

‘POMPEIUS MACER’ AND OVID*

The Pompeius Macer whom prosopographers have discerned among the friends of Ovid boasts connections as stellar as anyone in Ovid’s ambit.¹ His induction into the Roman establishment was preceded by the achievements of his father (or possibly grandfather) Theophanes of Mytilene, who for two decades had been one of Pompey’s closest confidants. Macer himself served Augustus first as equestrian procurator of Asia and then as director of state libraries in Rome, and when the phil-Hellene Tiberius replaced Augustus, his position at court grew firmer still. He lived to see his son gain a seat in the Roman senate, to become the first known senator of Greek origin. And while tending to his political career, he made a name for himself in Roman literary circles and maintained a long-lasting friendship with Ovid.

It is in the nature of the evidence that prosopographical entities must often be assembled from the merest scattering of fragments. But ‘Pompeius Macer’ is a particularly brittle amalgam of testimonia. The immediate purpose of this paper is to dissociate him from Ovid and from the Roman literary milieu, but it is not possible to discuss his relationship to Ovid without touching on other problems that the reconstruction of his career presents.

The only certain references to descendants of Theophanes who were active in Ovid’s lifetime consist of cursory allusions in two literary texts. Strabo, writing early in Tiberius’ reign, mentions that Theophanes ‘left a son Marcus Pompeius whom Caesar Augustus once appointed procurator of Asia and who is now ranked among the foremost of Tiberius’ friends’:

ὁ συγγραφεὺς Θεοφάνης καὶ πολιτικὸς ἀνὴρ ὑπήρξε καὶ Πομπηίῳ τῷ Μάγνῳ κατέστη φίλος μάλιστα διὰ τὴν ἀρετὴν ταύτην, καὶ πάσας συγκατάρθρωσεν αὐτῷ τὰς πράξεις, ἀφ’ ὧν τὴν τε πατρίδα ἐκόσμησε τὰ μὲν δι’ ἐκείνου τὰ δὲ δι’ αὐτοῦ, καὶ αὐτὸν πάντων τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἐπιφανέστατον ἀνέδειξεν· υἱὸν τε ἀπέλιπε Μάρκον Πομπήιον, ὃν τῆς Ἀσίας ἐπίτροπον κατέστησέ ποτε Καῖσαρ ὁ Σεβαστός, καὶ νῦν ἐν τοῖς πρώτοις ἐξετάζεται τῶν Τιβερίου φίλων.

Strabo 13.2.3 (618)

Other members of the family come to light in an account of a *maiestas* trial which Tacitus relates under the year A.D. 33:

Etiam in Pompeiam Macrinam exilium statuitur, cuius maritum Argolicum, socerum Laconem, e primoribus Achaeorum, Caesar adflixerat; pater quoque inlustris eques Romanus ac frater praetorius, cum damnatio instaret, se ipsi interfecere. datum erat crimini, quod Theophanen Mytilenaeum proauum eorum Cn. Magnus inter intimos habuisset quodque defuncto Theophani caelestes honores Graeca adulatio tribuerat.

Tac. Ann. 6.18.2

Short as Strabo’s statement is, juxtaposition with Tacitus has encouraged challenges to it at two points. In 1686 Theodor Rycke conjectured that since

* In the course of thinking through this argument I have benefited much (though perhaps not as much as I ought) from the criticisms of C. P. Jones, R. A. Kaster, J. D. Morgan, and the referee for *Classical Quarterly*; to all I am grateful.

¹ Among many discussions of Pompeius Macer, see for example G. W. Bowersock, *Augustus and the Greek World* (Oxford, 1965), pp. 38–9; R. Hanslik, *RE* 21 (1952), 2276–7 Pompeius 92; H.-G. Pflaum, *Les carrières procuratoriennes équestres sous le haut-empire romain* (Paris, 1960), i.11–13 and iii.957; R. Syme, *History in Ovid* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 73–4, and *JRS* 72 (1982), 79–80.

Theophanes' descendants bore the cognomen 'Macrina' or 'Macer' (Macrina's brother being identified with the praetor Pompeius Macer of *Ann.* 1.72.3), Strabo's procurator too must have been a Pompeius Macer. Rycke accordingly restored this name to Strabo's text by writing *Μάκρον Πομπήιον* for *Μάρκον Πομπήιον*.² This emendation met with relatively little resistance for three centuries, until J.-M. Bertrand emphasized that we now know, as Rycke did not, that Theophanes' descendants bore the praenomen 'Marcus' as well as the cognomen 'Macer' or 'Macrinus'. It is therefore possible that the Augustan procurator was correctly identified as Marcus Pompeius in Strabo's text.³

Given that no other source yet affords certain confirmation that the procurator was a Pompeius Macer, it is 'prudent not to alter what little evidence Strabo supplies about him. In fact, his name is a puzzle whether it is read as Marcus Pompeius or Pompeius Macer, since neither the praenomen nor the cognomen is readily explicable in terms of his antecedents. Theophanes had taken the name Gnaeus Pompeius Theophanes when he received the citizenship from Pompey, and that is the name, or at least the name pattern, he might have been expected to transmit to a son. Even if we were to suppose that the future procurator was a second rather than a first son, Marcus is a curious name for him to bear. Not only was that praenomen not used in Pompey's family, but it was rarely taken by any of the Pompeii who had made their way into Rome's governing elite (Broughton lists only a single Marcus Pompeius). The cognomen Macer presents its own difficulties. Like the praenomen, it lacks a parallel in Pompey's family, and it also involves a departure from Hellenic naming conventions which were prevalent in this period. Aristocrats in Greek cities who had obtained the Roman citizenship usually combined their new Roman names with traditional Greek names, as Theophanes himself had done. Fully Romanized names like Pompeius Macer were not unknown. But in the absence of other indications, one's first assumption would be that at this date such a name pointed to a settler of Italian origin who had come east in pursuit of business opportunity rather than to a local aristocrat invested with the Roman citizenship.⁴

The inscrutably named son – whether he was Marcus Pompeius, Pompeius Macer, or M. Pompeius Macer – may witness to one or both of two complications which had arisen in Theophanes' own life. We know that Theophanes survived the wreck of Pompey's fortunes and even outlived Caesar, but his years of influence in Rome were surely over by the end of 48. He is last heard of trying to corner Cicero for a talk about matters of mutual interest in the summer after Caesar's assassination (*Cic. Att.* 15.19.1 = Shackleton Bailey 396), which shows him headed in any but an opportune direction for repairing his position in the post-Caesarian era. It is generally thought that in the end he went home to Mytilene. If a son entered the picture at any point after Pompey's defeat, it was perhaps no accident that the name he received did not parallel Pompey's: the less made of that connection now, the better.

² *Ad Cornelium Tacitum animadversiones* (Leiden, 1686), p. 110, on *Tac. Ann.* 6.18.4.

³ J.-M. Bertrand, 'Apropos de deux disparus: Cn. Pompeius Theophanes, M. Pompeius Macer', *ZPE* 59 (1985), 173–6. Bertrand appears to me to give undue weight to another argument against Rycke's emendation, which is that the inversion 'Macer Pompeius' which it posits is an irregular name form. Bertrand is aware that Strabo does occasionally invert the order of nomen and cognomen (see p. 174 n. 21), and it must not be thought that this is mere Strabonian caprice. Strabo was undoubtedly mimicking speech patterns he heard among friends in the Roman elite, in whose parlance the order of nomen and cognomen was often inverted. On this front, Rycke's emendation seems unassailable.

⁴ For an account of Greek naming conventions at this period, see G. Daux, 'L'onomastique romaine d'expression grecque', in *L'onomastique latine, Paris 13–15 octobre 1975*, ed. N. Duval (Paris, 1977), pp. 405–13.

We cannot date the birth of Theophanes' son, but it is more likely to have fallen in the period of his decline than during his ascendancy. Strabo describes the son as flourishing under Augustus and on into the early years of Tiberius' reign, which would be consistent with his having been born in the 40s. And if Strabo's procurator is identical with the illustrious Roman knight who Tacitus says was driven to suicide in A.D. 33 (this is the second controversy associated with Strabo's text, which I will take up in a moment), he could not have been born prior to the Civil War unless we postulate that he lived to be over eighty years old. Another terminus is also relevant. In his heyday Theophanes had created some consternation at Rome by adopting the Spanish careerist Cornelius Balbus, a tie which Cicero seems to describe as still in force in the year 50 (Cic. *Balb.* 57, *Att.* 7.7.6 = SB 130), though it must have been dissolved once Balbus and Theophanes lined up opposite each other during the war. Adoption does not invariably indicate childlessness, but that is what it normally implies. Theophanes is thus unlikely to have already had the son who was to become Augustus' procurator when he adopted Balbus.

If Theophanes had to resort to adoption once, we have every reason to suspect that that was how he obtained an heir the second time. And if he adopted after the Civil War, he almost certainly turned to his connections back home in the region where his reputation as a benefactor still counted for something rather than in Rome. This is also the direction in which the name Marcus Pompeius points, which is as common a combination among the aristocracy of the Greek East as it is unusual in Rome.⁵ Not only, then, is there no call to emend the name found in Strabo's text, as Bertrand has rightly insisted, but the name may harbour a small clue to Theophanes' efforts at recovery after Pharsalia.⁶

The other crux in Strabo's text concerns his identification of the procurator as Theophanes' son. Strabo and Tacitus would mesh more smoothly if Strabo's procurator were Tacitus' *inlustris eques Romanus*, and thus the grandson rather than the son of Theophanes. For that reason it has been periodically suggested that Strabo's text be emended to read *νιωνόν* rather than *νιόν*. But this proposal has been less readily received than Rycke's, since the sources can be reconciled just as effectively by adjusting *proauum* in Tacitus' account. If an error has crept into one of the two texts in the course of its transmission, it is more likely that *νιωνόν* has been corrupted into *νιόν* than that *auum* has been corrupted into *proauum*. But if the error

⁵ Mytilene itself furnishes two more examples, M. Pompeius Lykaon (*IG* 12.2.115) and the poet Marcus Pompeius Ethicus (*IG* 12.2.653); cf. at Ephesus M. Pompeius Apollonius Claudianus and M. Pompeius Demeas Caecilianus (*Inscriptionen von Ephesos*, 708), M. Pompeius Damonius (*Inscriptionen von Ephesos*, 1020), and M. Pompeius Boron (*Inscriptionen von Ephesos*, 2304); at Cos M. Pompeius Ephebicus (A. Maiuri, *Nuova sylloge epigrafica di Rodi e Cos* [Florence, 1925], no. 571 b); at Rhodes M. Pompeius Epaphroditus (*IG* 12.1.647). The praenomen Marcus is also common along the Pompeii who proliferated at the other end of the Mediterranean, in Spain.

⁶ Another fact which may be pertinent to Theophanes' domestic arrangements is that Pompeii are attested in greater numbers at Mytilene than in any other Greek city of the East but Ephesus. (The numbers are 22 and 23 respectively: see the lists in B. Holtheide, *Römische Bürgerrechtspolitik und römische Neubürger in der Provinz Asia*, Hochschulsammlung Philosophie Geschichte 5 [Freiburg, 1983], pp. 234–7, with the discussion on pp. 24–5.) These Pompeii may be, or be descended from, kinsmen and protégés on whom Theophanes persuaded Pompey to confer the citizenship, or they may be from families of Italian settlers who originally had no connection to either Pompey or Theophanes. (On the difficulty of distinguishing between Romanized Greeks and Hellenized Romans at Mytilene, see J. Hatzfeld, *Les trafiquants italiens dans l'Orient hellénique* [Paris, 1919], pp. 92–5.) In either case, they will have been important people at Mytilene, and their numbers are large enough to raise the possibility that Theophanes adopted someone who was already a Pompeius by birth.

originated with one of the authors, Strabo is far less likely to have made a mistake at this point than Tacitus, who was writing a century after the events he relates and about the gentry of a region that was peripheral to his concerns. Here again, it is not possible to decide with certainty between the alternatives. But it should be recognized that a more circumstantial hypothesis is needed in order to accommodate Tacitus' version than Strabo's. Between 48 B.C. and A.D. 33 there is little room for the next three generations of Theophanes' family to unfold by natural succession. And a purely natural succession would be impossible if the Q. Pompeius Macer attested as praetor in A.D. 15 is Macrina's ill-starred praetorian brother, as almost all scholars have believed. To have become praetor in A.D. 15, Macer would have to have been born by 15 B.C. at the latest, which means that his father, putatively Theophanes' grandson, can hardly have been born later than 35 B.C. There is room for Theophanes' son too only if we make him an adoptive son who was a grown man when Theophanes adopted him, and who then played no role except to sire the future procurator.

Although Theophanes' only certifiable descendants during the early principate are the Pompeii mentioned by Strabo and Tacitus, like-named persons have been recruited into the family from a number of other sources. The most important is a Pompeius Macer whom Suetonius says Augustus put in charge of 'ordering the library collections', but instructed to block circulation of some youthful writings of Julius Caesar:

quaedam scripta [ab adulescentulo Caesare] ut Laudes Herculis, tragoedia Oedipus, item Dicta collectanea ... uetuit Augustus publicari in epistula quam breuem admodum ac simplicem ad Pompeium Macrum, cui ordinandas bibliothecas delegauerat, misit.

Suet. *Caes.* 56.7

Prosopographers are quick to reconstruct a bureaucratic apparatus behind the emperors and they have accordingly identified Pompeius Macer as an administrator of one of Augustus' new public libraries or possibly of the whole system.⁷ The verb *publicare* leaves no doubt that publicly accessible rather than private book collections are at issue here.⁸ But that Pompeius Macer was the director of one or more state libraries is not what the passage tells us. An administrative role would be expressed by a phrase like *praeesse bibliothecis*, which Suetonius elsewhere applies to one of Macer's contemporaries.⁹ 'Ordering collections', on the other hand, is one of several expressions which refer to the preliminary work of selecting, grouping, labelling, cataloguing, and shelving the books which form a collection.¹⁰ The very detail which

⁷ The fullest discussion of Pompeius Macer's library role is embedded in an account of the librarian Hyginus by J. Christes, *Sklaven und Freigelassene als Grammatiker und Philologen im antiken Rom*, *Forschungen zur antiken Sklaverei* 10 (Wiesbaden, 1979), pp. 74–6. Since Christes takes as a given that Macer is Theophanes' son, while granting little significance to the term *ordinare* which Suetonius uses to specify Macer's role, he reaches conclusions different from those argued here.

⁸ For *publicare* of opening a collection to the public, cf. Suet. *Caes.* 44.2, Pliny, *HN* 7.115, and 35.26.

⁹ '[C. Iulius Hyginus] praefuit Palatinae bibliothecae', Suet. *Gr.* 20.2; a comparable expression is (*esse*) *supra bibliothecam*, Vitruv. 7 *praef.* 5 and 7 and the inscription commemorating Ti. Julius Pappus, *AE* 1960 no. 26. Both expressions are analogous to and probably based on Greek terminology. The first corresponds to *προσθήναι τῶν βιβλιοθηκῶν*, cf. *Suda* ii.109.33–4, 306.16–17 Adler; for the second, cf. *ὁ ἐπὶ τῆς βιβλιοθήκης* at Strabo 13.1.54 (609) and *ἐπιστάτης τοῦ Μουσείου καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἐν Ῥώμῃ βιβλιοθηκῶν* at *IGR* i.58, no. 136.4–5.

¹⁰ Other terms used in addition to *ordinare* (Suet. *Caes.* 56.7, *Gr.* 21.3) are *disponere* (Cic. *Att.* 4.8.2 = SB 79), *digerere* (Suet. *Caes.* 44.2), *discribere* (Sen. *Dial.* 9.9.7), and *dissignatio* (Cic. *Att.* 4.4a.1 = SB 78). Plutarch uses *ἐνσκευάζεσθαι* of the cataloguing operation at *Sulla* 26.2, where

leads to mention of Macer shows him involved with the library at an early stage: he is instructed either not to acquire or not to allow circulation of certain works of Caesar which Augustus disdained as immature.¹¹ What Suetonius means, then, is not that Macer administered Augustus' library but that he organized it, performing something like the service which the scholar Varro had been asked to discharge for Caesar's (unrealized) library project a generation earlier, and which the *grammaticus* Tyrannio had performed for the private collections of Sulla and Cicero.¹² The only two public collections over whose formation Augustus was in any position to assert authority were the library he founded next to the temple of Apollo on the Palatine in 28 B.C. and the library his sister Octavia dedicated in honour of her son after 23. Since Suetonius happens to disclose that someone else undertook responsibility for organizing the latter, Macer must have organized the former.¹³ The plural *bibliothecae* will refer not to multiple establishments, but to the two sets of holdings, in Greek and in Latin, which together formed the Palatine collection.¹⁴

Can the man who organized Augustus' library be identical with Strabo's procurator, as has been almost universally believed? That both men shared the name Pompeius Macer is not improbable, though it remains so far unproven. Nor is it improbable that a scion of Theophanes' family would have the necessary background to function as a library expert. Theophanes himself had won Pompey's confidence at least in part for literary expertise, and Greek intellectuals must have known more than most Romans about books – certainly Greek books, still the core of any library – even in the late first century. It may even be a point in favour of identification that Macer is said to have organized but not to have administered Augustus' library. Those who ran the imperial libraries during the early principate seem to have been freedmen,¹⁵ which would mark that function as work unsuited to anyone with social pretensions. But if a generation earlier the senator and scholar Varro could be invited to organize Caesar's library, perhaps a Greek aristocrat had nothing to lose by accepting a similar invitation from Augustus.¹⁶ Against these probable convergences, however, there is one detail which makes it all but impossible to match the profile of

it is clearly not a function performed by the person in charge of the collection. John Morgan suggests to me that the distinction of functions is also evident in sources suggesting that Callimachus catalogued the collection at Alexandria while Zenodotus was the librarian in charge.

¹¹ The usual interpretation is that Augustus had Caesar's juvenilia in his keeping and forbade Macer to transfer them to the public collection. But some of these works seem already to have been in the public domain. The *dicta collectanea* which Suetonius mentions are evidently the same as the *uolumina ἀποφθεγμάτων* of which Cicero knew (*Fam.* 9.16.4 = SB 190), and the Oedipus tragedy was presumably among the second-rate poems which Tacitus says that Caesar himself 'in bibliothecas rettulit' (*Dial.* 21.6). If that is the case, what Augustus had to do in order to keep them out of the library was not just withhold his own copies, but instruct Macer not to acquire them on the open market.

¹² For Varro's role, see Suet. *Caes.* 44.2, '[Caesar destinabat] bibliothecas Graecas Latinasque quas maximas posset publicare data Marco Varroni cura comparandarum ac digerendarum'; for Tyrannio's role, see Plut. *Sulla* 26.2 and Cic. *Att.* 4.4a.1 = SB 78, 4.8.2 = SB 79; cf. also Cic. *QFr.* 3.4.5 = SB 24 and 3.5.6 = SB 25.

¹³ '[C. Melissus] curam ordinandarum bibliothecarum in Octaviae porticu suscepit', Suet. *Gr.* 21.3.

¹⁴ The plural is often used this way of component parts of one collection, as at Suet. *Caes.* 44.2, *Gr.* 21.3, Petron. 48.4, Isid. *Orig.* 6.5.2; cf. *ILS* 1588–9, 1971–2.

¹⁵ As for example Hyginus (Suet. *Gr.* 20.2) and Ti. Julius Pappus (*AE* 1960 no. 26) under Augustus and Tiberius respectively.

¹⁶ On the other hand, the man who performed a role exactly parallel to Macer's at the other Augustan library was definitely a freedman (Suet. *Gr.* 21.3).

the procurator with that of the library organizer. If the procurator is Tacitus' *eques illustis*, or if he was born after the start of the Civil War, he could scarcely have been more than twenty years old when the Palatine library was founded.

A second candidate for registration among Theophanes' descendants has already been mentioned. He is the Q. Pompeius Macer attested as urban praetor in A.D. 15 (Tac. *Ann.* 1.72.3, *ILS* 9349) and long presumed to be the unnamed praetorian brother who was brought to ruin with Pompeia Macrina eighteen years later. Of all the equations by which the house of Theophanes has been expanded, this is the most compelling, yet it too has untidy aspects. The praenomen is once again a problem. Not only was the name Quintus not taken by the praetor's immediate forebears, so far as we know, but it does not recur in later generations.¹⁷ It is also curious that as Strabo inventories famous persons from Mytilene, he should stop with the procurator and say nothing about the son who had since gone on to become a Roman senator – perhaps indeed the very first senator of Greek origin. Later in the imperial period when men of provincial origin became the first in their region to attain a senate seat, they often advertise the distinction.¹⁸ Finally, if there is room to doubt the identity of the procurator and the library organizer, alternative possibilities are opened up for explaining the parentage of the praetor of A.D. 15. He could as well be the son of the one man as of the other.

While it is not difficult to devise a stemma for Pompeii Macri and Macrini of the early principate so long as they are taken two or three at a time, to fit all the testimonia into a coherent array requires a daunting number of shims and props.¹⁹ Let me therefore conclude this survey with a reminder that 'Pompeius' is one of the most widely diffused gentilicia in the Roman empire and that 'Macer/Macrinus' is a relatively common cognomen. It is inevitable that sometimes they get paired in the names of persons who can have no connection with the family of Theophanes, like the two Pompeii Macri attested in north Italy and Pompeii Macrini in Africa and Narbonensis.²⁰ Wherever descendants of Theophanes have been identified chiefly on the basis of names, the stemma is precarious.

Up to this point I have tried to show, not that any particular combination of testimonia about this family is mistaken, but that a combination at one point tends to make further combinations problematic. The link which has been established between Pompeius Macer and Ovid, however, I think can be shown to be wholly illusory. The only two known members of the family whom it was chronologically

¹⁷ This anomaly becomes more acute if it was through offspring of Macrina's praetorian brother that Theophanes' line survived into the following century. Given the scale on which members of the family were purged in 33, we should be wary of postulating unknown siblings who escaped to propagate.

¹⁸ It must be admitted that Strabo's silence about the entry of Theophanes' family into the Roman senate still needs explaining even if we strike the praetor of A.D. 15 from the stemma. Though Strabo was writing down into the early 20s, he is equally oblivious of Macrina's brother, who had to have entered the senate by A.D. 27 at latest and who may have entered much earlier.

¹⁹ The pieces to be fitted together do not end with those I have reviewed. Other texts which have been thought relevant to the history of Theophanes' family give us a Pompeius Macer who was master of a slave buried near Rome (*ILS* 7391), a Pompeius Macer who wrote a Greek tragedy from which Stobaeus culled a short excerpt (p. 617, no. 52 Hense = *TGF* Nauck, pp. 830–1), a '...us Macer' honoured on an undated coin from Priene (K. Regling, *Die Münzen von Priene* [Berlin, 1927], no. 186), a Gaius or Gnaeus Pompeius who was honoured at Priene while serving as *ὑπαρχος* of Augustus (F. Hiller von Gaertringen, *Inscriptionen von Priene* [Berlin, 1906], no. 247), and a Pompeius Macer achieved by emending and combining author names associated with two epigrams in the *Greek Anthology* (*Anth. Pal.* 7.219, credited to a 'younger Pompeius', and 9.28, credited in alternate ascriptions to a 'Pompeius' or to a 'younger Marcus').

²⁰ *CIL* 5.7816 and 7566, 8.504, and 12.2568.

possible for the poet to have befriended are the equestrian procurator and the praetorian senator.²¹ That the latter was Ovid's friend has never been suggested, so far as I know, and with good reason. In a verse letter written in A.D. 13, Ovid reminds Macer of their 'age-long comradeship' ('longi...conuictibus aeuī', *Pont.* 2.10.9) dating back at least to the era of the *Amores*, when Macer first comes in for mention in Ovid's work (*Am.* 2.18). He should therefore be roughly coeval with Ovid. But if Theophanes' senatorial descendant is the praetor attested in A.D. 15, he must be a full generation younger than Ovid, since it is reasonable to assume that his excellent connections would have carried him to a praetorship near the minimum age of thirty.

Several details which Ovid discloses about his friend also rule out identification with the procurator. The letter just cited alludes to a tour on which Ovid spent the best part of a year accompanying Macer around Sicily.²² The passage has often been treated as evidence for an early posting in Macer's career. But if that conjecture is correct, Macer was probably not holding a post in the *equestrian* cursus. Ovid says at one point that in the course of their tour he and Macer transacted business together and recreated by turns.²³ Collaboration in the work of a Roman official, together with the duration of Ovid's stay, would most naturally suggest that Macer was holding a one-year senatorial position (Sicily was a senatorial province) and that Ovid belonged to his *cohors*. Equestrian posts, by contrast, typically involved multi-year assignments.

Family backgrounds also argue in favour of separating Ovid's friend from the Pompeii of Mytilene. We know that Theophanes was married to a Greek woman, and that two or three generations later the husband found for Pompeia Macrina was likewise Greek.²⁴ There is every likelihood, then, that the members of this house regularly intermarried with Greek families, as did other senatorial Greeks of the first century. But when Ovid tells us that his wife was related to his friend Macer,²⁵ we are practically bound to draw the conclusion that the man was not Greek, since Ovid's wife was not Greek. In a letter immediately following the letter to Macer, Ovid tells us that she was the niece of an eminent citizen of Fundi, and elsewhere he says that before their marriage she had belonged to the entourage of one of Rome's most blue-blooded families.²⁶

But the clearest indication that Macer was not Greek is the way Ovid speaks of the epic he composed. It is not just that he never mentions that Macer wrote in Greek, but that in a catalogue of contemporary poets he groups him with some thirty-odd others all of whom wrote in Latin (*Pont.* 4.16.6). In order to believe that Macer is nevertheless to be identified with the Augustan procurator, we would have to believe that he chose Latin rather than Greek as the medium in which to compose his major work – a notoriously rare undertaking among Greek writers of the Roman period.²⁷

²¹ The library organizer of Suet. *Caes.* 56.7 need not be separately considered: either he is the same man as the procurator, or else if he is not, we have no reason to suppose that he has any tie to the Mytilenean family.

²² 'Trinacris est oculis te duce uisa meis', *Pont.* 2.10.22 (and following); 'hic mihi labentis pars anni magna peracta est', *Pont.* 2.10.29.

²³ 'Est aliquid...et modo res egisse simul, modo rursus ab illis, / quorum non pudeat, posse referre iocos', *Pont.* 2.10.39–42.

²⁴ Theophanes' wife Archedamis is known from Mytilenean coins on which the pair are jointly commemorated as god and goddess, *BMC Greek Coins of Troas, Aeolis, Lesbos*, nos. 158–60; Pompeia Macrina's husband is identified by Tacitus at *Ann.* 6.18.2 above.

²⁵ 'Mea...coniunx non aliena tibi est', *Pont.* 2.10.10.

²⁶ *Pont.* 2.11.13–18 and 28, 1.2.136–40, 3.1.75–9.

²⁷ Those who conflate the procurator with the tragedian quoted by Stobaeus (above, n. 19) must believe that Pompeius Macer was ambidextrous, composing verse in major genres with equal facility in Greek and in Latin.

Against the points of difference which seem to separate Ovid's friend and the procurator, their one likeness counts for little: the friend was named Macer, which may have been the cognomen of the procurator as well. Since we do not know the friend's gentilicium, however, we have no more reason to try to equate him with the procurator than with any of several other contemporaries named Macer. A less unlikely candidate than Pompeius, for example, would be the Macer of whom Tibullus writes in 2.6.1–6. But the cognomen Macer is so common that there is little point in trying to merge Ovid's friend with any other known bearer of the name.²⁸

Prominent as Theophanes' heir was in the court and administration of Augustus, he can be eliminated from Ovid's circle and never be missed. In fact, the absence of Pompeius Macer from among Ovid's friends accords remarkably well with everything else we know about Roman literary society, and this is what I think is most interesting about the prosopographical question I have raised. Between 30 and 60 contemporaries can be identified who enjoyed some sort of amicable contact with Ovid.²⁹ No more than four of them can claim a Hellenic background, and of those, the only ones to attract significant notice in Ovid's poems are two Thracian potentates in the region where the poet was interned.³⁰ In the case of Horace, we can identify from 65 to 100 of his contemporaries who seem to have been friends or friendly acquaintances. In this group there are at most six Greeks, almost all of whom make only fleeting and inconspicuous appearances (if any) in Horace's work.³¹ Among 20 to 35 persons who have some plausibly documented connection with Vergil, the only Greeks are his freedman Eros, his teachers Parthenius, Siro, and Philodemus, and a rhetor who once travelled in Vergil's company on a diplomatic mission.³² No Greeks are known

²⁸ There is one more reason for not identifying the friend of Ovid and the procurator, which as an *argumentum ex silentio* cannot claim central importance, but which is worth stating nonetheless. The *Letters from Pontus* have as a prime objective to persuade friends to use their influence at court on Ovid's behalf. If Ovid's Macer was the Augustan procurator and the favourite of Tiberius, it is inconceivable that in *Pont.* 2.10 he would not have been asked to intercede for Ovid.

²⁹ In describing the friends of Ovid and the other poets named in this paragraph, I take no account of slaves, since slaves were not autonomous social actors.

³⁰ Cotys and his father Rhoemetaces, who figure in *Pont.* 1.8, 2.9, and 4.7. The others are the freedman Hyginus ('familiarissimus Ovidio poetae' according to Suet. *Gr.* 20.2, and possibly the unnamed recipient of *Tr.* 3.14, but not certainly of Greek origin) and Arellius Fuscus (Ovid's preceptor in rhetoric according to Sen. *Cont.* 2.2.8, but never mentioned in the poems).

³¹ The only one to receive prominent mention is the Sicilian rancher Pompeius Grosphus, honoured in *Carm.* 2.16 and *Epist.* 1.12 (though Pompeius' cognomen is not conclusive proof that he was Greek). The others are the brothers Sosius (probably though not certainly Greek) who marketed Horace's books (*Epist.* 1.20.2, *Ars* 345); the rhetor Heliodorus who accompanied a diplomatic party with which Horace happened to travel in the early 30s (*Serm.* 1.5.2); the doctor Antonius Musa to whose medical expertise Horace alludes at *Epist.* 1.15.3; and perhaps the messenger 'Onysius' (the name has often been emended) who carried a book of Horace's poems to Augustus (Suet. *Vita Hor.* p. 298.14 Roth). The possibility that the philosopher and poet Philodemus (whom Horace quotes at *Serm.* 1.2.120–2) addressed Horace in one of his philosophical works has now been effectively closed. *PHerc.* 253 contains an allocation to Varius, Quintilius, and a third person whose name ends '...tius' (*Vol. Herc. Coll. Altera* vii, fol. 196, frag. 12, line 4, with discussion by A. Körte, *RhM* 45 [1890], 173–7). That the name should be restored as 'Plotius' (Tucca) rather than 'Horatius' has been conclusively shown by a newly deciphered fragment containing an allocation to Plotius, Varius, Vergil, and Quintilius (M. Gigante and M. Capasso, *SIFC*, 3 ser., 7 (1989), 4).

³² Don. *Vita Verg.* 34 Hardie (Eros); Macr. *Sat.* 5.17.18 (Parthenius); Servius on *Ecl.* 6.13, *Aen.* 6.264 (Siro); *PHerc.* 1802 (*Vol. Herc. Coll. Altera* i, fol. 92, col. 11, line 3) as supplemented by A. Körte, *RhM* 45 (1890), 173–7, and *PHerc. Paris.* 2 as read by M. Gigante and M. Capasso, *SIFC*, 3 ser., 7 (1989), 4 (Philodemus); Hor. *Serm.* 1.5.2 and 40 (Heliodorus).

among the friends of Propertius and Tibullus. For the friends of Catullus a generation earlier, the same pattern holds as for the Augustans. It would thus have been a striking anomaly if the heir of Theophanes did turn out to be one of Ovid's friends.

Unfortunately, this is one of those cases in which a pattern emerges only to make the overall picture more confusing than ever. Scores of Greek intellectuals and literati are known to have visited Rome during the Augustan period, and many lived there for years. Some, like Dionysius of Halicarnassus and the epigrammatists of the *Greek Anthology*, certainly established contacts in Roman society, and just recently it has been established beyond any doubt that in southern Italy Philodemus consorted with Vergil, Varius, Quintilius, and Plotius Tucca.³³ But why do so few Greeks appear in the company of Roman poets in Rome? If they were truly as marginal in the literary life of the capital as the lack of reference to them suggests, does that mean that Roman poets did not look to their Greek counterparts as mediators of Hellenic culture? Or does it merely imply a streak of insularity or rivalry on the part of Roman poets? If on the other hand the inconspicuousness of Greek friends does not mirror their true role in Roman literary life, what caused them to be screened out of the discourse carried on in Latin poetry? Should we think of the 'circles' of Ovid, Horace, and the rest as literary projections, as self-conscious and selective as any other element of their poems? These are some of the questions that the non-relationship between Pompeius Macer and Ovid invites us to pursue, and I would be curious to know where anyone thinks they lead.

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³³ M. Gigante and M. Capasso, 'Il ritorno di Virgilio a Ercolano', *SIFC*, 3 ser., 7 (1989), 3–6.