CATULLUS AND CAESAR (*C.* 29)

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CATULLUS' attack on Caesar and Pompey in Poem 29 is for many reasons famous. Historians cite it as an expression of contemporary opinion on the two chief triumvirs.[1] In addition, the picture of the oily Mamurra slipping through countless—indeed, all—provincial beds has a luster of its own which immortalizes this poem as continuing evidence of Roman provincial management in the Verrine spirit. Caesar himself most probably felt the sting in Catullus' words; it may have been some such poem as this which caused Caesar to feel so irredeemably slandered.[2] Metricians turn to this poem as one of the few remaining examples of the pure iambic trimeter, a welcome reminiscence of the iambophile Archilochus.[3] Structuralists have a special love for this poem, which falls into two halves neatly delimited by repeated lines.[4] Biographers of Catullus are pleased to have a poem which can be so easily dated: "The poem was written after the first invasion of Britain. . . . which took place in 55 B.C., and during the lifetime of Julia, Caesar's daughter and Pompey's wife (v. 24), whose death in the fall of the year 54, weakened the bond between the two leaders."[5] Indeed varied types of scholars have a reason to be particularly gratified by the survival of this poem. It is, however, striking that literary critics have left this poem to their colleagues in other fields. These verses are regarded as being little more than politically colored invective and are, therefore, abandoned to historians and metricians.[6]

Such a judgment underestimates the artistic skill of Catullus. There is much of redeeming literary merit in this poem; yet the discomfort of literary critics is understandable. There is one major problem which must immediately strike any reader: to whom is Catullus writing this poem? Who is the *cinaede Romule* condemned as "impudicus et vorax et aleo" (5 and 9f.)? Is he the same person as the *imperator unice* of line 11, undeniably Julius Caesar? In line 13 when the possessive adjective *vestra* reveals that the object of the address has changed once again, have we merely an introduction (subtle or clumsy) of a second or third person who will not appear properly until the final line of the poem, the triumvir and son-in-law Pompey? Because of such confusion it is difficult to interpret the intention of the poet; and, therefore, literary critics have left this poem to others who could deal with its more precise and definable features.

There have been several solutions suggested to clarify the confusion in the addressee. Most scholars maintain that Julius Caesar is the sole addressee and that Pompey would naturally be understood as a coaddressee in a poem with a political

1. Cf. Mommsen, *RG*[5], V, 319; V. Durry, *Histoire des Romains*[2] (Paris, 1881), III, 239; W. E. Heitland, *The Roman Republic* (Cambridge, 1909), III, 465.

2. Suet. *Iul.* 73. Cf. Plin. *NH* 36. 48.

3. L. P. Wilkinson, *Golden Latin Artistry* (Cambridge, 1963), p. 101: "His [Catullus'] skill is particularly shown in the case of *Phaselus ille* (4) and *Quis hoc potest videre* (29), in which, for 27 and 24 lines respectively, he writes pure iambics—a considerable feat in Latin with its high percentage of long syllables. . . ." G. Lafaye, *Catulle et ses modèles* (Paris, 1894), chap. i, tries to define Catullus' relationship to Archilochus in terms of meter and spirit; but see the rejection of this idea by O. Hezel in *Catull und das griechische Epigramm* (Stuttgart, 1932), p. 46.

4. Lafaye (above n. 3), pp. 14 f.; A. L. Wheeler, *Catullus and the Traditions of Ancient Poetry* (Berkeley, 1934), pp. 51 f.; and I. Schnelle, *Untersuchungen zu Catulls dichterischer Form* (Leipzig, 1933), p. 44.

5. Merrill's introduction to Poem 29. Cf. Wheeler (above, n. 4), p. 103.

6. See the brief treatment by T. Frank, *Catullus and Horace* (New York, 1928), pp. 87 ff., and Wheeler (above, n. 4), pp. 44 f.

aim.[7] A problem immediately arises in trying to associate the adjectives *impudicus*, *vorax*, *aleo*, and *cinaedus* with Caesar. The charges of *impudicitia* have some substance at least in popular political gossip and verse, jesting soldiers' songs, and public jokes of the time;[8] such public acknowledgment is all that is required to make the allegations effective. Catullus has never been known for being scrupulous in handling his sources of information or meticulous in spreading a measured amount of satiric salt once he has opened a small wound. There is, however, no evidence to show that Caesar was a glutton; rather, all evidence suggests that Caesar was notably abstemious in his diet. Perhaps he was even quite lacking in taste for food; there is a tale that Caesar willingly consumed the rancid oil which had repelled the other guests at a party.[9] Similarly, there is no indication that Caesar was a gambler; in fact, Ellis notes as significant Suetonius' omission of the customary reference to gambling proclivities in his biography of Caesar. The mere phrasing of the famous comment, "The die is cast," scarcely proves Caesar a gambler, and the mention of his large debts from some unspecified source is a desperate attempt to grasp at any possible straw. There is simply no evidence that the general readers of Rome would recognize the words *vorax* and *aleo* as meaningful charges against Caesar.[10]

Baehrens and Kroll acknowledge the weakness of this case and adopt the expedient of making "impudicus et vorax et aleo" typical charges which need bear no relation to the personal habits of Caesar. Yet these critics are further troubled by the title "Romulus"; they interpret the use of this name to be a charge of ambition which could be applied to any man who was striving for great power in the state. In this way "Romulus" becomes a typical charge, too.

It seems clear that the very attempt to make Caesar the addressee throughout this poem in itself reduces the poem to a typical and crude piece of political slander; the allegations made against Caesar become so typical that they seem created far more by the general public of Rome than by Catullus.

I suggest that there is much more to the poem than these explanations will admit: I propose to examine Poem 29 under three headings: (1) the satiric picture of Mamurra; (2) the rhetorical organization of the poem; (3) the problem of the addressee. I hope to demonstrate that these verses are actually the imaginative, sincere, and personal statement of a sensitive writer who is definitely not acting as a mere mouthpiece for public indignation.

1. THE SATIRIC PICTURE OF MAMURRA

The Mamurra of Poem 29 is one of the triumphs of Catullan satire. He is pilloried in a series of small scenes which stamp him as an unscrupulous, insatiable voluptuary, embraced and supported by the two triumvirs. The satire is subtle and incisive. Only in line 21 is Mamurra directly called an outrage; yet the total picture painted by Catullus so far outweighs the simple adjective *malum* that the mere word at the end of the poem seems almost an afterthought.

The most consistent theme underlying the description of Mamurra is that of

7. This seems undeniable and is easily accepted by the commentators (cf. Baehrens on line 21). Baehrens and Schwabe think that *vestra* must be explained in advance and place lines 21–24 (Schwabe only lines 23–24) after line 10. See further n. 18 below.

8. Suet. *Iul.* 49–52.

9. *Ibid.* 53.

10. H. A. J. Munro in his *Criticisms and Elucidations of Catullus* (Cambridge, 1878), pp. 92 ff., makes a vigorous defense of Caesar's indifference to food concluding with a ringing dismissal of all such charges: "Emperor, minister, generalissimo, lawgiver, censor, restorer of lost rights and creator of new ideas, he was at the same time destroying with his right hand the world that was and building up in his mind the world that was to be. Any excess in any direction must have destroyed his delicate organization."

excess or lack of measure. Everything Mamurra does is in the extreme—so extreme that it is repulsive. He is *super-bus* and *super-fluens* as he strolls through the beds of all, not several, of the provincials (6f.). When he devours the money of the provinces he takes 20,000,000 or 30,000,000 sesterces (14). The implication is that his rapine is so great that the difference between the two figures is really of little significance: he took an indefinitely large amount. At line 16 the poet inquires if he has devoured too little as though the amount might not suffice a man with Mamurra's demands. Then in a series of separate entries the amount is listed. It comprises the spoils of three countries and two more nations remain threatened. By such a list Catullus implies that this man needs all that can be obtained—*all* the women and *all* the money of a nation. In line 3 he has "that which" (*quod*) Gaul and Britain possess. Without using the word *omnia* Catullus implies that he has everything. Mamurra in his desire for all is portrayed as a man who must always be supersatisfied.[11]

When the poet finishes his poem with the words *perdidistis omnia*, he has prepared his audience to know how complete the destruction is. The triumvirs as Mamurra's supporters stand charged of totally destroying the Roman world. By his maniacal penchant for completeness in both the bedroom and the bank vault Mamurra acts as the agent of the triumvirs in working their destruction so completely on the Roman world. In his excess-loving high jinks Mamurra becomes a type case of the degenerate condition of Rome and its empire. The real, but hidden, culprits are the men who tolerate such flamboyant and repulsive behavior. Because they are willing to risk the friendship of the provincials by supporting Mamurra, these men are appropriately called political gamblers (*aleo*).

This connection of agent and supporter —or, at least, tolerator—is brought out even more clearly in the repeated references to eating. Catullus brands as gluttonous anyone who can endure the behavior of Mamurra (2 and 10). This theme is picked up in the second part of the poem. In line 14 Mamurra "consumes" (*comesset*) quantities of money. Then in a series of words he is said to have devoured and gobbled up (*helluor* and *lancino*) whatever goods he could get his hands on. In line 21 f. he is pronounced expert in this one area: a gluttonous gourmand of other people's wealth, all of it. Of course, he eats only those dishes which are rich or sumptuous (*uncta*). Always in the background is the man who has tolerated Mamurra, and who is, by his tolerance, equally debased: *es vorax*.

There are other satiric elements in the picture of Mamurra. He wanders so easily through those many beds. Catullus considers this an outrage; by this year he was well aware of the shattering effects of betrayal by a woman previously considered faithful. But Mamurra was the darling of Venus, her dove or a veritable Adonis, and, therefore, especially entitled to ignore such trivial mortal preoccupations. The nickname Mentula was probably not invented for this poem nor was it necessarily invented by Catullus, but in this poem it is a suitable name describing the major concern of this agent of Rome. Again Mamurra and his behavior are supported by a man who declares himself by his continued support *impudicus*.[12]

These two great appetites, sex and food, are interwoven neatly in this picture of Mamurra as a self-centered, greedy, and

11. Cf. Plin. *NH* 36. 48.

12. Cf. Baehrens' comment on line 5 in which he strongly joins Caesar in Mamurra's guilt because of Caesar's continued equanimity when confronted with such behavior.

very efficient voluptuary. Both appetites are joined in lines 13 f. Mamurra has exhausted himself in the beds of provincial ladies and is appropriately called a *diffututa mentula*. Even the most robust Roman official with legions of aid would have had a debilitating schedule if he were to attempt to make his way through *all* provincial beds. And now having exhausted, at least for the moment, his first great drive, Mamurra settles in for the banquet: "ut ista vestra diffututa mentula / ducenties comesset aut trecenties?" And this is the agent who is tolerated, supported, and even fondled (*fovetis*) by the triumvirs.[13] Any man who would allow such scenes of exploitation deserves to be called "impudicus et vorax et aleo."[14]

2. The Rhetorical Organization of the Poem

This poem is unique in the Catullan corpus in that it is almost entirely a series of questions. In twenty-four lines there are nine questions. Since more than one line is often required to ask a question, such numbers are even more surprising. To state these figures another way, there are only five lines out of twenty-four which are not involved in direct questions (10 and 17–20).[15] It is even more perplexing to find that only one of these nonquestioning lines is in any way a response to any of the questions.[16]

Catullus asks at the beginning of the poem who but a man who is "impudicus et vorax et aleo" could endure a creature like Mamurra. The proper answer is that no one could unless he wished to claim those three adjectives for himself. In line 9 Catullus asks his Romulus if he can endure this; the answer seems to be "yes," for Catullus immediately states that Romulus is "impudicus et vorax et aleo." It is clear that line 10, the only direct statement in the first part of the poem, is really not an answer to one of the previous questions. The proper answers to the questions are implied and must be given by the reader. Line 10 is a conclusion drawn by Catullus on the basis of the unprinted responses to the preceding questions.[17]

The second part of the poem contains a similar series of questions with no recorded answers. After the final question: "Is it for this reason that you have destroyed everything?" there is no conclusion drawn by the poet. The lack of conclusion for this poem has been so bothersome that several critics have attempted to cover this embarrassment by shifting lines 21–24 to a position following line 10; yet these critics do not seem to notice that the brusque ending of this poem is perfectly consonant with the form of the preceding lines.[18] Just as Catullus has let the reader supply the answers for himself throughout the poem, so now he leaves the concluding

13. Cf. Cic. *Att.* 7. 7. 6 where he draws a similar connection between the triumvirs and their agent.

14. E. S. deAngeli, "The Unity of Catullus 29," *CJ*, LXV (1970), 81–84, suggests that *impudicus*, *vorax*, and *aleo* define the central theme of the poem. Mamurra's activities involve Caesar in guilt by association. However, she identifies the addressee as Caesar on the basis of no new evidence and extends the meaning of the three epithets too widely in order to apply them to Caesar. While many of her comments on poetic language are good, her total construction of the poem does not solve the problems involved in making Caesar the addressee in the opening section of the poem.

15. The unique form of this poem was noted by Schnelle (above, n. 4). She stated that this form provided "allerhöchste *Lebendigkeit*, subjektiver Affekt, und Momentaneität"; but she did not carry her analysis further.

16. The only comparable poems are 40 and 52. In Poem 40 there is a series of questions; the poet does, however, draw his conclusion in the final two lines. Poem 52 is too short to be an adequate parallel; the poem does end with a question which is to be answered by Catullus. Poem 29 is the only example in the Catullan corpus which contains almost exclusively a series of questions with no answers.

17. Baehrens (on line 5) states that line 10 is a response to the preceding question. He sees so strong a need for balanced form that he approves the inclusion of line 10 as line 5*b*, which was done in the Aldine edition. Yet when it is clear that line 10 is not a response but rather a reaction, then there is no need to provide relief to the series of unanswered questions. In fact, the pause after line 9 would be very similar to the pause after line 5; neither question receives an answer.

18. This transposition was originally made by Mommsen; Baehrens argues forcefully for the transposition. He thinks that the poet should not introduce a plural adjective or plural

statement unwritten. This poem thus requires that the reader enter into a dialogue with the poet in order that the progression from line to line be understood. It should be pointed out that lines 17–20 provide information on the basis of which a firm negative answer to the question posed in line 16 can be supplied.

The regularity of the meter reinforces the rhetorical structure of this poem. The meter is pure iambic trimeter, line after line with no variation.[19] In addition, few lines contain significant internal pauses. Therefore each line is recited to a simple, unvarying, and easily understood meter. The rhythm soon becomes clear to the listener. More important is the lack of enjambment in this poem. Seventeen out of twenty-four contain complete sense units in themselves; there are only 7 lines which force a reader to continue into the following line to complete the meaning. This combination of unvaried meter and insistence on the autonomous phrasing of each line produces a series of statements, each conforming to an easily recognizable pattern of meter but each requiring a pause at the end. The metrical scheme of the poem in providing constant pauses for answers emphasizes the rhetorical structure implicit in a series of questions.

3. The Problem of the Addressee

Finally there is the much-discussed problem of the addressee. The candidates are the Romulus addressed in 5 and 9; Caesar (unmistakably the *imperator unice* of line 11); or Pompey combined with Caesar in the *vestra* of 13 and the *fovetis* of 21 but not formally introduced until the final line as the *gener*. The problem arises in attempting to make any one man the addressee throughout the poem. This is a problem that is a product of modern thinking. Poem 1 is addressed to both Cornelius and Catullus' *patrona virgo* (cf. lines 3 and 8 ff.); Poem 4 is addressed to the guests, Amastris and Cytorus, and the Dioscuri (cf. lines 1, 13 f., and 26 f.); Poem 14 begins with an address to Calvus but ends with a curse to the anthology (cf. lines 2 and 21 ff.). There are further examples where Catullus clearly changes the addressee within one poem.

This observation releases a critic from the need to find one consistent addressee in Poem 29. I suggest that Catullus is addressing the Roman people under the title of Romulus in the first part of the poem. This general identification is familiar from several other references in his verse. At the end of 28 Catullus refers to two Roman governors as *opprobria Romuli Remique*; Cicero is entitled *disertissime Romuli nepotum* (49. 1); in his prayer to Diana Catullus prays for continued blessings on the *gens Romuli* (34. 21 ff.). In each of these cases Romulus is cited as the distinguished ancestor of the Roman race. The tone used by Catullus in invoking his name is clear from Poem 28; there he and Remus represent the honor and integrity

verb without some early mention of Pompey and also that the poem should end with a reference to Mamurra rather than the address to the two triumvirs. In his view the poem is an attack on Mamurra personally rather than a broader criticism of the state of the government and society; he would place Poem 29 with the other poems against Mamurra, including those about Ameana (41, 43, 57, 94, 105, 114, 115). According to this interpretation Catullus is not attacking Caesar and was not unfriendly to Caesar. Catullus only went after Caesar's agents whom he found personally disagreeable. This paper will make it clear that I do not accept this interpretation and, consequently, reject the transposition of lines 21–24. I believe that there is a social concern expressed in the works of Catullus (see the end of this paper) and that this poem is directed broadly at Roman society. I am not, therefore, bothered by the early introduction of the plurals and find the explicit address to Caesar and Pompey at the end of the poem a fine summary of the poet's intent. Cf. the arguments for maintaining the traditional order in Ellis' "Excursus on 29. 20 and 23."

19. The only variations are in line 3 where a long *ā* in Mamurra would make the first foot a spondee (cf. Horace *Sat.* I. 5. 37 and Martial 9. 59. 1 and 10. 4. 11). Most editors are willing to pardon Catullus for this exception because it occurs in a proper name; cf. Baehrens, Kroll, and the strong statements of Ellis. Lines 20 and 23 contain divergent feet, but there is little certainty that editors have recaptured the original text in these two vexed lines.

which were active forces in the founding of the Republic and which are the birthright of every Roman.[20] Men like Piso and Memmius have betrayed that heritage. In the first part of Poem 29 Catullus speaks to the contemporary Roman who should be aware of his ancestor's fine qualities in measuring his own behavior as a citizen.[21] At line 11 he turns to another addressee, Caesar, and asks him about his intentions. As he continues to ask questions he involves yet another addressee, Pompey. In this way the poem becomes a series of questions by an outraged Catullus to anyone in sight who wishes to answer them.

Catullus first asks who can endure Mamurra's depredations. The perfectly repeated meter comes to the end of line 4 and there is a pause because of the punctuation, but there is no answer. The first three lines have established the meter so that the reader is prepared to make a major halt at the end of line 4. At line 5 Catullus makes his question more pointed: can you, the reader, the man of Rome, the descendant of great Romulus, endure this man? Again there is no answer unless the individual reader chooses to provide one. A third question ending at line 8: will this man continue his excesses? Again, no answer. Catullus repeats his earlier question from line 5 and then gives up on his reader in line 10. I suspect that there have been no answers to any of the questions because the proper answer would have been: "No, I can't endure this type of scandalous activity going on and I want to do something about it!" This statement would be followed by breaking off one's reading or listening to the poem and initiating some sort of reform activity. But the reader who sticks with Catullus shows by his lack of activity that he is ready to endure either Mamurra or the charge of Catullus. By his silent acquiescence he is self-condemned at line 10.

Then Catullus, having despaired of the Roman reader who had docilely followed him up to this point, turns to the officials of the state, Caesar and Pompey. He asks if it was for this reason that Caesar extended Roman rule to the furthest reaches of the world? Was it so that men like Mamurra could indulge their every desire? He confronts Caesar with a Caesarian concept, *liberalitas*.[22] Surely the tolerance of Mamurra's behavior is a perverted *liberalitas* or a hypocritical *liberalitas* or a misguided *liberalitas*. Catullus lists the offenses of Mamurra and asks how the officials of the Roman state can endure such a man. In the last two lines of the poem Catullus inquires whether it was for this type of man that Caesar and Pompey have destroyed everything. Once again there are pauses at the ends

20. Similar betrayal of a lofty ideal by contemporary Romans is intended in poem 58 where Lesbia *glubit magnanimi Remi nepotes*.

21. An objection to this interpretation is given by Lenchantin de Gubernatis: "Contro l'interpretazione che fa dell' espressione R. (omule) c. (inaede) un singolare collettivo 'o Romani degeneri,' sta il fatto che *Romule* non può quale agg. (cfr. Verg. Aen. 6,877 *Romula tellus*) che essere attributo di *cinaede*, sicchè l'espressione potrebbe significare solo 'o cinedo romano, o cinedi romani,' quasi apostrofe a cotesta genia." *Romule* in Poem 29 is not an address to the real Romulus (Lenchantin de Gubernatis acknowledges this); it must, therefore, be addressed to somebody who can be called a "Romulus." I would contend that this addressee could be the average Roman ("Oh, man of Rome") as well as Julius Caesar. Cf. the parallel usage at Persius l. 87. Friedrich in his comment on verse 1 identifies Romulus as the Roman reader, and he associates this reader in the behavior of Mamurra. He does not, however, combine this section of the poem with the second part in any kind of unified poetic statement. This identification has also been suggested by P. R. Young in "Catullus 29," *CJ*, LXIV, (1969), 327–28, but she concluded that the poem should, therefore, be split into 29*a* and 29*b*. Baehrens (on line 5) cites the parallel in Persius only to show the difference between Catullus who addresses Caesar under the title of Romulus, and Persius who speaks to the Roman people. Later in the same note Baehrens states that the question in line 1 is addressed to everyone and only later does Catullus turn his questions to Caesar. I would agree with his basic understanding of the poem, but I think that the shift to Caesar does not occur until line 11. In this case the parellel to Persius is extremely pertinent.

22. Various ancient sources comment on the generosity of Caesar: Cic. *Phil.* 2. 20. 50 and 2. 45. 116; *Off.* 1. 14. 43; Sall. *Cat.* 54; Suet. *Iul.* 26 and 54. Several sources use the word *liberalitas*: Suet. *Iul.* 38 and Cic. *Fam.* 7. 17. 2 (and 3). These passages offer sufficient evidence for Ellis to pronounce *liberalitas* "a word of Caesar's."

of several lines for answers to the questions; but there are no answers. Once again the reader is left with the responsibility for supplying the answers. And yet if anyone stops to think of Caesar's answers to these questions, it is clear that they would also be self-condemnatory. If Caesar tried to explain his broader and perhaps visionary goals for invading Britain, he would still be confronted with the behavior of his agent. A ringing defense of *liberalitas* would not deal with the antics of Mamurra. Catullus lists a series of factual charges which make any answer to line 16 hopeless. To explain why they embrace and favor this man would require Caesar and Pompey to admit that Mamurra was an embarrassment. To list his qualifications as an engineer would satisfy no one who had listened to the charges earlier in the poem. Most probably Caesar would have no answer for such questions or would deign to give none. The only answer is reform. The second section of the poem is, therefore, much like the first where there was a series of questions which really could not be answered except by action. The poem condemns the person who keeps calmly reading and ignores the issues raised.

In such a reading of this poem the addressees are numerous, the Roman people and their leaders. The subject of this poem is the quality of government which Rome brought to her provinces. In fact, the provincial system existed not for the good of the governed but largely for the personal benefit of the governors and officials of the Roman state. In this poem Mamurra as the exemplar of extreme self-indulgence is the symbol of the unconcerned attitude of the Roman leaders. This lack of concern Catullus himself had been able to see firsthand when he followed along with his own governor to the province of Bithynia.

At the heart of Poem 29 is Catullus' concern for honesty and candor in human relationships. While there may be no fixed moral ethic implicit within the poems of Catullus, there is a sense of the limit or the proportion which must govern the behavior of those who claim to be truly cultured or civilized. Laughter is not a bad thing used in the proper place and to the proper measure, but when a person like an Egnatius laughs, he surpasses the limit of civilized taste. For men to call a woman beautiful or for a woman to think that she is beautiful seems only natural, but when a woman like Ameana puts an extreme value on her beauty and men say that she is as beautiful as Lesbia, then the limit of credibility has been passed. The problem is self-delusion.

Poem 29 is dealing with this attitude on a larger scale. Caesar and Pompey probably believe that the affairs of the Roman state are being administered fairly well. Caesar was having success in Gaul and Britain, the triumvirate was holding the Roman governmental system together (even though their methods might be a bit rugged as in the cases of Cicero and Cato), and the people of Rome probably thought that the proconsular governors were administering the provinces as well as could be expected. And yet the plight of the provincials under governors like Verres and at the mercy of Roman armies like that of Lucullus showed that the system was not equitable; Roman tax collectors and business men often further aggravated a bad situation.[23] Any idea that the provincial system was functioning well did not correspond to the facts, and, therefore, Catullus resorted to this series of difficult questions in order to

23. To be sure the provincial system was not consistently as bad as its worst representatives; see the balanced judgment of G. H. Stevenson in his chapter "The Provinces and Their Government," *CAH*, IX, 472–74. Yet the record of provincial government during these years of the Republic is not a glorious one. The system was no better than the character of the individual governor.

expose the situation in its true perspective. He hoped to let the Roman people and their leaders stand condemned by their lack of answers.

Therefore, in the first part of the poem he interrogates the people of Rome with a series of questions: in essence, can you really endure a representative of Rome who takes excesses of money out of the provinces and compels the provincials to submit to his excessive lusts? Only a person of inferior character and distorted values could tolerate such an outrage—and where do you stand, gentlemen of Rome? Then Catullus turns to the leaders of the Roman state—Caesar first, but Pompey two lines later—and asks: is this the reason that you have led Roman armies far away from Italy? Is this the reason that you have imposed Roman rule on provincials? Was it only in order that Mamurra and his like could get rich? If this is truly the reason for your conquests, then let us have it out in the open and not live with any hypocritical talk about extending Roman culture or aiding distressed allies.

The final question in the poem enlarges the area of criticism: Is this the reason that you have destroyed everything (*perdidistis omnia*)? This last phrase seems to have been a slogan of the Optimates at this time and must have been intended by Catullus to refer to the whole constitutional imbalance of Rome.[24] Great changes had been wrought in the Roman state by the triumvirate. A whole new system had supplanted the Republican constitution even though the dead forms of the old government lingered on. This was the ultimate delusion; Republicanism was alive in name only while the state was actually run by autocrats and their henchmen. It was only two years until the mobs that ran the Roman state were forced out into the open; the chaotic events of the year 52 B.C. showed how hypocritical the whole idea of convening meetings of the senate and convoking assemblies really was.

It may be objected that Catullus is usually regarded as a personal poet and did not have much concern for the society around him. There are a few phrases in his poems which can be cited to demonstrate a broader interest: at the end of Poem 22 there is a generalizing statement about men who cannot see their own faults; at the end of Poem 28 Catullus censures propraetorial governors as the *opprobria Romuli Remique*; Poem 34 is the Hymn to Diana which is really a hymn for the whole of the Roman people; and at the end of 64 Catullus comments on the fallen state of his society compared with the days when gods deigned to walk among mortals. These are the explicit bits of evidence for a social concern in Catullus' verse. More important, however, is the general code of civilized men which runs throughout his poetry.[25] For the most part this code is applied to individual people like Egnatius, Ameana, Volusius, Suffenus, and others. But the consistent occurrence of a standard of tasteful behavior throughout Catullus' verse implies that he would apply this

24. Munro (above, n. 10), pp. 102 ff. Cf. L. R. Taylor, *Party Politics in the Age of Caesar* (Berkeley, 1961), p. 146: "In the closing line Caesar and Pompey are lumped together as dynasts who had destroyed the state."

25. There have been many formulations of this social code. Perhaps none is as well expressed as Havelock's in *The Lyric Genius of Catullus* (Oxford, 1939), pp. 100 f.: "He [Catullus] gives no formula for this urban consciousness; to formulate it might destroy it, since its essence is a kind of tacit agreement between a certain number of people to speak and behave in a certain manner. It implies first an attitude and style of behavior, and second a style of expression, a manner of speech. As to the first, it makes the supreme virtues those which in conventional morality are reduced to matters of taste or accident of character. Personal nicety, suitable to the lover and mistress; personal loyalty, which preserves the intimacies of friendship unspoiled and does not betray them; a sensitive imagination capable of dealing with the subtleties alike of personal relationships and literary taste. Such are some of the unconscious standards of the Catullan ideal, to be illustrated from his own verse." Cf. also J. P. Elder, "Notes on Some Conscious and Subconscious Elements in Catullus' Poetry," *HSCP*, LX (1951), 101–36, esp. 129, and F. O. Copley, "Emotional Conflict and Its Significance in the Lesbia-Poems of Catullus," *AJP*, LXX (1949), 22–40.

measure to all men. Part of this code is a perceptive understanding of one's actions. Most of the people mentioned in the pages of Catullus' verse lack this knowledge and are carried away into a hypocritical posturing. When Catullus sees the same sort of hypocrisy in society, he is concerned and tries by his cold, frank, and often cruel satiric pictures to encourage change.

And therefore Catullus wrote an angry poem to the Roman world at large—high and low. He drew an unforgettable portrait of the sex-crazed, money-mad Mamurra tolerated and supported by the people of Rome. Then he asked a series of hard questions concerning personal attitudes and goals and state attitudes and goals. But there were no answers—only pauses; either his reader would have provided answers in the form of political awareness and action or else these questions would have remained unanswered in the dusty book of some passing poet. Catullus wrote an angry and artful poem. Critics have long commented on his anger; it is time that they gave equal recognition to his art.

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