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RECEPTION AND RECEPTIVITY IN CATULLUS 64

Basil Dufallo

Classical reception implies two interrelated sets of cultural practices. One is the use of specific classical sources in literary works, paintings, systems of thought, "cultural events," and other forms of cultural production, the whole gamut of citational techniques constituting what is usually addressed by "classical reception studies." Another—often harder to identify with specific ancient sources—is the staging of receptivity to the classical past, a notionally passive state but very much dependent on active behaviors and tied, like the first kind, to the occupation of certain social, cultural, and political roles within a given society. Displaying receptivity to the ancient world is intermingled with citation as a guarantee of its collective import, even as such display divides those who are receptive in the same way from those who are not. Indeed, any act of classical reception both invites and excludes other participants. Invitation and exclusion can occur in the same gesture, even with the same audience as their target. When Keats, for example, hears and allows us to hear his Grecian Urn declare, "Beauty is truth, truth beauty," he makes a statement about receptivity to ancient Greece over which learned debate, a sense of not quite being "in" on the meaning of this ultimately cryptic pronouncement, has long continued.[1]

Staging receptivity to antiquity is a political practice with a complex history extending back to our classical sources themselves, and so forms a natural complement to the study of reception within a volume such as this one. To underscore this idea, I have chosen to concentrate on a culture among the earliest receivers of the Greek classics, ancient Rome, and, further, on a series of fictive objects existing in the imagination of an ancient poet and his audience: the Argo, the royal palace of Peleus, and an embroidered coverlet depicting the story of Ariadne, all as described by Catullus in his famous "*epyllion*" on the

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marriage of Peleus and Thetis, poem 64 (Cat. 64).[2] The poem begins with a vision of the Argo's first voyage, during which the couple falls in love, then recounts the preparations for the wedding, including the marriage-couch on which the coverlet appears. For reasons of space, these opening episodes, together with the poem's conclusion, will be my main focus here, although my argument could be extended by considering the details of the great central ekphrasis, in which Ariadne's abandonment by Theseus is set beside her delivery by Bacchus, and the epithalamium sung by the three Fates at the marriage ceremony.[3] Concentrating on fictive objects will allow me more clearly to emphasize receptivity as opposed to reception per se, even though Catullus's poem in fact alludes to specific Greek and Latin literature in a dense and highly sophisticated way, so that these objects stand for and embody, among other things, literary reception. Poem 64 stages receptivity in the sense that it does not simply draw on earlier myth and literature but self-consciously demonstrates (not unlike Keats's Ode) certain idiosyncratic ways of perceiving the Greek past, particularly of *seeing* and *hearing* it, a performance concentrated in the Ariadne ekphrasis (50–266).

This staging is very complex and, as I shall argue, both sympathetic and ironic, encouraging and resisting unified readings.[4] It is expressly political insofar as the poem ends with a direct comparison between the heroic Greek past, when justice supposedly reigned and gods mingled with men, and the Roman present, in which society has degenerated to the point of civil war (384–408). A significant gap exists, however, between the narrator, who is made to appear receptive to the past in this particular way, and the poet, Catullus, who undercuts his narrator by lacing the narrative in question with subtle but unavoidable inconsistencies (O'Hara, 33–54). The Argo, for example, although introduced as the world's first ship, turns out somehow to have been preceded by the ships in Theseus's fleet (O'Hara, 34–41), while a host of other details in both the chronology of mythical events and the narrator's thematically and emotionally fluctuating presentation of them contribute, as we shall see, to the same effect. As he undercuts the narrator, Catullus also makes him appeal to the Roman audience in a variety of ways, not least in his expressed admiration for Greek aesthetic wonders. A programmatic, "neoteric" work directed at a sophisticated Hellenophile audience, poem 64 fashions a

new Roman version of typically Alexandrian kinds of reception and receptivity—and the inconsistencies themselves have Alexandrian precedent (O'Hara, 24–32).[5] Catullus's poem is not a slavish imitation of Alexandrian poetry in Latin, but issues, in effect, a qualified invitation to the Roman elite audience to enter *as Romans* into an archaic Greek world seen in part through Alexandrian eyes.

The contradictions of this invitation make it a component of poem 64's pervasive temporal inconsistency. And the poem's "labyrinthine" temporality, often remarked by scholars,[6] is thereby linked causally to the deep and conflicted identification of the narrator with the Greek past, which emerges as a kind of erotic object. To appreciate fully the implications of the inconsistent, belatedly Alexandrian narrator for the poem's supposed political "message," it is necessary to view the poem's erotics in this light. Readers at least since Konstan have seen that the poem's overall attitude toward the heroic Greek past is problematically connected to its apparent "indictment" of the Roman present, because it opens the possibility of Roman-style corruption already existing in the past and calls into question the value of traditional heroism in comparison with the domain of erotic attachment and loss embodied by Ariadne.[7] The narrator seems to identify strongly with the female figure Ariadne (even as he also regards her as an object of voyeuristic gratification) and treats Theseus and her other heroic male counterparts with suspicion. But what has not been stressed is that the Latin-speaking narrator's consequently ambiguous position as both insider and outsider to the heroic Greek world, a position anticipated in Alexandrian poetic debates over language, gender, and political identity, leaves it unclear whether he has correctly perceived the relation between past and present, Greek and Roman, in the course of the poem. Seen from this angle, the poem's overtly political conclusion emerges as only the final scene in a staging of inconsistent receptivity, rather than a simple moral judgment—even an ambiguous one—on Catullus's part. To subscribe to the version of receptivity embodied by the Catullan narrator becomes a politically ambiguous act, on which Catullus encourages his audience to reflect.

With his ambivalent attitude toward an eroticized Greek past, poem 64's narrator is a version of the lover-figure familiar from Catullus's lyrics and elegiacs. This lover's extreme ambivalence toward visualized objects of desire, above all his mistress, Lesbia, comes through

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clearly in a poem such as 51, where, in imitation of Sappho, Catullus (that is, the lover-figure as conventionally identified with the poet) complains of the debilitating physical effects that assail him in Lesbia's presence.[8] The broken social bonds that, for the narrator of poem 64, mark the severance between past and present correspond to the broken erotic bonds—as described using language of *amicitia* "friendship" borrowed from the political sphere (Ross 1969, 80–95)—that characterize the lover's experience and mark him as a subject. Understood from this perspective, poem 64 can make us keenly aware of receptivity as a contrivance inseparable from larger notions of desire, subjectivity, self-fashioning, and performance, as they intersect with the domain of "the political." The highly complex, active nature of the contrivance here, in a poem we claim as an object of classical reception, has the potential, in turn, to render us newly sensitive to such techniques in the postclassical works usually the focus of classical reception studies.

Let us turn to Catullus's text. The dynamic just described is at work from the start in poem 64, for already in its opening lines, Catullus mobilizes a dense, Alexandrian web of allusions to both Greek and, significantly, Roman authors around his narrator's account of a wondrous, erotically charged visual spectacle from archaic myth: the Argo, the first ship (or so it would seem) on its initial voyage (1–21). As Richard Thomas has discussed in an influential essay, the poem's opening recalls and revises Euripides' *Medea,* Apollonius's *Argonautica,* Callimachus's *Aetia,* Ennius's *Medea Exsul,* and other verse by Ennius and Accius. The opening detail "are said" (l. 2, *dicuntur,* with reference to the trees that "swim" to Phasis in the form of the Argo) signals the presence of allusion in what David Ross has called an "Alexandrian footnote" (1975, 78), and the allusions themselves announce the poem as an Alexandrian work "polemically" correcting older Greek and Latin versions of the myths surrounding the Argo (Thomas). The poet's skillful handling of allusion, however, will be part of what allows him to undercut his visualizing narrator, so that the question of the poem's Alexandrianism is already more complex than this.

Visual lushness abounds: the ship's oars striking the blue water and churning it to a white foam while its prow cleaves the surface of the sea personified as the goddess Amphitrite (ll. 7, 11–13) infuse the

scene with an erotic energy fitting in the prelude to a marriage (Konstan, 15–18).[9] Catullus concentrates attention on the act of viewing the Argo by including the "wondering Nereids" (l. 15) as spectators in the text. The Nereids, depicted seminude (ll. 17–18), their wonder having induced them to lift their bodies "as far as the breasts" (l. 18)[10] from beneath the water, become in turn objects of an erotic gaze: that of the narrator but also of the Argonauts and potentially of the poem's visualizing readers and listeners.[11] And Peleus and Thetis now each become the erotic object of the other, although with considerable emphasis on Peleus's passion and only litotic suggestion of Thetis's assent: *tum Thetidis Peleus incensus fertur amore, / tum Thetis humanos non despexit hymenaeos* (ll. 19–20, "Then Peleus is said to have burned with love for Thetis, then Thetis did not spurn marriage with a mortal"). The voice, then, that speaks the Latin of the opening lines foregrounds an eroticized receptivity to arresting visual images from the mythical Greek past while the poet appeals to a sophisticated audience familiar with earlier Greek and Roman literature (note the additional "footnote," *fertur,* in line 19).

Catullus in fact makes the narrator impart his initial wonder through a skillful reworking of Apollonius, so as to produce a partial syncretism of different viewers and focalizers, as Catullus's Nereids seem both to replace and stand in for Apollonius's, and the Latin epic narrator for the earlier Greek one. Line 9, *ipsa levi fecit volitantem flamine currum* ("[the goddess] herself made the chariot, flying about on the light breeze"), which identifies the Argo as entirely a divine production and so even more deserving of wonder, alludes to *Argonautica* 1.111–12 on the collaboration of the goddess Athena and the mortal Argus.[12] Catullus's suppression of Athena's coworker serves the purpose, as Thomas argues (149–50), of a counter-etymology linking the name "Argo" to the Greek adjective ἀργός ("swift"), while the description of the ship as a "chariot," a detail not in Apollonius, suggests the inability to assimilate this novel invention on the part of those encountering it for the first time. In a similar vein, Catullus alters Apollonius again to bring wondering deities closer to the Argo itself. In depicting the Nereids around the ship (ll. 14–15), Catullus conflates *Argonautica* 4.930–38, where Thetis and the Nereids swim playfully around the Argo as they guide it through the Wandering Rocks, with 1.549–51, where the Nymphs stand on Mount Pelion and marvel at the first

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ship (Thomas, 158). The transposition of Nymphs on Pelion to Nereids in the water again increases the sense of wonder at the divine. Indeed, the admiration experienced even by the Nereids for the handiwork of another divinity leads to their self-exposure (never repeated: ll. 16–18), part of the erotic buildup to the wedding. The initial events of Poem 64 are made to depend on the receptivity of already received mythical characters to the first spectacle its narrator, similarly receptive and received at once, offers.

At this point the audience may not have enough information confidently to dissociate narrator from poet as the controlling agent behind the poem's allusive games, but as the expectations triggered by successive allusions are defeated, suspicions begin to arise about the narrator's reliability. His opening recalls the dramatic *Medea* (both its Euripidean and Ennian versions) and the *Argonautica* in what then swiftly becomes a marriage poem (l. 20: *tum Thetis humanos non despexit hymenaeos* ["then Thetis did not spurn marriage with a mortal"]) (Clare, 64–65). The traditional sequel, however, to the Argonautic journey was in fact the tragedy of Medea, while Peleus and Thetis's marriage usually came *before* the Argo's maiden voyage rather than after it (Zetzel, 261). The multiple directions in which this allusive discourse points leave the audience in the dark about where the narrator's intense receptivity to the heroic past is causing him to lead them.

This comes to a head in the apostrophe to the heroes beginning on lines 22–23: *o nimis optato saeclorum tempore nati / heroes, salvete, deum genus!* ("O Heroes, born in an age exceedingly fortunate, hail, race of the gods!"). Here the narrator's pose becomes at once still more receptive to the Greek past—he claims to address the heroes themselves—and more peculiar when seen from the perspective of its Alexandrian models. Reminiscences of hymnic convention (Schmale, 73) here enhance the effect of "inner sympathy" (Kroll, 147) with the heroes, while a sense of personal emotion comes through similarly in the adjective *optato* (l. 22), which can mean both "fortunate" and "desired." A certain wistfulness coloring the narrator's wonder characterizes the apostrophe as, in Jonathan Culler's words, "a device which the poetic voice uses to establish with an object a relationship which helps to constitute him. The object is treated as a subject, an *I* which implies a certain type of *you* in its turn" (63). So, as he appears to seek out a still

closer bond with the heroes, a gesture perhaps already ironized,[13] the narrator takes on more psychological complexity from the perspective of Catullus's audience. If his address of the heroes helps define him, he is in turn brought into a more pointed relation with the audience as Hellenophile Romans, through whom his desire for the past is in effect triangulated, since he is in part a figure for the audience, and the assumption of their Hellenophilia informs Catullus's construction of him. Literary reception again mediates the course of the narrator's desire: the apostrophe of the heroes, which occurs near the beginning of poem 64, alludes to the *end* of the *Argonautica* (4.1773–75).[14] While typically Alexandrian in its reversal of poetic beginnings and endings, this particular allusion suggests the ensuing narrative as the "sequel" to a Greek poem it also seems to "correct" (Zetzel, 261). This increasingly idiosyncratic narrative is both revision to and continuation of earlier stories about a past to which the narrator also wishes to speak directly.

With the arrival of the Thessalian wedding guests in lines 32–33, Catullus puts forward a new spectator figure within the poem, and in the Thessalians' eventual reactions to the marvels of Peleus's court (ll. 267–68), Catullus again both stages and thematizes receptivity, just as he had done earlier with the narrator's vision of the Argo, the wondering Nereids, and the apostrophe to the heroes. This condition, however, now appears still more problematic than before. Introducing the Thessalians, the narrator does not in fact emphasize their receptivity to any of the marvels of Peleus's court, but rather the degeneration of the farmland they leave behind as they throng to the wedding (ll. 38–42). With its ironic echoes of "Golden Age" rhetoric amid an account of decline (Reckford, 81), the passage has, too, been read with poem 64's concluding condemnation of present-day corruption as a suggestion that the age of heroes is already corrupt (Konstan, 31–36). The account of agricultural decline, however, itself seems suspicious, particularly the notion that the necks of the bullocks released from the plough grow soft and that rust infects the unused ploughs (ll. 38, 42). The narrator clearly exaggerates the extent of the interruption, especially in light of the fact that the Thessalians are described, through a prominent simile, as leaving the wedding and returning to their homes immediately after viewing the tapestry (ll. 267–68, 276–77). That they do so *vago . . . pede* (l. 277: "with wandering foot") protracts their

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homeward journey somewhat, but by how much? And why is there no indication of this earlier, in the account of agricultural decline itself? The passage is no simple condemnation of the Age of Heroes on moral grounds, but is a further example of the narrator's inconsistency.

Catullus's original audience might hardly have been surprised by ambivalence over the mythical spectacle to which his narrator feels so powerfully drawn. The negative tone of the passage on agricultural decline (*deseritur . . . linquunt . . . nemo . . . non . . . non . . . non*) is jarring after the predominantly wondering tone of the poem's opening; but its emotional instability is a familiar feature of the Catullan lover. In poem 51, the lover expresses the ambivalent feelings roused by seeing Lesbia in proximity to another man, in an adaptation of Sappho's similar lines on a desirable girl (Sappho fr. 31).[15] Lesbia, whose very name here makes her stand for Sappho's Greece, becomes the focus of intense emotional turmoil: the lover's mute tongue, burning limbs, ringing ears, and darkened sight lead him to the observation that *otium* ("leisure") is ruining him, just as it has previously ruined kings and fortunate cities (ll. 13–16). So, too, in poem 64 the narratorial pose is made unstable just as powerfully attractive Greek objects of vision and desire (symbolic, likewise, of regal *otium* [Munich, 55n20]) have begun to come into view. The very receptivity that attracts the narrator to poem 64's principle objects is now undercut by the exaggeration of the passage on agricultural decline, and it is absolutely characteristic of Catullus the poet to drop the hint that this notion itself may be baseless (i.e., the wedding guests may in fact return to farming): this only undercuts the narrator's position further. In a similar way the poet of the Lesbia poems makes the Catullan lover a figure of pronounced inconsistency, nowhere more clearly than in the famous paradox *odi et amo* (l. 85.1: "I hate and I love"), while nevertheless elevating this lover's experience. Indeed, at this point in poem 64, *odi et amo* is beginning to seem like an apt characterization of the narrator's attitude toward the heroic Greek past itself.

As poem 64 turns, next, to an account of Peleus's palace, the narrator's posture of intense but problematic receptivity to the past appears to produce a new kind of temporal disjunction. Roman details now emerge in the midst of archaic Greek opulence. The placement of the royal couple's marriage bed *sedibus in mediis* (l. 48: "in the middle of the palace") corresponds entirely to Roman ritual and is

unprecedented in any Greek context. Although the couch is described as a *pulvinar* (l. 47), a word belonging "to the high epic vocabulary" and denoting the ritual couch of a divinity (appropriate in the case of the goddess Thetis), the adjective *genialis* in the same line would have reminded Roman audiences of the *lectus genialis*, the marriage bed placed in the atrium of a Roman house (Thomson, 400). As Michaela Schmale asserts, the whole description of Peleus's palace is likely to have recalled the Roman luxury villa with its splendid decorations and furnishings—here represented by gold and silver, ivory ceiling panels, and magnificent cups decorating the table (ll. 44–45)—so as to foreground the narrator's difficulty in contrasting a negatively weighted Roman present with an idealized heroic past, a larger theme of the poem (Schmale, 89). Her conclusion fits well with my own emphasis on an inconsistent receptivity staged by a manipulating poet. The narrator glorifies, however problematically, the Greek past at the same time as he invites an aesthetic response conditioned by the cultural circumstances, the real villas and other luxury belongings, known to his Roman audience. Since Roman Hellenophilia also expressed itself through domestic luxury, with Greek fashions and techniques transformed in the process of adaptation to the Roman context (Stewart, 10–38), the connection is apt (Schmale, 89). The audience can easily identify with the narrator's wonder over the aesthetic glories of Greece, in spite of doubts that the poet has begun to raise about both the Greek past and himself.

Catullus further underscores the narrator's ambiguous placement in relation to the Greek past through the Ariadne ekphrasis. The narrator's close identification with Ariadne is suggested especially through the extended lament (ll. 132–201) he performs in her voice. Abandoned by Theseus, whom she deprecates for his lack of *fides* (ll. 132–33, 144), she exposes the pain and loss implicit in the heroic ethos, and in this role corresponds both to Theseus's father Aegeus, who is also given a speech of lamentation within the ekphrasis (ll. 215–37), and Polyxena, whose sacrifice to the ghost of Achilles (ll. 368–70) sounds another pathetic note later in the poem, within the Song of the Fates (Konstan). A figure, in part, for the Catullan lover, whose abandonment and bitterness over broken *fides* she echoes (Putnam), she is nevertheless also an object of a voyeuristic gaze, appearing, like the Nereids, with bare breasts and careless of her self-exposure (ll. 63–67).

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Her story on the tapestry is a sign of both the narrator's alienation from the traditional heroism embodied by Peleus, Theseus, and Achilles and the connection he feels with other aspects of the archaic past, although this bond itself is qualified: Ariadne is not only an erotic figure herself but also contributes to the narrator's larger treatment of the Greek past as an erotic object ambivalently desired.

The traditions of Alexandrian ekphrasis may especially enhance the Catullan narrator's status as both insider and outsider to the heroic Greek past, in particular his ambivalent identification with Ariadne, if, as Wilhelm Kroll posited, Catullus had Theocritus's *Idyll* 15 (*Id*. 15) in mind as he composed poem 64 (Kroll, 157).[16] The concluding passages of this text provide the closest existing parallel for the ekphrasis of a tapestry located within a royal palace during the celebration of the union between a mortal and a divinity, and may, as Sebesta proposes (35), be Catullus's principal model here.[17] Even if it is not a conscious intertext, however, *Idyll* 15 nevertheless well illustrates Alexandrian concern with the political implications of staged receptivity to the mythical past and so strengthens the argument for Catullus's reworking of Alexandrian techniques. Theocritus's poem recounts the visit of two Syracusan women, Gorgo and Praxinoa, to the palace of Ptolemy Philadelphus during the festival of Adonis and their expressions of wonder at a tapestry depicting the boy, like Ariadne herself the mortal love object of a deity. *Idyll* 15 ends with a further ekphrasis in the form of a hymn to Adonis (ll. 100–144) describing an image of his "marriage" to Aphrodite. This is also voiced by a woman and corresponds in placement to the incipient marriage between Ariadne and Bacchus depicted, similarly, at the end of the Catullan ekphrasis (ll. 251–64). An allusion to Theocritus's poem, with its female interlocutors, would help Catullus underscore the ambiguities of his narrator's position, since Gorgo and Praxinoa occupy a similarly ambiguous place in relation to Ptolemy's court as the Catullan narrator does, so to speak, in relation to the imaginary court of Peleus. Praxinoa's brief description of the young Adonis, like the ensuing ekphrastic song, is strongly eroticized, lingering on the boy's silver couch (l. 84) and the early growth of beard on his cheeks (l. 85) and culminating in the epithets "thrice-beloved" and "beloved even in Acheron" (l. 86). Praxinoa is interrupted, however, by a stranger who chides the two women for their talkativeness and in particular mocks

their Doric accents (ll. 87–88). She in turn defends Gorgo and herself as descendents of Corinthian Greeks (Syracuse being a colony of Corinth), with whom they share their dialect (ll. 89–95), before Gorgo directs her attention to the "Argive woman's daughter," who is about to sing (ll. 96–99).

The meaning of the Theocritean encounter has been much debated, but Susan Stephens (242–43) is right to point out its intense concern with measuring both difference and sameness within the Greek-speaking population of Alexandria in relation to its Greek-speaking ruler, Ptolemy, as well as in opposition to the local Egyptian population, who appear in *Idyll* 15 as nothing more than criminals (*Id.* 15.47–50).[18] Gender accompanies language as an ironic aspect of the women's response, since their enthusiastic reactions to the royal celebration of Adonis's divine "marriage" stand out against their earlier complaints about unhappy marriages to inadequate husbands (Goldhill, 218). Whatever *Idyll* 15's exact significance for its original audience, its identification of the Doric dialect and Corinthian Greeks as both same and other to the regal court of Ptolemy anticipates Catullus's ambiguous situation of his Latin-speaking narrator vis-à-vis the Greek world of Peleus's palace and wedding. In both works, the cultural identity signaled by language and the influence of gender on perceptions of a given political formation are made to reflect on viewers' responses to visual art, and their aesthetic receptivity is both affirmed and undercut by a learned poet. The viewing female characters of *Idyll* 15, like the narrator of Catullus 64, stand in for—and can be read as manipulated versions of—both the poet (Griffiths, 84) and his trained audience (Skinner, 211–16). They, like their Catullan successor, press an audience to rethink not only its own critical judgments (Goldhill, 216–23)[19] but also its sense of cultural identity as a function of politics.

Space does not permit me to treat here all the passages of poem 64 that are relevant to my argument. But this analysis, brief as it is, can nevertheless shed light on one of the major issues raised by generations of readers: the question of the poem's overall moral stance, posed especially by its overtly political conclusion. The passage is indeed an indictment, and yet, sensitized to poem 64 as a self-conscious staging of inconsistent receptivity, we can only read its conclusion as the final scene in this production, rather than as a simple statement of a moral

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position, even an ambivalent one. Contradictions lurk here as they have earlier: the narrator elevates the heroic age over the present as a time when *pietas* (l. 386) governed human action and gods mingled with men (ll. 384–96), in spite of the fact that he seems to have deplored aspects of the heroic ethos, particularly the way it conflicts with erotic fidelity, and even gone so far as to suggest that the heroic age is corrupt in its love of material splendor leading to agricultural decline. Catullus, again, has his narrator perform a kind of receptivity to the past within which such contradictions emerge. From the point of view of the Roman present, Catullus suggests, the idealized world of archaic myth must appear to be a better time, and yet the very attitude that causes a strong and idiosyncratic identification with this world may be marked by inconsistencies similar to those of the Catullan lover. The result of this linkage is to characterize and comment on the narrator's receptivity as politically ambiguous, since it is not clear whether this narrator, in rejecting aspects of Roman politics, has perceived clearly the relation between the present and the past, even as he pronounces on decline. Poem 64 does not emerge from or produce a stable sense of present or past, Romanness or Greekness, but offers its audience an ironic—and yet sympathetic—perspective on a highly visual kind of imaginative literary play blurring these categories as they intersect with others: love and heroism, subjecthood and objecthood, the personal and the political. Such ambiguity is the consequence, Catullus suggests, of viewing the past as an erotic object.

In poem 64, the act of reception is bound up with a staged receptivity to the Greek past, and the two together organize the poem as a type of political scrutiny, enfolding a perspective on Rome—and perhaps also Alexandria—as a site of cultural negotiation linked to particular political circumstances. Catullus invites Roman elites who identify with Greece, both archaic and Alexandrian, to indulge this sentiment through poem 64's narrator, but the questions raised about this narrator might also apply to them. Is their self-asserting claim to Romanness, or, conversely, their perception of Rome's decline in relation to Greece, sustained or undermined by close identification with the Greek past? Can they negotiate the labyrinth created by complex Greek and Roman *exempla* without falling into the kind of inconsistency that characterizes poem 64's narrator? Rather than offering single-minded answers to such questions, Catullus encourages learned

reflection on identification and comparison themselves and on the erotics of the past that underlie them. Because we cannot separate the narrator of poem 64 entirely from Catullus, the controlling poet, the poem also undermines the distinction between "intellectual" and "erotic" responses to the past. And in this it points the way to discussion of our own investments, political and otherwise, in evoking ancient Rome as the site of Catullan complexity.

Notes

1. For discussion, see Dean with bibliography.

2. All citations of Catullus's *Carmina* refer to the edition of Mynors. The term "*epyllion*" ("miniature epic"), for which there is no ancient authority, is used for convenience to refer to a short hexameter poem in Hellenistic style. For discussion and bibliography, see Fantuzzi and Hunter, 191–245.

3. This extended argument will appear in a forthcoming book on Roman ekphrasis, from which the present article is drawn.

4. I echo Martindale's view of Catullus 64 as a poem "teasing with paradox" (98).

5. On the problematic term "neoteric" denoting the literary circle to which Catullus belonged, a group characterized by its adaptation of Alexandrian aesthetics, see Thomson, 11–22.

6. On this aspect of Catullus 64, see Weber; Gaisser; Janan, 107–12; Schmale; and, recently, O'Hara, 33–54.

7. Cf. Curran; O'Connell, 754–55; and, recently, Gardner, 163.

8. See below. Poem 64's connection to Catullus's other poetry has been much studied. For recent discussion see Gardner, 161; Putnam remains fundamental; cf. Miller, 107–18; Fitzgerald, 142–44, 273n6. For bibliography, see Forsyth and, more recently, Pavlock, 116–17.

9. On the visual lushness of poem 64's opening, see Fitzgerald, 140–68, and on Catullus's thematization of the gaze, Elsner, 67–109.

10. But on the difficulty of this expression, see Trappes-Lomax, 173, who regards line 18 as interpolated.

11. Ancient poetry being regularly voiced (even when read to oneself) and often performed by trained readers, we must imagine the first reception of poem 64 taking place through oral performance, the poem's tremendous "literariness" notwithstanding.

12. All citations of Apollonius refer to the edition of Fränkel.

13. Pointing out the further ambiguity of *nimis optato* ("very much wished for" or "too much, excessively wished for"), Janan remarks, "The decision demands a choice between an age of heroes that either was truly heroic or was overrated" (108).

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14. The allusion sets up a system of implicit comparisons between Jason and Medea and the two sets of lovers, Peleus and Thetis on the one hand and Theseus and Ariadne on the other, who will be prominent in the poem's narrative (Clare).

15. The fragment numbering refers to Lobel and Page's *Poetarum Lesbiorum fragmenta*.

16. The apparent echo of *Id*. 15.100, the first line of the Theocritean ekphrastic song, ἅ Γολγώς τε καὶ Ἰδάλιον ἐφίλησας ("you who love Golgi and Idalium") in the emended line 96 of Cat. 64, *quaeque regis Golgos quaeque Idalium frondosum* ("and you who rule Golgi and leafy Idalium") may, as Kroll (157) thought, indicate that Catullus had Theocritus's verse "before his eyes" (cf. Clausen, 201), but since this is a formulaic cult title due caution is warranted. I thank Benjamin Acosta-Hughes for pointing this out to me. On the emendation, see Thomson (406), who also sees Theocritean allusion here. Sebesta (35) argues that *Idyll* 15 is Catullus's principal model for the setting of the Ariadne ekphrasis. All citations of Theocritus refer to the text of the *Idylls* found in Gow's *Bucolici Graeci*.

17. Cf. Wheeler, 126.

18. For more on Theocritus's play with Greek language and identity in *Id.* 15, see Griffiths, 82–86; Hunter, 116–23; Reed; and Fantuzzi and Hunter, 371–75.

19. For more on this important theme, see Hunter, 117.

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