At the conclusion of his article on Catullus c.67, W. Kroll, after offering his own interpretation of the poem and summarizing the contributions of several other scholars to its understanding, remarks wistfully, with perhaps a touch of cynicism: "Und nun bin ich neugierig, was der nächste Erklärer aus dem Gedichte machen wird." Given its difficulties, he recognized only too well that he could not have said the last work on its interpretation. And most students of Catullus who have grappled with the text and context of this elegy would probably be inclined to agree with G. Perrotta's observation that "Il carme 67 è, fra tutte le poesie di Catullo, forse la più difficile a interpretarsi." Textual corruptions in lines 5 and 12 are in part responsible for this situation, but, as I shall attempt to show, the uniqueness of the poem as a whole and the failure of readers to apprehend the poet's primary motivation and intent in composing it lie at the heart of the problem. It may or may not be true, as L. Richardson has maintained, that the poet sought "to lampoon a fellow townsman and spread scandalous gossip about him and his family," or, as

2. G. Perrotta, "Il Carme della Ianua (Catullo 67)," Athenaeum n.s. 5 (1927) 160. See also H. Magnus, "Catullus Gedicht 67," Philologus 66 (1907) 296, where he quotes Turnebus' description of c.67 as aeque ac folium Sibyllae obscurum et tenebricosum.
3. The text of Catullus quoted in this study comes from R. A. B. Mynors' OCT edition (1958; reprinted with minor corrections 1960, 1967). On the emendation gnato (nato Froelich) adopted by Mynors and other editors in line 5 for uoto in V, see infra n.25. Line 12 (uerum ë istius populi ianua qui te ë facit) appears to be a locus desperatus, but no emendation or interpretation thus far proposed for it affects in any significant way the argument here developed.

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G. P. Goold suggests, Catullus' rejection as a suitor underlies the defamatory character of this poem. Such speculation, however, does little to explain the obscurities, whether real or apparent, inherent in its text and structure and would more properly be regarded as creative historical reconstruction than as literary criticism.

I

To begin with, it would be well to recognize the rather unusual literary form of the poem itself. There is, to be sure, ample precedent in classical literature for the vocalization of inanimate objects and, in particular, for oral communication with house doors, commonly in the guise of the so-called paraclausithyron. Catullus himself offers elsewhere a yacht speaking indirectly through an unidentified, presumably human intermediary (c. 4) and an articulate lock of hair (c. 66) in his translation of Callimachus' *Coma Berenices* (fr. 110 Pfeiffer). Nowhere, however, do we find anything quite comparable in dramatic form to c. 67, where the reader encounters a gossiping, self-righteous door directly engaged in a dialogue with another party. Analogous verbal exchanges of a sort may be discovered in numerous epigrams, such as are collected in the *Greek Anthology*, with first-person utterances attributed to gravestones, statues, or objects of votive offerings and directed to a passerby, but they lack a dramatic setting altogether or, at most, possess only an embryonic dialogue in a simple question-and-answer scheme. It is true that Callimachus also made use of a dialogue arrangement with vocal inanimate objects in poems other than epigrams, but the extant evidence for his practice would


6. Thus, in a recent study, Colin Macleod steers clear of the continuing controversy regarding the situation that supposedly underlies c. 67 and states that his paper "is not designed to swell the ample literature on that topic, but to further a little the interpretation of the poem as such"; see his article, "The Artistry of Catullus 67," in his *Collected Essays* (Oxford 1983) 187. This essay was first published in *Δευτεροκαινία*, edited by G. Fabiano and E. Salvaneschi, in memory of Gianfranco Bartolini (Genoa 1982) 71–88.


9. There is no internal evidence to support the common assumption that the door's interlocutor is Catullus himself. The mise-en-scène involves either one unidentified individual or perhaps an unidentified group of which one member serves as spokesperson; cf. *nobis* (the widely accepted emendation for *uobis* in V) in line 7, *nos volumus* and *nobis* (universally adopted correction for *uobis*) in line 18. The paraclausithyron of Propertius 1.16 is frequently cited as similar to and possibly influenced by c. 67 (cf., e.g., H. E. Butler and E. A. Barber, *The Elegies of Propertius* [Oxford 1933] 176; L. Richardson, Jr., *Propertius: Elegies I–IV* [Norman, Oklahoma 1976] 189), but the former is structured as a soliloquy and the latter completely lacks the lover's serenade to the door, which is an essential feature of the paraclausithyron.
seem to indicate either that his dramatic format was similarly undeveloped\(^\text{10}\) or, where the interchange was possibly somewhat more elaborated, that the subject of the dialogue was restricted to the representation of a deity.\(^\text{11}\)

Catullus opens c.67 with a couplet intimating a scenario far different from any of the earlier metrical dialogues in which articulate objects play a leading role:

\begin{quote}
O dulci iucunda uiro, iucunda parenti.
salue, teque bona Iuppiter auctet ope.
\end{quote}

As other scholars have already noted, the language appears to evoke, at least initially, a setting in which a bride is addressed on her wedding day.\(^\text{12}\) uiro and parenti are most naturally taken, in such a context, as referring to her husband and her father, respectively,\(^\text{13}\) with the blessing from Jupiter to be understood as a traditional wish on such an occasion for the birth of offspring to grace the marriage.\(^\text{14}\) It is only after the first distich that the poet's ploy begins to emerge. For the addressee, paradoxically, turns out to be, not really a bride, but a house door, whose symbolic and literal connotations he proceeds to exploit throughout the rest of the poem. This door, as customary guardian of moral purity and marital fidelity in the home,\(^\text{15}\) is, by a sort of metonymy, implicitly identified with the new bride of the current owner Caecilius\(^\text{16}\) but, as a permanent part of the home itself, is depicted also as responsible for events that took place there in the past.

The implicit identification of the door with the bride in the introduction of

\begin{quote}
nulla quit sine te domus
liberos dare, nec parentis
stirpe nitier . . .

. . . . . . .
ludite ut lubet, et breui
liberos date.
\end{quote}

10. Cf. Epigrams 4, 13, 34, 61 Pf.; Aetia, fr. 114 Pf., dealing with the statue of Delian Apollo, an elegy which Pfeiffer ad loc. sees as an exemplum for Ovid's mode of exposition in the Fasti. Propertius also followed the Callimachean aetiological tradition in poems 2, 4, 6, 9, and 10 of Book IV, but it should be noted that only poem 2 has a speaking inanimate object, namely, a statue of Vertumnus, which, unlike Catullus' ianua, is represented as delivering a monologue rather than as engaging in a dramatic dialogue.

11. Cf. Iambus 9, fr. 199 Pf. The two-line fragment, addressed to an ithyphallic Hermes, is by itself too brief to allow any definitive conclusions as to the extent of the dialogue apparatus, but the summary of Diegesis 8.33–40 relating to this poem and the content of two other fragments, 221 and 723 Pf., that may belong to it, appear to admit the possibility of a more developed form of dialogue exchange; cf. Pfeiffer's notes ad locc.

12. See, e.g., T. P. Wiseman, Catullan Questions (Leicester 1969) 22: "Catullus' address to the house-door itself is in terms more appropriate to a bride."

13. For the collocation uiro . . . parenti, cf. the epithalamium c.62.28: quae pepigeru uiro, pepigerunt ante parentes, and 52: cara uiro magis et minus est inuisa parenti.

14. Cf. c.61.66–68 and 204–5:

15. Cf. Copley (supra n.8) 28 and the references in n.1.

16. On the differentiation of Caecilius from the elder Balbus' son, see infra n.18.
c.67 furnishes the dramatic setting for the dialogue that follows and the direction of the ensuing conversation. The anonymous bride has presumably now arrived in her new home, which at this time belongs to a certain Caecilius (line 9: . . . *ita Caecilio placeam, cui tradita nunc sum*), and an interlocutor—representing, it would seem, an accompanying wedding party—takes this opportunity to question the door about its allegedly notorious prior history of complicity in marital infidelity. The risqué character of the exchange recalls the bawdy *Fescennina iocatio* that regularly occurred during the course of a Roman marriage ceremony.\(^\text{17}\) The ostensible butt of the jesting, however, is not the new groom but the door itself and the previous owner. Within the framework thus provided, the poet develops the dialogue regarding the conduct of the woman who had earlier lived in the house. A great deal of confusion over his intent has resulted from a failure on the part of readers to distinguish the vaguely drawn dramatic occasion of the dialogue from the subject and substance of the dialogue itself.\(^\text{18}\)

Adapting the characteristic format of question-and-answer (*κατὰ πέποιν καὶ ἄπόκωσιν*) employed in earlier poetic dialogues involving talking objects, Catullus portrays an unidentified interlocutor as soliciting from the door a response to the charge of delinquency leveled against it (lines 7–8):

\[
\text{dic agedum nobis, quare mutata feraris}
\text{in dominum ueterem deseruisse fidem.}\(^\text{19}\)
\]


\(^\text{18}\) Unless the dramatic occasion of the poem is distinguished from the incidents related in the dialogue, the wish expressed by the door in line 9 makes little sense, for it would then equate Caecilius, the new owner, with Balbus' son (reading *gnato* in line 5), whom the door is reported to have served ill already. Scholars are divided on this issue. Against the identification of Caecilius with Balbus' son are: Macleod (supra n.6) 187; J. P. Hallett, "Ianua iucunda: The Characterization of the Door in Catullus 67," *Collection Latomus* 168 (1980) 107, n.3; Richardson (supra n.4) 432; I. K. Horváth, "Chronologica Catulliana," *A AntHug* 8 (1960) 353 n. 34; F. O. Copley, "The 'Riddle' of Catullus 67," *TAPA* 80 (1949) 246; Kroll (supra n.1) 141. In favor of the identification are E. Badian, "The Case of the Door's Marriage (Catullus 67.6)." *HSCP* 84 (1980) 83; G. Giangrande, "Catullus 67," *QUCC* 9 (1970) 85–86; Perrotta (supra n.2) 179; Magnus (supra n.2) 298; E. T. Merrill, *Catullus* (Boston 1893; repr. Cambridge 1951) 175 on line 9; H. A. J. Munro, *Criticisms and Elucidations of Catullus*\(^^2\) (London 1905; repr. New York 1938) 161.

\(^\text{19}\) The commonly accepted emendation *nobis* seems preferable to the transmitted *uobis* in line 7. *uobis* would include a reference to the previously mentioned Balbus and his son, about whom the interlocutor has already shown that he is informed. *nobis* and *uobis* are easily confused in a minuscule script; cf., e.g., *uobis* for *nobis* in c.67.18 and *nobis* for *uobis* in c.28.14 and possibly in c.42.22. *ueterem* in line 8 may, of course, refer grammatically to either *dominum* or *fidem*, and D. Levin proposes that the adjective is to be understood with both nouns; cf. his article, "Ambiguity of Expression in Catullus 66 and 67," *CP* 54 (1959) 110. If, however, the similar position of a single adjective between two nouns in a pentameter (i.e., noun-adjective/verbal form–noun) elsewhere in Catullus is a criterion, then *ueterem* more likely goes with *fidem*; cf. cc.66.56; 67.32; 67.6; 76. 104, 108, 122; 95.2; 100.2. This would make good sense, for with *mutata*, which indicates a change from the door's commendable service under the elder Balbus, *ueterem* would allude to that "loyalty of old" which the reader has just been told it had forsaken in the case of the
What comes next is a fairly exhaustive catalogue of conduct or, better, misconduct, reflecting what may be called the dark side of love and marriage. First, we learn that the woman who occupied the house as wife of Balbus’ son had been married before and thus, by implication, fell short of the Roman ideal of being an uniuira.20 Worse still, though her former husband was not only sterile but also utterly impotent, the report that she was a virgin at the time of her subsequent marriage to Balbus’ son is characterized as false by the door because rumor also had it that she had been deflowered by the lustful father of that former husband.21 This dismal picture of the earlier marriage, which had taken place in Brixia,22 prior to her coming to Verona, is further darkened by an allusion to her adultery with a certain Postumius and Cornelius, and the whole poem is finally capped with a reference to yet another lover who was subject to a lawsuit concerning a supposititious childbirth. The inquisitive reader finds the circumstances surrounding this spurious pregnancy tantalizingly vague, and scholars have as a consequence interpreted them variously.23

next owner, Balbus’ son, to whom dominum refers. Caecilius, the new owner, does not come into consideration at this juncture; line 9 tells us that he moved in most recently, and the entire poem poses, in a sense, an implicit question: “What is he to expect of his wife’s behavior in view of the door’s past performance?”

20. Cf. J. Marquardt and A Mau, Das Privaleben der Römer (Leipzig 1886) 42 and n.6; W. Kroll, Die Kultur der Ciceronischen Zeit (Darmstadt 1963) 171 and references on 321, n.45. Scholars who, like Macleod ([supra n.6] 187–188), insist that theuir prior in line 20 must refer to the younger Balbus (“her husband . . . beforehand”) and not to a previous spouse completely overlook this point in the account of the woman’s earlier marital career in Brixia.

21. Cf. lines 19–28:

Primum igitur, urgo quod fertur tradita nobis,
falsum est. non illam uir prior attigere,
languidior tenera cui pendens sicula beta
numquam se medium sustulit ad tunicam;
sed pater illius gnati iolasse cubile
dicitur et miseram conscelerasse domum,
siue quod impia mens caeco flagratab amore,
seu quod iners sterili semine natus erat,
ut quaerendum unde <unde> foret neruosius illud,
quod posset zonam soluere uirgineam.

To state, as Macleod ([supra n.6] 188) does: “if the woman had been married before, no-one would have ever supposed she was a virgin when she married Balbus,” is to miss the waggish thrust of the report regarding her virginity.

22. That Brixia was the site of the earlier marriage is evident from the detailed knowledge there of the scandals associated with that ill-starred union; cf. lines 31–32, 35–36:

Atqui non solum hoc dicit se cognitum habere
Brixia Cycneae supposita speculae,

sed de Postumio et Corneli narrat amore,
cum quibus illa malum fecit adulterium.

23. K. Quinn, Catullus: The Poems (London 1973) 372–73 in n. on lines 47–48, wonders whether the woman tried “to get the last of her lovers to marry her by pretending she was with child by him.” M. Lenchatin de Gubernatis, Il Libro di Catullo (Turin 1928; repr. 1966) 207 in n. on line 48, explains that she pretended the birth of a son to claim an inheritance; W. Kroll, C. Valerius Catullus (Stuttgart 1968) 218 in n. on the poem’s conclusion, suggests that the feigned
It should be recognized, however, that the poet’s main purpose here was not to elaborate the underlying peripheral context of the event itself but, rather, economically to conclude a gossipy discourse on an ill-starred marriage and gross marital misconduct with a congruous climax, and what could be more appropriate or effective than a fake childbirth from a lying womb (line 48: falsum mendaci uentre puenerium)?

Viewed in this light, the several scandalous details relating to marriage and sex in c.67 neatly cohere and give the poem a certain thematic progression. The dramatic context, as pointed out above, suggests, at least initially, a regular stage in a traditional Roman wedding ceremony, but the subject matter of the ensuing dialogue comprises the inverse of honorable love and marital fidelity. Paradoxical though this development may seem, Catullus does in fact provide clues at the very beginning regarding the actual thrust of the poem. Their significance, however, is fully perceived only in retrospect. Thus, the apparent compliment paid to the door in lines 3–4 for its loyal service in the past to the elder Balbus is deftly undercut by the fact that the old man had been living in the house without a wife whose virtue needed to be protected. This situation stands in contrast to that of his son, whose wife the door is faulted for not having sufficiently guarded against scandal. In essence, the door’s defense, albeit understated, is that its symbolic role as upholder of childbirth was a ruse by the man to secure an inheritance or, less likely, that it was a trick on the part of the woman alleging that she had been raped by him; R. Ellis, A Commentary on Catullus (Oxford 1889) 395–96 in n. on line 47, states simply that the man “had been accused of stuprum with a woman who from external signs of pregnancy was believed to have had a child by him.” Far more imaginative than all the other views is that proffered by Munro (supra n.18] 165–66 on lines 47–48), who surmises “a trick for evading the lex Voconia: either the man’s father and mother, having no son, in order not to forgo the property of the mother’s father had got up this fictitious lying in and asserted the supposititious child was their own; or else this man was the father who, with his wife, played the same trick in order to keep the property of the wife’s father.”

24. Macleod (supra n.6), after rightly concluding, p. 187, that Caecilius was “apparently not involved in the door’s story,” seemingly contradicts himself when he later, pp. 190–91, proceeds to identify him with the man described in lines 45–48. When he argues, in support of this identification, that by reporting such gossip about the current owner of the house the door administered the “coupe de grâce” to its own self-defense and that “the door’s total self-defeat” is “what gives the poem its point,” he curiously (and quite unnecessarily) confuses the medium, which is the door, with the message, which is marital infidelity. The door’s self-defense is, in fact, unassailable.

25. Cf. lines 3–6:

\[ \text{Ianua, quam Balbo dicunt seruisse benignem} \\
\text{Olim, cum sedes ipsae senex tenuit,} \\
\text{Quamque ferunt rursus gnato seruisse maligne,} \\
\text{Postquam es porrecto facta marita senes.} \]

The widely accepted emendations of gnato for uoto in line 5 and of es for est in line 6 more effectively support the situational contrast intended by the poet in these two couplets:

Line 3—line 5: Balbus, the father, was well served by the door; the son, ill served.

Line 4–line 6: the old man himself lived in the house (without a wife); the son resided there, upon Balbus’ demise, with a wife. Marita in line 6 surely must imply that the elder Balbus was widowed or, possibly, divorced.
domestic morality is ineffectual where temptation and weak or corrupt human character exist. Similarly, the invocation of Jupiter’s blessing, seemingly for a fruitful union, in line 2, while perhaps apposite enough in itself, recalls with subtle irony that god’s notorious philandering and siring of illegitimate offspring, as recounted, for example, in Iliad 14.315–28 and as mentioned by Catullus himself in c.68.140 (noscens omniuoli plurima furta luis). Hence, the reference to a “fake childbirth from a lying womb” in the very last line of the poem brings the elegy full circle, through this reductio ad absurdum of sexual misconduct, to a motif implicit in the first couplet.

II

The basis of c.67 has been described as “a trivially amusing personification, cleverly tosed to show the poet’s satirical skill.” And it cannot be denied that the characterization of the personified door does seem, if not muddled, at least overloaded. The apparent bride of the introductory couplet proves to be a door (line 3: ianua), which is then cast, successively, as a servant (line 3: seruisse benigne; line 5: seruisse maligne), as a wife when, after the death of Balbus, his son got married (line 6: postquam es porrecto facta marita sene), again as a servant (line 8: in dominum ueterem deseruisse fided), and next as perhaps a composite of a door and a servant belonging to the current owner Caecilius (line 9: ita Caecilio placeam, cui tradita nunc sum). Moreover, when the door disclaims responsibility for the misconduct of the wife of Balbus’ son (line 10: non . . . culpa mea est, quamquam dicitur esse mea), the choice of language used in its defense intimates an identification with that son and the house itself (line 19: uirgo . . . furtur tradita nobis). Finally, the ultimate in personification of the door is achieved when it claims possession of a tongue and an ear (lines 43–44: ut pote quae mi / speraret nec linguam esse nec auriculam) to explain its ability to report the gossip that it has heard. In these respects, and in others as well, c.67 certainly constitutes a curious literary effort on the part of the poet and therefore merits further study in the wider context of the Catullan corpus for a better insight into his intent and purpose in composing it.

27. Cf. also the allusion to Hercules as falsiparens Amphitryoniades in c.68.112.
28. Cf. Badian (supra n.18) 84.
29. Only by endowing the door with the sense of hearing and the power of speech could Catullus have it serve as a viable intermediary between the interlocutor and the woman who confided details of her scandalous past to her maids. However bizarre this specific characterization of the personified door may appear, those attributes were essential in order to lend plausibility to its role in the dialogue itself. On the importance of establishing in dialogues, for historical verisimilitude, a credible intermediary or a series of intermediaries between discussions recalled and a literary account of them, cf. M. Ruch, Le Préambule dans les œuvres philosophiques de Cicéron (Paris 1958) 401–3.
As mentioned above, the poem’s formal structure as a dialogue between an inanimate object and a human interlocutor in a dramatic, albeit sketchily designed, setting stands alone in Catullus’ collection. Absent an extant literary model for the particular characterization of this elegy in earlier Greek or Latin literature, Copley has hypothesized the existence of a Roman, non-literary paraclausithyron tradition, in the form of a diffamatio or lampoon, where the door would have played a central role comparable to that of the ianua in c.67. He has prudently refrained, however, from insisting that Catullus actually had any songs of this sort before him when he wrote his own poem.30 The poet’s originality and creativity should not be overlooked or underestimated here. The broad symbolic significance of the door to the ancient and, more specifically, the Roman consciousness has been well established31 and may, to some extent at least, explain the manifold characterization of it in c.67. Insufficient attention, however, has been paid to evidence closer at hand—in the Catullan corpus itself—of more immediate influences that operated on the poet.

In that corpus, only one other poem introduces an inanimate object directly engaged in speaking. This is, of course, the preceding elegy, c.66, in which a lock of hair dedicated by Berenice to the gods on the safe return of her husband from battle discourses loftily on its situation and on love and marriage. Enough remains of Callimachus’ original Greek text to show that Catullus followed it quite closely in his Latin version.32 The verbal tonality, overall structure, and thematic development of the poem are noteworthy. Thus, the elevated diction of the first three couplets dealing with astronomical lore suddenly seems stylistically incongruous in the fourth with the surprising revelation of the speaker as a mere lock of hair, and whatever text is adopted for the final distich of c.66, the sense is clear enough: the lock would gladly yield its exalted place among the stars if only it could once again become attached to Berenice’s pate.33

This flippancy disdain it evinces for the other constellations in the firmament contrasts notably with the dignified tone of the introductory passage, where the court astronomer and the celestial phenomena observed by him are cited. Moreover, with the parting allusion to the queen’s head, the lock in effect circles back to the commencement of its discourse where a similar reference is found (line 8: e Beroniceo vertice caesariem). Further, it can be seen in retrospect that the non-astronomical major motif of love and devotion that sets the mood for the thematic development of the elegy is foreshadowed in the astro-

nomical introduction by the mention of the power of dulcis amor to draw the Moon down from her course in the sky (lines 5–6: ut Triuam furtim sub Latmia saxa relegans / dulcis amor gyro deuocat aereo).\(^{34}\) Hence, viewed from these perspectives, the Callimachean poem is seen to bear a striking parallelism in its composition to Catullus’ own c.67, for, as we have noted above, the latter elegy also begins on a lofty key before an unexpected nonhuman protagonist is revealed (line 3: ianua), and its earthy climax (line 48: falsum mendaci uentre puerperium), contrasting with the refinement of the introductory verses, grotesquely echoes an early allusion (line 2: teque bona Juppiter auctet ope) that turns out, in retrospect, to anticipate by broader implication the major motif of marital infidelity pervading the entire poem.

On the other hand, although c.66 and c.67 resemble each other thematically in that they both deal with the institution of marriage, they differ markedly in their detailed treatment of that subject.\(^{35}\) In this respect, the two poems represent, in fact, a study in what appears to be deliberate contrast and variation. C.66 tells of a royal marriage, bridal virginity, maidenly modesty, deep love of husband, loyal devotion of the talking object to its original possessor, and utter contempt for any adulteress. C.67, in turn, portrays marriage among the ordinary folk. The talking object here, charged with disloyalty to a former owner, complains of a woman who, though she had an impotent first husband, yet lacked bridal virginity at her second marriage because she had engaged in incest with her first husband’s father. This woman, moreover, immodestly used to rehearse her adulterous affairs to her maids. In brief, the presence of marital love, decorum, and fidelity is as conspicuous in c.66 as their absence is in c.67.

The structural, stylistic, and thematic considerations discussed above shed better light on Catullus’ underlying motivation and intent in composing c.67 than the traditional biographical assumption that he was writing for a local audience and out of personal pique against some Brixian woman for having rejected his amorous overtures. The poet has been criticized, perhaps not wholly without justification, for the nebulosity of his description of the mise-en-scène. The inquisitive reader can only speculate about the actual identity of the door’s interlocutor or of the woman whose scandalous conduct is the subject of the poem or of the mysterious tall man with red eyebrows who was once defendant in a suit involving a false pregnancy. Once it is recognized, however, that Catullus’ purpose in writing c.67 was primarily, if not exclusively, literary, his achievement can be better gauged and appreciated.

\(^{34}\) Cf. Kroll (supra n.23) 200 in n. ad loc.: “Dass die Liebe als treibende Kraft erscheint . . . schafft von vornherein eine zum Tone des ganzen Gedichtes passende Stimmung.”

\(^{35}\) The contrasting characters of cc.66 and 67 have been previously noted, e.g., by Richardson (supra n.4) 424 and, more recently, by Macleod (supra n.6) 192. The purpose of the present paper in this connection is not only to supplement in detail their observations but, more importantly, to draw attention to the overall significance of the contrasting features with reference to Catullus’ literary intent and achievement in composing c.67.
The juxtaposition of c.66 and c.67 was deliberate. To describe c.66, however, as a remaniement of the Greek original, as Macleod does,36 is misleading and obscures the purpose and significance of the placement of the two elegies. In c.66 Catullus sought to produce a Latin calque of Callimachus' Lock of Berenice, and by so doing he not only demonstrated his linguistic virtuosity but, more importantly, provided as a basis for direct comparison with his own composition the Hellenistic model that he sought to emulate in his own poetic idiom. He borrowed from that model the literary device of a talking inanimate object, the general theme of marriage, and certain features of overall structure, but he gave free play to his artistic creativity and imagination by expanding the use of the dramatic dialogue format, by substituting a lowbrow, thoroughly Italian scenario for the highly sophisticated Greek setting, and by completely inverting in his portrayal of the dark side of love and marriage almost every aspect of these subjects as treated in c.66. The result was an experimental, not necessarily entirely successful effort on the part of the poet to exercise his originality within the parameters of the elegiac tradition that he had inherited from Callimachus and his other Alexandrian predecessors.

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36. Cf. Macleod (supra n.6) 192.