

CATULLUS THROUGH HIS BOOKS

Modern readings of the Roman poet Catullus' work have always been constrained by doubts about the surviving text. Does the sequence of our corpus reflect the artistically coherent and meaningful arrangement of the poems? Why are the various parts of the collection so jarringly different in content and emotional tone? To what extent, if at all, can we explain these shifts by appealing to Catullus' famously vivid portrayals of his emotions and life circumstances? *Catullus Through his Books* argues that we possess three separate books of poems designed by the poet himself; at key moments in these books, the poems dramatize the creative activity of their own composition, embedding apparent autobiographical details and purportedly revealing the poet's intentions and goals. These dramas of composition direct us through the poems, integrating our understanding of each part and generating a holistic vision of Catullus as poet of self-destroying longing and irreparable loss.

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CATULLUS THROUGH
HIS BOOKS

Dramas of Composition

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
 978-1-108-45917-4 — Catullus Through his Books
 John Kyrin Schafer
 Frontmatter
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Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom
 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
 314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India
 103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
 a department of the University of Cambridge.

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 education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
 Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108459174

DOI: 10.1017/9781108559584

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First published 2020
 First paperback edition 2023

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication data

NAMES: Schafer, John, 1978– author.

TITLE: Catullus through his books : dramas of composition / John Kyrin Schafer.

DESCRIPTION: New York : Cambridge University Press, 2020. | Includes bibliographical
 references and index.

IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2019045017 (print) | LCCN 2019045018 (ebook) | ISBN 9781108472241
 (hardback) | ISBN 9781108559584 (epub)

SUBJECTS: LCSH: Catullus, Gaius Valerius – Criticism and interpretation.

CLASSIFICATION: LCC PA6276 .S314 2020 (print) | LCC PA6276 (ebook) | DDC 874/.01–dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2019045017>

LC ebook record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2019045018>

ISBN 978-1-108-47224-1 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-108-45917-4 Paperback

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Acknowledgments

It is slightly terrifying to reflect how deeply indebted I have been, in the writing of this book, to so many loved ones, friends, and colleagues. Above all and by far, to my wife Julie: it isn't fair, how much this book and I have taken from you, and I can't imagine how I could ever make good on your steadfastness and love. Others I now thank collectively, thinking it both needless and impossible to disentangle between those who have been such brilliant intellectual benefactors, such wise professional counselors, and such personally generous friends – most of you have been all of these. And so my deepest thanks to all of you: Kimberly Allen, Eugenie Allen, all the Allens everywhere, David Bird, Tess Cavagnero, Rob Cioffi, Kathy Coleman, Lauren Curtis, Katie Deutsch, Micaela DiLeonardo, David Ebrey, Moa Ekblom, David Elmer, Joe Farrell, Stephanie Frampton, Ana Galjanic, Bill Gladhill, Marina Haworth, Joe Howley, Tim Joseph, Alison Keith, Sasha Kirichenko, Paul Kosmin, Christopher Krebs, Leah Kronenberg, Ben Levine, Cameron Lewellen, Margot Lurie, Jake Mackey, Lisa Mignone, Andy Miller, Michelle Molitor, Micah Myers, Jim O'Hara, Nandini Pandey, Emily Pillinger-Avlamis, Susan Prince, Laura and Jack Schafer, Frannie Schafer, Madeleine and Jacob Schafer, Tim Schafer, all the Schafers everywhere, Marilyn Skinner, Gisela Striker, Sarah Culpepper Stroup, Francesca Tataranni, Richard Thomas, Kate Topper, Jarrett Welsh, Gareth Williams, Alison Witte, and Tom Zanker. I also thank the Loeb Classical Library for supporting this work with a fellowship over the 2014–15 academic year, as well as Cambridge University Press, its anonymous referees, and its Classics editor Michael Sharp.

Cui dono? Eleven years ago, my dear friend and brilliant fellow graduate student, Isaac Meyers, passed away suddenly. About six years ago, hoping to renew the presence of his memory in mine, I found myself looking vaguely around for “something brief but interesting” to say about Catullus 101 – I had always remembered him and worked through my grief for him with those holy words (to me they are that), the unvoiced stop consonants

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in *mutam nequiquam alloquerer cinerem* have mimed the catch in my throat more times than I can know, and so I thought, a nice act of memory, and maybe a short article. Within a couple months, my plan to write a second book on Senecan prose was on hold, and I was giddy with a new intellectual thrill, lost in the rabbit hole of this work. I wish I could talk to him and tell him how he changed my life. And so, Isaac, *accipe* whatever this is of a book. And, of course, forever, *ave atque uale*.