



## Introduction

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This collection of papers is the outcome of a one-day symposium held at The University of Newcastle, New South Wales in November 2018. The symposium marked fourteen years since the first Catullus gathering at Newcastle, which resulted in the first thematic issue of *Antichthon*, 'Catullus in Contemporary Perspective' in 2006. This inaugural thematic issue of *Antichthon* marked the fortieth anniversary of the foundation of the Australasian Society for Classical Studies and the publication of its journal. It is especially poignant that many of the original contributors and audience members returned in 2018, and their papers appear in this second thematic volume, 'Catullus in the 21st Century.'

When one compares the content of this thematic issue with its 2006 predecessor, certain topics remain constant, while new ways of engaging with Catullus also emerge. The new millennium has seen the publication of several key collections on Catullan scholarship, including Julia Haig Gaisser's *Catullus* (2007) for the Oxford Readings in Classical Studies series, with twenty-five chapters on the poet from the second-half of the twentieth century. Serious students of Catullus would be familiar with most if not all of the readings in Gaisser's volume. The same year saw the publication of Marilyn B. Skinner's edited collection of new work on Catullus – *A Companion to Catullus* – in the Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World series. Skinner's extensive collation of commissioned chapters captured the innovations as well as the traditions in Catullan scholarship and complemented Gaisser's retrospective volume.<sup>1</sup> The contributions in this special issue of *Antichthon* reflect the content of both eminent volumes: the scholarship and traditions of Gaisser's collection, and the recent developments in the field of Skinner's volume. Twenty-first-century monographs are also in evidence in the articles herein, be they in the extension of ideas or more robust engagement with them.

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<sup>1</sup> This thematic issue shares its publication year with another compendium, edited by Ian Du Quesnay and Tony Woodman. Like Skinner's 2007 collection, *The Cambridge Companion to Catullus* captures the current state-of-play in Catullan scholarship, but it appeared too late for our contributors to take it into account.

Growing out of feminist examination of issues related to ancient gender and sexuality, studies of Roman masculinity have come to a comparative forefront of Catullan scholarship. Following Skinner's magisterial analysis, *'Ego mulier: The Construction of Male Sexuality in Catullus'* (1993), the last thirty years has seen the publication of works such as David Wray's *Catullus and the Poetics of Roman Manhood* (2001), Ellen Greene's *'Catullus, Caesar and Roman Masculine Identity'* (2006), and Ralph J. Hexter's *'The Kisses of Juventius, and Policing the Boundaries of Masculinity'* (2015). In this second thematic volume for *Antichthon*, masculinity is very much at the centre of some contributions. **Leah O'Hearn's 'Conquering Ida: An Ecofeminist Reading of Catullus' Poem 63'** examines the role that nature plays in the striking tale of Attis' emasculation. Using ecofeminist theory, O'Hearn analyses how Catullus shapes Attis' story as a loss of masculinity – and, critically, a loss of rationality – when this Greek, 'Western', youth meets an Eastern natural environment, Mount Ida in Asia Minor. Among other things, **Lindsay Watson's 'Catullus' Priapean Poem (c. 17)'** concerns another male who fails to dominate, namely, the doltish husband in Colonia, who incurs Catullan ridicule for his inability to meet, or even perceive, his young wife's sexual needs.

Meanwhile, Catullan masculinity is recontextualised and reconsidered for new ages in **Maxine Lewis and Christina Robertson's 'Shameful Kisses: A History of the Reception – and Rejection – of Homoeroticism in Catullus'**, which explores how the poet's depictions of male–male sexual violence and homoeroticism were translated or otherwise adapted in Anglophone poetry and novels from 1659–1915. Lewis and Robertson reveal that while some translators felt able to portray Catullus' erotic relationship with Juventius (and other such instances of homoeroticism), others did not – though they might still include his poems of male–male sexual violence. Translators found different ways of recuperating this poetry to suit their own morals and those of their time. Working outside the Anglophone tradition and during the Second World War, Carl Orff's *Catulli Carmina* nonetheless represents one way of dealing with themes that offend contemporary standards of masculinity. Juventius is simply ignored in favour of a narrative that focuses on the Lesbia relationship. However, as **Jonathan Wallis** shows in **'Masculine Redemption in Carl Orff's Catulli Carmina (1943)'** there is still more for Orff to do to bring Catullus into line with Nazi ideals about masculinity. Gone is the forever divided character who hates and loves and suffers from the disease of unrequited love; in his place, a rejuvenated and vigorous Catullus capable of overcoming his erotic travails. Like Henry Stead's *A Cockney Catullus* (2015), these contributions by Wallis and Lewis and Robertson reflect the growing number of Reception Studies in Classics as the discipline develops, changes, and places ever more importance on how the ancient world has come down to us and why it remains relevant today.

Another prominent theme in the issue, invective, has never fallen out of favour in scholarship. Indeed, some of the most memorable poems, and academic endeavours, have been devoted to the poet's particular skill at downright nastiness, rendered with a flair for the obscene. David Lateiner ventured there in the mid-1970s with the unambiguously titled, 'Obscenity

in Catullus', followed by Skinner's 'Parasites and Strange Bedfellows: A Study in Catullus' Political Imagery' in 1979. **Lindsay Watson's** contribution to this important theme is in evidence in the first *Antichthon* collection, 'Catullus and the Poetics of Incest' (2006), followed by another *Antichthon* publication in 2009, 'Catullus and the Brothel-Creepers: Carmen 37'. In '**Catullus' Priapean Poem (c. 17)**', Watson returns to one area of his Catullan expertise, and extends the scholarship on poem 17 through examination of the rare Priapean metre employed. The role metre plays in constructing the poem's meaning has been tackled previously, including by Judy Deuling in 'Catullus 17, 67, and the Catullan Context' in the first thematic issue, and Watson addresses her analysis but extends it through an examination of the Priapic tradition in, for example, the *Carmina Priapea* among other Latin sources.

Catullan *vituperatio* takes fiercer form in **Robert Cowan's 'Dismembering Cominius: Political Violence and Iambic Aggression in Catullus 108'**, which explores the relationship between late Republican mob violence and literary traditions of invective. Cowan expands upon the connection drawn by Christian Gnilka (1973) between poem 108 and the realities of political violence in Catullus' time in order to uncover a piece that may engage in Archilochean and Hipponactean hate-speech fully cognisant of the real acts of dismemberment it can incite.

**James Uden's 'Egnatius the Epicurean: The Banalization of Philosophy in Catullus'** and **Tom Hillard's 'Catullus 113 as the Vilification of Pompey's Ex-Wife Mucia'** also examine examples of Catullan ridicule with one eye on his social, cultural, and historical context. A contributor to the 2006 special issue, where he demonstrated how Catullus embraced the role of the comic *adulescens amator* in poem 75, Uden now turns his attention to the figure of Egnatius in poems 37 and 39 and the poet's deployment of another area of discourse, philosophy. The role of philosophy in late Republican culture as well as use of its ideas and terminology in literature is a topic of growing scholarly interest: in the last five years, Tamas (2016), Godwin (2018) and O'Hearn (2021) have examined various aspects of Catullus' use of philosophical terms and themes. Uden shows how Catullus makes use of Epicurean ideas as well as the usual tropes against devotees of the philosophy in order to make fun of the 'beaming' Celtiberian for his lack of taste.

Hillard chases the identity of the mysterious 'Mecilia', used in poem 113, as he comments, 'as the yardstick of sexual profligacy' in an era bookended by Pompey's consulships. Rather than proposing an emendation to the text, he demonstrates how the sobriquet identifies the adulterous woman as Pompey's ex-wife Mucia and ridicules her family's rustic pronunciation along the way. Hillard demonstrates his trademark expertise in textual analysis, prosopography, and late Republican history (see, for example Hillard 1989) to produce a series of answers to this problematic poem, which has attracted a 'proliferation of editorial conjecture' on the clause *duo ... solebant mecilia* (Catull. 113.1–2). Tantalisingly, he shows that one aspect of its project of vilification may be to raise questions about the legitimacy of Pompey's children.

Lesbia has tended to be relegated to the background in a good deal of the scholarship of the last twenty years, often appearing in broader approaches

to the Catullan oeuvre, as in 'Lesbia's Controversial Bird: Testing the Cases for and against *Passer* as Sparrow' by Ashleigh Green, and 'Catullus' Lament for Lesbia's *Passer* in the Context of Pet-Keeping' by Patricia Watson. Green's approach includes Lesbia, of course, not as the *prima donna* of Catullus' poetic theatre, but as the means by which to further interrogate the age-old conundrum: what exactly was this species of bird that caused so much angst? Although the scholarly hobby of identifying the *passer* is a long one, Green expands the theme by making effective use of the relatively new studies concerning domestic pets in antiquity, considering the broader socio-cultural environments of elite Romans to better contextualise matters ornithological as well as domestic. Watson's article also reflects the trend in scholarship that has tended to separate Lesbia from Catullus and his fixation on her, in order to situate her amid other stories and concepts. While Watson does cover the seemingly endless avenues of getting to the bottom of the nature of this toxic relationship through the *passer*, this is only half of her concerns, as she considers Lesbia as a bird fancier and pet-keeper. In this way, both articles show the developments in Catullan studies in terms of the increasing use of his poetry not only as a source of the history of love and eroticism but also the socio-cultural enclave he and Lesbia (and the bird) inhabited.

But Lesbia is never far away, although she appears in different guises. In 'Catullus' Fantastical Memories', Marguerite Johnson recalls the woman of Frank Olin Copley (1949), Patrick McGushin (1967), David Rankin (1976), Ernst A. Fredricksmeyer (1983), and the other romantic Latinists under her spell. Johnson reviews Lesbia through the lens of Memory Studies, as well as the psychoanalytical research of Micaela Janan's Lacanian readings (1994), expanded and made Freudian by Ellen Oliensis (2009). Thus, Lesbia regains her status as the centre of Catullus' universe – along with his brother – once again in our collection.

Discussing themes as diverse as hate-speech, grief, trauma, colonialism, environmental degradation, and pet-keeping, the papers in this special issue demonstrate that Catullus' lively and learned output remains relevant. Catullus still engages his readers as much as he has ever done. His intense poetry of personal relationships continues to charm, trouble, amuse, frustrate, and move in ways that we are still trying to understand. In this way, he is a poet of the twenty-first century, his words ringing true in new contexts of modernity and resonating in different ways to different readers. We have endeavoured to capture some of his agelessness herein, guided by his own words:

quare habe tibi quidquid hoc libelli  
 quaecumque; quod, <0> patrona uirgo,  
 plus uno maneat perenne saeclo.

Catull. 1.8–10

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