CATULLUS'S *PHASELUS* (*C.* 4): MASTERING A NEW WAVE OF POETIC SPEECH

ELIZABETH M. YOUNG

Phaselus ille, quem videtis, hospites,
ait fuisse navium celerrimus,
neque ullius natantis impetum trabis
nequisse praeterire, sive palmulis
5   opus foret volare sive linteo.
et hoc negat minacis Hadriatici
negare litus insulasve Cycladas
Rhodumque nobilem horridamque Thraciam
Propontida trucemve Ponticum sinum,
10 ubi iste post phaselus antea fuit
comata silva; nam Cytorio in iugo
loquente saepe sibilum edidit coma.
Amastri Pontica et Cytore buxifer,
tibi haec fuisse et esse cognitissima
15 ait phaselus: ultima ex origine
tuo stetisse dicit in cacumine,
tuo imbuisse palmulas in aequore,
et inde tot per impotentia freta
erum tulisse, laeva sive dextera
20 vocaret aura, sive utrumque Iuppiter
simul secundus incidisset in pedem;
neque ulla vota litoralibus deis
sibi esse facta, cum veniret a mari
novissime hunc ad usque limpidum lacum.
25 sed haec prius fuere: nunc recondita
senet quiete seque dedicat tibi,
gemelle Castor et gemelle Castoris.

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That ship whom you see, strangers, says that he used to be the fastest of ships. And he says that no assault of any swimming plank was able to outstrip him, whether the work of flying was done with oars or sail. He also denies that the coast of the threatening Adriatic contradicts this claim, or the islands of the Cyclades, and celebrated Rhodes, and the fierce Thracian Propontis, or the savage Black Sea where that soon-to-be ship was, before, a leafy forest. For on the ridge of Mt. Cytorus, he often emitted a hiss with his speaking foliage. O Amastris-by-the-Black-Sea, O boxwood-bearing Cytorus, the ship says these facts were and are well known to you; he says that he stood on your summit beginning at the distant moment of his birth, that he wet his oar blades in your sea, and that, from there, he carried his master through a great number of raging straits, regardless of whether a port or starboard breeze called him on his way, regardless of whether a favorable Jupiter blew evenly upon both sheets. He says he never made any vows to the shore gods when he came, finally, from the sea all the way to this limpid lake. But these things happened in the past. Now he is old and, in obscure repose, he dedicates himself to you, twin Castor and twin of Castor.[1]

Catullus 4 recounts the adventures of a personified ship who spent his lifetime traversing sea routes between Asia Minor and Italy. This ship's journey is often understood as a playful reworking of Catullus's own roundtrip journey to Bithynia, a region the poet appears to have visited in 57–56 B.C.E. as part of Gaius Memmius's administrative cohort.[2] As we traverse the poem's meandering phrases, we are drawn along a recognizable

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1 I am very grateful to Curtis Dozier, Kate Gilhuly, Deborah Kamen, Cashman Kerr Prince, Raymond J. Starr, and my MACTe (MA/CT Junior Faculty colloquium) colleagues, especially Edan Dekel, for reading drafts of this paper and offering excellent suggestions. I would also like to extend my sincerest thanks to *Arethusa*'s editors and anonymous referees for their insightful engagement with this piece. The translation of poem 4 is my own. The text is taken from D. F. S. Thomson's 1997 edition (with the exception of *Thraciam* in line 8 for Thomson's *Thracia*).

2 Catullus 10 and 28 touch on this unrewarding sojourn, while poems 31 and 46 describe an ebullient return to Italy. For a recent treatment of these Bithynia poems, see Cairns 2003.

itinerary. It begins in a tranquil lake lying upstream from the Adriatic Sea, then moves by way of the Cyclades and Rhodes through the Propontis and the Black Sea to finally reach the Bithynian city of Amastris. The poem traces this voyage twice: first from west to east (lines 6–12), then from east to west (lines 13–24). This is, indeed, a route the poet might have followed as he sailed to Asia Minor, then left the "Phrygian fields . . . and rich land of sweltering Nicaea" (46.4–5) to make his way back to Italy. This overlap has led to many insistently biographical readings. I suggest we take a more expansive view of the poem's itinerary, reading it within the context of Rome's growing dominion over the eastern regions the poem evokes.[3]

My discussion builds upon William Fitzgerald's elucidation of poem 4 as hinging upon manipulations of reported speech. Fitzgerald views this poem as a demonstration of *urbanitas* wherein the anonymous speaker harnesses an inferior's voice to demonstrate his dominant social position (Fitzgerald 1995.104–10). He shows that the narrator of this reported monologue treats the yacht's tale with "patronizing" amusement (104), mocking the postures of a social inferior and affirming his own "playful sovereignty" (104) over the ship's speech. I agree with the outlines of this elegant reading. The *phaselus* is "very much the pawn of the poet" (109), and this poet is playing some complex games with poetic speech. But an even richer understanding of the poem results if we expand our view of this linguistic play to encompass the ship's far-flung itinerary. Even as poem 4 taps into the late republican elites' obsession with competitive displays of urbane speech, it gestures beyond the Italian metropolis toward the eastern Mediterranean and the southern shores of the Black Sea.[4] When we shift our gaze to include the ship's eastern origins, we unearth a foundation of cultural imperialism and human domination lying behind the poem's discursive playfulness.

My reading positions poem 4's roving vessel within the networks of travel, plunder, and intellectual exchange that followed Rome's annexation of Bithynia, the *phaselus*'s self-proclaimed homeland. In the mid-first century B.C.E., Rome was reaping the rewards of this recent annexation.

For an analysis that contextualizes these poems within the flow of material and cultural capital between Bithynia and Italy, see Hinds 2001.

3 Biographical methods marked most of the work done on poem 4 from the turn of the nineteenth century through the first half of the twentieth. A classic essay in this mode is Putnam 1962. Copley 1958, Quinn 1959.89, and Hornsby 1963 offer some early objections to biographical analysis of the poem.

4 Skinner 1993 offers a quite different analysis of poem 4 as a competitive verbal performance.

Pompey's definitive conquest of the region in 63 gave Romans abundant access to local resources, and his defeat of the Cilician pirates four years earlier had opened up the waters of the Mediterranean for unprecedented circulation of people and goods between the Black Sea and Italy (Rawson 1985.5–14, Gruen 1974.427).[5] Catullus's poems testify to these developments, alluding to Bithynia as a place that beckons with the opportunity of amassing fabulous wealth (poems 10 and 28).[6] "How much money did you make there?" his companions ask him in poem 10 (line 8). Catullus responds that he made absolutely nothing (lines 9–11). Indeed, he consistently poses himself as a loser in this imperialist free-for-all. But his posture as an unjustly swindled victim belies the fact that he did not return empty-handed from Asia Minor. He may not have procured Bithynian litter bearers, but, as we shall see, he enhanced his poetry with a wealth of themes, genres, and styles made available to him by way of this erudite province.

Catullus belongs to the first generation of Roman poets to make sustained attempts at translating small-scale Hellenistic genres into Latin.[7] The development of this first-century Alexandrianism was importantly mediated by Bithynia, which supplied Italian authors with a wealth of Greek texts and Greek-speaking teachers. Cultured Bithynian captives like Parthenius of Nicaea aided Roman poets in their efforts to translate the Hellenistic poetic tradition into Roman form. I read poem 4 as an expression of the tensions inherent in this process. The ship's reported account of his travels between Bithynia and Italy embeds, I will argue, an anxious discourse on Roman authors' dependence upon books and scholars hailing from the Greek east to deepen their understanding of Hellenistic literature. Through its ambiguous presentation of a Bithynian ship as both subject and object, master and slave, poem 4 stages a defining first-century concern about the Roman poet's ability to control

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 5 This region of Anatolia had been bequeathed to Rome by Attalus III in 133 B.C.E. In 123, Roman equestrians were given the right to collect taxes there and appear to have availed themselves of the privilege. In 88, the area was taken by Mithridates, who ordered the slaughter of all Italians. Sulla reconquered the region and created a settlement in 85. But stability was not complete until Pompey defeated Mithridates in 63 and created permanent military and administrative divisions and regulations (Mitchell 1993.29–34). For in-depth treatment of Rome's involvement in Bithynia, see Magie 1950 and B. F. Harris 1980.

 6 The idea that Bithynia was an especially wealthy province seems to have been widespread. For sources on Bithynian wealth, see Francese 2001.17 n. 3. Cairns 2003.178, however, argues that due, in part, to overtaxation, the province would have been quite impoverished at the time of Catullus's sojourn.

 7 For a concise discussion of earlier Latin writing in this vein, see Kenney 1982.

a poetic tradition drawn from a captive Greece and mediated by a newly conquered region of Asia Minor.

Catullus 4 is an aggressively upbeat poem. Indeed, it "fairly ripples with sprightliness" thanks to the "buoyancy" of its iambic meter and the "jauntiness" of its geographical catalogue (Richardson 1972.215). Yet close examination reveals a number of cracks in this veneer of chatty optimism that suggest this upbeat surface masks a subtext concerned with the mutual entanglement of enslavement and speech.[8] The ship's autobiography may project a sense of lighthearted freedom, but there are many indications that this ship is less a free spirit than a slave subject to the whims of a human master.

This "fastest of ships" (2) has spent his life traversing the sea, paying his respects to distant straits, shores, and islands. But such freedom of movement is, in fact, a memory that is restricted to a nostalgic past tense (*fuisse, nequisse,* etc.). The ship's present reality—the *nunc* we are brought back to in line 25—is one of constraint, not liberation. This adventurous vessel is now an enfeebled *senex* (*senet*, 26), whiling away his remaining years docked upon a "limpid lake" (24). The young ship's epic confrontations with threatening seas are now just stories his aged self recalls while resting in still waters. The closing vision of the *phaselus* growing old upon a lake is an image of peace—but also one of confinement. This sense of restriction increases when we examine the structure of the ship's monologue and find that this garrulous craft never actually speaks for himself.

The poem's intimate tone and recurring verbs of speaking (*ait, negat, ait, dicit*) easily charm us into feeling that our friendly *phaselus* addresses us directly. Indeed, these verses read as the autobiography of a well-worn traveler eager to share his escapades with anyone who will listen. But readers do not have direct access to the ship's voice because his disclosures are contained within a framework of indirect discourse.[9] Grammatically, this vessel is as good as mute. His entire monologue is reported by the anonymous narrator who utters the poem's first and final lines (1 and 25–27). This unspecified speaker controls the ship's confessions, first pointing out the *phaselus* as a kind of curiosity (*phaselus ille,* 1), then relaying its life story with uncanny authority. The ship's language—and, in effect,

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8 Much as in Roman comedy, where the slaves' indomitable optimism is belied by constant jokes about corporal punishment. See McCarthy 2000 on the confluence of slavery, humor, and violence in Plautine comedy.

9 This structure of indirect speech is the crux of Fitzgerald's reading (1995.104–10).

his life—is imposed upon him by a shadowy presence who determines what the reader can and cannot know about his travels.

The poem begins with a teasing turn of phrase that highlights this speaker's position as the poem's rhetorical mastermind. "*That* ship whom *you see,* strangers" ("Phaselus *ille*, quem *videtis,* hospites") he quips, drawing attention to our distance from the object his demonstrative adjective so forcefully indicates. This phrase invites readers, as guest-friends, into the scene while rebuffing us at the same time. We might imagine an internal audience who can actually view this ship, but the external audience of readers is forever barred from the scene. The narrator's invitation to gaze upon an invisible spectacle positions him as the one who controls our access to the poem's wide-ranging sights. Our knowledge of these diverse landscapes depends upon the benevolence of an anonymous narrating host.

This controlling narrative structure finds its figurative parallel in personification, the poem's dominant trope. Poem 4 does not simply tell the ship's life story, it rhetorically brings this object to life by granting it the power of speech. Such awakenings are an inherent feature of ancient epigrams, which frequently hinge upon the idea that we might hear ashes, hammers, and other objects speak. This poem gestures toward two distinct Hellenistic epigram traditions in its opening and closing lines (Mette 1962).[10] Addressing itself to an anonymous set of *hospites*, the poem evokes sepulchral epigrams, which typically begin by flagging down a passing stranger to serve as audience to the eulogy.[11] Meanwhile, the closing lines' gesture of dedication mimics ex-voto inscriptions where anthropomorphized objects are shaken from their material stupor to dedicate themselves to gods.[12] Such epitaphs and object epigrams showcase the animating powers of poetry. Catullus 4 puts on display a similar set of rhetorical strategies that poems often use to bring objects to life. In so doing, it demonstrates the control

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10 On the Hellenistic epigram tradition, see Tueller 2008, Bing and Bruss 2007, and Gutzwiller 1998.

11 Cf. *AP* 9.34 and 36 (both on deceased ships). Quinn 1970.101 prints the epitaph for Claudia as a Latin comparandum. On the passerby in Greek sepulchral epigram, see Tueller 2008.65–94. For a more general discussion of Hellenistic sepulchral epigrams, see Bing 2008.39–40, 58–65, and 67–70. For a detailed discussion of poem 4's use of features drawn from sepulchral epigram, see Davis 2002.117–19.

12 Cf. *AP* 6.69 and 70, as well as Callimachus *Ep.* 5 on a nautilus shell. On Greek dedicatory epigrams, see Tueller 2008.95–111. For an intriguing reading that moves between Catullus 4 and Callimachus's nautilus epigram, see Fredrick 1999.66–70. Courtney 1997.117 also discusses similarities between these two poems.

a poem can claim over the material world (Culler 1981.139). This personable ship is not a person at all but an object brought into personhood by a narrator—and, ultimately, a poet—who likewise has the power to return him to inanimate slumber.

The narrator of poem 4 exercises just this power in the closing lines when he turns the briefly vivified ship back into a votive offering. After giving free rein to the ship's lively monologue for twenty-three lines, he abruptly brings this reported autobiography to a halt with a dismissive summation: "But these things happened in the past. Now he is old and, in obscure repose, he dedicates himself to you, twin Castor and twin of Castor" (25–27). With this closing statement, the anonymous narrator takes charge of the poem once again and reminds us that he has been controlling the ship's language all along. The ship's adventures are relegated to memory, and the ship is transformed from a freewheeling speaker back into an inert thing.[13] These closing lines highlight the fact that the ship is not a carefree subject but a malleable object whose life and language hinge upon a human speaker's rhetorical intervention. This ship cannot actually speak, nor can he propel himself from place to place. Both his travels and the narrative account of these adventures depend upon a human master who gives him language and governs each step of his journey. At line 19, the idea that the *phaselus* does not control his own fate is cemented when we learn of this ship's *erus* ("owner" or, better, "master," for this term was often used to refer to owners of slaves).[14] The ship declares that he "carried his master through a great number of raging straits" (18–19). At this moment, it becomes clear that these journeys were guided less by the wind than by the whims of some commanding passenger. The phrase *erum tulisse* "brands the craft as a slave" (Kahn 1967.169) and confirms the sense that the structure of reported narration has given us all along: this ship neither speaks nor sails of its own accord.[15]

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13 The animating power of this narrator, who wakes the ship only to lay him back to rest, runs parallel to the absolute power of life and death that a Roman master held over his slaves. For this facet of the Roman slave system, see Bradley 1994.25.

14 *OLD* 1a. *Erus* could also be used, poetically, to refer to the owner of a piece of property (*OLD* 3), as Catullus does in his Sirmio poem (31.12). For a discussion of the evolution of this word, see Finley 1980.73.

15 Kahn 1967.167 takes this observation one step further, seeing this vessel of humble origins offering a self-aggrandizing genealogy that vies with grander craft—in particular, the *Argo*. The parody of this poem in the *Appendix Vergiliana, Catalepton* 10, draws out these undercurrents of social mobility by rewriting the poem as the story of a muleteer

The ship's servile associations are strengthened by his peculiar form of verbosity. As Kenneth Quinn, among others, notes, this ship ventriloquizes "an old, garrulous slave . . . proud of a successful career of faithful service" (Quinn 1970.101).[16] In his opening boast, he channels the familiar posture of comedy's *servus currens*, bragging about his speedy travels with humorous bravado (Kahn 1967.171). Free Roman citizens were encouraged to maintain a slow and stately gait, while slaves were expected to complete their errands at a full run (Fitzgerald 2000.15). The frenetic pace of this speedy ship's journey, picked up by the relentless speed of the narration, carries implications of servitude. This flying vessel (*opus . . . volare*, 5) takes the comic topos of the running slave to an absurdist extreme, darting across the ocean as a Plautine trickster sprints across the stage.

Once we begin to notice the servile undercurrents of the ship's persona, we are forced to reconsider whether he is a free spirit after all. His passage through the aquatic byways of the Greek east no longer smacks of spontaneous adventure: there are too many suggestions that this was forced labor done at the bidding of a human master. Indeed, this talking ship recalls Varro's definition of a slave as "a speaking tool" (*instrumentum vocale, Rust.* 1.17.1).[17] In a witty reversal of the idea that a slave was a human subject whose servile state had reduced him to objecthood, this ship is an object vivified through speech. Layered upon the manipulative relationship Fitzgerald recognizes between the patronizingly urbane narrator and the garrulous ship, we discover a more overtly coercive pairing: master and slave.

The poem's geographical details add specificity to this tale of bondage, for they suggest that master and slave are Roman and Bithynian, respectively. Born atop a ridge that hugs the Thracian coast, our *phaselus* hails from Asia Minor and has a Greek name.[18] This Greek "beanpod" drifts through this Latin poem with consummate ease, gliding in to form its first three syllables. Typically, Catullus employs Greek words sparingly

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from Cisalpine Gaul who ends up occupying a curule magistrate's ivory chair. Thanks to John Dugan for pointing out this connection.

16 See also Kahn 1967.169–71 and objections in Richardson 1972.

17 Varro's comment echoes Aristotle's description of a slave as "property endowed with a soul" (*Politics* 1253b32). On slaves as property, see Finley 1980.73.

18 *Phaselus* derives from φάσηλος. Originally referring to a bean, the word was extended to apply to vessels that resembled bean pods, including ships that transported both passengers and cargo (Ellis 1876.10, Fordyce 1961.99, Thomson 1997.212–13).

(Sheets 2007.197–98), but here he foregrounds a foreign word by setting it at the beginning of his poem.

The ship's reported monologue is delivered in language reminiscent of his eastern origins. As many commentators have noted, these lines are riddled with Grecisms (Quinn 1970.103, Skinner 1993.63, Courtney 1997.114, Thomson 1997. 214–21, Sheets 2007.197–98). As his speech begins, the poem veers into a distinctly Greek syntax ("ait fuisse navium celerrimus"—as opposed to the expected *celerrimum*) that continues with the repeated omission of accusative subjects in indirect speech (for *stetisse*, *imbuisse,* and *tulisse*). This foreign cadence continues with a rush of Greek place names (*Hadriatici, Cycladas, Rhodum, Thraciam, Propontida, Ponticum, Cytorio, Amastri,* etc.), two of them boasting distinctly Greek word endings (*Propontida* and *Amastri*). Like the compound-prone poets of Greece, this ship cannot resist the occasional compound epithet (*buxifer).* His Greek cadences are even manifest in the realm of metrics with the lengthening of the final syllables of certain words (*Propontida*, *impotentia*; Davis 2002.122 n. 21). To borrow a phrase from George A. Sheets, this "personified Greek boat seems to speak Latin with a Greek accent" (Sheets 2007.198).

But a distinctly Roman authorial presence steers this ship's itinerary. It is a Latin-speaking narrator who invites the *hospites* to view the ship, a host who presumably inhabits the Lake Region of northern Italy where the ship appears to have anchored upon passing westward through the Adriatic.[19] Presenting this Bithynian ship's life story in the language of Rome is an imperial gesture that effaces the *phaselus*'s origins at the very moment it announces them. It contributes to our sense that this Bithynian ship's every word and move is guided by a Roman master.

A first-century Roman reader would likely not have been surprised to find a Bithynian ship represented as a slave: in this period, numerous vessels making the journey between the Black Sea and Italy would have been carrying human cargo. In the years surrounding its annexation, Bithynia was at the center of the Roman slave trade.[20] Catullus alludes to

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19 Many have argued for understanding this lake as the Lago di Garda (e.g., Putnam 1962.10–11), though most scholars now agree that such a reading is too speculative (e.g., Quinn 1970.107). I tend to agree with Fredrick 1999.63 that the "structural symmetry" of the poem's mirrored voyages from the Adriatic to Cytorus and back invites us to understand this lake "to be at least fictionally in Italy."

20 Finley 1962.53–57 posits the Black Sea region as a major source of slaves for both the Greeks and Romans starting in the seventh century B.C.E., noting that the area to the south

this development in poem 10 when he refers to Bithynian litter bearers as the region's most plentiful export: "But certainly nonetheless," goad his cheeky interlocutors, "you managed to procure there [while on governmental duty in Bithynia] what is said to be a native product—men to bear your litter" ("At certe tamen . . . quod illic / natum dicitur esse, comparasti / ad lecticam homines," 10.14–16). As it turns out, the would-be master of poem 10 did *not* manage to acquire Bithynian slaves to parade him through Rome. But the *erus* in poem 4 has brought back something even better, a slavish ship to convey him through the aquatic byways of Rome's expanding empire. This Cytorian *phaselus* recalls, at once, Bithynian slaves and the ships that would have carried them into bondage. This ship is a metonymic stand-in for the captives who filled the hulls of so many vessels traveling between Asia Minor and Italy in this period.

Poem 4 lays bare the Roman elite's growing sense of themselves as masters of an expanding empire that extended all the way to the shores of the Black Sea. It also serves the interests of the slave-owning class to which Catullus belonged by naturalizing the movement of resources from Asia Minor to Italy. Presenting the ship's passage from Mt. Cytorus to an Italian *lacus* as the trajectory of a contented life, it presents the arrival of Bithynian slaves and goods in Italy as a kind of manifest destiny. There is much implicit violence in this autobiography: saplings were toppled from a ridge, chopped into planks, and bent to form a hull. The ship then left its homeland to carry its master back and forth through stormy seas. Finally, this vessel was abandoned on an inland lake to grow old in obscurity. If presented from a less buoyant perspective, this same little *vita* could easily be viewed as a tale of exile, forced labor, and ignominious death. But, instead, these trials are recounted as the youthful adventures of a well-satisfied *senex* who delights in rehashing a life of relentless toil. This assimilation of the ship's Italy-bound journey to a happy life story naturalizes Roman

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of the Black Sea became especially important in the late republican period. Evidence for this intensified seizure of slaves in the first century comes from Diodorus Siculus, who writes that Nicomedes IV, king of Bithynia in 94–75/74 B.C.E., was unable to offer military aide to Marius because the majority of the Bithynian population had been enslaved by Roman tax collectors (Diodorus 36.3.1). Ancient evidence on the sources of Roman slaves is notoriously thin (Finley 1962.51), and the topic is hotly debated. For a range of perspectives, see Finley 1980.83–85, W. V. Harris 1980, Bradley 1987, Scheidel 1997, W. V. Harris 1999.62–63, and Scheidel 2005.64–65. For good discussions of Roman slavery more generally, see Hopkins 1978, the second chapter of Phillips 1985, and Bradley 1994. On representations of slavery in Roman literature, see Fitzgerald 2000.

ownership over the products of her new province and obscures the appalling realities of Roman slavery in a single narrative gesture.

And yet, in many ways, the relationship between this ship and his master is curiously inverted. At Rome, slaves were not normally granted the powers of full personhood and free speech (Fitzgerald 2000.75). In this poem, however, the identification of masters with subjects and slaves with objects is curiously reversed. The "speaking tool" is granted a personality and a biography, while human actors fade anonymously into the woodwork. The narrator who recounts the *phaselus*'s tale may be in charge of this monologue, but he subordinates his selfhood to the ship's by narrating its life story instead of his own. What's more, the echo of funerary epigram embedded in the first line stifles this speaker even as he utters his opening words. In posing his addressees as *hospites*, the narrator assumes a speaking position familiar from funerary epigrams, which frequently address themselves to passing strangers in just this way. The speaker of such epitaphic utterances is typically the tomb itself. When seen through this generic lens, we are invited to imagine our narrator as an inscribed piece of stone. The first subject we encounter in poem 4 is thus swiftly transformed into an object through an act of prosopopoeia. The only other human actor, the *erus,* appears just once, as the object of the ship's intrepid attentions—and as the grammatical object in its clause (*erum tulisse*, 19).[21] Both imagistically and grammatically, this master is reduced to an inert piece of cargo; meanwhile, the slavish ship emerges as nothing less than a wayfaring hero.

As the poem progresses, the ship continues to be anthropomorphized while human actors are ignored or effaced.[22] Indeed, this talking ship is a kind of "latter-day Argo" (Hornsby 1963.263), whose sea route recalls the heroic voyage of its famously personified precursor. His passage from Asia Minor to Italy is posed as a life story that begins with the inchoate babbling of infancy (line 12) and ends in the quiet contentment of old age (line 26). This sense of the ship's flamboyant humanness is augmented by numerous anthropomorphizing descriptions (*natantis impetum*

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21 Griffith 1983.128 argues that *erum* might also be understood as the accusative subject of the indirect statement. This reading of the syntax bolsters his claim that the *phaselus* of this poem is a model ship that the master has carried back with him from Bithynia. But taking *erum* as the object of *tulisse* is the far more natural reading.

22 Thomson 1997.214–15 comments extensively on this ship's presentation as a "quasi-human organism."

trabis, 3; *palmulis*, 4; *loquente . . . coma*, 12; *palmulas*, 17) as well as the quirky characterizations of the landscape he encounters along his route. As portrayed by this vessel, the region lying between Asia Minor and Italy is abuzz with the chatter of personified landmasses and landmarks. The ship even enlists a number of high-profile topographic friends as witnesses to his preeminence. He boasts that his deeds are "extremely well known" (*cognitissima,* 14) to Amastris and Cytorus, and he cites the Adriatic, the Cyclades, Thrace, and Rhodes as places that might attest to the truth of his claims. Such phrasing suggests a rich social network that we might expect of a powerful Roman citizen but not of a ship or a slave.[23] The poem's positioning of the Romans as rightful proprietors of the Mediterranean is unsettled by this elaboration of a well-connected and boastful Greek ship's life story rather than that of his Roman master.

Furthermore, the ship speaks in an extravagant style that marks him less as an enslaved laborer than an aspiring poet or orator. We have already noted the poem's many Grecisms. But we have yet to explore the literary affectations of the ship's peculiar accent. During the course of his reported monologue, the *phaselus* emits a current of conspicuous poeticisms. The ornamentation includes metonymy, synecdoche, litotes, apostrophe, anaphora, archaisms, descriptive epithets, and learned periphrases. Gregson Davis has performed an extensive analysis of this poem's "ostentatious" use of "stylistic affectation" (Davis 2002.122), arguing that the ship speaks in a "flawed and overly mannered style" (113) that is the antithesis of the sophistication and elegance displayed in other Catullan poems. Davis associates this style with the "tumidity and redundancy" (127) of the Asianist rhetoric making its way to Italy in Catullus's period (138). This ship certainly does seem to be reveling in a flamboyantly ornate style. But I would argue that this ostentatious mode of speaking echoes not only the rhetoric of Asia Minor but also the poetry of Alexandria.

This ship's reported speech makes conspicuous use of certain specifically Alexandrian affectations. Chief among these is his use of toponyms. The ship's reported monologue is peppered with exotic place names, several of which retain their distinctive Greek endings. Peculiar toponyms were of great interest to poets like Callimachus, who did extensive grammatical research into geographical terminology and used this

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23 In antiquity, a slave was generally understood as "a socially dead person" (Patterson 1982.38).

erudition to stud his poetry with a wealth of unusual words (Francese 2001.42–45). The ship in poem 4 does much the same thing. His description of his travels incorporates a catalogue of geographically, linguistically, and grammatically foreign names that recall the peculiar erudition of Alexandrian poet-scholars. This penchant for unusual toponyms culminates in the geographical apostrophe at line thirteen ("Amastri Pontica et Cytore buxifer"). As Robinson Ellis comments, such an abrupt apostrophe to geographical locales is "more Greek than Latin" (1876.11) and recurs frequently in Callimachus and other Alexandrian poets.[24] What's more, these place names spread across the entire line, resulting in a verse that consists entirely of proper nouns and their attending epithets, another Hellenistic affectation.

   The line in which this poetic tour de force appears occupies an ambivalent position between the poem's two speakers. As an apostrophe, it would seem to be the voice of the narrator interjecting his own spontaneous effusion. But this outburst is immediately absorbed back into indirect speech, and its style is remarkably close to the reported speech that precedes it. It is as though the narrator has begun to mimic the peculiar voice of the ship, assuming the voice of a Hellenistic poet intent on displaying his compositional mastery. As Davis clearly demonstrates, this mastery of poetic style is by no means complete. The ship's mobilization of poetic speech is downright clumsy at times. But this stylistic ineptitude is, I would argue, part of the poem's ambiguous drama. Our inability to pinpoint the source and style of the speaking voice throws us into perpetual confusion about whom we are hearing: is the speaker gifted or inept, human or ship, master or slave?

   In this poem, then, the respective positions of master and slave are destabilized as the boundary between speaking subjects and silent objects is repeatedly blurred. This ambiguity, I would argue, reflects a peculiarity of Bithynia's export market. In the first century B.C.E., many of the items making their way from Asia Minor to Italy were, in effect, speaking tools that aided Latin authors with the challenges of writing Alexandrianizing verse. In the years following its annexation, Bithynia supplied spectacular libraries to members of the Roman elite beginning with those plundered by Lucullus and continuing with King Mithridates' personal collection,

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24 Fordyce 1961.103–04 likewise comments on such apostrophes as "a trick of later Greek poetry."

which Pompey himself carted back home. Nor did the Romans confine their booty to books; they also seized scholars and poets to educate them in the finer points of astrology, oratory, and medicine, among many other fields (Rawson 1985.7–14).[25]

One Bithynian intellectual who seems to have been especially important in Catullus's period is Parthenius of Nicaea, a poet and mythographer enslaved during the Mithridatic Wars.[26] Reportedly carried back to Italy by a man named Cinna (often identified with C. Helvius Cinna, Catullus's friend and fellow poet), Parthenius was set free because of his erudition, and he came to exert tremendous influence over the development of Latin literature.[27] Some scholars have singled him out as the most important figure to shape the evolution of late republican—and, later, Augustan—poetry.[28]

Though his influence was likely a bit more modest, the stories told about Parthenius's life do point to recurring allegiances with a number of Roman poets. Beyond his possible link to Cinna, he is said to have bestowed a compendium of racy mythological themes on the poet Gallus to use as source material for his passion-filled elegies (the *Ero-*

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25 While discussing a kind of chalk used to mark the feet of foreign slaves, Pliny the Elder notes the prevalence of enslaved intellectuals arriving from the east three generations earlier (i.e., in the mid-first century B.C.E.) and suggests their centrality to initiating literary and artistic developments at Rome (Plin. *HN* 35.58). For a discussion of this passage, see Wiedemann 1981.111–12.

26 Our sources on Parthenius's biography are scant and their interpretation is much debated. See Lightfoot 1999 for a compilation of the sources. For a measured account of Parthenius's life based on this evidence, see Francese 2001.17–28.

27 The *Suda* refers to Cinna under its entry for Parthenius. The entry states that the poet was taken by Cinna as a prize when the Romans defeated Mithridates (Lightfoot 1999 Parthenius, Tes. 1). There has been a great deal of debate over the identity of the Cinna mentioned in this passage, with most critics identifying him with either the poet or his father. For an impassioned argument for identifying this Cinna with the poet, see Wiseman 1974.44–58. For an outline of both sides of the debate, see Francese 2001.18–24. Regardless of who brought him to Rome, Parthenius does seem to have influenced Cinna's poetry. The erudite illegibility of the *Zmyrna* (as described in Catullus 95) recalls Parthenius's labyrinthine version of the same myth (Hollis 2007.31). Cinna's *Propempticon Pollionis* can likewise be traced back to Parthenius, the first poet we know to have written a piece titled *Propempticon* (Hollis 2007.22).

28 See, esp., Clausen 1964, an influential article that promoted Parthenius to celebrity status among scholars of Latin literature. One might read Clausen's essay alongside Crowther's more measured response (1976). Another important early discussion is Wiseman 1974.44–58. For in-depth overviews of Parthenius's influence on Roman literature and thought, see Lightfoot 1999.50–76 and Francese 2001.9–13.

tika Pathemata, or *Disastrous Love Stories*).[29] His lost *Metamorphoses* seems to have exerted an influence on Ovid's poem of that title, as well as on Vergil's *Eclogues* (Wheeler 1999.15). He is even said to have taught Vergil his Greek.[30]

Whatever the truth of each individual detail, such recurring associations suggest that Parthenius was a key figure mediating between Roman poets and the Greek literature they imitated with such enthusiasm. Christopher Francese argues convincingly that Parthenius served "as a *grammaticus*, helping Roman authors to read, interpret and emulate Hellenistic models, and providing authoritative guidance on mythology and nomenclature" (2001.60). *Grammatici* of this period were often not so much language tutors as "learned literary collaborators" who helped Romans "to appreciate and emulate Hellenistic authors at a new level of polish" (Francese 2001.46). Viewed in this way, Parthenius appears to have been, in effect, an envoy of translation who helped Roman poets access and imitate the intricacies of Hellenistic verse.

Despite his singular celebrity among contemporary Latinists, Parthenius was not alone in this task. We might think of him not so much as a maverick, but as a name we now associate with a broader historical phenomenon. Many like him arrived from Asia Minor in Catullus's period (Francese 2001.17).[31] As Elizabeth Rawson explains: "The Mithridatic Wars, from Sulla to Pompey, proved in many respects a turning point. Greek scholars and teachers—like Greek libraries—were swept in the turmoil to Rome or Italy" (Rawson 1985.7). These newly arrived Greek intellectuals proved a pivotal influence on Romans of Catullus's and Cicero's generation, an influence that Rawson and many others credit with inciting the "great intellectual flowering" seen at Rome during the 50s and 40s B.C.E. (Rawson 1985.3).

Together, these learned exiles revolutionized the literary landscape of Rome by guiding Latin-speaking authors through the intricacies

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29 I take this lovely English translation of Parthenius's title from Francese 2001.8. Thanks to Kristopher Fletcher for sharing with me his forthcoming essay, "Teaching Romans to Write Greek Myth: Parthenius, Gallus, and the *Erotica Pathemata*."

30 The citation, from Macrobius, reads that Parthenius served as a *grammaticus in Graecis* to Vergil (5.17.18). Francese 2001.27 and 37–46 argues convincingly that this phrase should be understood to mean that Parthenius helped Vergil understand the intricacies of Greek literature rather than drilling him in the fundamentals of Greek grammar.

31 For a list of enslaved intellectuals from throughout the Greek world who worked as writers in Italy, see Francese 2001.24–26. For sources on other Bithynian intellectuals, see Francese 2001.17 n. 4.

of Hellenistic verse. Alexandrianism had, of course, been a feature of Latin poetry from the start.[32] But Callimachean poetics did not come to dominate Latin poetry until the first century B.C.E. (Clausen 1964.187, Zetzel 1983.96), and the kind of polemical, detailed use of Hellenistic models that emerged in the mid-first century was a new phenomenon.[33] This development was enabled, if not necessarily engendered, by Rome's newfound command over the Greek east. If Bithynia had never been conquered, Catullus might well have found his way to Callimachus. But it is unlikely that he could have written such adroitly Callimachean poems.

Playing the part they did in mediating Roman access to Hellenistic literature, educated captives came to exert unusual influence over their masters' discourse during Catullus's period. In the literary sphere, the roles of master and slave were, then, frequently reversed, and this caused some conceptual problems for aspiring Roman authors.[34] This was, of course, a perpetual quandary of Latin literature. As Horace put it some decades later, Roman authors had been captivated by the literature of "captive Greece" for many generations (*Epist*. 2.1.156). But during the late republic, this dilemma was especially deeply felt, for the task of translating Greek literature into Roman forms had shifted away from those Suetonius dubbed *semigraeci* (*Gramm*. 1) to Italians who had no cultural or linguistic ties to the east. Authors like Catullus and Cinna, both from Transpadane Gaul, did not speak Greek as their first language and required "speaking tools"—books, grammars, Greek-speaking slaves—to mediate their access to Hellenistic poetry.

Poem 4 is a prime example of this new phase in Roman literary translation when poets from non-Greek speaking parts of Italy revolutionized Latin poetry using Alexandrian genres and styles mediated by resources drawn from newly conquered regions of Asia Minor. The poem

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32 A frequently cited instance of early Roman Alexandrianism is Ennius's evocation of Callimachus's dream of Mount Helicon in his *Annales*. But it is significant that Ennius alludes to Callimachus only to have Homer's ghost override Callimachean principles and urge him to compose an epic (see Clausen 1964.186).

33 See Francese 2001.60, where he contrasts Cicero's "mechanical" use of Hellenistic metrics in the *Aratea* with the "expressive" use the neoterics made of Hellenistic metrical innovations.

34 This subject/object quandary would have been a problem with any slave, and Romans were accustomed to thinking about slaves in contradictory terms (Fitzgerald 2000.6–8, Thalmann 1996). But the problem was especially acute when it came to enslaved Greek intellectuals (Hopkins 1978.123).

is, itself, a product of this translation process.[35] Written in a Greek meter (iambic senarius), it models itself after well-known varieties of Hellenistic epigram and incorporates a number of stylistic features favored by Callimachus and his peers. Even its choice of protagonist—a chatty *phaselus* as opposed to the talking *Argo*—has a coy Callimachean edge. This iambic trifle sets itself in opposition to narrative epic, recalling a Callimachean preference for the small, the minor, and the recherché.

Catullus's *phaselus* poem is clearly a product of stylistic and generic translation, and it appears to include an internal meditation upon the anxieties inherent in such a project. Its ongoing vacillations between subject and object, speaker and spoken, master and slave reflect the complex relations developing between Greek and Roman intellectuals in the late republican period. This ship and his various masters (the *erus*, the narrator, the poet himself) are locked in a state of interchangeability and interdependence that echoes the intellectual realities of Catullus's period. The linguistic resources of the slavish ship's homeland—the poetic *silvae* shown murmuring atop a Cytorian ridge at lines 11–12—furnish the raw material for every line of this Latin poem. A poetic medium developed in captive Greece is the very language that poem 4's anonymous Roman master—and celebrated Roman author—have chosen as the vehicle for their own utterances. At the same time as these masters control the *phaselus*'s story, the *phaselus* provides them with a language in which to tell their own.[36]

Wellesley College

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35 Thomson 1997.213–15 suggests that poem 4 might be a full-on linguistic translation of a lost *Phaselus Berenices* by Callimachus. By this reading, the *lacus* would be identified with Lake Mareotis and the places along the *phaselus*'s journey with contemporary trade routes.

36 Thank you to the anonymous *Arethusa* referee to whom I owe this closing formulation.

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