

Aristotelian) as it is sometimes claimed.¹⁰ For it is clear that Aristotle would reject Marx's famous line from the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*: 'From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!'

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CATULLUS 1.5-7

In this note I wish to reopen discussion of the role of Cornelius Nepos in Catullus' dedicatory poem. The Callimachean features of Catullus' assessment of his own work have been well documented.¹ However I believe that, since this is a poem where Catullus evaluates not only his own work, but also that of Nepos, a closer examination of the latter is called for.

Catullus begins by characterizing the *libellus* he is offering to Cornelius Nepos (1-2). It is charming (*lepidum*) and it is new (*novum*),² but it has also been a work of refined composition, as evinced by the metaphor of the pumice-stone (2). Three qualities are thus established: novelty, charm, and refinement. Catullus asks who should receive this gift, and concludes that it is Cornelius, since he thought that Catullus' trifles had some merit.

It is noticeable, however, that the reason for Catullus' choice of recipient is the goodwill shown to his poetry by Nepos. There is no suggestion that the qualities mentioned in the first two lines are also features of the recipient's work. Indeed, Catullus continues by characterizing Nepos' writings in quite a different fashion. In line 5, emphasizing the seriousness of the undertaking, Catullus explains that Nepos' generous opinion of his poetry was manifested at the time when he had embarked on a literary enterprise of his own. The positive Callimachean aspects of lines 5-7, such as the association of Nepos' work (his *Chronica*) with *doctrina* and *labor*, and the implications of literary innovation suggested by *ausus es unus Italorum*³ have been identified by Cairns (153-4).⁴ However, it is worth examining these lines more closely

¹⁰ See, for example, M. Nussbaum, 'Aristotelian Social Democracy', in Douglas, B., Mara, G. and Richardson, H. (eds.), *Liberalism and the Good* (New York, 1990), 203-52; and, 'Nature, Function, and Capability: Aristotle on Political Distribution', in McCarthy, G. (ed.), *Marx and Aristotle: Nineteenth Century German Social Theory and Classical Antiquity* (Lanham, MD, 1992).

¹ For discussions of Callimachean influences on Catullus 1 see J. P. Elder, 'Catullus 1, his Poetic Creed and Nepos', *HSCP* 71 (1966), 143-9 (henceforth referred to as 'Elder'), F. Cairns, 'Catullus 1', *Mnemosyne* 22 (1969), 153-8 (henceforth 'Cairns'), and B. Latta, 'Zu Catullus Carmen 1', *MH* 29 (1972), 201-13 (henceforth 'Latta'). See also G. P. Goold, 'Two Notes on Catullus 1', *LCM* 6.9 (November, 1981), 233-8 (henceforth 'Goold') and B. Arkins, 'Further Thoughts on Catullus 1', *LCM* 8.2 (February, 1983), 18-20 (henceforth 'Arkins').

² For the programmatic aspect of this word, see Elder 147, who compares Cicero's use of the term 'poetae novi', on which see N. B. Crowther, 'ΟΙ ΝΕΩΤΕΡΟΙ, Poetae Novi, and Cantores Euphorionis', *CQ* 20 (1970), 335-8, C. Tuplin, 'Cantores Euphorionis', *PLLS* 1 (1976), 1-23, and R. O. A. M. Lyne, 'The Neoteric Poets', *CQ* 28 (1978), 167-87.

³ Compare the tone of Propertius 3.1.3-4 'primus ego ingredior puro de fonte sacerdos / Italia per Graios orgia ferre choras' and Horace C. 3.30.10ff 'dicar ... / ... / ... / princeps Aeolium carmen ad Italos / deduxisse modos'.

⁴ Cairns 153: 'Catullus' praise of the *Chronica* is couched (albeit informally) in the language of Alexandrian literary criticism and shows clearly that Catullus is lauding the *Chronica* as a work conforming to the canons of that school and possessing all the standard Alexandrian virtues.'

to see whether there may be ironic aspects in Catullus' praise.⁵ Pace Wiseman,⁶ who has rejected the notion of an ironic reading of the poem, such a search may still be valid: since this is a poem which begins by discussing Catullus' own work in an ironic light,⁷ it is not unreasonable to look for similar elements in Catullus' criticism of Nepos' literary productions as well.⁸

In particular I wish to concentrate on line 7, where Catullus describes the three *cartae* of Nepos' *Chronica* as 'doctis, Iuppiter, et laboriosis'. *Doctis*, it is true, can only be a positive epithet, especially in a poem of Callimachean allegiance, but what of *Iuppiter* and *laboriosis*? Why should Catullus mention Jove here? Is Catullus simply using the god's name as an oath, perhaps to express surprise at the character of Nepos' work?⁹ I would suggest that the exclamation *Iuppiter* is more than this; mention of Jove draws attention to the contradiction between Nepos' *doctrina* and the 'epic', non-Callimachean features of his work, which combines the large scale of *omne aevum* with the compression of *tribus cartis*. In the *Aetia* prologue Callimachus had remarked that it was for Zeus to thunder, not for him (Callimachus *fr.* 1.20 Pf.).

And what of *laboriosis*? The most obvious reading of this word is to take it as a positive assessment of the *labor* which has gone into Nepos' work. One might compare the opening of Catullus 95, where in lines 1–2 Callimachean *labor* is exemplified by the nine years required for Cinna to compose his *Smyrna*. But is this the only possible reading of *laboriosis* in Catullus 1? The word can also have a more negative meaning: thus Aulus Gellius 9.12.10, in demonstrating that the adjective can mean not only 'qui laborat' but also 'in quo laboratur', quotes from the Neoteric poet Calvus (= *fr.* 2 Morel): 'durum rus fugis et laboriosum'.¹⁰ Here the word's semantic range seems close to *durus*, which need not occasion surprise since the noun *labor* can itself have positive and negative connotations.¹¹ The implication might thus be that Nepos' *Chronica* involved *labor* for the reader as well.¹² For this dual nature of *labor*, where the positive qualities of hard work on the part of an author are

⁵ Elder 144 notes the different tone of these lines, remarking that 'the middle portion, that about Nepos' work, is puffed and somewhat pompous writing (e.g. *iam tum, cum ausus, doctis, Iuppiter, et laboriosis*); the period is longer, more involved.'

⁶ T. P. Wiseman, *Clio's Cosmetics* (Leicester, 1979), 171.

⁷ See e.g. Arkins 19.

⁸ Goold, in his contribution ('O Patrona Virgo') to *Polis and Imperium: Studies in Honour of Edward Togo Salmon*, J. A. S. Evans (ed.), (Toronto, 1974), 262–3, suggests that one may compare Catullus 1 with Catullus 49, where Catullus expresses his thanks to Cicero in the following terms (4–7): 'gratias tibi maximas Catullus / agit pessimus omnium poeta, / tanto pessimus omnium poeta, / quanto tu optimus omnium patronus.' Though Goold himself (263) cautions against readings of poem 49 as more than friendly banter, the precise means of comparison between Catullus and Cicero ('tanto pessimus... / quanto tu optimus') do seem to invite us to read Catullus' praise, as well as his self-disparagement, as ironic: Catullus is the worst poet, just as much as Cicero is *optimus omnium patronus*. See further e.g. E. Laughton, 'Disertissime Romuli nepotum', *CP* 65 (1970), 1–7, and W. J. Tatum, 'Catullus' Criticism of Cicero in Poem 49', *TAPA* 118 (1988), 179–84.

⁹ Thus Latta (207), who glosses lines 5–7 as follows: 'Grosser Gott, ein historisches Werk, das dem Forderungen *doctrina* und *labor* im Sinne alexandrinisch-neoterischen Dichters gerecht wird.'

¹⁰ See further the parallels cited by C. J. Fordyce, *Catullus: A Commentary* (Oxford 1961, corr. 1978) on 1.7.

¹¹ For the negative qualities of *labor*, see *OLD* s.v. 6 and 7. One is reminded of the debate over the interpretation of Vergil *Georgics* 1.145f 'labor omnia vici / improbus et duris urgens in rebus egestas', on which see R. Jenkyns, 'Labor Improbus', *CQ* 43 (1993), 243–8.

¹² It may be objected that *laboriosis*, even if it did refer to the reader, might only denote the (positive) *labor* undertaken in reading a text such as the *Chronica*. This might be no bad thing; a Callimachean would hope for a receptive and learned audience. In that case, however, *laboriosis* would add nothing to what has already been implied by *doctis*.

combined with the undesirable toil which may be imposed on an audience, compare Pliny the Younger, *Epist.* 2.19.5: 'Porro ita natura comparatum est, ut ea quae scripsimus cum labore, cum labore etiam audiri putemus.' Pliny also uses *laboriosus* in this way (*Epist.* 5.6.41): 'neque enim verebar ne laboriosum esset legenti tibi, quod visenti non fuisset, praesertim cum interquiescere, si liberet, depositaque epistula quasi residere saepius posses.'

Such a reading of line 7, where Callimachean language is used with ironic effect, might gain support from the contrast between Nepos' *tribus cartis*, and Catullus' own production, which he twice describes in the poem with the diminutive form *libellus*,¹³ a word evoking Callimachus' strictures against 'the big book' (*fr.* 465 Pf.). Though Nepos has summarized 'omne aevum' in a manageable work of *tribus cartis*, when this quantity is set beside the diminutive *libellus*, Nepos, with his ambitious subject matter, seems quite unCallimachean. A further pointer to this may be Catullus' use of the word *explicare* in line 6, which is a word used by Nepos himself in his extant *Vitae*, to signify the process of historical exposition.¹⁴ On one occasion, Nepos contrasts the small scale of his work with the extensive outpourings of his predecessors:

... plurima quidem proferre possimus, sed modus adhibendus est, quoniam uno hoc volumine vitam excellentium virorum complurium concludere constituimus, quorum separatim multis milibus versuum complures scriptores ante nos explicarunt. (*Epam.* 4.6)

Here Nepos describes the very process of compression which Catullus notes in line 6 ('omne aevum tribus explicare cartis'). Whereas the subjects of his biographies had previously been described in many thousands of lines (one may compare the complaint of the Telchines at Callimachus *fr.* 1.4 Pf. that Callimachus has not accomplished a poem ἐν πολλαῖς ... χιλιάδων), Nepos is confining his work to a single *volumen*. Another passage from the *Vitae* is also relevant here:

sed hic plura persequi cum magnitudo voluminis prohibet, tum festinatio, ut ea explicem, quae exorsus sum. quare ad propositum veniemus et in hoc exponemus libro de vita excellentium imperatorum. (*Praef.* 8)

Here Nepos uses *explicare* of his own work, and elucidates the almost paradoxical brevity that is imposed on his work by the *magnitudo voluminis*, which in company with Nepos' desire for *festinatio* compels abridgement. Taken together these two passages represent the historian's desire for concision, which might be argued to be a Callimachean quality; Nepos' comparison between himself and the authors of many thousand verses is particularly revealing.¹⁵

At first sight, Catullus might therefore seem to present straightforward praise of Nepos' Callimachean brevity in lines 5–7. However, the juxtaposition of Catullus' *libellus* with Nepos' three 'cartae', is, in Callimachean terms, a comparison decidedly in favour of the former. Even the word *explicare*, as used by Catullus here, might suggest not only the kind of *explicatio* employed by Nepos, but also that employed by more prolific writers. Callimacheanism here seems a matter of relativity; a historical work such as Nepos' *Chronica* or his *Vitae* may seem impressively small when set beside large numbers of lines. When set beside a *libellus* which is 'arido

¹³ This contrast is mentioned by Elder 144, who also notes, without further comment or analysis, the contrasting pairs *omne aevum* and *nugae*, *omne aevum* and *uno saeclo*; *lepidum novum* and *doctis laboriosis*; *novum* and *perenne*.

¹⁴ E.g. *Praef.* 8, *Timotheus* 4.6, *Epam.* 4.6, *Hann.* 13.4.

¹⁵ Compare the praise of the short *Smyrna* of Cinna, and the apparent censure (the text is lacunose) of 'milia ... quingenta' in Catullus 95.1–4.

modo pumice expolitus',¹⁶ Nepos' work seems to be not so different from the specimens of historical writing so vehemently condemned by Catullus in poems 22, 36 and 95. Instead of displaying open hostility in this poem, Catullus exploits the medium of ironic praise, which complements the similarly ironic language used in apparent disparagement of his own literary effort.

A final argument which I shall adduce in favour of this reading of Catullus' treatment of Nepos in this poem concerns the last lines of the poem. Here, consideration of the textual problems of line 9 seems in order, although the value of the argument is not, I think, irremediably dependent on this vexed passage.

In its simplest form the issue is between acceptance of the reading of *OGR*, *patrona virgo*, with *o* supplied to complete the metre, or adopting a text which refers to a *patronus*, Nepos. The conservative position is adopted by Arkins, while Goold gives the arguments against retention of *patrona virgo*. My preference is to reject *o patrona virgo*, principally on the grounds that the subordinate clause of a sentence which has already mentioned Nepos (*tibi* in line 8), is an odd place to introduce such a vague and unspecific reference to a *patrona virgo* (assumed to be the Muse); comparisons with poems featuring dedicatee and Muse such as Horace C. 2.1 are irrelevant since this is a far shorter poem. The familiar argument against denoting Nepos as a *patronus* on the grounds that a person of Catullus' station did not need one disappears if we are alive to the possibility that such a title may be appropriate to the ironic praise of Nepos offered in lines 5–7. Accordingly in my discussion of these lines I am accepting Bergk's text of line 9 'qualecumque quidem est, patroni ut ergo',¹⁷ so that Catullus' poem ends with the wish that Nepos assist in the survival of his *libellus*.

In lines 8–9, Catullus reverts to a tone of disparagement as he describes his work in vague and unspecific terms, *quidquid*, for example, recalling the ambiguous *aliquid* of line 4. After noting Nepos' earlier goodwill and his historical pursuits in the previous lines, Catullus answers the question he posed himself in line 1, announcing his decision to hand over the *libellus* to Nepos. It is now that Catullus springs his surprise, with the request for immortality, revealing at a stroke the artful nature of his self-deprecation in the preceding lines. The *nugae* which Nepos thought were *aliquid* (which we should perhaps view as equivalent to the similarly ambiguous 'not bad' in English) are, for Catullus, worthy of something far more, eternal survival. Nepos, as Catullus' notional *patronus*, is requested to ensure their survival. *patroni ut ergo* should not be taken too seriously; having previously praised Nepos' own work, Catullus changes his tune and deigns to ask Nepos' assistance, at once complimenting and diminishing him.¹⁸ The last line, with its hopes of literary immortality, has not a word about the *tribus cartis*; its sole concern is with the *nugae*. The critical terms used earlier in the poem are thus thrown into question at the conclusion.

The last line, moreover, deserves closer inspection. Why does Catullus ask for his work to last 'plus uno... saeclo'? By hoping that it will last more than one century, Catullus also suggests that there might be books which will not last more than a century. Such a work might be the *Chronica* of Nepos, *saeclo* frivolously evoking the title of Nepos' work. Catullus elsewhere does not offer much in the way of life expectancy for historical writings.¹⁹

Catullus 1 is thus a poem which anticipates and outmanoeuvres criticism. The basic

¹⁶ I support Goold's (233–5) defence of *arido* (*OGR*).

¹⁷ Goold 235–8 argues for the text 'qualecumque quidem patroni ut ergo'.

¹⁸ If the correct text in line 9 were *patrona virgo*, the effect would still be a diminution of the importance of Nepos. See Cairns 158 on the effect of such a shift from Nepos to a Muse.

¹⁹ Catullus 95.5–8.

technique is similar to that used by Callimachus in his *Aetia* prologue. However, Catullus' principal weapon is the use of irony; Catullus expects a dismissive reaction to his work, and accordingly praises Nepos' own writings. The end of the poem enacts Catullus' claim to literary fame; the *novum libellum* becomes *perenne*. The process of revaluation applies to Nepos' work as well, inviting us to probe more deeply the seemingly innocuous praise offered by Catullus. Nepos may have included *omne aevum* in his *Chronica*, but there is no hint that the work will survive anything like so long.²⁰

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HORACE'S VOLADICTORY: *CARM.* 2.20

'It is not likely that anything absolutely new can be added to the interpretation of this familiar poem.' So G. L. Hendrickson forty five years ago.¹ It need scarcely be noted that in spite of these cautionary words much has been written on this ode in the intervening years. With hesitation I add here a few words on what seems to me an overlooked yet central aspect of this poem.

The commentators have long noticed that it was commonplace among the Greeks and Romans to compare poets with birds. But none seems to observe that while such an observation provides illumination, it also prompts a serious question. *Carm.* 2.20 is an epilogue poem that proclaims Horace's greatness as a poet. Horace has, after all, been writing poetry for many years. What then does it mean that he is now about to be 'transformed' into a swan. Surely he has, so to speak, been a swan for several decades now.

A key to this question and indeed to the poem as a whole lies in a theme that has been overlooked. It is the notion in the ancient world that the soul was a bird. Whether Homer held this view is not clear, though verses like *ψυχὴ δ' ἐκ ῥεθέων παμένη Ἀιδόσδε βεβήκει* (*Il.* 16.856) and *ψυχὴ δ'...ἀποπταμένη πεπότηται* (*Od.* 11.222) may point in this direction. Similar is Plato's elaborate account of the soul in the *Phaedrus* which includes the words *ἐπτερωμένη μετεωροπορεῖ* (246B).² Birdlike souls are not rare in Greek art.³ The soul of Aristeas, Pliny the Elder reports, took the form of a raven when it left him (*H.N.* 7.174), while that of Alexander the great apparently departed in the guise of an eagle (*Ps-Callisth.* 3.33). Cicero has Socrates tell Crito that he will *avolaturus* (*TD* 1.103–4; interestingly, Plato's Socrates only says *οἰχίσσομαι ἀπὼν*: *Phaedo* 115D).

Thus, Horace's transformation into a swan is not so much a metamorphosis as a release of the bird-soul from its confining human container. The metamorphosis, such as it is, represents the freed soul's gaining (or regaining) its true form. That the bird is a swan is, of course, a reflection of Horace's essential being as a poet. He may have remembered that in Plato's Myth of Er Orpheus' soul chose the life of a swan (*Rep.* 620A). Thus, the bird-theme operates on two levels. Bird equals soul and therefore the

²⁰ I am indebted to Dr S. J. Heyworth and the anonymous referee for *CQ* for their comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

¹ *CP* 44 (1949), 30.

² For the influence of Platonic imagery in *Carm.* III. 5, see S. J. Harrison, *CQ* 80 (1986), 502–7.

³ See e.g. the red-figure vase (Brit. Mus. E477) depicting the death of Prokris, in which the bird-soul is seen flying away from the dying human (G. Weicker, *Der Seelenvogel in der alten Literatur und Kunst* [Leipzig, 1902], 166–7. Further examples with illustrations and discussion at A. Fairbanks, *Athenian Lekythoi* (New York, 1907), 191–2.