The crisis in scholarly publishing

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UNTIL one day last February, I thought I had a pretty good understanding of what is now generally called "the crisis of the monograph"—that is, the drying up of resources for intensive studies of small but worthwhile subjects in favor of trend-driven publishing. Such publishing is favored today by some leading university presses, on subjects formerly associated with punk rock lyrics or supermarket tabloids or the Oprah Winfrey show. As an eighteenth-century scholar I had myself published several specialized literary studies, and as co-owner of Winthrop Press, a small part-time publishing operation based in Princeton, New Jersey, I had learned a good bit about the economics of book production. The one thing I hadn’t done, as it happened, was actually lay eyes on any example of the new trend-based scholarship.

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Nor did I have any intention of doing so on that day in February. I had gone up to Micawber Books, our most dependable local purveyor of "serious" titles, in search of Aulus Gellius, a new study of the Noctes Atticae by the British classicist Leofranc Holford-Strevens. I knew it was a long shot. The book is published by the University of North Carolina Press. I had seen other UNC titles on their shelves, but even Micawber seldom carries anything as specialized as studies of minor second-century Latin authors. It wasn't there. I special ordered the book and, the weather being chilly and the afternoon gray, fell to browsing in Micawber's recently expanded section on Gender and Cultural Studies. This was my awakening. I stood there reading for an hour, by which time I saw that I would never understand the crisis in scholarly publishing until I had at least attempted to understand how this section of the bookstore had come into existence.

The book I took home from the cultural-studies section that day was Barbie's Queer Accessories, written by Erica Rand, a "dyke activist"—the phrase comes from the back cover—who teaches art history at Bates College in Lewiston, Maine. It was published by Duke University Press. In the months since, I have read a great number of works in gender and cultural studies, but nothing I have read since better exemplifies the new trend-driven scholarly publishing than Barbie's Queer Accessories. To read it through is to see why, for better or for worse, the traditional scholarly monograph is on its way to extinction.

Barbie's queer accessories

To begin with, Barbie's Queer Accessories is written in the quasi-autobiographical mode that has become the trademark of so much writing in cultural studies. It is difficult to resist its note of personal engagement. Rand begins with the story of how her interest in Barbie dolls arose, almost by accident, from an otherwise wholly routine incident. A friend had sent her the latest copy of their favorite lesbian sex magazine, and while leafing through its pages, Rand came across a photograph of a woman inserting a Barbie doll—"feet first"—into her vagina. Here, Rand saw instantly, was something more
significant than a mere bit of lesbian pornography. She loved the photograph, and she immediately wanted to teach it to her students in art history and women's studies.

Yet there was a danger. In a world still swayed by homophobic attitudes, a Barbie-in-the-vagina photo might be taken as an immature or sophomoric gesture of “transgression” rather than an occasion of serious intellectual analysis. “I worried,” as she puts it, “about inserting a Barbie dildo into the heterosexist context of the university classroom.” In this moment of pedagogical perplexity lie the origins of *Barbie's Queer Accessories* as a work of scholarship. For as Rand consults colleagues and friends about the problem, the question of the Barbie dildo drops into the background—she does eventually introduce the photo into classroom discussion, and nothing much happens—while Rand herself begins to get widely known as someone with an interest in Barbie dolls.

The ostensible subject of *Barbie's Queer Accessories* is what in cultural studies is called “counterhegemonic discourse”—“the Barbie features that,” as Rand puts it early on, “make her seem to resist the free play of accessorizing signifiers”—but a reader soon understands that Rand's heart isn't in the talk about counterhegemony and accessorizing signifiers. The real subject is the book itself: how it came to be written, what Rand went through in writing it. Thus, for instance, Rand’s account of how her early research as a Barbie scholar took the form, very often, of simply gathering anecdotes:

My friends told me about how they had loved or hated Barbie and about what they had done with and to her—how they had turned her punk, set her on fire, made her fuck Midge or Ken or G.I. Joe, or, on occasion, gotten the much advertised “hours of fun” by following Mattel’s directions. People I hardly knew who heard of my interest were anxious to tell me their Barbie tales.

The serious intellectual substance of *Barbie's Queer Accessories* always has to do with personal experience. Rand does undertake a dutiful review of Mattel's own “official” history of Barbie, but this is quite unabashedly journalistic filler, the sort of thing one might find in a magazine article about the toy industry. The moments at which the writing comes alive—the reason, one sees, that the editorial board at Duke must
have been drawn to it in the first place—are those in which Rand talks about her own personal involvement with Barbie dolls. Consider her extended account of a dollhouse-like "environment," Barbie’s Dream Loft, originally created for Rand by an artist friend. As restaged by Rand herself, the scene features two dolls, a blonde Barbie and a Chicana Barbie, in a "top/bottom dyke sex scene" in which the latter plays the dominant role: "She stands bent over blond Barbie with a hand on blond Barbie's butt, a hand moved now and then to suggest alternately spanking, anal penetration, and the more run-of-the-mill hand-to-vagina activity generically known as finger-fucking." The intellectual substance of the Dream Loft section lies in the way Rand is able to turn her own sense of inner conflict to the purposes of serious cultural analysis:

Among other problems, I struggled with how to assign roles to my two Barbies. Putting Chicana Barbie on top reinforces racial stereotypes of the dark brute overpowering the less animalistic white girl; the hair contrast alone places my Dream Loft firmly within the hetero-generated tradition of lesbian representation, which often features an aggressive, dark-haired vixen seducing a blond innocent. Putting blond Barbie on top would have subverted these stereotypes but performed white supremacy. In terms of race there was no way out of the dominant discourse.

Journalistic clues

This is a standard sort of analysis in cultural studies. Allowing for some adjustment among "theoretical" registers, most of the books in the section in which I originally came across Barbie’s Queer Accessories were written in this mode. Its significance lies, I think, no matter how one may happen to feel personally about Barbie studies or the paradoxes of lesbian representation, in the way it is today driving out of existence a more "traditional" sort of scholarly publication. For it is not simply that demand for specialized studies like Aulus Gellius, the volume I had come to buy, has all but disappeared—as I shall show, current statistics suggest that such studies will in a very short time cease to be published at all—nor that the demand for books like Barbie’s Queer Accessories has, at least over the short term, mushroomed. It is that a hidden play of
institutional and economic forces has conspired to put them in direct competition.

An essential point here—what I mean by talking about "hidden" forces—is that a decline in demand for books in the *Aulus Gellius* category and a rise in demand for *Barbie's Queer Accessories* need not be related. It is true that one has an intuitive sense that the two must be connected. Chevrolet sales go down and Toyota sales go up: Isn't this likely to be related to the zero-sum nature of competition in the automobile industry? The problem is that books, unlike automobiles, need not exist in precisely this zero-sum relation to one another. We could easily enough imagine, for instance, a situation in which demand for both Tai Kwon Do books and Pocock's *The Machiavellian Moment* rose dramatically simply because, for whatever reason, people had begun to read more.

This is a point that seldom comes up in recent writing about the "crisis of the monograph," where, beyond occasional grumbling that only titles about gender or identity politics seem to sell these days, most of the talk has been about production costs, library budgets, warehouse-storage rates, and the like. So it is that we get the essential clue to the zero-sum relation between *Aulus Gellius* and *Barbie's Queer Accessories* in quite a different quarter: the journalistic celebration of Cultural Studies that has tended to pursue the story on the level of names and personalities. Examples of such treatment include a long *Lingua Franca* article on editor William Germano and the triumph of what its critics have called "tabloid scholarship" at Routledge, a piece in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* on Nicholas Pfund of NYU Press, and, on a weekly basis, items in the *Chronicle*'s own recently instituted "Hot Type" department, devoted to the new and the topical in university publishing.

The reason that this journalism strikes me as crucial is that it has emanated from the same space—located, as one might say, somewhere between *People* magazine and the *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*—occupied by Cultural Studies itself, such that one is constantly aware of tremors of an assumed "transgressiveness" just beneath the surface. For otherwise, on the face of it, these would simply be marketing stories, as readily told about General Foods as Routledge or
NYU Press. Thus, for instance, we hear in *Lingua Franca* that Routledge once favored sober, academic-type covers for its books. No more:

The cover of *Spectacular Bodies*, a study of gender and race in action movies, is typical of Routledge's hunk, puff-'n'-pant aesthetic. It features a muscle-bound and tattooed Jean-Claude Van Damme. *Arresting Images*, a collection on art and censorship, juxtaposes an image of the artist Leon Golub dressed as a cardinal with a bound torture victim, her nude chest dripping with blood.

Or, from the Routledge in-house organ *The Cultural Studies Times*, we get a list of the “top-ten reasons why you need a cultural studies section in your bookstore” (“#6—To create a hip pick-up scene,” “#8—Where else would you find Barbie, Disney, and Madonna next to one another?”).

**Intellectual prostitutes**

The tendency in these stories is to focus on two elements, the personality of the protagonist—portrayed as a brash young ex-academic or would-be academic who has dared to overturn the stodgy orthodoxies of conventional scholarly publishing—and the “sensationalistic” quality of the titles they have dared to publish. Thus the picture of Germano, the central figure in *Lingua Franca*’s Routledge story, moving through the corridors at the Modern Language Association:

Germano’s devotion to the culture of academic celebrity remains strong. “When I go to MLA,” he says, “I don’t go to hear papers. I go to ask people whom I respect who’s hot, what’s going on, what are you really excited about? That’s much more important than spending two hours listening to a lecture.” And, apparently, what people are really excited about is Tonya Harding: Routledge’s most-hyped forthcoming title is *Women on Ice: Feminist Responses to the Tonya Harding/Nancy Kerrigan Spectacle*.

The emphasis, in short, is on what is being published and how it is being packaged: Tonya Harding, Jean-Claude Van Damme, nude torture victims dripping with blood, Barbie as dildo. The same note occurs in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*’s account of Nicholas Pfund, the new director of NYU Press. (“Fast-moving and aggressive,” reports the *Chronicle*
somewhat breathlessly, "Mr. Pfund may represent the future of scholarly editing.") There is the usual story of a marketing miracle wrought by paying attention to trends—NYU, we learn, "has doubled sales in the past four years, to more than $3.2 million annually. And with Mr. Pfund at the helm, it has an all-important buzz going for it"—and then the list of titles that have brought in the profits: "What do people want to read, according to Mr. Pfund? Drag: A History of Female Impersonation in the Performing Arts, Clarence Thomas and the Tough Love Crowd, Lesbian Erotics, Rwanda and Genocide in the Twentieth Century, and Heavenly Sex, 'a light-hearted tour of sexuality in the Jewish tradition,' by Ruth Westheimer (who is an adjunct faculty member at N.Y.U.) and Jonathan Mark."

Yet it would be a serious mistake, I think, to suppose that the subjects or topics or titles of these books play anything but a minor role in such stories of marketing success. For there is, first of all, the simple fact that the culture on which they report is immensely more "sensationalistic" than anything that could be found on the Cultural Studies bookshelves. Tonya Harding and female impersonation are not, after all, news to the millions who view TV "trash" talk shows, and who, if they should happen to want more information, would be far more likely to turn to People magazine or a supermarket tabloid than a title published by Routledge or NYU or Duke University Press.

Then there is the fact that large commercial publishers, with far greater resources and even fewer misgivings about being accused of intellectual prostitution, have taken aim at the same market. It is its despairing sense that the very notion of intellectual prostitution has ceased to have meaning among American publishers, for instance, that drives the New Republic to an almost desperate irony in reporting on a new children's series to be put out by Random House:

Last week Maureen O'Brien of The New York Post reported that Random House is planning a series of fast tabloid books about sensational crimes ... for children. A spokeswoman for the publishing house told O'Brien that these books will be "exposés of the most provocative, frightening, other worldly and until now 'adult' current events." We're not sure what "other worldly" means,
but the meaning of “until now 'adult'” is perfectly clear. Random House is preparing to pander to kids. The same spokeswoman admitted that “if another Jeffrey Dahmer and Amy Fisher were to come along and make the news, that’s precisely the type of crimes that we would want to cover in these books.” (See Amy fire. See Jeffrey chew.)... The first volume is called *Unabomber: Handled with Care*. Another shrewd publicity person at Random House did us the favor of sending along the book's first three chapters. They are special. Chapter One tells of a botched explosion on a Boeing 727 carrying seventy-two people:... “The bomber went to a lot more trouble than he had to. He could have bought a lot of the stuff at Radio Shack.” (Cool.)... And so on. We wish the publishers luck in hell.

**The Belle du Jour scenario**

Were they simply entries in the Jeffrey Dahmer-Amy Fisher market, there is no reason to suppose that books like *Women on Ice* and *Barbie's Queer Accessories* would be selling any more copies than the average scholarly monograph. There is simply too much competition, both in the media generally and within publishing from commercial firms like Random House, to explain their success as being due to an attentiveness to market trends to which traditional scholarly publishers have remained oblivious. This is what directs us to look for an explanation in a source of “transgression” having very little to do with Barbie dildos or nude torture victims and a great deal to do with a titillation presumed to arise from seeing authors trained in serious scholarship displaying an absorption in such topics.

To see the marketing success of publishers like Routledge and NYU as a narrative or story, in other words, is to see that its underlying plot has all along been a version of *Belle du Jour*, Bunuel's film about an upper-class woman who has a secret life working in a Parisian brothel. The thrill lies not in the scenes that take place in the brothel—one has always known, after all, that houses of prostitution exist—but in all the scenes that don't: the prim society lady at home in her proper surroundings, the servants and the rich furnishings and the ceremony of afternoon tea. The hovering sense of a “violated” propriety is the story, in a manner of speaking. Take it away, and *Belle du Jour* is simply about a prostitute going to
work. The recent success of various Cultural Studies titles seems to me explicable on similar terms.

Yet there is a twist. The Belle du Jour scenario would seem to make sense, on the face of it, only if there were some market of general readers thrilled to discover that university-trained scholars—minds presumed to be at home with Plato and Kant and Shakespeare, popularly supposed to be the custodians of some “higher” learning—have, once one has penetrated the veil of intellectual hypocrisy, exactly the same preoccupations as the average viewer of “Roseanne” or “Oprah.” The problem is, of course, that no such market exists. For it is academics themselves, by and large, who provide the market for these titles. No one who actually buys Barbie’s Queer Accessories is shocked by its “transgressive” patter about finger-fucking, and no one who might be so shocked buys books like Barbie’s Queer Accessories.

The zero-sum relationship between books like Barbie’s Queer Accessories and books like Aulus Gellius thus demands to be understood as, after all, something entirely internal to academic publishing, involving a kind of allegory or fantasy in which a specific academic audience is encouraged to imagine, to its considerable delight, a stuffy “establishment” driven to apoplexy by the very idea of Barbie or Madonna studies. Most Cultural Studies titles are something like those special-effects movies in which a cartoon-character protagonist is introduced into an actual setting: Barbie’s Queer Accessories “transgresses” only so long as its readers may imagine its being actually presented as a credential for tenure or promotion at a real college or university. For the same reason, it is important that the contributors to Women on Ice be “feminists,” which, translated, may mean “academic feminists,” which in turn means university-trained scholars who may be presumed to be “transgressing” in writing about “tabloid” subjects like Tonya Harding.

Tenuring Barbie

Perhaps the greatest significance of the Cultural Studies trend lies in the way it has put a power of evaluation and oversight, traditionally invested in the community of scholars themselves, into the hands of figures like Germano and Pfund. Twenty years ago, it was much harder to get a specialized
literary study accepted at, say, Princeton, than at what was then generally called a second- or third-tier press, such that acceptance at Princeton University Press meant certain academic or intellectual recognition for a scholarly author. In a recent thoughtful article on scholarly publishing, literary critic Hugh Kenner describes a former press committee colleague going through a sardonic pantomime: “We control,” Ralph Rader would say, “The Imprint”, ... he’d emphasize the formality of The Imprint by a downward punch with an invisible Great Seal.” For the process of scholarly refereeing within a recognized order of selectivity was until very recently able to operate, however imperfectly, as something like a minimal guarantee of intellectual quality.

This is no longer true. For whatever reason, the refereeing process has been more seriously compromised by current trends than anything else in scholarly publishing, to the point that even leading university presses tend now to think primarily in market terms when considering manuscripts for publication. This is why, for instance, there has been a kind of stampede in recent years at “top” presses to add editors in such areas as gender and cultural studies, and why old-line editors, whose expertise lay in the immensely complex business of getting submitted work reliably evaluated on purely intellectual grounds, have gradually been pushed to the margins or phased out. The model that now dominates, in short, is that of someone like Germano at Routledge:

An editor can walk into my office and say: “I’ve been talking to some smart people in this field and they are excited about topic X.... I think we should commission a collection.” We’ll consult our marketing department, and if they think it’s a good project being done by the right people and they can sell it, we’ll send out a contract. When the book comes in, then we might get a reader’s report to see whether it is correct in all its details.

This is where the demoralization among university publishers has resulted most significantly in damage to the tenure and promotion process. At nearly every major university, books accepted by publishers like Routledge under the conditions described by Germano are today being considered by departments, tenure and promotion committees, and deans and provosts on the terms once reserved for works of genuine schol-
arship. And, as more university publishers imitate the model, making it harder to tell the difference between a book published by Routledge and one published by NYU or Rutgers or Duke University Press, the problem becomes more severe. We have entered a period, in short, where young academics may quite realistically expect tenure and promotion for having written *Barbie's Queer Accessories* or contributed to *Women on Ice*, while authors of specialized studies like *Aulus Gellius* may just as realistically expect never to be published at all.

The real death knell of the learned monograph is not to be heard, it seems to me, in any dreary recitation of declining sales figures and shrinking library budgets. It is, rather, the sound of Pfund cheerily spelling out to a reporter from the *Chronicle of Higher Education* his own predilections in publishing:

I'm just not interested on an intellectual level in figuring out how to publish tremendously esoteric texts. What I want are books that people read, that deal with subjects that are of interest to a range of people. That entails a willingness occasionally to say it's not our responsibility to publish a book, no matter how good, if it's going to lose a lot of money.

**Demoralization**

But how is the crisis of the monograph being perceived within the world of academic or university publishing? Consider part of a letter from John G. Ryden, the director of Yale Press, to Hugh Kenner:

Yale and every other university press in America has seen the sale of the scholarly monograph ... decline by two-thirds. Where we once expected to sell perhaps 2,500, we now sell 800-900. Over the years smaller print runs pushed up costs and therefore prices in an ongoing spiral. Scholars virtually stopped buying books. Library budgets declined in the 70s; in the 80s they dropped again and serial purchases cut deeply into funds available to buy books.

Or, consider “The Crisis in Scholarly Communication,” written for the *Chronicle of Higher Education* by Sanford G. Thatcher, director of Penn State Press. In the last 10 years, Thatcher reports, Penn State Press has published 150 titles in
literary studies, putting it among the leading scholarly publishers in that field. "We cannot be sure exactly how many people have read these books, but we do know how many have bought them. Of the 150 titles, 65 percent have sold fewer than 500 copies and 91 percent fewer than 800. Only 3 percent (generally those dealing with American literature or gender issues) have sold more than 1,000 copies." The result has been a draconian change in policy: "The market for books of traditional literary criticism has now shrunk to the point that it is no longer possible for a small, unendowed press like Penn State's to continue publishing such works."

Thatcher's column in the Chronicle conveys the current sense of demoralization among traditional scholarly publishers and the particularly close connection between scholarly publishing and tenure and promotion in American colleges and universities. Much of Thatcher's column is based on a survey taken by Penn State Press among authors on its own list, and the results in this department are especially dispiriting:

According to the survey of our authors, the deciding factor when they do buy a book is "the reputation of the author." This suggests that the careers of younger scholars publishing their first books are especially at risk. If faculty members are required to publish books to gain tenure, how will they manage to do so if presses can no longer afford to issue books by unknown authors that are likely to sell only a few hundred copies?

When university presses like his own have to cease publishing specialized studies, says Thatcher, something is badly amiss in the scholarly world, "which relies on such publications to make the process of tenure and promotion work."

But what are those specialized studies that Penn State Press is no longer able to publish? Thatcher's mention of "gender issues" as one of the only two categories in which Penn State titles have sold 1,000 copies is enough to let us guess that we are dealing here with the zero-sum relationship discussed earlier. Most books that attain even this modest level of marketing success will be those that, like Barbie's Queer Accessories, manage to attract a somewhat wider audience by promising to transgress the norms of conventional or traditional scholarship. In the background, then, gathering dust on the shelves of unsold volumes, will be all those books—97 percent, in the
Penn State case—that, like Aulus Gellius, embody precisely the "higher" learning whose very conventionality gives the transgression its point: Studies assuming a certain background in ancient and modern history, philosophy, literature, and languages, and very often presuming beyond that a genuine interest in some writer or intellectual milieu that, from what might be called the Barbie's Dream Loft perspective, must seem hopelessly and hilariously obscure.

**Ancient culture**

One could not look for a better example than Aulus Gellius, the subject of Holford-Strevens's study. For the author of the *Noctes Atticae* wrote long after the great age of Livy and Horace and Virgil, and, even among scholars who take a serious interest in authors of the Antonine period, he has not been seen as a commanding figure. The *Noctes Atticae* is itself a collection of occasional pieces, composed, as Gellius tells us, during the winter evenings when he was staying in a villa with a friend outside Athens. The work consists of anecdotes and chatty observations, remarks on books and Greek and Latin grammar and curious points of natural history, little glimpses of Graeco-Roman life as it settled gratefully into a long calm after the terror and insanity of Galigula and Nero and Domitian, the incest and murder and capricious tyranny of the Julio-Claudian and Flavian years as one reads about them in Tacitus or Suetonius.

To anyone drawn to the *Noctes Atticae*, a great part of the attraction has always no doubt lain in the way they permit a modern reader to bask, as Holford-Strevens says, in the afternoon sun of ancient culture, to dwell with Aulus Gellius and his friends in a Roman intellectual milieu that was beginning to turn backwards to its own earliest roots and, beyond that, to the enormous debt to Greek literature, philosophy, and political theory on which so much of the Roman civic and literary achievement was based. Modern scholarship has done a great deal to recover the details that make this picture so compelling—the large-scale absorption of provincials into Roman administration, so that the empire becomes gradually and peacefully a homogenous entity; the completion and perfection of the road system that allowed one to travel easily from
one end to another of its vast extent; the hundreds of cities of
the empire that became "little Romes," with their amphithe-
aters and their baths and libraries—but it is only in works like
the *Noctes Atticae* that we are permitted to hear the voices of
the age.

Yet those voices are conversing in Latin and Greek, which
is no doubt why books like *Aulus Gellius*, even given the great
attractions of what one scholar calls the Antonine golden age,
could hardly be expected to sell a thousand copies in the
1990s. In practical terms, this means that Holford-Strevens
must assume on the part of his readers at least enough Greek
and Latin to make sense of the world—to a very large extent,
a world of books, of phrases echoing earlier poetry and drama
and philosophy—that it is his business to recreate. So, for
instance, we have the scene in which Gellius, who has just
made the sea passage from Greece to Brundisium, comes ashore
and takes a stroll around the marketplace to regain his land-
legs. He comes across a bookstall in which a great number of
old Greek books are for sale. They are in battered condition,
but they are cheap. He buys the lot, and then spends the next
two nights reading them, copying into his commonplace book
their tales about strange people in faraway places, cannibals,
and one-eyed humans—we are in the immediate vicinity here
of Othello's "Anthropophagai, and men whose heads do grow
beneath their shoulders"—and tribes who are able to kill by
uttering praise.

Some of these same stories, says Gellius, he later found in
Pliny's *Naturalis Historia*. The point made by Holford-Strevens
will be precisely that a great deal of this has demonstrably
come directly from Pliny, that the story of the sea voyage and
the stroll around the marketplace has been imported into this
context to bestow verisimilitude on a borrowed template onto
which Gellius will then overlay other curious bits of Greek
anthropological learning. The argument depends, inevitably,
on a close analysis of the language used by both Gellius and
Pliny:

That the order is the same is an argument for dependence, sup-
ported by linguistic similarities. At *NH* 7.16, *NA* 9.4. 7-8,
and nowhere else till Symmachus, *Ep*. 6.77, we find the verb *effascinare*:
Pliny writes "in eadem Africa familias quasdam effascinantium,"
Gellius "quasdam in terra Africa hominum familias uoce atque lingua effascinantium"; to Pliny's "effascinent interemantque" correspond in Gellius "exitialem fascinationem" and "interimant."... Pliny is therefore a source, but not the only source: whereas at §25 he states that the Astomi are clad in leaves, "uestiri frondium lanugine," Gellius (§10) gives them feathers like the birds', "auium ritu plumantibus." An original περιον, it seems, has been diversely understood as "fern" and "little feather."

The decline of civilization

As a work of scholarship, Holford-Strevens's Aulus Gellius is a superb exploration of this literary and cultural moment. It is also, significantly enough for the present discussion, a perfect example of the sort of work that can no longer be published, or even considered for publication, by Penn State Press under the policy reported by Sanford Thatcher. But, in the current climate, Aulus Gellius has become one of those "tremendously esoteric texts" in which Pfund professes so complete a lack of interest in comparison to the titles that do appeal to him and the readers sought by NYU Press.

No one who has studied the present situation can doubt that Penn State Press is, in its decision to give up publishing studies like Aulus Gellius, simply a bit ahead of the times. For the same bleak story is being played out at every university press for which statistics are available, and it cannot be long before Thatcher's decision begins to be repeated by directors of other presses. Yet there is a problem here. Aulus Gellius, however small its present readership, is a genuine contribution to knowledge. It will be there on the shelves of a few great libraries a hundred years from now, read and studied by scholars who retain a serious interest in the culture of late antiquity; long after the last copy of Barbie's Queer Accessories has been pulped and the names of Tonya Harding and Nancy Kerrigan and Midge and Ken and G.I. Joe have vanished into oblivion. And, in a situation in which works like Aulus Gellius are no longer published, it seems to me, we may with some justice cease to speak about a "crisis of the monograph" and begin speaking of a crisis in the sphere of human knowledge.