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Humanities

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"*Plus uno maneat perenne saeclo*:"

The Lasting Influence of Catullus

Introduction

At the end of the dedicatory opening poem of his *libellus*, Catullus, as per custom, asks of the Muse, "*o patrona virgo, plus uno maneat perenne saeclo*" ("O virgin patron, may [my *libellus*] remain perpetually for more than one age"). Catullus got his wish. His poetry not only lasted into the next generation of Latin poets, profoundly influencing its authors who have also remained famous through the millennia, but also into every generation after that. The echoes of Catullus resonate throughout literary history.

These echoes are not limited to the copies of Catullus' works, from the manuscripts passed down in ancient times and copied in medieval times to the printed copies that Renaissance scholars and college students alike have pored over for centuries. They include everyone who has ever read Catullus, and everyone who has ever read anyone who has ever read Catullus, which includes just about everyone in the Western World. Though not every author has read his works or known of him, his imprint on modern literature, especially modern poetry, is ubiquitous. He expressed a wide range of feelings and experiences in a combination of the prosody of Greek meters with the beauty of Latin words.

In this paper I will attempt to explain how Catullus has influenced poetry over the years, differentiating between how he was read before his disappearance and since his rediscovery. The Western World was a drastically different place in Catullus' time to when Catullus' works were rediscovered in the 14th century. The Roman Empire had fallen and Christianity was the law of the land. And yet, Catullus was received just as readily by the literary community that found

him, the humanists, as the generation that left him. And since then, there has been something about Catullus that has spoken to every literary generation.

Influences on Catullus

To understand how revolutionary Catullus was for his time, one must examine the poetic norms that preceded his lifetime. Catullus was the most famous member of the innovative *Poetae Novi* (New Poets) of the first century B.C., who rebelled against the stodgy and limiting style prevalent in Rome. But that is not to say that this was the first generation that attempted to break from tradition. Catullus did not create his own style out of nothing; he was the synthesis of a series of revolutionary poets who paved the road he would follow. Catullus' influences were just as revolutionary as he was, though they may not have translated through the ages as well for various reasons. Catullus, despite the incomplete nature of his corpus and the gap in awareness of his work, also has the advantage that his works have mostly survived to this day. Latin writers of generations before him are known more through quotations in later works than their complete originals.

The most commonly cited influence on the *Poetae Novi* is Callimachus. Callimachus was himself a member of a radical group, the Alexandrians, which disavowed the continued writing of sub-par epics and favored shorter, more lyrical styles such as the epigram. The Alexandrians did for Greek literature what the neoterics did for Latin literature, though the Romans had the advantage of being able to look back on the successes and failures of the Greek example.

Though no literary commentaries (at least in prose) by Catullus survive, it is obvious that he regarded Callimachus as one of his greatest influences. In fact, one of Catullus' poems, c. 66, is a direct translations of Callimachus, though Catullus added his own touches here and there. It matches what we have of the Callimachean original quite well; Catullus was looking to translate,

not adapt. The impetus for this translation might be seen in c. 65, in which Catullus responds to a suggestion by his friend Hortalus to get out of a writing slump by translating some Greek lines. Both c. 65 and c. 66, written in elegiac couplets, are still beautiful poems despite their unoriginal content. Catullus tried his best to emulate his idol.

Catullus was heavily influenced by another Greek, who, although not in the Alexandrian school, was nonetheless revolutionary. Sappho was not the traditional Greek poet; for one, she was a woman, and she was from the island of Lesbos, nearer to Asia Minor than to Greece. She also spent time in Sicily; in this respect, she was like the Alexandrians who worked away from the homeland of the language they were writing in (as opposed to Catullus, who needed to go to Rome to write poetry). Sappho was an influence on the Alexandrians, so she was in a way the stylistic "grandmother" of the *Poetae Novi.* And, of course, Catullus' nickname "Lesbia" for his lover is almost certainly a reference to the homeland of one of his idols. C. 51 is a direct translation of Sappho 31, which has remained intact to this day, so we can tell how close Catullus kept to the original. He did, of course, modify it to match his name and his personal situation, though much of the content and imagery remains. C. 11 is Catullus' only other poem written in Sapphic strophe, though its subject matter is quite different from that of c. 51. He spends the first three stanzas inviting his friends Furius and Aurelius on a trip around the world, but the last three stanzas focus on Lesbia's infidelity, attacking her for taking so many lovers beside him.

Roman poetry before the *Poetae Novi* was epic. Roman authors constantly attempted to return to the days of the great Greek epics. Much of their work was mere translations from Greek, producing routine dactylic hexameter. Ennius, the "father of Latin poetry," wrote such epics. He considered himself the reincarnation of Homer, so he considered himself part of a

direct line of great epic writers including Callimachus. In fact, there is evidence that Ennius was aware of Callimachus' literary criticisms and "worked to refute the theories of Callimachus and to show that epic could still be written" (Crowther).

Roman writers after Ennius and before Catullus also knew Callimachus and the Alexandrians, and many of them had more positive views on them. Lucilius wrote an epic in the Alexandrian style; Licinus, Lutatius Catulus, and Aedituus "composed love epigrams adapted from the *Greek Anthology*" (Crowther). Laevius adapted Alexandrian stories into Latin. Even Varro and Lucretius were admired by the *Poetae Novi* for their contributions to the style they chose (Crowther).

These earlier Latin writers were crucial in introducing one of the styles that Catullus and his peers wrote in, the epyllion, a condensed mythological epic. Cinna and Cato wrote epyllia, though Laevius might have written the first. Others also introduced the love epigram, the satirical epigram, and the invective to Latin literature generations before Catullus stepped onto the scene (Crowther).

Catullus certainly represented a turning point in Latin literature, but he did not get there on his own. He was the product of centuries of development in Greek and Latin literature that had produced a few schools of thought, of which he and the other *Poetae Novi* chose the most radical. They were looking to breathe fresh life into Latin literature, but they couldn't do it without a little wind behind them.

During Catullus' lifetime

Thus, Catullus was not the only avant-garde poet of his lifetime. He was part of a movement of Latin writers who all strove to bring back the "self-conscious style of Hellenistic poetry" to Roman poetry, which they thought had diverged too much from its ultimately Greek

roots (Poetry Foundation). Catullus formed the *Poetae Novi* with his friends Cinna and Calvus. They served together abroad and influenced each other's writing. They were part of a larger circle of writers in Rome who were trying out new things with their poetry.

Catullus mentions these friends (some of whom he portrays as rivals) often, but it is hard to get a definite grasp on how he feels about them. Some of them he criticizes for their poetic abilities, such as his words to Cinna in c. 95. Some of them he criticizes for their sexual deviancies, though these are too numerous to list. He criticizes men for stealing his lovers, for having ugly lovers, for having no lovers, for being bad lovers. It seems that either these poems were mostly meant to be taken with more than a few grains of salt, or Catullus had very few friends. The former is more likely to be the case: Catullus had a friendly rivalry going with his fellow *Poetae Novi*, and history has made it clear that Catullus was the greatest of these poets.

Catullus' rivals weren't all easygoing poets. Catullus was in a well-connected family (his father knew Julius Caesar socially), and so Catullus was around politics his whole life. This made its way into his poetry (not to mention his love life), though not in a way the establishment politicians liked. Old-school politicians like Cicero didn't just want to preserve the political system of the Republic; they wanted to preserve its literature. Cicero was highly critical of the waves Catullus and his neoteric friends were making with their non-epic, non-aristocratic poetry. And Catullus responded in kind, calling out these politicians for their corruption, such as in c. 29 where he attacks Caesar and his crony Mamurra for robbing the provinces blind for personal gain. In c. 49, he obsequiously thanks Cicero for some unknown deed, but the satire is apparent because of the over-the-top graciousness he expresses. Cicero would've been dumbstruck.

During his own lifetime, Catullus was a controversial figure. He was part of a group of poets looking to upend everything traditionalists had stood for. And he couldn't have done it at a

more crucial point in Roman history; with his snide invectives, Catullus was essentially distracting the politicians and the generals who were gearing up for war. He showed them that no matter how much territory they controlled or how much money they had, they could never escape the well-worded critiques of the literary community. Catullus was a countercultural; he saw through the sweet words of the politicians and responded with irreverence. The Roman Empire didn't last, but Catullus continued to influence and inspire for two thousand years.

After Catullus' lifetime, before the Middle Ages

For generations of Roman writers after him, Catullus represented the link between the always-stylish Greeks and the new, more independent genres of Latin poetry. Catullus was quickly seen as the most successful poet of his generation, and the one to be most admired and emulated. Some emulated more than admired, and this brought derision and disrespect on them: Horace called one writer who too blatantly copied Catullus and Calvus an "ape" (Mendell). In this attack, Horace is himself emulating Catullus by taking shots at his contemporaries and rivals; he felt a need to raise himself above the other poets of his generation, just like Catullus had to do. Later Roman writers admired Catullus not just for his poetry but for the persona he cultivated behind it.

Horace also borrowed heavily from Catullus' works themselves. There are several phrases that appear in Horace and Catullus that the former must have used intentionally: "*dulce ridentem*," "*ultimos Britannos*," and repetition of "*sive*" all appear in Horace in similar places where Catullus used them. Horace saw these poems from which these phrases came "worthy of recognition even while introducing improvements" (Mendell). These phrases show up in Catullus' Sapphic poems, drawing an even longer continuous line of influence for hundreds of

years. Poets tried to improve on each other, using a previous poet's theories or themes as starting points to create something newer and better.

Ovid, for example, was initially attracted more to Catullus' themes than his technique. Though many poets copied Catullus directly, the influence he had on others was often simply that he opened up the field for new topics to be discussed in poetry. Ovid eventually crafted a style for himself far more complex than Catullus', but he still had use for Catullus' ideas: "Ovid in fact uses Catullus as an instance of a poet of moral laxity, whose morals were reflected in his verse" (Ferguson). Catullus was admired for his honesty in his portrayal of his emotions and the way he saw the world. Catullus and his contemporaries preferred to model themselves directly after Greeks, but not everyone interprets Catullus in the same way. What Ovid wanted to accomplish with poetry was too different from Catullus' goal, but he still received ideological influence from Catullus.

Martial, most famous for his witty epigrams, was much more directly indebted to Catullus than was Ovid. In searching for a model, Martial did not want a grandiose epicist who would take five lines to get to the subject of a clause; he needed someone who could be blunt yet eloquent, someone who could get across complex ideas in a way that would be easily understood. Martial also used Catullus as a model for combining vulgarity and satire with profundity and style; the latter qualities were necessary to ensure one's work was taken serious (Poetry Foundation). But Martial didn't just borrow Catullus' ideas; he compared himself personally to Catullus, describing how they were of a single spirit separated by time. Martial saw himself as a direct continuation of Catullus; his epigrams could not have been without Catullus' epigrams.

Outside of the poetry indebted to him, Catullus is mentioned in literary commentaries through to the end of the Western Roman Empire, but these commentaries fade away as the influence of Rome fades. Aulus Gellius in the second century is really the last commentator to treat Catullus in depth. References to him become increasingly inaccurate and obtuse. Often, he is confused with his contemporaries, being credited for writing something they wrote, or having his own work attributed to another author. Some lines attributed to him are not found in his *libellus* or in the corpora of his contemporaries, adding to the mystery.

Catullus was on the tips of everyone's tongues during this period, for better or for worse. He had left a huge mark on Roman literature that later writers, if they wanted to be taken seriously, could not avoid. Different writers appreciated him for different aspects of his life and works, but they all had him in their minds as they wrote. The early imperial period also produced the most lasting and high-quality Latin literature. This is period was crucial for Catullus' preservation into the Middle Ages and beyond; Catullus was kept alive because critics thought he was relevant for hundreds of years after his time.

The Middle Ages: Few mentions of Catullus, but echoes throughout

The last possible mention of Catullus before the 700-year break in his influence is by St. Isidore of Seville in the seventh century in his *Etymologiae*. As a definition of "strophium," St, Isidore gives "*de quo ait* Cinna *strofio lactantes cincta papillas*." The curious thing, however, is that there is no record that Cinna wrote anything of the sort. Catullus, however, did write "*non tereti strophio lacentis vincta papillas*" in c. 64. Scholars have a few ideas about what this could be, the most likely of which (unless it is simply wish-fulfillment) being that St. Isidore meant to cite Catullus but instead wrote Cinna. If true, this possibility raises some implications, namely the psychological fact that St. Isidore probably made this mistake because he held Catullus and

his fellow *Poeta novus* so close together in his mind that he switched their names. Normally, one doesn't confuse names one thinks are extremely important, which says something about the opinion of Catullus by this time; he hadn't yet attained his position among the greatest poets of all time. He was merely lumped in and confused with his contemporaries (Skinner).

Between St. Isidore and the discovery of the V manuscript, the number of times Catullus is mentioned in a 700-year period can be counted on one hand. Several authors are said to have "echoed" Catullus, including Englishmen John of Salisbury, William of Malmesbury, and Walter Map, all after the turn of the millennium. Notker Labeo, a German monk who wrote around the turn of the millennium, mentioned in a translation of Boethius "*Veronensis poeta nobilis"* ("The noble Veronese poet") (Savage). A ninth-century monk named Hildemar of Brescia, near Verona, composed his own verses that are apparently influenced by Catullus. Catullus is finally mentioned by name in a 966 sermon by the Bishop Ratherius of Verona, who noted that he had once stayed up late one night reading "previously unread Catullus" only to use it as an example of "ungodly, frivolous behavior" (Mulroy). Ratherius' mention of Catullus is crucial to understanding why Catullus was unpopular to the extent that he was virtually unknown in the Middle Ages: he did not fit into the idea of the world that the religious rulers wanted to present to the people. That Ratherius mentioned Catullus in a sermon is significant; he assumed that the common man listening to his sermon would understand the reference (though this might have been affected by the fact that he was preaching in Catullus' birthplace) and already know what to think about him, as a preacher today might mention the moral degeneration visible in rap music without actually playing any.

Thus, it is no coincidence that this is the period when Catullus is least read, least quoted, and least transcribed, for this is also the period when Catullus' ideas were least applicable to the

mores of the day. These were the Dark Ages, when the Western World stopped creating and monks were the censors of what was available to the common man. Catullus' style and message were completely against what was accepted in his day, and they certainly would not have been better received in the even more conservative Middle Ages. Cicero was liberal compared with the authoritarian theocrats that ruled Europe for practically a millennium. There was no place for Catullus in the Middle Ages, and this is why his works are rarely mentioned, and when they are, they are spoken of in hushed tones.

Rediscovery: Catullus is a hit with the humanists

Though Catullus was read by at least a handful of people in the Middle Ages modern scholars know of, there is only one manuscript of Catullus' work that remains from that era. Fittingly, this manuscript, dating to the ninth century, is also by far the least complete of all in that it contains only one poem. This manuscript, called "T," is a *florilegium*, or compilation, and it contains only c. 62. It had no visible influence on writers of the Dark Ages, though it is curious as a footnote in the story of the Catullan manuscripts, especially considering that the one Catullus poem included in the collection was a pagan wedding hymn. (Mannheim).

The other poems of Catullus come from manuscripts discovered over 400 years after the T manuscript. The first of these, "V," labelled after Catullus' birthplace and the town it was found in, was "clearly available to various Paduan and Veronese humanists in the period 1290-1310" (Mannheim). Though V no longer exists, it was copied at least twice (though some say an intermediate "A" came between these), into "O" and "X," of which only the former survives today and is housed at Oxford. X, "which was probably owned by Petrarch," was copied twice into "G" and "R" in 1375 before it too vanished (Poetry Foundation). The Catullan corpus was printed for the first time in 1472 by the Venetian Wendelin von Speyer, and after this Catullus

officially became a sensation throughout Europe, and "Emendation of Catullus became one of the sports of Europe." There has been a continuous line of (mostly still extant) improvements to the *libellus* since then; the poems have been reorganized and recategorized, but the more important and lasting emendations have been to the lacunae and ungrammatical sections in the text (Mannheim).

Catullus was most immediately popular among the humanists, a group not unlike the *Poetae Novi* in that it rebelled ideologically and stylistically against the *mos maiorum*. The arrival of the humanists signaled the end of the Middle Ages, whose art merely preserved tradition, and the beginning of the Renaissance, when art was "reborn" in the memory of the Classics. Catullus spoke to this first generation of humanists; he was, like them, a member of a generation that was breaking the traditional expectations of art and creating a style of his own that would last for centuries. He accomplished over a millennium before what they hoped to accomplish "*plus uno perenne saeclo*."

Petrarch was, as Catullus was to the *Poetae Novi*, one of the first and most influential humanists. Also like Catullus, his works continue to be read and influence new literature to this day. And, in a remarkable coincidence of history, he was also one of the first scholars to possess a copy of the more complete text of Catullus. Petrarch, as the original humanist, was a convenient figure to be in possession of this copy. Catullus was clearly always in the back of Petrarch's mind; in the margins of his copy of Vergil's works, now housed at the Ambrosia library, Petrarch scribbled notes comparing Vergil to Catullus. Petrarch also echoed Catullus in his own writing; he replaced Catullus' Lesbia with Laura in his poems about his conflicted passions, and he includes obtuse adaptations of Catullan ideas, usually mixed in with Horace or Vergil, in his sonnets. In this, Petrarch was more like the Early Modern Poets who intermingled

translation, adaptation, and original writing; everything was happening so fast that he didn't have time to consciously create a new style (Stuart).

Catullus' rediscovery came at the perfect time. If Catullus' ideas were anathema to the Middle Ages, the early Renaissance was most receptive to them. There's a reason Petrarch called them the "Dark Ages." Europe was beginning to open up again, and its values were changing; art was becoming a profession again, as Catullus and the neoterics had always dreamed. Art was no longer confined to dark rooms in monasteries, to be censored by prudish monks. Art was being made for art's sake.

Early Modern Period: Catullus quickly becomes part of the canon

By the Early Modern Period, Catullus had taken his rightful place among the greats of Latin literature. Catullus was revered as the great love poet, not least because his works run the gamut of potential feelings a lover could have. Catullus wrote about every stage of a love: the blissful honeymoon phase, the cathartic middle, and the bitter end. His works capture the joys and the pain (and the outrage) with equal beauty, so later writers have striven to emulate him.

As the Renaissance started in Italy and spread to the rest of Europe, so did interest in Catullus start in Italy and creep slowly into the native literature of other countries. Catullus penetrated French literature only after he began to be printed in 1472. In 1500, by which time Catullus had already thoroughly permeated the literature of Italy, there is in France "at first no evidence of great enthusiasm, in fact there is resistance and hostility, on moral grounds, to his works." Erasmus wrote in 1496 "*Je m'irrite contre les versificateurs modernes, qui choisissent pour modeles Catulle, Tibulle, Properce, Ovide, plutôt que saint Ambroise, Paulin de Nole, Prudence… notre style doit toujours rester chaste*" ("I am angered by the modern poets, who choose for models Catullus, Tibullus, Propertius, Ovid, over Saint Ambrosius, Paulinus of Nola,

Prudentius… our style should always remain modest"). But, by about 1530, the French finally began to follow the Italians and embrace Catullus because "he too was bold and independent in his political attitude, he was the arrogant partisan of a new school of young poets and a ruthless and impertinent satirist of things and people he disliked" (Morrison). Despite the complaints of the *severior*, the Neo-Latin poets in France found Catullus, with his concise yet sonorous rhythms to be a perfect match for their new style (Morrison).

Just as Catullus gave stylized translations of Callimachus and Sappho, Early Modern writers adapted Catullus' words to their own idiom. Ben Jonson replaced Catullus' Lesbia with Celia in his adaptation of c. 5: "Come my Celia, let us prove,/while we may, the sports of love;/Time will not be ours forever…Suns that set may rise again;/But if once we lost this light,/'Tis with us perpetual night" (Duckett). These are the lines in the poem most literally taken from the Catullus, though the rest of the poem captures the same feeling of young lovers who think they can last forever. In another poem, Jonson channels Catullus 7 as he proposes to count his kisses with his lover: "Kiss me sweet: the wary lover/Can your favors keep, and cover…First give a hundred,/Then a thousand, then another/Hundred, then unto the other/Add a thousand, and so more" (Duckett). Once again, Jonson mixes literal translations of Catullus' words with his own, adapting them as he pleases to his modern needs.

The Early Modern Period was in many ways more of a transitional period than the Renaissance. Writers of the Renaissance like Petrarch were merely laying the ground for the truly lasting transformations to take place. Writers of this period put into practice the theories that the humanists of the Renaissance promoted once they rediscovered the genius of the Ancients. Once again, Catullus fit right in in this era, though he encountered more backlash once word about his works had spread. At first, he was the best-kept secret, but once everyone knew

about him, every moralist and religious scholar had to put in their two cents against him. These efforts failed as Catullus became one of the principal inspirations for artists across Europe, who, though they saw him as a love poet, did not embrace the ruder side of his works.

Modern Period: Music and lyrics

Though the study of Latin (and composition of literature in it) has obviously declined in the past century, the influences of Catullus continue to be seen to this day. Outside of direct references to his work, Catullus' style can be seen everywhere. Little has changed about the human psyche since Catullus' time. Men still yearn for women and condemn them when they are spurned. People still get homesick and dream of vacation. The young still rebel against the mores of the old. And people definitely still hate politicians.

Many of the most notable names in 20th century poetry translated or adapted Catullus. Ezra Pound claimed to "reverence Dante and Villon and Catullus" and opened his poem "*Lustra"* with the first line in c. 1, "*Cui dono lepidum novum libellum?"* Pound demonstrated his awareness of Catullus' roots when he wrote that the Greeks "might be hard put to it to find a better poet among themselves than is their disciple Catullus." Robert Frost, "who initially aspired to teach Greek and Latin" mentions Catullus in his poem "Kitty Hawk." References abound in Auden, Stevens, Lowell (Ziolkowsky).

Then, the beat poets, the most cutting-edge writers of their day, naturally picked up the bawdier side of Catullus: Allen Ginsberg titled a poem he wrote to Jack Kerouac about the former's new gay lover "*Malest Cornifici Tuo Catullo"* ("*Your Catullus is in a Bad Way, Cornificius*"), with no apparent connection between the subject matter and the title besides that Catullus often wrote about his romantic conquests. And in his "Eclogues of These States" (yet another classical reference, though this time to Vergil), Ginsberg spoke of the "Bucolics &

Eclogues!/Hesiod the beginning of the World,/Virgil the end of his World-/& Catullus sucked cock in the country/far from the Emperor's police." Catullus was the model for poets breaking new ground like Ginsberg, who clearly focused on the sexual side of Catullus (Ziolkowsky).

Indeed, much of the revival of interest in Catullus in the past century, especially the past half-century, has been due to the study of the *full* corpus of Catullus. The most common translations and student editions of the *libellus* omitted Catullus' bawdy poems, which are many. George Lamb cut 20 poems from his 1821 *Poems of Caius Valerius Catullus*, and still censored parts of others. A hundred forty years later, C.J. Fordyce's *Catullus,* widely used in schools and universities, omitted "a few poems which do not lend themselves to comment in English" (Fordyce). Since the rebellion against Fordyce's edition, however, scholars have gotten quite creative translating Catullus' lewder poems that weren't in the editions they grew up with (Ziolkowski).

Though Latin and Catullus are not as widely studied as they once were, there are still those in the modern era who put their studies to good use. Mark Lowe, a British businessman, was sued in 2009 for threatening a former lover with the words of Catullus, applying them to the new medium of text. Lowe texted Ariane Gordji, who had initiated the conversation with an innocuous Latin line from St. Paul, the line from Catullus 16, "*pedicabo ego vos et irrumabo"* ("I will force anal and oral sex on you"), which "the BBC declines to translate" and NPR censored in both English and Latin in a 2009 interview with Mary Beard (Higgins). Lowe defended himself by saying that the line "is burlesque, it was always light-hearted in the first century and it still is now." Though he didn't exactly do it for a good cause, Lowe did succeed in getting Catullus in the news again.

Another major change in the "echoes" of Catullus in the Modern Era has been the medium in which artists channel the poet. The most prominent of these media, which in fact harkens back to the origins of "lyric" poetry, is music. Many musicians have adapted Catullus' works and themes into various styles of music. The most famous of these is Carl Orff's cantata "*Catulli Carmina*," which sets 13 of Catullus' poems to an operatic score. The cantata tells the story of Catullus and Lesbia's rocky romance through a rearrangement of Catullus' love poems. The orchestra plays only in the prelude and postlude, leaving the two characters alone for three acts. They are interrupted by a chorus of old men, jeering at their immaturity, reminiscent of c. 5 (Mellers).

Orff's piece begins with c. 85, commonly known by its first clause, "*Odi et amo*," which is perhaps the most musically adapted of Catullus' works. The tradition might well have begun with Slovene composer Jacob Handl in the 16th century, and it has been continued by American Dominick Argento's choral piece "I Hate and I Love" in the 20th century and Icelandic Jóhann Jóhannsson's experimental piece "*Odi et amo*." Jóhannsson's version is by far the most modernistic of the interpretations of c. 85. In Jóhannsson's version, a robotic voice recites the two-line poem accompanied by a lamenting violin, string section, and piano. The voice recites it once, after which just the instruments play their sad tune, and finally the voice repeats the poem. The music video is just as somber; it consists of a still pencil-drawn image of a violin player looking down upon a giant cross that is taller than another of the European-style buildings around it. The only moving part of the video is the grey rain that descends evenly upon the scene (Jóhannsson). Jóhannsson clearly took a more literal interpretation of the poem than that which is generally agreed upon, i.e. that it is about Catullus' internal conflict over his feelings about Lesbia. Jóhannsson's imagery suggests that this conflict has expanded to everything in the

speaker's life. The speaker hates and loves everything, not just his lover, and he is as lost as the violinist in the rain looking down on the cross (assumedly in reference to the "*excrucior*" in the last line of the poem). Catullus is easily applied to modern art because he himself was once modern art.

The 20th century and the early 21st century might well have been the perfect audience Catullus was looking for with his poetry. He had to defend his own style in his own day, and later Latin poets admired him but didn't come close to replicating his beautiful vulgarity. Dark Age poets revolted against his pagan irreverence. And though not as auto-repressive as Dark Age writers, Renaissance and Early Modern writers used Catullus mostly as an exemplar in style and theme, not his message. He could express love the most beautifully, but they wouldn't dare approach his ruder material. Not until the past century have artists made use of Catullus' full corpus, because they knew they could do so without ruffling too many feathers. As people around the world have become freer in the past half-century, so has their acceptance of all kinds of art. It is no coincidence that the censoring of Catullus ended in the 1950s.

Conclusions

Catullus' popularity as an artist has waxed and waned as the mores of the day have changed to accept or reject his subject matter. Catullus is an intensely personal poet; his poems display raw emotions that he wanted everyone to be able to connect with, and so his poems mean something different to every person, and every generation, that is exposed to them. Thus, Catullus has been read differently by writers of every era who bring with them a whole new set of morals.

Catullus was popular but controversial in his lifetime. He was part of a daring group of poets that were challenging the *status quo*, which riled those who tried to maintain it, like Cicero.

Roman poets, however, admired him for the remainder of the Empire: to them, he was the exemplar for Greek-based lyric poetry. These later poets embraced the full corpus of Catullus because, partially thanks to him, such vulgarity and lewdness had become widespread.

Catullus was the least popular in the Middle Ages, when his way of life was diametrically opposed to what the Catholic Church wanted to impose on Europeans. Catullus is mentioned very few times for hundreds of years, and when he is mentioned, commentators do not have nice things to say. People didn't want to read Catullus and monks didn't want to transcribe him; for this reason, we have so few copies left of his work.

Catullus was rediscovered at the outset of the Renaissance, when an artistic revival similar to what Catullus worked for in his lifetime was going on. Catullus suddenly applied again to a heterodox group of artists who would change the Western World forever with Catullus in their pockets. Catullus has been seen as a poet of change and counterculture ever since: French moralists and English educators have tried to stop it, but Catullus has finally lined up again with the morals of the day. In the last century, he has finally found his audience among the poets, writers, and musicians who dare to try anything. Catullus was a *Poeta Nova*, and although no one's called them that for a long time, there's always been someone trying something new in literature for thousands of years, and when they need inspiration, they go to the original modernist: Catullus.

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