Edited by

Julia Haig Gaisser

Oxford Readings in Classical Studies

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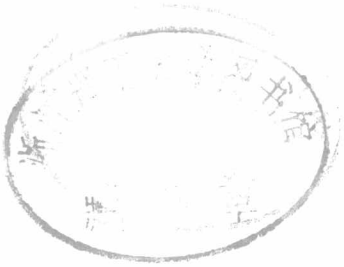

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Preface

This volume includes 25 readings on Catullus from the last half century and three very short excerpts from the Renaissance. My first criterion for selection was intrinsic interest and importance. I looked for pieces that were thought-provoking (and in some cases provocative) and that would challenge readers to look at Catullus in different ways. I also wanted to show something of the history of Catullan interpretation over the last half century and to cover as many poems as possible. In order to insure variety, I decided to select no more than one piece by any author – a principle I have violated only once. (The volume includes two readings by T. P. Wiseman.) I also tried to avoid pieces reprinted in the two previous Catullan collections: Kenneth Quinn's *Approaches to Catullus* (1972) and Rolf Heine's *Catull* (1975). (There is one duplication: the piece by Eduard Fraenkel, which appeared in both.) Most of the readings appear in their original form; some have been lightly revised by their authors or contain bibliographical additions.

The collection is intended to be of interest to several constituencies: undergraduate and graduate students of Catullus, school and university Latin teachers (including non-specialists), and specialists in Roman poetry. In order to make the readings accessible to the widest possible audience, English translations have been provided for the Latin and Greek, as well as for quotations in other languages. Only the short piece by J. N. Adams is printed without translations.

It is a pleasure to thank the contributors to this volume, both for permitting their work to be reprinted and for their great cooperation in checking my translations and providing their own. I owe special thanks to Giuseppe Gilberto Biondi and Gian Biagio Conte for their kind attention to the English translations of their articles and to Leofranc Holford-Strevens for his translations. The selections in the volume are my own, but I benefited from the suggestions of both the anonymous readers for the press and several valued colleagues: Joseph Farrell, Brendon Reay, Marilyn Skinner, and James Zetzel. I

am also most grateful to Hilary O'Shea and Jenny Wagstaffe of Oxford University Press, who provided encouragement and support to this project from the beginning.

Bryn Mawr College
July 2006

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Introduction: Themes in Catullan Criticism (*c.*1950–2000)

Julia Haig Gaisser

This volume includes 25 readings that represent a sampling of the most interesting and important work on Catullus from around 1950 to 2000, together with three very short pieces from the Renaissance. The pieces are grouped in several broad categories in order to demonstrate a range of treatments of similar topics over time, but the authors' interests are not so easily pinned down. Several articles could be placed in more than one category.

The readings demonstrate a number of approaches—stylistic, historical, literary-historical, New Critical, and theoretical (of several flavors)—and it is likely that in some cases their authors would have little intellectual common ground except for an enthusiasm for Catullus' poetry and a desire to interpret it. Such hermeneutic diversity could be duplicated in the criticism of any Latin poet in the last fifty years, but it is especially appropriate in the case of Catullus, whose *œuvre* is famously—some might say notoriously—varied in length, genre, tone, and subject matter. Catullus' variety has often been the despair of critics, who have tried to explain it (or rather, to explain it away) by identifying one or two of his qualities as those of 'the real' or 'the essential' Catullus and overlooking or denigrating the rest. Thus, different critics have insisted that he is above all a lyrist or a satirist, an Alexandrian, or an epigrammatist, and—at least at the beginning of our period—that some of his poetry is more worth reading than the

rest or that he put more work into some poems and much less into others, with corresponding effects on their quality. Such pigeonholing is a mistake. The fact is that Catullus' genius and variety are greater than those of individual critics or schools. We do best to look at him in as many ways as possible.

The last fifty years have seen many hundreds of publications on Catullus.[1] In this introduction I will not present a survey or try to demonstrate a development or progress in Catullan studies as if all earlier efforts at interpretation were merely a preamble to our own enlightened reading. Instead I will consider views of Catullus at several critical moments from the middle of the twentieth century to the present, looking at what has interested his readers and how they have approached his poetry. We will be looking at Catullan criticism from a historical and thematic perspective—not a teleological one.

THE MID-CENTURY CATULLUS

For Catullus, as for most classical poets, twentieth-century scholarship breaks neatly at around the half-century mark. The first half is summed up accurately if pessimistically in *Fifty Years of Classical Scholarship* (1954) by R. G. C. Levens, who introduces his discussion with this comment: 'a survey of work published in the last half-century yields only a very limited sense of achievement and progress'.[2] Levens goes on to survey Catullan scholarship from 1900 to 1950 under six headings: 1. Editions; 2. Translations; 3. Biography; 4. Literary History and Criticism; 5. MSS and Text; 6. Language, Metre, and Style. The survey speaks volumes both about what resources were available

[1] *L'Année Philologique* Online lists over two thousand between 1959 and 2003. The most recent survey of Catullan scholarship is nearly twenty years old: Ferguson (1988). Other important surveys include Leon (1959–60), Thomson (1971), Quinn (1973b), Harrauer (1979), and Granarolo (1973–4) and (1987). Holoka (1985) lists works on Catullus published between 1878 and 1981. Thomson (1997) includes bibliography up to about 1993 for each poem. Martindale's preface in Quinn (1999) discusses some twentieth-century trends in Catullan criticism.

[2] Levens (1954: 284). Levens' survey was printed unchanged in *Fifty Years and Twelve of Classical Scholarship* (1966).

to mid-century Catullan scholars and what they considered interesting and important about his poetry.

In 1954 the most recent text was the Teubner of Mauriz Schuster (1949), which like its predecessors still did not make full use of the important fourteenth-century manuscript R (Vatican library, Ottob.1829) discovered by William Gardner Hale in 1896.[3] The most recent commentaries in English were those of Robinson Ellis (1889) and E. T. Merrill (1893, reissued 1951). More recent and more useful were the German commentary of Wilhelm Kroll (1923) and the Italian commentary of Massimo Lenchantin de Gubernatis (1928). As Levens' categories indicate, research on Catullus was largely directed to historical, technical, and textual matters. Nine of his twenty pages are taken up with discussion of editions, manuscripts, and the text, while fewer than two (four shortish paragraphs in all) treat the category of literary history and criticism. The lack of literary treatment is even more extreme than it sounds: only two of the four paragraphs discuss works of literary interpretation or analysis. The others treat scholarship on Catullus' Alexandrian models and his influence on English poetry. The most literary of the few books Levens mentions as works of 'general criticism of the poetry of Catullus' is E. A. Havelock's *The Lyric Genius of Catullus* (1939),[4] which he says 'swept like a gust of fresh air through the stuffy corridors of Catullian criticism' (293). But the dearth of literary studies is not surprising, for in general serious classicists in the first half of the twentieth century did not go in much for literary criticism, which remained

[3] The discovery was announced in Hale (1896) and described at greater length in Hale (1897: 33–9), Hale's report on his year as the first director of the American School in Rome (predecessor of the American Academy). The importance of R was challenged by German champions of M (Venice, Biblioteca Marciana lat. 12.80 [4167]) and D (Berlin, Deutsche Staatsbibliothek Diez. B. Sant. 37), and Hale embarked on a vast collation of Catullus manuscripts in the effort to reconstruct the entire textual tradition and vindicate his discovery. He never finished his work. 'In 1928 Hale died at his desk, his collations of the codices deteriores lying open before him' (Thomson [1973: 115]). For more on Hale's discovery and its aftermath see especially Thomson (121–8) and Levens (1954: 294–5).

[4] The others were D. A. Slater, *The Poetry of Catullus* (1912); Tenney Frank, *Catullus and Horace* (1928); S. Gaetani, *La poesia di Catullo* (1934); and F. A. Wright, *Three Roman Poets* (1938). A. L. Wheeler's *Catullus and the Traditions of Ancient Poetry* (1934) is mentioned in the paragraph on works treating Catullus' Greek models.

suspect in many quarters—especially in Britain—well into the 1970s.[5] The lack is still less surprising in the case of Catullus since scholars believed that his poetry presented few difficulties. Contrasting Catullus with Lucretius, for example, Levens comments: 'To read Lucretius at all requires some study; but all that is most vital in Catullus can be read by anyone with a basic knowledge of Latin' (284). As twenty-first-century readers we are inclined to bristle a little at the phrase 'all that is most vital', and well we should, for it means 'all that is worth reading' in the eyes of Levens and his intended readers, and implies that there are things in Catullus that are 'less vital' and less worth reading. Dismissal of portions of the poetry from consideration is a recurrent theme in Catullan criticism, as we shall see presently.

Levens' review provides a fascinating snapshot of the mid-twentieth century Catullus at the critical moment when everything in the picture was about to change. Let us pause for a moment to study the image more closely. Mostly we see background, the underbrush, we might say, of historical and philological scholarship, but lacking essential current texts and commentaries that would incorporate the progress of the previous half century. The poet himself—that is, Catullus the literary artist—takes up only a small portion of the picture, fittingly enough, since he was considered so transparent. This Catullus, in the portrait painted by Havelock and accepted by Levens and his contemporaries, is, above all, 'modern' in sensibility and hence congenial to twentieth-century readers. For Havelock, Catullus is more suited to the 'modern' temper than he had been to the taste of his fellow Romans:

> Catullus paid the price to Roman posterity of defying the unromantic Roman temper. He wrote love lyrics which his countrymen proved incompetent to classify and enjoy as modern taste may enjoy them. We

[5] Havelock, for example, is careful to note in his preface: 'This book…makes none of the claims proper to a severe work of scholarship'; a few lines later he calls it 'a labour of love rather than learning' and continues: 'the discovery of the charms of Catullan lyric has been my diversion ever since my schooldays'. As for attitudes towards literary criticism in the 1970s, anyone in the audience of the Cambridge Philological Society in 1969–70 will remember the dismay verging on outrage with which several senior (and not so senior) scholars greeted J. C. Bramble's paper on Catullus 64, now regarded as a classic (Bramble 1970).

have cleared a dignified space in literature for sexual passion. That is the difference.[6]

Levens is more moderate. His Catullus is merely 'more congenial to the taste of the twentieth century than to that of the nineteenth'.[7] Modern sensibility, he feels, is in tune with Catullus: it exalts poets like John Donne and Dylan Thomas, judging poetry more by its 'energy' than 'the polish of its surface,' so that it 'is naturally drawn to a poet whose sense of form was the servant of his urge to express emotion'.[8] The 'emotion' that Levens' Catullus expresses, however, is not the 'sexual passion' valued by Havelock but rather a kind of social and political disenchantment that speaks to Levens and his generation:

The present age is all the more at home with Catullus because the feelings he expressed were those of an individualist clinging, in a disintegrating society, to the one standard which he could feel was secure, that of personal integrity.[9]

The mid-century Catullus was a poet of feeling even if scholars disagreed about what those feelings were, and for Havelock at least the expression of feeling was his chief, not to say his only, excellence. Writing in reaction to a view that saw essentially two Catulluses (a lyrist and a learned Alexandrian), he argued instead for a single poet, whose great talent was the 'lyric genius' of his title.

Catullus…should be interpreted first and last as a lyrist. Even in his longer compositions, his writing becomes significant and important only in so far as it is lyrical. He is *par excellence* the poet of intense moods, expressed either singly or in rapid succession. This it is true requires poetic organization, but the organization is of the emotions pure and simple. Let him pause to reflect, to marshal ideas or situations which call for an effort of abstraction, and his muse fails.[10]

Catullus' muse fails a great deal in Havelock's view, and most conspicuously in the long poems. Poems 66 and 67 have 'no poetic significance at all' (p. 76); 65, 68a, and 68b each have some fine passages, but 'each… considered as a whole is a complete failure' (p. 77); 62 'reads like a fairly close imitation of some Greek original,

[6] Havelock (1939: 92). [7] Levens (1954: 284). [8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid. [10] Havelock (1939: 78).

though it has some pretty passages' (p. 77); 64 has appealing 'emotional episodes and semi-lyrical passages', but these 'are strung together with a minimum of hasty narrative into an ill-assorted series' (p. 77). Only 61 and 63 are 'indubitable successes'; they succeed because 'they are simply long sustained lyrics' (pp. 77–8). Havelock knows what he likes: 'lyric genius' requires intense emotion (primarily love) with a particular kind of originality not too far behind:

> Of all his emotions it was his love that crowned his verse.... The originality of Catullus lay in making love completely tender and completely serious.[11]

One can see how exciting Havelock's work, with its emphasis on emotion, sexual passion, and originality, must have seemed in 'the stuffy corridors of Catullian criticism' of the first part of the twentieth century. But his purely lyrical Catullus has been achieved at great cost. The procrustean bed of lyric he has constructed is too small for Catullus; to make him fit, Havelock must lop off a third of his poetry.[12]

THE CATULLAN REVOLUTION 1958–1970

Levens wrote his survey in 1954 on the eve of what it is hardly excessive to call a revolution. In the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s Catullan scholarship experienced both a burst of activity and a sea change in its nature and direction.

Traditional scholarship was a conspicuous beneficiary of the heightened interest. Within a decade of Levens' review, several major works from the first half of the century had been reissued and made available to a new generation of readers. Kroll's commentary was reprinted in 1959 and appeared in a new edition in 1960. The 1912

[11] Havelock (1939: 90). As for 'originality', we should also note that his very faint praise of 62 seems related to his suspicion that it has a Greek original. Poem 66, translating Callimachus' *Lock of Berenice*, 'is a piece of hack-work written to order' (77), a poetic exercise 'in a quite different category' from 51, his 'creative imitation' of Sappho (185 n. 5).

[12] The text of Catullus as we have it consists of about 2300 verses. Poems 62, 64, 65, 66, 67 and 68 alone comprise about 800, but there are other poems Havelock would probably dismiss from consideration: he notes that 'the total is very uneven in quality' (73).

Index verborum Catullianus of M. N. Wetmore was reprinted in 1961. A. L. Wheeler's *Catullus and the Traditions of Ancient Poetry* (1934) was reprinted in 1964, Havelock's *Lyric Genius of Catullus* in 1967. But entirely new texts and commentaries also appeared, providing material and impetus for increased literary study. In 1958 R. A. B. Mynors published his Oxford Classical Text, the first edition of Catullus to make serious use of the important manuscript R discovered by Hale over sixty years earlier. As G. P. Goold noted in his review:

> The first problem in the textual criticism of our author is to isolate and classify all mss independently derived from V. Mynors' edition solves this problem once and for all by providing enough ms readings to prove Hale's hitherto unsubstantiated claim (*TAPA* 53 [1922] 111) that 'all the manuscripts except OGR are derived from these three, and...we may and must cut off the whole web below the manuscripts OGR'.[13]

Goold predicted that Mynors' text would foster the study and appreciation of Catullus (114), and so it has. For the last fifty years it has been the text of choice, at least in the English-speaking world. Although other texts have appeared since, some better in various ways than Mynors',[14] the overall excellence of his edition and the prestige and wide distribution of the OCT have carried the day. In 1961 C. J. Fordyce published a commentary on Mynors' text—the first commentary on Catullus in English since Merrill (1893). His work, which was 'intended to meet the need for an English commentary for general school and university use', omitted what he described as 'a few poems which do not lend themselves to comment in English'.[15] The 'few poems' in fact numbered 32, roughly a quarter of the 116 printed in modern editions. Fordyce was sharply criticized at the time for his omissions and has been ridiculed since, but omitting the poems seems to have been the decision of the press, which hoped to market the edition to schools.[16] The decision was probably

[13] Goold (1958: 95). Goold's detailed review is important reading for anyone interested in the Renaissance history of the text since he presents a census of corrections and their sources culled from Mynors' apparatus.

[14] Notably Goold (1983) and Thomson (1978) and Thomson (1997).

[15] Fordyce (1961: [p. v]).

[16] See especially Fraenkel's review (1962). Thomson (1997: 59 n. 79) points out that the first printing contained references to notes missing in the commentary and says