

The Impermanent Text in Catullus and Other Roman Poets

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To us, who have lived our entire lives in a culture saturated with print, it seems obvious that the survival of a verbal artifact for any length of time would be impossible without material texts. To a writer, getting published is the necessary first step toward a potentially limitless *Nachleben*. The fact that, *ceteris paribus*, a new book is more likely to be pulped within a few years than to survive into the following century doesn't really enter into consideration. In a general way, publication itself is considered a form of immortality.

If we consider the past, the importance of material texts looms even larger. Virtually all our knowledge about ancient poetry, fiction, and other genres depends on what was written down, so that the importance of material texts seems self-evident; and it is easy to assume that it was evident to the ancients as well. Exhibit A is the elder Pliny's well-known remark that a civilized way of life, and particularly any knowledge of the past, actually depends on the use of papyrus (NH 13.21.68):

Nondum palustria attingimus nec frutices amnium; prius tamen quam digrediamur ab Aegypto, et papyri natura dicetur, cum cartae usu maxime humanitas vitae constet, certe memoria.

(So far I have said nothing about the plants that grow in wetlands or along rivers; but before I leave Egypt, I will say something about the papyrus plant, since civilized life, and above all our memory, depends upon its use.)

Pliny's perspective on material texts seems identical to our own, so that we may easily infer that all literate people of his time shared it with him, and so with us. And of course, many did so. But there is another side to the story.

Roman poets during the first century B.C. did recognize the importance of material texts as the medium in which their poetry would circulate most widely and for the longest time. Catullus, for instance, in presenting a *libellus* to Cornelius Nepos expresses the wish that the poetry that

he has had copied into this volume might possibly outlive its author (*carm.* 1), and he elsewhere imagines future generations reading the *Zmyrna* of C. Helvius Cinna even on the banks of the river Satrachus, far from where the poem was composed (*carm.* 95). Horace envisions the book containing his *Odes*, enshrined in Maecenas's library, as proof of his inclusion among the canon of lyric poets (*carm.* 1.1.35–36). Yet these same poets—indeed, some of these same passages—also draw deliberate attention to the fragility of material texts. And in this way, such passages embody a paradox. Alongside the idea that poetry depends on some physical instantiation if it is to gain a wide and lasting audience, we find a countervailing concern that material texts, precisely because they are material, expose their contents to degradation, corruption, and destruction in ways that render them consummately impermanent, particularly in comparison to the spoken word.¹ The roots of this idea are in archaic and classical Greece, a period when literacy was still young. This material is fairly well understood, so that I can forgo discussion of it here.² But, paradoxically perhaps, this attitude became prominent again in Rome during the two centuries that span the turn of the era—that is, roughly speaking, in the age that produced Pliny, an age that depended heavily on texts in their material form. Indeed, the evidence from this period, which I have not seen discussed from this point of view, is too extensive to permit comprehensive treatment or adequate summary in a brief essay, so that I will have to be selective. For that reason, I will focus my discussion mainly on Catullus, with only brief consideration of some passages in Vergil and Horace.³

As we have learned from Peter Bing and others, one of the key contributions of the Hellenistic period to the poet's craft was a self-consciousness, an acceptance, and a celebration of the poet specifically

1. For a survey of the natural predators that threatened books in the ancient world and of texts that comment on these threats, see Puglia 1991. I am grateful to George Houston for calling this book to my attention.

2. Greek distrust of the written word in the archaic and classical periods focuses less on the material aspect of these texts than on their fixedness. The *locus classicus* for this attitude is of course Plato, *Phaedrus* 274e–277a. In Roman times, voice remains a privileged category and as such owes quite a lot to developments in the Hellenistic period, but its precise significance is not identical with that of any period of Greek culture.

3. On the opposition between the written and spoken word as a theme in Latin poetry, see McCarthy 1998, Farrell 1999, Roman 2001, and Farrell 2007. A more comprehensive survey, Roman 2006, came into my hands just as I was putting the final touches on this chapter. Roman cites, and builds upon, the argument of McCarthy 1998, 184, that Ovid's handling of this theme “separates out the poet's transcendent art from . . . the material instruments that might seem to affect its success” and that he thereby “implies that his voice (and subjectivity) transcend the material carriers of his words, that he can speak to us without the intervention of wood and wax.” Where Ovid (and, for that matter, Horace) is concerned, this is an important part of the story, but only a part: see, for instance, Fitzgerald 2000, 62, on Ovid's “anxieties about the adequacy of the written word.” Catullus's anxieties, however, are still more pressing, as I will show. Whereas Roman 2006, 353, asserts that

as a writer instead of a singer.⁴ If we turn to Rome, we might expect these attitudes to continue, especially during the first century B.C., when Rome had become comparatively literate and when the ideas of Callimachus and his contemporaries were having their greatest impact on Roman poets. What we find instead is a tendency to treat the material text as a thing that is weak in itself and that becomes a focus for all those forces that threaten to consign a poet's work to oblivion. Catullus in particular is quite chary of predicting a long literary afterlife, at least for himself; and when poets such as Horace do so, they do not stake their immortality on the fact that they write, but rather imagine themselves as singers—and this in spite of the fact that their work is consummately literary, and that they were utterly dependent on libraries, copyists, and booksellers for both the production and the circulation of their works. Living in a world and practicing a profession in which Pliny's encomium of papyrus was shown to be valid every single day, these poets nevertheless emphasized and exaggerated the disadvantages of textual materialism, and occasionally asserted their claims to literary immortality in terms that to us seem anachronistic if not downright whimsical.

We can get a good idea of this perspective by looking closely at some familiar poems of Catullus. What is conventionally known as poem 1 focuses prominently, as is well known, on the material condition of the book that it introduces. This book is graceful (*lepidum*), new (*nouum*), small (Catullus uses not *liber*, but the diminutive *libellum*), and nicely finished (*arida modo pumice expolitum*). Commentators uniformly read these physical descriptors as metaphors for the style of the poetry that the book contains; and so they are. But this reading has become so familiar that we risk losing sight of other effects that these opening lines produce. Some of these effects were surely unintended and arose accidentally as the methods and conventions of book production developed over the centuries. A modern reader, holding in his hands a printed edition of Catullus, one that is identical with thousands of others, has to make a big effort to think himself back into the tactile world of Catullus's first readers, each of whom read, in effect, a unique text, defined as such by accidental errors as

The author's *ingenium* and deathless, immaterial voice must be differentiated from the mere matter (*materia*) he molds, animates, and finally transcends. It is not accidental, then, that the tablets disappear: their loss enables the emergence of the poetic author.

I agree that materiality and immaterial voice are the right terms of opposition, but find Catullus much less confident that his poetry and his reputation will outlive him or transcend their material condition. In what follows, I have tried to indicate in passing the most important points of similarity or difference between Roman's reading of Catullus and my own.

4. Bing 1988, esp. ch. 1, "Poetic Inspiration and the Poet's Self Image in Hellenistic Greece," 10–48.

well as by more deliberately controlled factors such as the *mise en page*. But even in a world before printing existed but long after the obsolescence of the bookroll, the reader who is told to imagine himself as reading a *libellus* ought to experience just a bit of cognitive dissonance. This particular effect will perhaps have been most pronounced for the first readers to encounter Catullus in codex form; but the word *libellus* itself should remind us that no one for most of the last two thousand years has read Catullus in a format similar to the one that he envisioned in poem 1; and, for that matter, apart from the fact that the form envisioned there is a scroll or bookroll, all else about that *libellus*—its exact dimensions, the number of poems it contained, whether its contents were determined and arranged by the poet himself or by someone else—are matters of scholarly debate.⁵

Even for Catullus's contemporaries, though, poem 1 has the potential to provoke a sense of alienation. This sense will be mild, for the most part, but might be quite sharp as well. In any case, we cannot suppose that all readers were in an equally advantageous position to appreciate the perfect congruity of form and content that we are accustomed to find in Catullus's description of his *lepidum nouum libellum/arida modo pumice expolitum*. In the first place, the condition of the book that Catullus describes is one that is guaranteed not to last very long. No one who owns and uses books of any kind has to be convinced of this. But bookrolls lose their youthful bloom in a particular way. Because of the way in which they are handled, the outer part of the roll is especially liable to damage of every kind.⁶ If it is not actually torn away, it is very likely to become soiled through constant handling. This unassuming fact forms part of the background to the description of the *libellus* in poem 1. As the first poem in the collection, it will have been written very close to the front of the bookroll. It will therefore have found itself on that portion of the roll that became shopworn most rapidly.⁷ This presents us with

5. On the shape of Catullus's oeuvre see Baehrens 1885, vol. 2, 57–61; Quinn 1972, 12 and 16; Wiseman 1985, 265–6, with reference to Wiseman's earlier work on the subject; Skinner 1992 and 2003, xxii–xxviii.

6. This is the point of Martial's references to the soiling of the outer edge of a bookroll from being held under the chin as the reader rewound it from the inside out (1.66.8, 10.93.5–6). Of course, it stands to reason that the beginning and the end of a roll would be more liable to damage of all sorts, including tearing, than other parts.

7. Presumably this is the case. The issue is complicated by the fact that a collection of Catullus's poetry circulated in antiquity under the name of *Passer*—an informal title based on the first word(s) of the collection, just as the *Aeneid* might be referred to as *Arma uirumque*. The question is whether there was a separate collection in which our poem 2 stood first. I know of no other poem or collection that takes its titular *incipit* from the first words of its second poem; but neither do I know of a poem or collection referred to as *Cui dono?* or anything remotely similar. On the other hand, we do have collections, such as Ovid's *Amores*, that are preceded by an epigram that is clearly meant as preliminary to the collection as a whole. In this case, the epigram is treated as supernumerary in modern editions. Moreover, the first words of *Am.* 1.1, *arma graui numero*, clearly allude to the

something of a paradox: the more the *libellus* was read, the shabbier the beginning of the roll will have looked, even though the first poem that the reader will have encountered there is one in which the author boasts of the book's fresh, new appearance.

Of course, at least one reader will have appreciated a perfect concinuity between the book described in poem 1 and the book that he held in his hands. That reader was Cornelius Nepos, the dedicatee of the *libellus*. In view of this fact, one might try to insist that the observations contained in my previous paragraph are beside the point. But in reality, this line of argument just raises another paradox. It is true that the book described in poem 1 is the book that Nepos read; at the very least, we must assume that this was the case. But Catullus expresses a wish for other readers at the end of this poem, when he wishes that his *libellus* will last. Clearly he is writing with readers besides Nepos in mind. But of course, the more readers he reaches, and the longer his work continues to be read, the greater the number of readers whose material experience of his poetry will be distant from the one described in poem 1, and the longer he is read, the greater that distance will become.⁸

Not to labor the point, I make these observations to underline the fact that the material references in this poem are not just symbolic references to the author's literary ideals. They situate the act of reading in a set of practices rooted in a specific cultural-materialist milieu that will be more or less familiar to any actual reader according to his or her distance from the reading experience that the poem assumes and partially describes.

In the last two lines of poem 1, as I noted briefly above, Catullus prays that his volume may remain immortal beyond a single generation (*quod . . . plus uno maneat perenne saeculo*, 9–10). This is an appealing bit of modesty, and it is unconventional.⁹ Catullus does not claim hyperbolically that his poetry, now that he has "published" it, will live forever; he merely hopes that it will outlive him, at least for a while.¹⁰ Perhaps he is

first words of the *Aeneid*, *arma uirumque cano*, and so to their titular character. (More on this relationship in Farrell 2004.) On balance, then, the situation that we face in Catullus would be probably be clearer if our poem 1 were treated as *extra ordinem*, and if the numbering of the poems began with our poem 2, *Passer deliciae meae puellae*.

8. This is the material aspect of an important thematic element in the poem, that of ownership or property, in regard to which Fitzgerald 1995 has well observed that "Nepos is welcome to the book (this attractive, smooth little volume) . . . but, as the poet prays for the same book that the Muse may preserve it fresh throughout posterity, he withdraws it from its dedicatee" (41).

9. Excellent commentary on Catullus's stance here in Fitzgerald 1995, 39, and Roman 2001, 120–1; see also Roman 2006, 356.

10. Contrast Catullus's more realistic request with the boast of Horace at the end of *Odes* 1–3 that he has created a *monumentum aere perennius*, and that of Ovid, who has a close eye on Horace, at the end of the *Metamorphoses*. Ovid, having staked his claim to poetic immortality in these lines, made undoing and ironizing it a major theme of his exile poetry (Farrell 1999, with further references; cf. Roman 2001, 121).

only being realistic: as a self-conscious exponent of novelty in literature, Catullus may have understood that he would be fortunate to remain popular even until the end of his own life, let alone beyond. But it is noteworthy that he makes this self-deprecating wish at the end of a poem that begins by commenting on the physical condition of the book that contains it.

I will return to poem 1 from time to time throughout this essay; for Catullus's references there to the appearance of his *libellus*, and his hope that the thing will last a while, announce textual materiality as a major theme of his poetry. In fact, it is one of the very first themes that Catullus sees fit to announce, along with the theme of gift exchange (*Cui dono?*)—and, by extension, that of reciprocal obligation more generally—as well as those themes that are metaphorically conjured by the words used to describe the physical *libellus* (which refer both to literary and social ideals). Critics have long been active in exploring the presence of the other themes announced here throughout Catullus's oeuvre. The facts would suggest that, by comparison, the theme of textual materiality has been overlooked.

Elsewhere in Catullus, just as in poem 1, the material text appears mainly in contexts in which its durability, and hence the survival of its contents, is open to doubt. Let us here return to poem 95, in which, as we have seen, Catullus predicts long life for the book that contains the *Zmyrna* of C. Helvius Cinna (5–8):

Zmyrna cauas Satrachi penitus mittetur ad undas,
 Zmyrnam cana diu saecula peruoluent.
 at Volusi Annales Paduam morientur ad ipsam
 et laxas scombris saepe dabunt tunicas.
 (*Zmyrna* will travel far to the deep-watered channels of the Satrachus,
 the white-haired generations will long read *Zmyrna*;
 but Volusius's *Annales* will die right on the banks of the Po
 and provide comfortable tunics for many mackerel.)

Cinna's book will travel far and will be rolled and unrolled "for a long time" (*diu*) by "white-haired generations" (*cana . . . saecula*). Note the occurrence of *saecula* here and of *saeclo* in poem 1. In the earlier poem Catullus hopes that his *libellus* will outlast at least a single generation (10); here he predicts confidently that multiple generations will enjoy the *Zmyrna* (6). He graciously appears more certain about Cinna's posthumous reception than he is about his own. And, once

I use the word "published" with some hesitation and merely for convenience. The Roman realities that corresponded to modern "publication" involved a much more gradual dispersion of a text, mainly through social networks rather than a primarily commercial release in quantity to an anonymous reading public. On the ancient process see Starr 1987 (with Starr's caution against the use of words like "publish" at 215 n. 18).

again, we are talking about a *libellus*: the image introduced by *peruoluent* (6) requires that we think of an actual object, a scroll that the white-haired generations will wind and unwind as they read and reread the *Zmyrna*. This durable scroll is directly contrasted in the next line with one that contains another book, Volusius's *Annales*. That poem will not travel as far as the *Zmyrna* or last as long. Instead, it will never get past the Po and will be used to wrap fish (7–8). Here the vector of influence in the relationship between the physical book and its literary content becomes clear. Volusius, here as elsewhere, is for Catullus the paradigmatically bad poet. His work is so bad that the papyrus on which it is written is more valuable as wrapping paper than as a vehicle for preserving Volusius's work.

Catullus's thrust at Volusius is amusing, but it reflects uncomfortably on poem 1. In that poem Catullus shows little confidence that his beautifully finished *lepidus nouus libellus*—by which I mean the physical book—will itself ensure the survival of the poetry that it contains. Rather, the converse is true. We learn as much from poem 95, in which the book that contains Volusius's poem will be used for wrapping paper. We learn elsewhere, from the example of the poetaster Suffenus, that the beautiful outer form of a *libellus* does not necessarily guarantee the beauty of the poetry that lies within. We first meet Suffenus in poem 14, in which Catullus threatens to send poems by him and other insufferables to his friend Calvus in retaliation for the miscellany of bad poetry that Calvus sent Catullus as a mock Saturnalia present (16–23):

non non hoc tibi, false, sic abibit.
 nam si luxerit ad librariorum
 curram scrinia, Caesios, Aquinos,
 Suffenum, omnia colligam uenena.
 ac te his suppliciis remunerabor.
 uos hinc interea ualete abite
 illuc, unde malum pedem attulistis,
 saeculi incommoda, pessimi poetae.

(You won't get away with it, traitor! For when it's day I will run to the booksellers' stalls and buy poets like Caesius and Aquinus, even Suffenus himself, every form of poison there is. And in the meantime, goodbye and go back where you began your hapless journey, burden of our generation, worst poets.)

I note in passing the occurrence once again of the word *saeculum*, this time in the phrase *saeculi incommoda* (23). Here there is no question of any *Nachleben* at all: these poets, and the misery (or mirthful derision) that they supply to their readers remains confined to the current generation. But that is not the end of Suffenus. In poem 22, Catullus tells us how the man composes, not only writing too much, but always writing everything on the best quality papyrus, carefully laid out as if he were not a poet but a scribe producing luxury copies for sale to the carriage trade (4–8):

puto esse ego illi milia aut decem aut plura
 perscripta, nec sic ut fit in palimpsesto
 relata: cartae regiae, noui libri,
 noui umbilici, lora rubra membranae,
 derecta plumbo et pumice omnia aequata.

(I suppose he's written out ten thousand or more, not jotted in the usual way on reused stock: the best papyrus, new books, new roller ends, new red ties for the wrapper, ruled with lead and smoothed with pumice all around.)

The satire works on different levels, but one simple point Catullus is making is that Suffenus never revises; he doesn't use palimpsest, which Catullus describes as the normal way to compose, and which is itself emblematic of erasure, both in the process of composition and in that unhappy stage of reception when a book becomes more valuable for its materials than for its contents. The misguided Suffenus overrates his own work by assuming that it will ever be worth writing down on top-quality goods.¹¹ Perhaps he is deluded as well in thinking that these goods will ensure that his poetry survives. More likely some right-thinking poet will make use of Suffenus's volume by scraping off his scribbles and converting his *cartae regiae* into the very palimpsests that Suffenus eschews.

Catullus marvels that Suffenus, whom he paints as a sympathetic and urbane fellow, was nevertheless such a bad poet, and he wonders at Suffenus's sheer cluelessness. But the end of this poem is surprising (18–21):

nimirum idem omnes fallimur, neque est quisquam
 quem non in aliqua re uidere Suffenum
 possis. suus cuique attributus est error;
 sed non uidemus manticae quod in tergo est.

(We probably all make the same mistake, and there's no one you couldn't regard somehow or other as a Suffenus. Everyone has his own besetting sin; we don't see the pack on our own back.)

We all have a bit of Suffenus in us, says Catullus. It is not like Catullus to soften a blow in this way.¹² What in the world does this mean?

Is it possible that Catullus fears that he himself, in his satisfaction with his own *lepidus novus libellus*, may not be so different from the deluded

11. Catullus's *cartae regiae*, a latinization of *χάρται βασιλικοί* (cf. Heron *De automatis* 26.3.5), is usually identified with the *carta Augusta* (called *carta Augustea regia* by Suetonius ap. Isid. *Orig.* 6.10.2). According to Pliny (*NH* 13.74) this highest grade of papyrus was originally known as *carta hieratica*.

12. The *mantica* is proverbial (Otto 1971, 209, no. 1032), but also specifically Aesopic (Perry 1936, 266). As such, it may emblemize Catullus's ironic adoption of the satirist's habitual stance of abjection, as is suggested to me by Ralph Rosen.

Suffenus? I think there is little question but that this is so. If we look among Catullus's poems for a correlative to Suffenus's pretentious volume, we will find one in Catullus's description of his own. Catullus calls his own book a *nouum libellum* (1.1); Suffenus writes on *noui libri* (22.6). The edges of Catullus's papyrus have been nicely finished with pumice stone (1.2); ditto Suffenus's (22.8). It is true, at least, that Catullus doesn't actually write his first and only draft of a poem on this beautifully finished papyrus, as Suffenus does. Still, Catullus's ridicule of Suffenus's delight in his beautiful book casts an uncomfortable light on poem 1.

Viewed from one angle, of course, the bad poets whom Catullus mocks exist only to set off the good poets—friends of his, like Calvus and Cinna—whom he approves. Viewed from another angle, they may exemplify the fate to which Catullus fears his own work might be consigned. And this fate is regularly expressed as the fate of the poet's book as a physical object. At least two distinct aspects are visible.

First, after the poems have been finished and arranged, and the collection copied out into multiple *libelli* for presentation or sale, there is the question of what will happen to these books. In this regard Volusius, to return to that worst of poets, is not merely Catullus's opposite; he is a kind of *Doppelgänger*, or even an emblem of the failed poet that Catullus fears he himself may turn out to be. In poem 95, Volusius's books are used to wrap fish. In poem 36, they fare even worse. When Catullus ridicules Volusius's *Annales* as *cacata carta*, he metaphorically equates with excrement the inferior poetry that has befouled what had been perfectly good papyrus, and suggests the kind of degrading use for which those books might now be fit. But Catullus envisions a more complete annihilation of Volusius's books. His *puella* and he are about to burn them in fulfillment of a vow that she took to Venus and Cupid to burn the choicest products of the worst of poets if Catullus would only stop writing nasty things about her. By "worst of poets," of course, she meant at the time Catullus himself; but now that she has made up with him, he cheerfully joins her in fulfilling her vow by burning Volusius instead. It is a funny poem, but our enjoyment of it should not mask the fact that Volusius is being burned in *Catullus's place*, thus narrowly saving Catullus's own work from annihilation.

The form of Volusius's poem that Catullus envisions here is evidently a bookroll. The word *carta*, "papyrus," suggests as much; and because Catullus is so hostile to Volusius's poetry, and does nothing to suggest that the two of them were on intimate or even friendly terms, it is reasonable to assume that Catullus knew the *Annales* not in draft, but in the form in which Volusius had made the poem public. I make the point just to underline the fact this poem dramatizes the destruction of a "published" text.¹³ But the vow of the *puella* brings into view a second

13. This fact underlines one difference between Roman's approach and my own. Whereas Roman argues that the published work symbolizes the release of the poet's voice, in

aspect of Catullus's anxiety over his books' fate, one that is prior to any concerns he may have about the reception of the finished product. Even before it is finished, the book's condition as a physical object exposes it to hazards that threaten its existence. For the vow to burn Catullus's books is not merely a symbolic threat: the actual, physical possession of Catullus's work is thematized in poem 42, in which a *moecha* (3) has got hold of some of his poems, leaving him in a state over how to get them back. Specifically, what the *moecha* has got hold of are *pugillaria* and *codicilli*, or a number of tablets bound together as leaves in a quire.¹⁴ This is the form in which one would expect a poet to keep his work prior to public circulation in the form of a scroll (*liber* or *libellus*).¹⁵ Catullus, as I have said, in this respect, at least, is no Suffenus. But the more humble *codex* form is no less material than a scroll, and it is just as liable to destruction as a finished book, if not more so. Catullus does not say explicitly that the *moecha* has acquired what appear to be the *only* copies he had of at least some of his poems, but it does seem possible that she now has the power to destroy his notebooks and prevent at least some poems not only from surviving into the next generation, but from surviving long enough to be made public.

If we put this poem together with the one in which Volusius gets burned instead of Catullus, it seems likely that destroying the poems is what the *moecha* of 42, like the *puella* of 36, has in mind.¹⁶ But we can imagine other malicious possibilities as well, like the circulation of poems that Catullus himself would have decided not to make public; the circulation of Catullus's poems under someone else's name; or the circulation under Catullus's name of texts altered for the worse, expressly to embarrass him. Catullus does not mention these possibilities, but all are real.¹⁷

my view Catullus never regards his poetry, or any poetry, as transcending the limitations of the physical materials on which they are written. Certainly here, at any rate, the imagined destruction of Volusius's work in its material form is not to be taken as symbolizing the release of his voice and the survival of his work as a classic.

14. On these words and the kinds of books that they denote see Birt 1882, 85–7 and 95–6; Kenyon 1932, 89–91.

15. Birt 1882, 12–14.

16. The point of putting these poems together is not to construct a single, coherent confessional or novelistic account of the love affair between "Catullus" and "Lesbia." There is nothing that requires the reader to identify the *puella* of 36 and the *moecha* of 42 with Lesbia or even with each other, and nothing to prevent the reader from imagining that "Catullus" had this sort of trouble with a series of girlfriends. But I would suggest that the situations of poems 36 and 42 speak to one another in a way that invites the reader to construct a narrative not of "what actually happened," but an exemplary one, and one that is not confessional but speculative. On this question in general see Fitzgerald 1995, 27–9.

17. In fact, such things did happen in one way or another to a number of ancient authors, some of whose complaints we have. Out of the scores of plays that circulated under the name of Plautus, M. Terentius Varro identified only twenty-one as definitely genuine (Gellius *NA* 3.3). When Cicero's *Academica* were released (by a well-meaning Atticus) in a two-book edition, the author had to work to suppress the first edition and to replace it with a second in four books (*Att.* 13.13.1). (Result: the text that we have combines book 1 of the second

There is, however, a larger point. The theft of Catullus's notebooks stands for the inevitable moment that every author eventually confronts, namely, that of the alienation of his text from his personal ownership and control.¹⁸ For that is what the wider circulation of his text—or to use the anachronistic modern term, its publication—fundamentally entails. In order to be read, the author has to give his text away, and this fact, too, is tied to the image of the book as a material artifact.

The moment of alienation is the process that Catullus thematizes and in fact dramatizes in the poem with which we began, his dedication poem. Here the *libellus* is an object, a physical thing that the poet has to give to someone. Poem 1 begins with Catullus wondering who should get it. When he lights upon Cornelius Nepos, he enacts the formal presentation of the dedication copy with the words *habe tibi* (8); and, as commentators point out, the idiom *sibi habere* "is a regular phrase of Roman law in reference to the disposal of property" even if the colloquial *tibi habe* "often implies a certain indifference which is here in keeping with the following words."¹⁹ As such, the phrase is perfectly chosen. Presenting the dedication copy to someone represents the alienation of the book and its contents from the author as a piece of property and the placing of his work into the public domain. Catullus's lighthearted and somewhat high-handed attitude in performing this ceremonial act may be felt to mask an element of anxiety. "To whom am I giving my book?" he asks, or better, "To whom am I making a gift of my book?" The language underlines the idea of exchange, because gift giving is a practice that circulates throughout society: Catullus, like everybody else, gives in order to get. Like other writers, he gives his work to some patron in the hope of getting a favorable reception. Of course, Catullus in choosing Cornelius Nepos puts himself in a position that is hardly abject. First of all, even to assume the right of choosing who will receive the dedication copy implies a certain freedom that Roman poets did not always have.²⁰ Second, in choosing Nepos,

edition, the *Academica posteriora*, with book 2 of the first edition, the *Academica priora*.) Cicero's oration against Clodius and Curio was also published without his approval (*Att.* 3.12.2, 3.13.3; fragments and discussion in Crawford 1994, 227–63). The *Aeneid*, of course, was edited to some extent and released against Vergil's deathbed wishes, according to the ancient *vita* tradition. Martial repeatedly complains, or boasts, of being plagiarized (1.29, 38, 52, 53, 63, 66, 72, 2.20, 10.100, 11.94, 12.63). Perhaps the most extreme case is that of Galen, who in his treatises "On My Own Books" and "On the Order of My Own Books" documents the various ways in which unauthorized works ascribed to him circulated through the Roman book trade, creating difficulties for the author himself in his effort to establish the canon of his own works. Cf. Pliny, *Epist.* 2.10.2–3. On the poetic thematization of this problem by Ovid, see Farrell 1998, 307–38, esp. 329–38.

18. Fitzgerald 1995, 44–55 and 93–104; Roman 2001; Roman 2006, 354 n. 9.

19. Fordyce 1961, 86 *ad* 1.8.

20. Catullus's independent-minded question is not unprecedented, however, but echoes that of Meleager in the dedication poem of his *Garland* (*AP* 4.1). Horace, too, having once addressed Maecenas as his first dedicatee and as destined to be his last (*Epist.* 1.1.1), nevertheless addresses his later epistles to Augustus, to Florus, and to the Pisones.

Catullus selects a dedicatee who might be seen as worthy of the poet in various ways—as a fellow *transpadanus*, as a learned writer in his own right, and so forth—rather than one on whose patronage in the traditional sense Catullus might depend.²¹ It makes sense to think of their relationship as a friendship of the sort defined in particular by Peter White.²² But another occasion in the Catullan corpus when we hear about the gift of a book is, again, in poem 14, in which someone has presented Calvus with a miscellany of bad poetry as a Saturnalia present. That someone is designated as one of Calvus's *clientes* (6), meaning someone whom Calvus had defended in court; but the word, like the textually suspect *patrona* in poem 1, or like *patronus* in 49, hints at the patron/client relationship that lurked beneath unequal friendships between poets and their addressees.²³ The sharp edge of explicit deference involved in the client's presentation of a Saturnalia present to his patron Calvus, in poem 14, is blunted somewhat when Calvus immediately sends the same present to Catullus, his social equal. Still, the precise meaning of the client's act of fealty remains visible, and his presenting Calvus with the gift of a book reflects upon Catullus's gift to Cornelius Nepos. When Catullus, despite the relative independence that he shows in poem 1, nevertheless submits to the formal ritual of presenting a dedication copy to a patron, he acknowledges, even if ironically, the patron's social role in the reception and survival of the poetry with which he is presented. And both the patron's role in this process and the fate of the poetry itself are bound up with the fate of the physical book that Catullus presents to Nepos, praying that it might remain everlasting, at least beyond a single generation.

At this juncture I would like to expand the focus of this essay from the written word alone to include that other medium in which poetry is experienced: the spoken word or, as so often in the ancient world, song. And I want to begin by pointing out a fact that, when I first realized it, surprised me a lot. Unlike so many ancient poets, Catullus almost never represents himself as a singer. Indeed, he is relatively uninterested in singing generally. He does mention singing by others several times, but only in mythical or ritual contexts.²⁴ The single time when Catullus imagines himself as a singer is in poem 65, in which he says that, although he will never see his dead brother again, he will always love him, and will

21. Cairns 1969; Wiseman 1979, 171; Gibson 1995.

22. White 1978 and 1993.

23. The treatment of the Muse by Catullus's model, Meleager (see note 20 above), is worth bearing in mind. Meleager addresses the Muse immediately, asking her to whom he ought to dedicate his *Garland*. At the beginning of Catullus's poem, it is not clear to whom the question, "*Cui dono . . . ?*" is addressed, but comparison with Catullus's source suggests that it may be the Muse. Nepos, of course, is then apostrophized in lines 3–7; but the phrase *patrona uirgo* in line 9 may signal a return to the original addressee of lines 1–2.

24. The devotees of Cybele sing (63.11, 27–29) as do the Fates (64.306, 382–83); there is singing by choruses in poem 34, a hymn to Diana, and in 61 and 62, the epithalamia.

forever sing songs of mourning like the nightingale, mourning the death of Itys. This is a poem that requires a closer look.

Etsi me assiduo confectum cura dolore
 seuocat a doctis, Ortale, uirginibus,
 nec potis est dulcis Musarum expromere fetus
 mens animi, tantis fluctuat ipsa malis—
 namque mei nuper Lethaeo in gurgite fratris
 pallidulum manans alluit unda pedem,
 Troia Rhoeteo quem subter litore tellus
 ereptum nostris obterit ex oculis.

* * * * *

numquam ego te, uita frater amabilior,
 aspiciam posthac? at certe semper amabo,
 semper maesta tua carmina morte canam,
 qualia sub densis ramorum concinit umbris
 Daulias, absumpti fata gemens Ityli—
 sed tamen in tantis maeroribus, Ortale, mitto
 haec expressa tibi carmina Battiadae . . .

(Although I am beset with constant sorrow and heartache keeps me from the learned maidens, Hortalus, and my mind is unable to bring forth the sweet children of the Muses, so great is the sea of troubles on which it floats—for waters that run in the pool of Lethe have just now bathed my brother's pallid little foot, my brother whom the Trojan land, under the shore of Rhoeteum, treads upon, hidden from my sight. *** Shall I never again see you, brother more loveable than life? But surely I will always love you, always will I sing songs that are mournful because you are dead, like those Daulius's daughter sings, bewailing the fate of the murdered Itylus, under the dense shadows of branches—nevertheless, in the midst of such sorrow, Hortalus, I send you these versions of poems by Callimachus, scion of Battus. . . .)

Like poem 1, poem 65 is a dedication poem. It introduces poem 66, the *Coma Berenices*, which Catullus, as we are told, has produced at the request of his friend Hortalus. In this dedication poem, Catullus is concerned to explain how difficult it has been for him to fulfill Hortalus's request. The death of Catullus's brother has left him paralyzed and has severed his relationship to the Muses (1–4); nevertheless, he has managed to translate a poem of Callimachus, the *Coma Berenices*, which follows. Poem 66 is of course a major statement about Catullus's literary ideals and, as a translation, an extraordinary masterpiece.²⁵ But Catullus presents it in a rather particular light. First, as we have just seen, it is characterized as a piece that was written to order. Second, although the translation is certainly Catullus's work, he refers to it as *carmina Battiadae* (65.16), a poem of Callimachus. It is therefore, we might say, alienated

25. Marinone 1997.

from Catullus in two senses, both as something that belongs to Hortalus, and as something that belongs to Callimachus. Third, the poem that Catullus has chosen to translate, or that Hortalus has chosen for him, is itself an example par excellence of poetry written in honor of a patron.²⁶ And finally, as a translation, it stands at an extreme point on the spectrum of bookish poetry. I take it that this statement needs no elaboration.

It is very significant, then, that this literary tour de force is implicitly contrasted with a very different sort of poem, not poem 65 itself, but the unwritten and unwritable poem that Catullus would prefer to sing and that almost prevented him from translating the *Coma* for Hortalus. This would be a poem of mourning for Catullus's brother—a poem that would mean little to Hortalus or any other patron, but that would mean everything to the poet—like the song of the nightingale, which listeners might find beautiful, but which the bird sings to and for itself. And, like the nightingale's song, Catullus's lament would never end. Just how this could be so, Catullus does not make clear. Even though he declares that he will always sing songs of mourning for his brother, we have to take his declaration as more of a wish. Still, it is notable that he links his wish to produce this most personal of poems with an image of himself as a singer rather than as a writer, and with an obsessive desire to indulge himself in this song forever, while contrasting this desire with the need to write out a translation of another poet's work for some third party.

There is one other passage that must enter into this discussion. Poem 68 seems to fall into two more or less distinct parts that nevertheless go together much in the way that poem 65 goes with poem 66.²⁷ The first part, lines 1–40 (poem 68a), introduce the proto-elegiac narrative that follows in the second part, lines 41–160 (poem 68b). Like poem 65, poem 68a addresses itself to a friend who has asked Catullus to write him a poem. Catullus explains that the request is difficult to answer: as in poem 65, here, too, the death of his brother is a major psychological obstacle. And on a more mundane level, Catullus represents himself as being in Verona, where he has no books. This of course is interesting because it is so different from the situation to which we are introduced in poem 65,

26. Callimachus's *Coma Berenices* was of course the conclusion to his *Aetia*. Standing as it did at the end of the fourth and last book, it balanced the *Victoria Berenices* at the beginning of Book 3, working together with that episode as a frame for the second half of the collection and inscribing the poet's patron into the structure of the work in a most forceful and obvious way. On the structure of the *Aetia* see Fantuzzi and Hunter 2004, 44–9 and 83–8.

27. The text of poem 68 and the relationship between parts a and b remains controversial. The most significant problem is that in the manuscripts part a, the dedicatory epistle, addresses one Manius (*Mani* 11 [v.1. *Manli* R], 30), whereas part b, the elegiac narrative, expresses a great debt to someone named Allius (41, 50, 66 [*Mallius* O in marg. *Manlius* GR]), who is addressed in the vocative at the end of the poem (*Alli* 150). The simplest remedy is to accept Schöll's emendation *mi Alli* for *Man(1)i* "in spite of the unique elision in the sixth foot in l. 11" (Fordyce 1961, 342).

which introduces a translation of the *Coma Berenices*—a consummately bookish poem in every sense. By contrast, Catullus implies in poem 68a, anything that he manages to produce on this occasion will be a kind of improvisation—certainly not a translation, and probably free of the elaborate, sometimes recondite, learning and allusiveness for which Catullus is known.

In any case, having concluded these preliminaries, Catullus launches into the poem that he has managed to compose. His friend Allius, who has been such a help to him, is not actually addressed until near the end of the poem (150); he is first introduced in a third-person reference while Catullus addresses the Muses in order to ensure that his poem, and so memory of Allius, will last (41–50):

Non possum reticere, deae, qua me Allius in re
iuvet aut quantis iuvet officiis,
ne fugiens saeculis obliuiscens aetas
illius hoc caeca nocte tegat studium:
sed dicam vobis, vos porro dicite multis
milibus et facite haec carta loquatur anus.

notescatque magis mortuus atque magis,
nec tenuem texens sublimis aranea telam
in deserto Alli nomine opus faciat.

(I cannot remain silent, goddesses, about the favor Allius did me,
—either the kind of favor or how great it was—
lest the passage of time in the forgetful succession of generations
cover his good offices in the darkness of night.
But I shall speak to you, and you in turn speak to many
thousands and cause this page of mine to speak even when it is old.

and even in death may he become more and more famous,
and may no spider, spinning its delicate web on high,
perform its work on the name of a forgotten Allius.)

Once again, several features link this poem to the dedication of the *libellus* as a whole. One is, in fact, the address to the Muses. For it is difficult to imagine what other goddesses (*deae* 41) Catullus has in mind here, just as no one has convincingly refuted the idea that the *patrona* addressed at 1.9 is also a Muse.²⁸ In poem 1, the apostrophe to the Muse is surprising. Catullus has been addressing Cornelius Nepos, who is to receive the presentation copy of his *libellus*, when he suddenly turns to the Muse, his *patrona*, and prays that his book may outlast his own generation (*saeculo* 1.10). As we have seen, the word *saeculum* is linked in several other

28. For a recent committed attempt to oust the Muse from poem 1, see Gratwick 2002.

passages to the idea of poetic reputation, and is used to express the idea that a poem (or poet) is or is not likely to last. Here, as well, Catullus prays to the Muses that his poem for Allius will not merely outlive the current generation, but that it will survive the passage of many "forgetful generations" (*obliuiscensibus saeculis* 43). So here the idea of composing a work that will last is as much on Catullus's mind as it was when he composed the dedication poem to the *libellus* itself.

There is, however, an important difference between poems 1 and 68. The former, as I hope to have shown, is deeply implicated in an anxious discourse of materiality. The very handsomeness of the presentation copy that Catullus bestows upon Nepos is an aspect of its materiality. The appearance of this book may be an accurate reflection of its contents, and Catullus clearly means to suggest that it is. But he knows this may not be the case. His beautiful book may, in the eyes of readers, be as much a failure as that of Suffenus; and if so, it will not remain *plus uno . . . perenne saeculo*, but it will be regarded as one of the *saeculi incommoda*. In either case, the survival of the poetry is linked to the survival of the book that contains it; and although circulation in material form may be a poet's best chance for winning a reputation that will outlive him, it is also true that a material existence exposes poetry, like that of Volusius and, very nearly, that of Catullus himself, to all sorts of mistreatment, including degradation and destruction. For this reason, the ritual presentation of a poetry book to some patron is but one of the ways in which a poet must alienate his work from himself. Of course, he must do so in order to gain a wide and long-lasting readership. But readers can do with books as they please, and Catullus depicts himself and others in the act of ridiculing, misusing, and destroying books. When viewed in this light, the ritual of presenting one's patron with a new *libellus* represents a loss of control and an acceptance of the fact that the fate of the new work and one's own reputation are now in the hands of someone else. Or rather, of many. For books circulate, and even one that finds an initial reader who is well disposed may be passed on by that reader to someone else who will find the book risible, as happens in poem 14. Small wonder, then, that when Catullus imagines poetic immortality, he imagines himself in poem 65 as singing an eternal song, not to please a patron but to indulge his own sorrow. So perhaps the remarkable conflation in poem 68 of these two modes of poetic expression, singing and writing, is as far as Catullus can go in hoping that any product of his pen can last, as he predicts Cinna's poetry will, for generations. He can only do so, however, not by praying to the Muse or Muses, as he does in poem 1, but by enlisting their aid: he will sing (*dicam* 45) to the Muses, and they in turn will sing (*dicite* 45) to many thousands, so that the page may continue speaking when it is an old lady (*carta loquatur anus* 46).

The speaking page is a paradoxical image with which to close, but perhaps an apt one. If Catullus is obsessed with and anxious about textuality, and utopian in his sparing claims to be a singer, the paradox

of the singing page, along with singing and writing as sharply defined alternatives, are themes that future generations of Roman poets would enthusiastically explore. That is a topic for another occasion. I hope here to have shown first that the materials of textuality are an important theme in the poems of Catullus, and second that what seem to us commonsensical assumptions about the relationship between materiality and the survival of texts are contradicted in the work of this highly literate poet. The image of the physical book remains closely linked to conditions of patronage in post-Republican literature. A telling example is found in Vergil's sixth eclogue, which, like Catullus's dedication poem, walks a fine line in managing the poet's relationship to his patron. It does so by carefully observing the two modalities of poetic communication, writing and singing.

Prima Syracosio dignata est ludere uersu
 nostra, neque erubuit siluas habitare, Thalia.
 Cum canerem reges et proelia, Cynthus aurem
 uellit, et admonuit: 'Pastorem, Tityre, pinguis
 pascere oportet ouis, deductum dicere carmen.'
 Nunc ego (namque super tibi erunt, qui dicere laudes,
 Vare, tuas cupiant, et tristia condere bella)
 agrestem tenui meditabor harundine Musam.
 Non iniussa cano. Si quis tamen haec quoque, si quis
 captus amore leget, te nostrae, Vare, myricae,
 te nemus omne canet; nec Phoebus gravior ulla est
 quam sibi quae Vari praescripsit pagina nomen.

—*Eclogue* 6.1–12

(My Muse was the first to deign to dabble in Syracusan verse and not to blush at living in the woods. When I was trying to sing of kings and battles, Apollo tugged at my ear and told me, "A shepherd, Tityrus, should feed his sheep fat, but sing a slender song." Now (for you will have many wanting to sing your praises, Varus, and to compose poems of bitter war), I cultivate a country Muse with my thin reed. I sing under orders. But if someone should be enticed to read these things as well, the arbutes, Varus, and the whole grove will sing you, you, you; nor is any page more welcome to Phoebus than one with Varus's name at the top.)

The speaker of this poem, Tityrus, has been asked to compose a poem on the military exploits of one Varus, who is identified as either Quintilius or Alfenus Varus. Tityrus excuses himself on the grounds that Apollo of Cynthus has advised him not to attempt that sort of thing. Now, Tityrus, in keeping with the prevailing attitude of bucolic poetry, represents himself as a singer. This would be less striking if he did not also, as is well known, paraphrase a passage in which Callimachus received a similar injunction from Apollo Lycius, altering one important detail. Both Callimachus and Tityrus recall an earlier attempt to compose poetry. For Callimachus, the attempt in question seems to be his very first: he specifies the moment "when he first put a writing tablet on his knees." For

Tityrus, it is not clear whether the occasion was his first; the really important point, however, is that he was not writing but singing. In fact, Tityrus alters Callimachus a second time, because Apollo Lycius advises Callimachus in metaphorical and material terms: his sacrificial offering is to be plump, but he is to keep his Muse slender. In Vergil, Apollo Cynthus tells Tityrus similarly to make his flock nice and fat, but to sing (*dicere*) a *deductum carmen*. For my purposes, *dicere* is the important word. Again, this is a remarkable alteration. Callimachus and his contemporaries, as Peter Bing and others have shown, embraced their role as writers and made the fact of writing along with its implications and symbolism an important part of their respective poetic identities. Now Vergil's Tityrus, alluding unmistakably to a foundational passage of Callimachus's literary credo, signally alters the poet's role from that of writer to that of singer. This is certainly unexpected. By the time of the triumphal period, when the eclogues were composed, the idea of poet as writer was not the novelty that it had seemed to be in Alexandria two hundred years before. And Catullus, who obviously knew his Callimachus, just a few years before the eclogues had represented himself primarily as a writer, too. Why does Vergil's Tityrus prefer to present himself as a singer instead?

I think we can answer this question. Although Catullus was a writer, we have seen that for him the material text was a locus of anxiety at least as much as of empowerment. Moreover, we have traced this anxiety to several moments in which the text becomes alienated from the poet as a piece of property. This nexus of ideas is put into play immediately in Catullus's dedication poem to the patron figure Cornelius Nepos. Vergil, too, represents Tityrus as negotiating with a patron. I infer from all this that, in Roman culture, one crucial and emblematic role played by the physical text was to supply the presentation copy that the poet presented to his patron in acknowledgment of the patron's social superiority. If this is right, then it makes sense for Vergil to have converted Callimachus's writing tablet into a song precisely in the context of a *recusatio*. For in this passage a poet says no to a patron. Or at least, he pretends to say no, ostensibly refusing to celebrate his military victories in heroic verse, but instead commemorating them gracefully and perhaps more effectively in bucolic verse. At any rate, I take it that Tityrus's representation of himself as a singer, and not as a writer, has something to do with his ability to refuse Varus's request. He can refuse to write for Varus because he must sing for Apollo. He has, we might say, a higher calling.

This higher calling clearly has something to do with the poet's own ambition and with his preferences. In this sense it resembles Catullus's song of mourning for his brother. If we turn now to Horace, we find that his odes corroborate this impression.

The first of the odes invites comparison with Catullus's dedication poem. What attracts attention in Horace's ode are factors such as the treatment of Maecenas, so much more prominent and hyperbolically complimentary

than Catullus's address to Nepos, and the elaborate priamel of occupations that occupies the majority of the poem's lines. The important thing for our purposes, though, is the very end of the poem, in which Horace speaks of his ambition to join the canon of Greek lyric poets:

Me doctarum hederæ præmia frontium
dis miscent superis, me gelidum nemus
Nympharumque leues cum Satyris chori
secernunt populo, si neque tibia
Euterpe cohibet nec Polyhymnia
Lesboum refugit tendere barbiton.
Quod si me lyricis uatibus inseres,
sublimi feriam sidera uertice.

—*Carm.* 1.1.29–36

(An ivy crown, the reward of learned brows, places me among the gods above, the cool grove and the nimble dancing of Nymphs with Satyrs removes me from the crowd, if Euterpe does not withhold her pipes and Polyhymnia refuse to offer the harp of Lesbos. But if you will insert me among the lyric bards, I shall strike the stars with my towering head.)

Horace's language, as I have said elsewhere in another connection, is extremely bookish and material.²⁹ *Quodsi me lyricis inseres uatibus/sublimi feriam sidera uertice*. It is the word *inseres* that we must give its full weight. Nisbet and Hubbard compare it to the Greek *egkrinein* and emphasize the act of judgment by which Horace will gain inclusion within the lyric canon. But the word is more straightforward than that. In fact, the English derivative captures the basic sense nicely: "but if *you will insert* me among the lyric poets, I will strike the stars with my towering head." What does this mean? It is helpful to remember that the "you" in *inseres* is Maecenas, and that we are to imagine Maecenas not just as the addressee of this poem and the dedicatee of *Odes* 1–3 as a whole, but also, in this capacity, as the recipient of a ceremonial presentation copy. Accordingly, Horace says in this opening poem of the collection that he hopes Maecenas likes his gift well enough to find it a place in his library next to the works of Sappho, Alcaeus, and the other poets of the Greek lyric canon. The patron's act of judgment is figured as the concrete act of storing the three *libelli* that make up this corpus of lyric poems in the same *capsa* or *scrinium* in which he keeps the Greek lyric poets.

So, as in Catullus, the physical presentation copy that Horace gives his patron symbolizes their relationship in the economy of gift exchange; at the same time, Horace makes clear the idea latent in Catullus that whatever the patron does with the book has an important bearing on

29. For what follows cf. Farrell 2007, 188–92.

the poet's reputation. The relationship represented here is clearly asymmetrical, with the patron having a key advantage over the poet.

Horace develops this idea just a few poems later in *Odes* 1.6, in which he suggests that his friend Varius would be a much better choice to compose an epic on the exploits of M. Vipsanius Agrippa. *Scriberis Vario*, Horace tells Agrippa, "you will be written by Varius." This opening phrase has long provoked puzzled comment, directed mainly at *Vario*: the dative of agent would be a bit unusual, but an instrumental ablative almost insulting. What is seldom noticed is that the verb *scribere*, and indeed any word or image that points specifically to writing, is rare in the *Odes*. It occurs twice in this poem. This makes the ode a useful pendant to *Eclogue* 6—like it, a *recusatio*—in which, remember, Vergil suppresses the idea of writing that is so prominent in the Callimachean passage that he imitates. Here Horace, unusually in the *Odes*, introduces the idea of writing, but in connection with a different poet, Varius, and with a genre that is alien to Horace. He instead associates his own poetry and his chosen themes with vocal performance (*dicere* 5, *cantamus* 19).

To return briefly to Maecenas, a number of scholars have shown that, over the three books of odes, Horace's position vis à vis his patron changes decisively.³⁰ Whereas in the first poem Maecenas is superior to Horace in all respects, the poet gradually assumes a position of equality with the patron, and then at last even asserts his own superiority in some respects. The poet's self-esteem reaches its climax in the final two poems of book 3. Poem 3.30, famously, is a matching bookend to poem 1.1, the only other ode of this collection composed in the first Asclepiadian meter. It is, then, surprising to find Maecenas, in his last appearance, "demoted" from the final ode to the penultimate one, the opening of which (*Tyrrhena regum progenies*) clearly recalls that of the dedication ode. By relegating Maecenas to this inferior station, Horace reserves the place of honor to himself, and takes the opportunity to express pride in his achievement. The final poem declares that it will outlast all material monuments, precisely because it is immaterial: neither bronze, nor of stone like the pyramids, and thus impervious to the elements and to time, Horace will not die altogether, but will grow in posthumous praise, because his poetry will live in viva voce performance (*dicar* 10).

A lot more could be said, but I hope that this much makes clear a few basic points. First, in Catullus the image of the physical book is associated not only with permanence, but also with various possibilities for theft, corruption, destruction, ridicule, and oblivion. It is also associated with the alienation of the poet's work from his control, whether by theft, by public circulation, or by gift to a patron. Further, the patron's reception of a physical book in the form of a ceremonial presentation copy represents the all-important first stage of public reception, which conventionally and,

30. Zetzel 1982 and Santirocco 1984.

perhaps normally, in fact as well sets the tone for all future stages. For all these reasons, the image of the book serves as a magnet for the poet's anxiety about his immediate reception and posthumous reputation.

Against such images of the material book, Catullus presents himself only once as a singer; the subject of his song will be intensely personal, a lament for his dead brother; and significantly, on that occasion he imagines that his song will be eternal. Later in Vergil and then more clearly in Horace we find immaterial song opposed to material text in ways that suggest both the poet's assertion of independence from the demands of a patron and, in Horace, in ways that instantiate the poet's claim to immortality through his work. The oppositions between images of material and immaterial texts continue to inform the works of later poets, but investigation of these developments must await another occasion.

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Ancient Literacies

The Culture of Reading in Greece
and Rome

EDITED BY

William A. Johnson and Holt N. Parker

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

2009

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198 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10016
www.oup.com

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Ancient literacies : the culture of reading in Greece and Rome / edited by William A. Johnson and
Holt N. Parker.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and indexes.

ISBN 978-0-19-534015-0

1. Transmission of texts—Greece. 2. Transmission of texts—Rome.

3. Books and reading—Greece. 4. Books and reading—Rome. 5. Literacy—Greece.

6. Literacy—Rome. I. Johnson, William A. (William Allen), 1956– II. Parker, Holt N.

Z1003.5.G8A53 2009

302.2'24409495—dc22 2008020329

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