

My collection of references to the eagle as king (or queen) of birds was not intended to be exhaustive,² but it should not have omitted the most relevant of all, Martial 5. 55. 1, where this very eagle is addressed as *volucrum regina*. This makes strongly in favor of my proposal *regem* as against *regi* (Gronovius), but it also shows that Martial sometimes, if not always, thought of the bird as female. On *rex* for *regina*, see my note.

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2. Ibid., p. 286.

"LESBIA": A MOCK HYPOCORISM?

Numerous explanations have been offered for Catullus' choice of the name "Lesbia" for his beloved: perhaps it was during a conversation about Sappho that the woman was won over,¹ or perhaps Catullus was paying homage to his lover by associating her with the revered Sappho,² or the poet saw a similarity between the passion Sappho expressed for a young bride (31 Lobel-Page) and his own passion,³ or "Lesbia" had by Catullus' time become proverbial for "pretty as a girl from Lesbos,"⁴ and so on.⁵ These explanations need not be mutually exclusive; Catullus was doubtless aware of the various connotations such a word would have. I suggest that an additional, playful reference is contained in the word, that Catullus was simultaneously twitting his lover as he exalted her. By its association with *λεσβιάζω*,⁶ the pseudonym alludes to something private and personal, which undercuts the seriousness of the learned reference to Sappho. That "Lesbia," in addition to her many charms, was also a *fellatrix* cannot be proved, though her reputation for stooping to the lowest acts may partly derive from this activity.⁷ The possibility that Catullus chose a name with both sublime and lewd connotations accords well with the growing evidence of his tendency to self-mockery.⁸

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1. A. Riese (ed.), *Die Gedichte des Catullus* (Leipzig, 1884), p. xi.

2. M. Schanz, *Geschichte der römischen Literatur* (Munich, 1909), p. 68.

3. G. Friedrich (ed.), *Catulli Veronensis liber* (Leipzig, 1908), p. 236.

4. L. Alfonsi, "Lesbia," *AJP* 71 (1950): 64-66.

5. For other theories, see A. H. Weston, "The Lesbia of Catullus," *CJ* 15 (1919-20): 501; G. Lieberg, *Puella Divina* (Amsterdam, 1962), pp. 82-95.

6. LSJ glosses *λεσβιάζω* as "do like the Lesbian women, *fellare*." Cf. P. Pierrugues, *Glossarium eroticum linguae Latinae* (Amsterdam, 1826), s.v. *Lesbiari*: "Hoc usus est verbo Galenus in exordio lib. II *Simpl. medic.* eodem sensu quo *λεσβιάζειν*." On Catullus' command of Greek, see A. Ronconi, *Studi catulliani* (Brescia, 1971).

7. Cf. *Pro Cael.* 47, where Cicero says of Clodia that "in turpissimis rebus . . . laetetur," and 49, "complexu, osculatione, actis . . . proterva meretrix procaxque videatur." This citation, of course, begs the question whether "Lesbia" is to be identified with Clodia Metella, on which see R. G. Austin (ed.), *M. Tulli Ciceronis "Pro Caelio" oratio*² (Oxford, 1952), pp. 148-49.

8. On this tendency, see F. Cairns, "Catullus' *Basia* Poems," *Mnemosyne* 26 (1973): 15-22; D. N. Levin, "Propertius, Catullus, and Three Kinds of Ambiguous Expression," *TAPA* 100 (1969): 230; H. D. Rankin, "A Note on Some Implications of Catullus," *Latomus* 29 (1970): 121.