

Introduction

If Catullus had been born fifty years earlier, in the midst of the Gracchan revolution, or fifty years later, on the eve of the battle of Actium, he would have had a very different life from the one which he did have – and he would have been a very different poet. But this presupposes that we know when Catullus was in fact born; do we? According to St Jerome (*Chron.* 1930), he was born in Verona in 87 BC ('Gaius Valerius Catullus scriptor lyricus Veronae nascitur'). The reference to Verona tallies with what can be inferred from the poems. In one poem he begs a fellow poet to visit him in Verona (35.3), in another he appears to write from Verona but explains that his primary residence is in Rome (68A.27–8, 34–5).¹ Elsewhere (31.9, 12) he refers to home as Sirmio, a peninsula which juts out from the southern shore of Lake Garda less than thirty miles west from Verona and of which he describes himself as 'master'; visible there today are the remains of an impressive Roman villa. At some point, like many ambitious young men from the north, he moved to Rome.² Whether further references to Verona (67.32–4, 100.2), or his amusing account of a provincial ritual (17), were written after his move to Rome is unknown. Several of the persons whom he mentions, such as his dedicatee Cornelius Nepos (1), were Transpadane – that is, from across the River Po in Gallia Cisalpina.³

Jerome's date for the poet's birth is more problematic and is to be seen in the light of the saint's further information (*Chron.* 1959) that Catullus died at Rome in his thirtieth year in 58/57 BC ('Catullus xxx aetatis anno Romae moritur'). This latter date cannot be right, since in Poem 113 Catullus refers to Pompey's second consulship (113.2) and in Poem 11 to the invasion of Britain by Julius Caesar (11.10–12; cf. 29.4, 20; 45.22): as Pompey's consulship fell in 55, Catullus must still have been alive then; and, since Caesar

¹ Poem 44 implies that, like Horace, he also had a country villa to the east of Rome.

² One of these young men was Virgil: see esp. Jenkyns (1998) 73–127.

³ For the background to Catullus see esp. Wiseman (1985) and, for his family and Sirmio, Wiseman (1987) 307–70 and (2007) 57–71.

invaded Britain twice, in 55 and 54, Catullus may still have been alive in 54. Many scholars – probably the majority – believe that 54 is the latest date which Catullus mentions, and, putting this together with Jerome’s (admittedly suspicious) round figure for Catullus’ life-span, conclude that Catullus was perhaps born in 84 BC. Since that was the year of the fourth and last of L. Cornelius Cinna’s consecutive consulships, it is possible that Jerome confused the year with 87, the year of Cinna’s first.

Apart from a relative dating for the death of Catullus’ brother, all datable references in the Catullan corpus lie between 56 and 54 BC and all are to be found in the short poems and epigrams (1–60 and 69–116). If the death of his brother in the Troad and Catullus’ visit to his grave (101) are, as most believe, connected with the poet’s time in Bithynia (57–56 BC), then the long elegies (65–68B) probably derive from that period. A date of 54 BC for Catullus’ death is compatible with one of the interpretations of the joking statement in Poem 52 that ‘Vatinius is swearing falsely by his consulship’ (52.3 ‘per consulatum peierat Vatinius’), namely that Vatinius was swearing by the consulship which in 63 he famously boasted that he would hold (cf. Cic. *Vat.* 6, 11). Others, however, take Poem 52 at face value as a reference to Vatinius’ actual consulship, which he did not hold until 47 BC, and then only for a short time at the end of the year;⁴ scholars of this persuasion simply accept that the Catullan corpus displays no other datable event between 54 and 47,⁵ although this would be a convenient period in which to slot the non-elegiac long poems (61–64). It is possible to infer from Ovid’s *Amores* (3.9.61–2), where it is implied that Catullus and Licinius Calvus died as *iuuenes* (technically under 45), that Catullus may have died at roughly the same time as Calvus, who is known to have been dead by 46 BC (Cic. *Brut.* 279 *adulescens*). It may be that Jerome’s error lies not in the year of Catullus’ birth (87 BC) but in his age and that the poet died not in his thirtieth year (‘xxx aetatis anno’) but in his fortieth (‘xxxx’), i.e. 48/47 BC.⁶ But we simply do not know.⁷

Catullus’ poetry is replete with the names of friends, acquaintances and enemies.⁸ Few can be identified with anything approaching certainty; and

⁴ See Broughton (1968) 2.286.

⁵ There is a useful survey of the evidence by Barrett (1972), who himself favours 47.

⁶ So Skinner (2011) 127; Jerome may have misread his source or used a text in which the numeral had already been corrupted. For the corruption of numerals, see e.g. Oakley (2005) 330–2.

⁷ For the suggestions that Catullus married and had children and followed up the surviving poems by writing others, including mimes, which have not survived, see Wiseman (2007) 59–65 and (1985) 189–98 respectively.

⁸ The persons mentioned by Catullus are listed and discussed by Neudling (1955), now inevitably out of date in some respects.

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even when they are most securely identified, as with Manlius Torquatus (61), we do not have enough evidence of the right kind to shed much light on the poems. When Varus, who has been variously identified as the Epicurean and critic Quintilius Varus or as Alfenus Varus the lawyer and future suffect consul (39 BC), took Catullus to see his girlfriend, the girl engaged the poet in a conversation from which it is clear that Catullus and another friend, the poet Helvius Cinna, had served on the staff of the governor of Bithynia, in Asia Minor (10.7, 30).⁹ We know from another poem (28.9) that the governor in question was Lucretius' addressee, C. Memmius, who governed Bithynia in 57/56 BC. Other poems give the impression that Catullus was pleased to leave Asia Minor and return home (46, 31), although we know that his brother, also in Asia Minor but for an unknown reason, died there (65.5–14, 68B.91–100; cf. 101). The person mentioned most memorably in the poems is of course the woman whom he calls by the pseudonym Lesbia (cf. *Ov. Tr.* 2.427–8), named in thirteen poems and evidently alluded to in a similar number.¹⁰ Apuleius says that her real name was Clodia (*Apol.* 10), and she is conventionally identified with the notorious wife of Q. Caecilius Metellus, who was consul in 60, and the sister of P. Clodius Pulcher, who was tribune in 58;¹¹ some scholars, however, have suggested that she is Clodia's homonymous sister, wife of L. Licinius Lucullus, who was consul in 74, while the most recent notion is that she is a daughter of Ap. Claudius Pulcher (the consul of 54) and the wife of Cn. Pompeius Magnus (elder son of Pompey the Great).¹² Since Catullus very frequently refers to his beloved as his *puella*, a word which implies youth rather than middle age, this last suggestion has its attraction; but, whoever she was, her name has been inextricably associated with that of Catullus almost from the start (cf. *Prop.* 2.34.87–8).

Catullus' poetry is so exceptionally varied, and raises so many problems, that it is impossible to deal with every aspect in a single volume. Contributors to the present *Companion* have done their best to provide

⁹ Helvius Cinna (tribunus plebis 44 BC) was murdered following the assassination of Julius Caesar by an angry mob who confused him with the alleged conspirator Cornelius Cinna (praetor 44 BC): the paucity of Roman names in use were a problem not just for modern scholars, as Helvius Cinna discovered to his cost!

¹⁰ For discussion of Lesbia's identity see Wiseman (1969) 50–60. ¹¹ See Skinner (2011).

¹² That Lesbia/Clodia was one of the daughters of the consul of 54 was the suggestion of J. D. Morgan; that she was the daughter married to Cn. Pompeius as opposed to M. Junius Brutus was the suggestion of J. T. Ramsey. The identification is supported by the fact that Catullus refers to Lesbia's husband as 'illi fatuo' (83.2), a term notoriously associated with Cn. Pompeius (cf. *Cic. Fam.* 15.19.4 'scis Gnaeum quam sit fatuus'). See Hutchinson (2012) 56 n. 16. For a different view of Poem 83, see Du Quesnay (below) p. 206.

a wide variety of perspectives from which his poems can be profitably explored. Catullus was writing, as we have seen, in the period following the Social Wars 91–88 BC. The integration into Italy of the various areas south of the Po, with Rome as the dominant city (often simply *Vrbs*), was still not complete. The existing Roman elite resisted the increased competition from those they considered to be rustic, ill-educated and uncouth, whether they came from Arpinum or were *domi nobiles*, like the Valerii Catulli, who had held magistracies in the municipalities of Gallia Cisalpina, which remained a province until 42 BC; throughout the 50s its proconsul, appointed by the Roman Senate, was Julius Caesar. And throughout these decades Rome continued to expand, taking in new provinces, including Macedonia, where Veranius and Fabullus went as *comites* to the proconsul Calpurnius Piso, and Bithynia and Pontus, where Catullus was among the *comites* of the governor C. Memmius. His journey afforded the opportunity to visit not only the Troad, both the site of his brother's grave and the setting for Homer's *Iliad* and the myths associated with it, but also the famous cities of Asia (now a Roman province). Damon explores how Catullus, from his newly adopted home (68A.34–5), enthusiastically embraces its sophisticated perspective on these shifting relationships with the peoples and places of both Italy and the expanding provinces that increasingly defined the areas around the Mediterranean in which Roman power held sway. Rome's expansion eastwards not only offered opportunities for travel to lands familiar from literature and legend but also resulted in an influx of Greek scholars, poets and philosophers to Italy. Some came of their own accord, like the Epicurean philosopher Philodemus of Gadara, a friend of both Calpurnius Piso (28; 47) and Manlius Torquatus (61), or as captives, like Parthenius of Nicaea in Bithynia. The latter had a formative effect both on the Neoterics and then on the early Augustans. The loss of so much of almost all the work of poets contemporary with and earlier than Catullus makes it difficult to appreciate fully his achievement. Woodman examines a number of passages in which there is clear connection between Catullus and his contemporaries, not just the Neoterics but also orators (Sestius, 44) and Lucretius (the only contemporary poet to survive more or less complete). For the most part, the reader has to deal with Catullus' text on its own terms, bearing in mind the wider context. Gibson provides an overview of the themes that run through his entire corpus, emphasising the varied nature of the material, and the versatile treatments of related themes that are to be found not only between shorter and longer poems but also within individual poems. Myers uses the frameworks of Feminist and Gender

studies to explore some aspects of the interpersonal and sociopolitical relationships represented in Catullus' poems and the importance of gender in his treatment of social relationships, similes, his representation of marriage and the nature of the invective used against men and women. Du Quesnay re-examines the long-standing question of the nature of the *liber Catulli* as transmitted, and concludes that it is a compilation of a varied selection of smaller *libelli* with 1–60 comprising perhaps four original books arranged by Catullus, while 69–116 comprise two such books and 65–66 another, with each of 61–64 and 67–68B originally circulating as individual poems. Chahoud exploits recent advances in Latin linguistics and the renewed interest in the fragments of older Latin (including Lucilius) to illustrate the range of Catullan linguistic registers, from the obscenities at home on the walls of Pompeii to the elevated and exotic styles derived from learned Greek poetry. Butterfield demonstrates the importance of Catullus' metrical achievements as an integral and important part of his claim to be a *doctus poeta*, advancing his right to be recognised as a 'metrical revolutionary'. Thomas examines the various ways in which Catullus appropriates, incorporates and transforms his inheritance from Greek literature, ranging from close imitation or translation to the subtle allusivity of Poem 64.

The variety of Catullus' work is reflected in its reception. Gale explores not only the deep impact he had on Augustan elegy but the more complex relationship with Horace in both his lyrics (*Odes*) and in his *Epodes* and the more nuanced and extensive importance of Catullus for Virgil throughout his career, from the *Eclogues* to the *Aeneid*. In the Flavian period, Catullus took on a further significance as a source of renewal (alongside other late Republican writers) in an age which sought to differentiate itself from the Julio-Claudian period. Newlands examines the various ways in which the elder and younger Pliny appropriated Catullus (a fellow Transpadane) to develop their own images; Martial promoted phalaecian (hendecasyllabic) and elegiac epigram into a Latin genre destined for an influential future; and Statius, who in his epic *Thebaid* exploited Catullus as Virgil had done before him in his emulation of his Augustan predecessor, not only transformed Catullus' *epithalamia* (61 and 62) but also some of the epigrammatic themes (e.g. Poems 2 and 3) into the influential genre of more elevated occasional poetry (usually in hexameters).

The next phase in Catullus' story is the rediscovery of his poems in a codex which resurfaced in Verona around the start of the fourteenth century. Oakley provides a fresh examination and overview of the manuscripts and concludes, in support of Hale, that there is no reason to

suppose, on present evidence, that any of the other existing manuscripts derives from other than T, O, G and R (and their various correctors). His account, which is based on a fresh examination of the *recentiores*, includes an updated list of all the manuscripts, a fresh stemma of the older manuscripts, and much information about the early circulation of the ‘new’ Catullus in the fifteenth century, as well as a much needed introduction to reading the apparatus criticus, essential for serious students of Catullus. Attempts to produce a readable text of Catullus and to build a scholarly framework within which it might be better understood are traced by Kiss from the earliest printed editions through the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In spite of the many difficulties presented by the text, still far from fully resolved, Catullus had an immediate and a lasting impact on subsequent literature. Wong explores the themes felt to be particularly Catullan (including the ‘kissing poems’, the distinction between the poet’s morality and that of his poetic persona, and the wedding hymns) by the Neo-Latin poets of the Renaissance and the early efforts to create a distinctive and recognisably Catullan style in French and English vernacular poetry. Harrison traces the richness of Catullus’ reception from the eighteenth century to the twenty-first in English translations and in allusive imitations. For all the difficulties that persist in establishing and understanding the text of his poems, Catullus’ ability to speak in a convincing first-person voice and express immediately recognisable emotions about things that are perennial gives him wide and enduring appeal even to those coming to Latin literature for the first time.

Further Reading

In addition to the various printed editions of Catullus, of which Mynors’ OCT is regarded as standard, there is the remarkable online Catullus by Dániel Kiss, complete with a very full apparatus criticus and explanatory bibliography (www.catullusonline.org). There is an online Oxford Bibliography by D. Konstan (www.oxfordbibliographies.com), and a full bibliography by Skinner (2015).

CHAPTER I

*Situating Catullus**Cynthia Damon***I Situating Catullus?**

The desire to situate Catullus and his poems at the tumultuous midpoint of first-century BC Rome is both hard to resist and hard to satisfy. The basic problem can be glimpsed through a confrontation of two scholarly positions represented in a collection of influential papers on Catullus:

There can be no denying that in the Catullan corpus . . . social issues are so intimately united with the poet's aesthetic programme that they constitute an unavoidable dimension of interpretation. (Tatum (2007) 398)

Any reading that attempts to recuperate the poet's life and times on the basis of his work will have to do so ultimately at the cost of philological precision, and any critical examination of the poet's words is bound to expose such readings as naive, incompetent, or blind. (Selden (2007) 511)

The poet, it seems, both situates himself insistently in contemporary milieux and withholds the details that would allow readers confidently to place those milieux on our 'map' of late-Republican Rome. Denis Feeney puts it well: 'The poems . . . tease us with the possibility of making the data fit.'¹

Catullus' poems introduce us to a society of vividly realised friends, lovers and enemies. He tantalises the reader, particularly the historicising reader, with their names – 'some forty contemporaries are named in his poems' – only to involve her in 'insurmountable prosopographical problems'.² Is the Cato addressed in Poem 56 the literary figure P. Valerius Cato, or the political figure M. Porcius Cato or another Cato altogether?³ Is the Rufus of Poems 69 and 77 the same person as the Caelius of Poems 58 and 100, and is either of them to be identified

¹ Feeney (2012) 44.

² Quotations from Du Quesnay and Woodman (2012) 262 and Bellandi (2012) 48 'incertezze insormontabili di prosopografia'.

³ See recently Cowan (2015).

with Cicero's friend and correspondent M. Caelius Rufus?⁴ Periphrases such as 'fag Romulus' (*cinaede Romule*: 29.5, 9) multiply the uncertainties – is the addressee Caesar? or Pompey? – as do pseudonyms (Lesbia, Lesbius, Mentula, Socraton, etc.). Of the 40-odd named contemporaries only about a third are securely identified.⁵ And even where Catullus provides enough context to permit the identification of individuals who are independently known to us, the relationship evoked in his poems often remains hard to define.⁶ Readers from Catullus' own world might have found the prosopographical fog less impenetrable, but they would also have been aware of the generic obstacles to historicising the addressee of an apparently 'personal' poem, particularly a poem involving invective, and to trusting the speaker.⁷ Furthermore, Catullus' readership is no more bounded by space and time than the poems of his *libellus* (however defined) are confined to the physical object in which they were presented to their dedicatee in Poem 1.⁸ In short, the social world in which Catullus shows himself enmeshed is constructed by the poet, and the degree to which it is useful to align that construct with historical reality is a matter of critical debate.⁹

Critics are likewise divided on the question of Catullus' political engagement. The number of poems in which politically prominent figures such as Caesar and Cicero are named, or politically significant themes such as the profits of empire are overt, is small – Bellandi counts a dozen¹⁰ – and the function of the political discourse is hard to pin down, with interpretations ranging from active (attack or critique) to passive (commentary or complaint) to detachment and even indifference.¹¹ Hindsight may delude us into seeing Catullus as a Sallust *avant la lettre*, identifying corruption as the

⁴ Names involving prosopographical uncertainty include, e.g., Veranius (Poems 9, 12, 28, 47), Varus (10, 22), Furius (11, 16, 23, 26), Suffenus (14, 22), Juventius (24, 48, 81, 99), Piso (28, 47), Cornificius (38), Hortalus (66), Gellius (74, 80, 88–91, 116), Arrius (84). For preliminary orientation see Neudling (1955) and Thomson (1997) ad locc.

⁵ E.g., Caesar (Poems 11, 29, 57, 93), Cicero (49), Cinna (10, 95, 113), Junia and Manlius (61), Licinius Calvus (14, 50, 53), Mamurra (29, 57), Memmius (28), Pollio (12), Pompey (29, 113), Sestius (44), Vatinius (14, 52, 53).

⁶ On Cicero in Poem 49 see Selden (2007); on Memmius in Poem 10 see the contrasting positions of Braund (1996) and Cairns (2003/2012a).

⁷ On possible fictional addressees in the collection see recently Holzberg (2002a) 26–7, Hawkins (2011), Ingleheart (2014), Kronenberg (2014), Shapiro (2014); on the generic expectations of poetic invective more generally see Rosen (2007), esp. ch.1, 'The dynamics of ancient satirical poetry'.

⁸ Cf. Feeney (2012) 38: 'The poems will eventually outstrip the particular social nexus between Catullus and Nepos as much as they outstrip the material text.'

⁹ Skinner (2015) 171, for example, sees sociopolitical contextualization as a growth area in Catullan studies, but Gale (2005) is critical of the 'social criticism' angle in Nappa (2001) and Skinner (2003).

¹⁰ Bellandi (2012) 47. For some key figures see n. 5 above.

¹¹ For a survey see Skinner (2015) 176–82.

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key political problem of the day, or as an early exponent of the protest against Caesar's social engineering. The undeniable pleasure that we derive from Catullus' outspoken disrespect (to put it no more strongly) for Caesar needs to be calibrated against Caesar's own reaction: though stung, he responded with a social gesture, treating it as a *faux pas* not a political attack (Suet. *DJ* 73, quoted below). And here too one has to take genre into account: it is clear that political invective was inherently personal in the ancient world, but that is no guarantee that personal invective was inherently political.¹² As a number of recent discussions have shown, the temptation to see 'the political' in a broader sense as widespread in Catullus' poems is strong; we embrace Catullus as a spokesperson for our own disapproval of late-Republican *mores*.¹³ But no matter how broadly we construe 'the political' in Catullus, it aligns poorly with political realities in an age when 'the direction of the Roman world was decided by men who had the brains to accumulate military power, the stomach to think out its implications, and the nerve to act accordingly'.¹⁴ The military dimension of mid-50s politics is trivialised or ignored in Catullus' poems, and the nature of the poet's engagement with the political context more generally remains elusive.

If we want to understand poems that their author situates in a realistic (if not necessarily real) world, we need to find a framework for interpretation that is general enough to be relevant to a substantial portion of the collection and robust enough to hold up despite some wobbly textual and historical props. Instead of trying to align the sociopolitical world evoked in the poems with its historical correlate, this chapter examines the poet's own alignment of disparate worlds: Verona and Cisalpine Gaul, the Roman empire, the world beyond Rome's control, and the metropolis with its immediate environs.

The expressive possibilities of such geographic entities are particularly clear when Catullus uses one place as a foil to another, as he often does, or assembles them into a catalogue. In Poem 44, for example, with its opening quibble 'whether Sabine or Tiburtine' (44.1 *seu Sabine seu Tiburs*), we see a distinction between the categories 'Sabine' and 'Tiburtine' as applied to a 'country estate' (*fundus*), and more generally a distinction between Italian hinterland ('Sabine') and Rome's suburbs ('Tiburtine'). Relative values are assigned as the poem continues: whereas those who do not want to offend the estate's owner call it 'Tiburtine', his enemies eagerly avail themselves of the nomenclatory weapon 'Sabine' (44.2–5), and he himself defends the more flattering label as the truer of the two (44.5 *uerius Tiburs*). A similar

¹² See, e.g., Tatum (1993, 2007), Heyworth (2001), Cowan (2015).

¹³ See, e.g., Konstan (1977, 2000, 2007) and Skinner (2003). ¹⁴ Krostenko (2007) 229.

contrast between Rome and Italy contributes to the paradoxical likeness of Caesar and his military subordinate Mamurra in Poem 57: they are ‘stained with equivalent stains’ (3), but one stain is from Rome, one from Formiae, a town half-way to Naples (57.4 *urbana altera et illa Formiana*). In Poem 39 the cleanliness of Italians living anywhere from Rome to the Po valley (*urbanus . . . Sabinus . . . Tiburs . . . Vmber . . . Etruscus . . . Lanuvinus . . . Transpadanus*) stands as foil to the filthiness of a man who learned his dental hygiene routine in Spain (39.17 *Celtiberia in terra*).¹⁵ Zones of Roman military and administrative activity such as Spain serve as foil to the wilderness in Poem 45, where the narrator adduces Syria and Britain as more realistic threats than Septimius’ Libyan and Indian lions (45.22 *Syrias Britanniasque*, cf. 45.6–7 *in Libya Indiaque . . . leoni*). Toponyms can even structure the contrast between mythological past and banal present, the former represented in Poem 95 by the ‘waters of Satrachus’ in Zmyrna’s homeland on Cyprus, the latter by Padua in the Po valley, where Volusius’ *Annals* will serve to wrap fish for cooking.¹⁶ In these poems and many others contrast and contestation show Catullus making meaning out of worlds identified geographically. In fact, each of the four geographic worlds mentioned above – Italy, the empire, the world beyond Rome’s reach, and the metropolis with its immediate penumbra – is evoked in more than a dozen poems, while geographic references occur in more than half of the poems in the collection and in every type of poem. The importance of geography for situating Catullus is even inscribed in the miserable scrap of the ancient biography that has come down to us, according to which he was ‘born at Verona’ and ‘died at Rome’.¹⁷

II ‘My people’

Italian origin is a defining feature for a number of the inhabitants of Catullus’ literary world, including the recipient of the gift-*libellus* described in Poem 1, Cornelius Nepos, whose literary endeavours are the more admirable because ventured by him ‘alone of the Italians’ (1.5 *unus Itolorum*).¹⁸ ‘From Bologna’ is the first thing we hear about the sordid Rufa

¹⁵ Journey poems, too, feature catalogues of toponyms: 4, 11, 29, 36, 46, 84, 101. See Armstrong (2013).

¹⁶ See Noonan (1986), esp. 302.

¹⁷ The locations are given (with problematic dates: 87 and 57 BC) in Jerome’s *Chronicle*. See also Dench (2005) 328 on Catullus’ ‘studiedly dislocated persona strung out between towns of Italy, Rome, and the Greek world’. On the emotional and metapoetic aspects of Catullan geography see Armstrong (2013).

¹⁸ Catullus’ assertion that a fellow Transpadane (Plin. *HN* 3.127 *Padi accola*) is ‘Italian’ engages with a contemporary issue: this area was territorially but not politically Italian (Dyson (1985), Wiseman