.3 quotes Verg. *G.* 4.152, calling it a *versiculus*.

70.2)—in some cases invective or convivial, and sometimes (but not always) in elegiac meter.[59]

The terms under discussion here, often indicating play, smallness, frivolity, and inappropriateness, point to an underlying insignificance of the poetry in question, an insignificance whose precise reference is often indicated contextually. For example, poems designated by these terms are contrasted with more "serious" poetry (e.g., Sen. *Ag.* 331, Hor. *S.* 1.10.32, Tac. *Dial.* 10.3–4), or are associated with leisure activities (e.g., Stat. *Silv.* 4 pr., Petr. 55.3), or are implied to have erotic or obscene content (e.g., *Priap.* 2.1, Ov. *Tr.* 3.2.5–6, Quint. *Inst.* 1.8.6). This last implication occurs especially with the terms *lusus/ludere*, which are allowed to slip between the senses of poetic composition and sexual play (cf. Wagenvoort 37–38). The terms *hendecasyllabi* (a metrical designation) and *epigrammata* do not by themselves denote insignificance, but occur in the same kinds of contexts as the other terms and are often conjoined with them, and in practice are used to designate the same kinds of poetry. Pliny's usage of these terms is broadly consistent with the usages of the authors discussed here: he thus situates his own poetry within a diverse group of poetic forms that mark themselves as "frivolous" or "non-serious."

[59]The diminutive form *poematia*, which Pliny uses at 4.14.9 and 4.27.1, occurs nowhere else in Latin (according to the *PHI* database)—though *TLG* shows that ποιημάτιον appears at Plut. *Cic.* 2.3, roughly contemporary with Pliny, and in [Longin.] *De Subl.* 33.5 (referring to Eratosthenes' elegy *Erigone*), which may date to the first century C.E.; also twice in the scholia to Theocritus, the earliest stratum of which may be Augustan (see below). Thus, as a Greek borrowing, Pliny's usage may not be extraordinary. The non-diminutive form *poema* is very common in Latin from Plautus onward, designating many specific poetic forms, or even verse generally as opposed to prose (Var. *L.* 7.2); it can be applied to polymetric poetry (as at Catul. 50.16) *inter alia.* The two remaining terms that Pliny offers in *Ep.* 4.14, *idyllia* and *eclogae*, are both hapax legomena in Pliny, and very rare in Latin. *Ecloga* occurs at Stat. *Silv.* 3 pr. and 4 pr. to refer to poems 3.5 and 4.8 respectively, both hexameter poems; also, Suet. *Vit. Hor.* uses *ecloga* to refer to *Ep.* 2.1 (a hexameter poem). The etymological sense of "extract" (from a larger work) is operative at Cic. *Att.* 16.2.6, where *eclogarii* refers to selections from the *De Gloria*, and Varro *ap.* Char. 1.120 Keil, referring to extracts from some sort of *annales.* Aside from these citations, neither *OLD*, *TLL*, nor *PHI* show any occurrences of either term until late antiquity. However, ἐκλογή in the sense of "extract" (from a literary work) is attested in imperial Greek prose (*LSJ* s.v.), while εἰδύλλιον is virtually limited to the scholia to Theocritus (*TLG* adds only two further occurrences: Sozomenus, and a scholion to Aristophanes). If indeed the first layer of these scholia dates from the Augustan period, perhaps this word was already associated with Theocritus in Pliny's day. If not, Pliny's use at 4.14.9 is its earliest attestation. On these matters see Gow I.lxxi–lxxii, lxxxii.

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