HONORS TO A LIBRARIAN

(PLATE 91)

A reference in the fragmentary History of Olympiodorus rouses speculation concerning some of the more mechanical aspects of scholarship in Athens in the fifth century after Christ. The passage, as preserved by Photius, is tantalizingly brief, consisting of only one sentence between accounts of unrelated episodes of A.D. 416 and 417:

"Οτι ξητήματος ἐν ταῖς Ἀθηναῖς ἀνακώπημετος περὶ τῶν κεκωλυσμένων βιβλίων, μαθείν τοὺς ἐπίξητοι το μέτρον τοῦ κώλου, Φιλτάτιος ὁ τοῦ ἱστορικοῦ ἑταῖρος, εὐφύνος περὶ γραμματικὴν ἔχων, τούτο ἑπέδειξε, καὶ εὐδοκιμήσας τυχάναι παρὰ τῶν σολιτῶν εἶκόνος."

"[The author says] that when the question arose in Athens concerning the books transcribed according to κώλα, those who wanted to know the measure of the κώλου were referred to Philtatius, the friend of the historian. He, being well versed in grammar, explained it to them, thereby gaining such renown that the citizens awarded him a statue."

The measuring of texts, primarily as a means of computing the copyist’s pay, was a matter of concern at least as early as the fourth century B.C. For poetry this


No apology is offered to the recipient of this volume for a paper so remote from his own special field of activity. It is presented rather in recognition of his interest in the whole spectrum of Greece, whether ancient or modern.

2 For κεκωλυσμένων and κώλου Bekker and Müller read κεκολυσμένων and κόλλου, thus transforming Philtatius’ achievement from resolution of a difficult problem in manuscript transcription into either advice on how to glue pages that had come apart or else furnishing a recipe for glue. Gluing was a menial task, performed by slaves (cf. Cicero, ad Att., iv, 4, b, “mittas de tuis librariolis duos aliquos quibus Tyrannio utatur glutaminoribus”), and it is doubtful that a recipe for glue would have departed far from a standard formula which most likely began with the words “take some flour.” In neither case would one expect such a considerable token of gratitude as fell to Philtatius, quite apart from the waste of his literary talents.

Dindorf (op. cit., preface, p. iv) rejects the reading on the ground that κόλλου is a vocabulum inauditum, that the most reliable MS (Venice, Marc. gr. 450, saec. x) has ω in both words, and, most of all, “quum . . . tota res perinde mira, si de libris conglutinandis agitur, ut creditum est, atque imaginis pro ea honore . . .” With perhaps some faint regret therefore we must abandon what would surely have been a unique occasion for the erection of a statue.

3 General accounts of the methods are to be found in Th. Birt, Das Antike Buchwesen, Berlin, 1882, pp. 179 ff.; E. Maunde Thompson, Introduction to Greek and Latin Palaeography, Oxford,
presented no problem; it was only a question of choosing a standard unit, and the
choice not unnaturally fell on the average Homeric line of about sixteen syllables.
Since there was no standard line in prose, an arbitrary measure of about sixteen
syllables was selected, making an easy correlation between prose and poetry. The
situation became complicated only with the introduction of a division based on clauses,
or "sense-lines," which adhered as far as possible to the 16-syllable standard. The
first known instance of this method seems to be in Dionysius of Halicarnassus (De
Comp. Verb., XVIII), where the author explains the principles used in breaking up the
text of Demosthenes into cola and periods. The new system was especially suited to
texts which were intended to be widely read, e.g. the Orators and the Bible. However
much it was used in the classical period it seems to have fallen sufficiently into disuse
by the fifth century after Christ to be presented as a new method or at least a revival
by two writers, the sixth century rhetorician Castor and St. Jerome.

Castor, according to Harris, proposes "to punctuate a passage of Demosthenes
so that the numeration of the broken-up text may agree with the number of verses
found in the old copies." (τοῦτον γὰρ στίξομεν, σὺν θεῷ φάναι, κατὰ κῶλον καταντήσαντες
eίς τῇν ποσότητα τῶν κῶλων κατὰ τὸν ἀριθμὸν τὸν ἐγκείμενον ἐν τοῖς ἄρχαιοις βιβλίοις ...

St. Jerome, in his preface to the book of Isaiah, warns the reader not to think that
because the book is transcribed in verses it was written in meter by the Hebrews, but
explains that for the convenience of readers he is introducing a new method of
writing by clauses, such as is employed for the works of Demosthenes and Cicero.
(Nemo cum Prophetas versibus viderit esse descriptos metro eos aestimet apud
Hebraeos ligari, et aliquod simile habere de Psalmis vel operibus Salomonis: sed quod
in Demosthene et Tullio solet fieri, ut per cola scribantur et commata, qui utique
prosa et non versibus conscripserunt, nos quoque utilitati legentium providentes, inter-
pretationem novam novo scribendi genere distinximus.)

From the careful explanations of Castor and St. Jerome we may infer that the
art of writing κατὰ κῶλον was not an altogether simple matter. If St. Jerome († A.D.
424) could refer to it as a "new method" it is understandable that the Athenians in
416-417 may have felt the need of elucidation. It seems strange, however, that they
should have been suddenly seized with such a need of clarification that the man who

1912, in the chapter on Stichometry and Colometry; and J. Rendel Harris, "Stichometry," A.J.P.,
Heliodoros 16.

The study of stichometry and colometry goes far beyond the scope of the present problem. In
venturing on this superficial recapitulation of a small part of the subject I have tried to limit myself
to the aspects relevant to the questions posed by the passage in Olympiodorus.

4 Harris, op. cit., p. 152.
5 Rhetores Graeci, ed. Ch. Walz, Stuttgart, 1832-36, III, 721.
could satisfy it should have been honored with a statue, unless some particular event made the knowledge a practical necessity.  

Under normal circumstances the new system of writing would presumably take hold only gradually, as wear and tear on old books necessitated their replacement by new copies. But conditions in Athens at the time of which Olympiodorus is writing might easily have caused such a situation as is hinted at in the brief account that Photius saw fit to preserve. The destruction caused by the Herulian invasion of A.D. 267, the subsequent abandonment of at least some parts of Athens and the monumental building program launched in the early years of the fifth century are too well known to need recapitulation here. Although the philosophical schools had continued to flourish throughout the fourth century, the sudden rush of construction of schools just after 400, e.g. the Gymnasium in the Agora, the school buildings to north and south of the Acropolis and the rebuilding of Plato's Academy, leave no doubt that their physical plants had suffered, to be rebuilt when the barbarian threat had passed and some measure of prosperity had returned.

But in the meantime the destruction and abandonment of the libraries, as a result not only of Herulian activity but also more recently, in the outskirts, of devastation by Alaric's forces, must have taken a heavy toll of the books as well. Many would have been burned outright and others left unprotected from damp and general decay. Once the buildings themselves were ready the primary concern must have been the restocking of the shelves. With the wholesale acquisition of books the opportunity would quite naturally be taken of bringing the libraries up to date by having the new copies transcribed katà kòlóv.

Whether the crisis in book transcription was precipitated by the construction of a new building, repair of an old, or by the general resurgence of material and cultural activity, it is impossible to say. But the later history of the Library of Hadrian may have some relevance (Pl. 91, a). The building evidently suffered heavy damage in the invasion of 267. A series of column bases in the east colonnade of the court (Pl. 91, b), fronting the part of the building actually used for the storage of books, bears unmistakable signs of early fifth century work and must be assumed to have replaced the original bases on that side (Pl. 91, c), probably as part of a general reconstruction of

---

7 The εἰκών, to be sure, might have been only a herm, such as that dedicated a few years earlier to the younger Iamblichus in gratitude for helping to restore the city walls (cf. A. E. Raubitschek, "Iamblichos at Athens," Hesperia, XXXIII, 1964, pp. 63-68), but this would only slightly diminish the honor.


10 This may account for references in the 4th century to the philosophers teaching in their own homes, e.g., Eunapius, Lives of the Philosophers, 483.
the whole building.\textsuperscript{11} It seems increasingly likely that the man responsible for the restoration was Herculius, Prefect of Illyricum from 408 to 412, whose statue, dedicated by Plutarch, Head of the Neo-Platonic Academy, stood on the entrance porch, immediately to the left of the main door (Pl. 91, d).\textsuperscript{12}

If Herculius did indeed provide for the restoration of the Library of Hadrian it is unlikely that the philosophers would have been so grateful to him if his bounty had stopped short of replenishing the books. It is a tempting hypothesis, to be treated with due caution, that before leaving office in 412 he set in motion a program of complete rehabilitation which reached its culmination in 416.

The honor paid to Philtatius becomes more comprehensible if we suppose that his role extended beyond the limits of the κόλον into this program of rehabilitation, which would include also modernization. For by the middle of the century there is definite evidence that not only were the new books in use in Athens along with the old, but that in some cases texts were emended as well as transcribed κατὰ κόλον. Thus Proclus, the famous Head of the Academy from ca. 450 to his death in 485, was able to quote variant readings from the older manuscripts and the new: “\( \delta\iota\iota\iota\, \delta\ \varepsilon\iota\iota\iota\varepsilon\ \gamma\varphi\alpha\rho\gamma \tau\iota\varsigma\ \tau\alpha\tau\varsigma\ \tau\alpha\beta\theta\ \delta\iota\iota\iota\iota\iota\iota\iota\iota\ tau\iota\varepsilon\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigm
a. The West Facade (Arrow points to Herculius Inscription).

b. Late Column Bases in Interior Colonnade.

c. Original Column Base (Now in Roman Market).


The Library of Hadrian.

ALISON FRANTZ: HONORS TO A LIBRARIAN