# I CATULLUS AND HIS CULTURAL MILIEU

## 1. Life and background; the composition of the collection

Little is known with any degree of certainty about Catullus' life and background, though attempts have been made to write the poet's biography in more or less comprehensive detail.[1] Our main source of evidence is the poems themselves, on the basis of which we can locate Catullus' place of birth in Verona (at this date still part of the province of Transpadane or Cisalpine Gaul), and his *floruit* in the mid-50s BC. The references to Verona and neighbouring towns in poems 35, 59, 67, 68, and 100, and to the nearby peninsula of Sirmio on Lake Garda in poem 31, are confirmed by other ancient authors, who regularly refer to 'Catullus of Verona';[2] but it is clear that the poet's literary ambitions soon drew him to Rome, where the majority of the poems are apparently set, and which Catullus himself refers to as his 'home' at 68.34–5. According to St Jerome, in his expanded translation of the *Chronicle* of Eusebius, it was here that the poet died.[3] An anecdote recorded by Suetonius (*Iul.* 73) suggests in addition that Catullus' father was on friendly terms with Julius Caesar, and thus clearly a high-ranking member of the local aristocracy.[4]

Datable references in the poems are few and far between, but consistently point to composition during or around the years 55–54 BC. Poems 11 and 29 refer to Caesar's bridging of the Rhine (55 BC) and subsequent expedition(s) to Britain (55 and 54); Pompey's theatre complex, dedicated in 55 BC, and the triumvir's second consulship, in the same year, are mentioned in poems 55 and 113 respectively; and poem 52 seems to belong to the context of the consular elections of

[1] Most recently by Burl (2010) and Dunn (2016). For more scholarly assessment of what can (and what cannot) legitimately be inferred about the poet's life and background, see Wiseman 1979b; Skinner 2003: xix–xxii; Gaisser 2009: 2–6.

[2] E.g. Plin. *HN* 36.48: *Mamurra Catulli Veroniensis carminibus proscissus*; Macrob. *Sat.* 2.1.8: *Veronensis poeta*. See also Ov. *Am.* 3.15.7: *Mantua Virgilio gaudet, Verona Catullo*; Plin. *NH* praef. 1: *conterraneum meum*; Martial 14.195.1: *tantum magna suo debet Verona Catullo*.

[3] Jerome, *Chronica*, p. 154 Helm$^2$ (58 BC).

[4] On the Valerii Catulli and the Transpadane background, see Wiseman 1985: 107–11, 1987b, 2007, 2023: 87–102. Wiseman conjectures, on the basis of an amphora found in Rome in 1878 and bearing the name C. Valerius Catullus, that the family made its money through commerce.

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55 BC, though here the dating is less secure. References to Syria and Britain at 45.22 and 84.7 also suggest a date of 55/54, when both regions were in the news (the former as the base from which Crassus was to launch his disastrous expedition against the Parthians in 54–53); and Catullus twice (14.3, 53.2–3) alludes to the prosecution of Caesar's ally Vatinius by the poet and orator Licinius Calvus, which probably also took place in 54 BC. Perhaps a year or two earlier are the poems dealing with Catullus' posting as aide-de-camp on the staff of Gaius Memmius in Bithynia (poems 10, 28, 31, and 46), which may be dated to 57–56 BC.[5]

It is curious that all these poems seem to cluster so tightly around a single year, and there is no way to be sure whether others in the collection as we have it are earlier or later.[6] In any case, the internal evidence is in clear contradiction with the testimony of Jerome, who dates Catullus' birth to the year 87, and his death 'in his thirtieth year' to 58. We have seen that the second of these dates cannot be right, since Catullus was still writing in 55 or 54; and scholars usually assume that Jerome has misread his source and that 87 is a mistake for 84 or 82. The notion that the poet lived only to the age of twenty-nine (or thirty) suits the romantic modern image of the doomed young lover and *enfant terrible*, discussed further in Chapter 2; but there seems no good reason to trust Jerome here while rejecting his absolute dates, and the conventional dating of 84–54 BC should be regarded only as a tentative approximation.[7]

It is evident, too, that the order of poems in the collection as we have it does not correspond to the order of composition.[8] This is indeed very

[5] On the Bithynia poems, see further pp. 15–16 below. Poems 4 and 25 both refer to the province (the *phaselus* traces its origins to Mount Cytorus in Pontus [4.11–16] and 'Bithynian ?writing-tablets' – the meaning of the word *catagraphos* is disputed – are among the items stolen by Thallus [25.7]); but in neither case is it a *necessary* inference that the items in question were personally obtained by the poet during his stay in the area.

[6] Skutsch 1969 advances the theory that the polymetrics may be dated in relative terms by means of the poet's handling of the first two syllables (or 'base') of the hendecasyllabic line: hendecasyllabic poems between 2 and 26 almost exclusively employ a spondaic base, in accordance with the more usual Roman practice, whereas in roughly 20% of the hendecasyllabic lines in the second part of the collection, poems 27–60, the base is either iambic or trochaic. Skutsch argued that this pattern is evidence for a development in Catullus' metrical practice, and that poems 27–60, along with the dedication poem, 1 (which contains four iambic or trochaic bases), are, broadly, later than 2–26 (cf. Skinner 1981: 21–3). But this metrical criterion cuts across the chronology suggested by the datable references discussed above; and it is certainly possible to think of other ways of interpreting the configuration discovered by Skutsch (so Hubbard 1983: 234–5; Beck 1996: 235–41).

[7] For a good brief discussion of the evidence, see Wiseman 1985: 189–91.

[8] This is particularly clear in the case of the Lesbia poems, discussed in Chapter 2 below.

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much what we would expect: certainly by the next generation, poets were devoting considerable attention to the artful arrangement of their poetry books, and it is becoming increasingly clear that this was true also of their Hellenistic Greek predecessors.[9] But Catullus presents special problems in this regard: it is not clear whether the ordering of the poems as transmitted in our manuscripts is the work of the poet himself or of a later editor;[10] nor can we be sure that all 113 poems were assembled into a single volume or volumes by the author, or whether, alternatively, what we have is a collected edition, cobbled together from what were originally three (or more) separate books.[11]

Scholarly opinion on both questions has varied widely. At one extreme lie those, such as Helena Dettmer, who find evidence of elaborate structural patterning in our text, and take it as axiomatic that this must be due to the author himself.[12] The opposing position – associated mainly with the biographical criticism of the nineteenth century, considered in the next chapter, but occasionally revisited since – is that the poems were originally organized in chronological or narrative sequence, but that this authorial arrangement was disrupted after the poet's death by an editor who followed a more arbitrary system based primarily on metre.[13] Majority opinion during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has generally lain somewhere between the two poles, and has tended to view the corpus that has come down to us as an amalgamation of three or more smaller

[9] See especially Gutzwiller 1998 on Hellenistic epigram; Kerkhecker 1999: 282–90 and Acosta-Hughes 2002: 3–9 on Callimachus' *Iambi*; and Gutzwiller 2005a on the new Posidippus papyrus.

[10] For the manuscript tradition and the history of the text, see Chapter 6, pp. 126–8, below.

[11] The figure of 113 is necessarily approximate: on the one hand, the traditional numeration includes the three Priapea, 18–20, which do not appear in the manuscripts but were inserted by the Renaissance editor Muret in his edition of 1554, and which are universally excluded in modern editions (see Zarker 1962, who argues for Catullan authorship); on the other, a number of what are on the traditional numeration single poems are now regularly divided into two. In some instances (e.g. 58 and 58b, which clearly do not belong together), this latter issue is clear cut; but many cases (esp. poems 2 and 68) remain controversial. The manuscript tradition, which is erratic and intermittent in indicating poem divisions, gives us little assistance here.

[12] Dettmer 1988, 1997. Cf. (e.g.) Wiseman 1969: 1–31; Quinn 1972: 9–20; E. A. Schmidt 1973; Skinner 1981; Claes 2002; Holzberg 2002: esp. 72–87; Schafer 2020. A slightly different approach, adopted notably by Skinner 2003 and combined by Holzberg with a more traditional 'architectural' schema, is to emphasize the process of sequential reading arguably necessitated by the book-roll format, which – it is claimed – imposes a unidirectional reading of the collection, or of its constituent parts: thus, Holzberg (2002: 67) tropes his reading as a 'voyage of discovery' (*Entdeckungsfahrt*), while Skinner (2003: xxiv–xxvi) sees the 'serial progression of events' from poem to poem as a crucial factor in the construction of meaning. Claes's principle of 'concatenation' – lexical and/or thematic repetition from poem to poem (Claes 2002: esp. 27–56) – is somewhat similar.

[13] For a useful history of the debate, see Skinner 2007a (esp. 36–8 for nineteenth-century theories).

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collections issued by the author himself, perhaps with the addition of some otherwise unpublished material, and/or with some disruption of the original ordering.[14]

The division of the corpus into three blocks (the so-called polymetrics or 'poems in a variety of metres', 1–60; the *carmina maiora* or 'longer poems', 61–8; and the elegiac epigrams, 69–116) does appear to be broadly corroborated by ancient testimonia.[15] Where other authors quote or refer to a specific work of Catullus, they very occasionally identify it by metre ('in his hendecasyllables', 'the famous epigram'),[16] in such a way as to suggest that this was already the organizing principle of the ancient text or texts.[17] Quintilian cites poem 62 under the separate title *Epithalamium*, and this has been taken to support the hypothesis that some or all of the longer poems were issued as self-standing publications.[18] Most scholars agree, too, that the collection as transmitted is too long to have been contained in a single papyrus roll, particularly one designated in the programmatic poem 1 as a *libellus* or 'booklet'.[19] Moreover, the poet's self-deprecating reference in the same poem to his *nugae* or 'trifles' has often been thought inappropriate to a volume containing a work as substantial and elevated in style as poem 64.

[14] See e.g. Wheeler 1934: 21–32; Clausen 1976; Hubbard 1983, 2005; Stroh 1990; Beck 1996; Hutchinson 2008: 109–30, 2012; Du Quesnay 2021; Wiseman 2023: 13–47. Proponents of this view have tended to emphasize in particular the apparent lack of meaningful arrangement in the closing run of polymetrics, 52–60, described by Skinner (1981: 74, 76) as a 'jumble of unrelated and curiously unfinished verses', probably constituting a 'posthumous supplement to the *Passer*', and by Hubbard (1983: 220), more colourfully, as a 'rather embarrassing grab-bag of doggerel and fragments'. Cf. Schafer 2020: 46–62.

[15] References to Catullus by other ancient authors are conveniently collected and classified by Wiseman 1985: 246–62.

[16] *in hendecasyllabis*: Sen. *Controv.* 7.4.7, Charisius, *Grammatici Latini* I.97 Keil; *Catulli nobile epigramma*: Quint. 1.5.20; *in epithalamio*: Quint. 9.3.16. Butrica 2007: 19–21, pointing to similar patterns in references to the work of contemporaries such as Calvus and Cinna, argues that separate publication of works in different metres was the rule among poets of Catullus' generation. Such collections likely went by the titles *Hendecasyllabi*, *Epigrammata*, etc., though Butrica thinks it more probable that these were bestowed on the works by booksellers or editors than by the poets themselves.

[17] A further argument in this direction is provided by the important and influential study of Ross 1969, who points to significant stylistic differences between polymetrics and epigrams. See also E. A. Schmidt 1973: 234–8; Solodow 1989; Fain 2008: 17–64; Hutchinson 2008: 121–30, 2012.

[18] So e.g. Clausen 1976; Butrica 2007: 19–22. Some evidence of a further self-standing (?) publication is offered by Pliny the Elder (*HN* 28.19, Mynors' fr. 4 of Catullus), who attributes to Catullus an 'imitation of erotic spells' along similar lines to Theocritus 2 (the *Pharmaceutria*) and Virgil, *Eclogue* 8. For this and a possible collection of *Priapea* (frs. 1–2 Mynors), see e.g. Butrica 2007: 17–18.

[19] Though this continues to be a matter of debate: see e.g. Tränkle 1967: 100–1; E. A. Schmidt 1979; Van Sickle 1980: 7–12; Minyard 1988; Scherf 1996:12–29; Hubbard 2005: 255–6.

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A different organizing principle often posited by critics is thematic. This way of looking at the collection is, indeed, implicit in the structure of the present volume: poems on similar themes – whether juxtaposed or separated by unrelated poems – can be seen to 'speak to each other', and the poet's oeuvre as a whole is rich in internal echoes and interconnections of other kinds. These phenomena are often described by scholars in terms of cycles within the collection: these are most commonly identified by the recurring characters that crop up in the polymetrics, the epigrams, and in a few cases across the two. The most widely recognized cycle (discussed in detail in Chapter 2) is devoted to the love affair between the poems' speaker and the woman he calls Lesbia; there is also a shorter sequence dealing with the speaker's beloved boy, Juventius, and his rivals, Furius and Aurelius. The latter pair can be contrasted in turn with the poet's friends, Veranius and Fabullus, who appear separately or together in a set of poems interwoven with the Furius–Aurelius series: we might posit a deliberate and artful contrast in tone between these two cycles.[20] Several further poems dealing with the theme of friendship (30, 38, 73, and 77) focus on betrayals of the speaker's trust: these too might be identified as a less tightly structured sequence. We can point in addition to two series of invective attacks – against Julius Caesar's henchman Mamurra (for whom *Mentula*, 'Prick', is usually taken to be a derisive pseudonym[21]) and an amatory rival, Gellius – though these are quite differently structured, the former consisting of poems in different metres, widely scattered throughout the collection, and the latter confined to a short and mainly continuous sequence within the epigrams.[22] Finally, references to the death of the poet's brother crop up in three poems in the latter part of the collection (65, 68, and 101), and these too have been seen as structurally significant.

Again, however, critics differ as to the extent to which artful arrangement can be perceived within these so-called cycles. The clearest

[20] Juventius is named in poems 24, 48, 81, and 99; verbal echoes between 15, 21, 23, and 24 invite us to read these poems as a group, with the implication that the unnamed object of rivalry in 15 and 21 is to be identified with Juventius, and the rival of 24 with Furius. Furius also appears in 26, and the pair are jointly addressed in poem 16 (discussed in Chapter 4 below, pp. 76–9). Veranius and Fabullus appear, separately or together, in poems 9, 12, 13, 28, and 47.

[21] In poem 29, Mamurra is both attacked under his real name and referred to as 'that fucked-out prick' (29.13 *ista . . . diffututa mentula*): this is usually taken to identify him definitively as the target of the 'Mentula' poems.

[22] Mamurra/Mentula: 29, 57, 94, 105, 114, 115 (also 41 and 43, where he is almost certainly to be identified with the *decoctor Formianus* or 'bankrupt of Formiae'; for Formiae as Mamurra's birthplace, see 57.4); Gellius: 74, 80, 88–91, 116. On both cycles, see further in Chapter 4 below.

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case can be made for the first eleven (or twelve, or fourteen) poems, which appear to present the reader with a kind of summary narrative of the affair with Lesbia, from initial obsession (poem 2) to final break-up (poem 11).[23] Poem 1 dedicates the collection (the whole collection? this sequence? or something between the two?) to the historian and biographer Cornelius Nepos, and the love poems are interspersed with poems on unrelated themes (4, 6, 9, 10) in such a way as offer the kind of variety widely regarded in ancient literary criticism as a desirable quality. Poem 14, to Catullus' fellow-poet Licinius Calvus (on whom see further below) and consisting, in effect, of an attack on the 'worst poets' of the age (*saecli incommoda*, *pessimi poetae*; 14.23), could be seen as a thematic counterpart to poem 1: the programmatic function of the opening poem, with its praise of dedicatee and, implicitly, poet is matched by a corresponding attack on writers whose work Catullus deplores. Together, then, poems 1 and 14 perhaps round off a book or sequence by creating a kind of frame – a technique often referred to as 'ring-composition'. Poem 14b is evidently a fragment (as it stands, it consists of a single incomplete sentence, which does not appear to belong to either poem 14 or poem 15), but could represent the remains of a second introductory poem: it is addressed to readers, envisaged – presumably disingenuously – as shrinking away from the poet's *ineptiae*, 'foolishness', another self-deprecating term reminiscent of poem 1's *nugae*.

Perhaps, then, we have here the remains of what was originally a self-contained book, followed – on one common hypothesis[24] – by a partner volume concerned with Furius, Aurelius, and Juventius. There is some evidence, too, that some or all of the poems circulated in antiquity under the title *Passer*, or 'sparrow', from the first word of poem 2:[25] if poem 1 stands apart as a kind of preface, such a title would appear appropriate (it is argued) for an independent *libellus* centring on the relationship with Lesbia. Equally, though, this opening sequence could be perceived as a subdivision within a larger, more elaborate 'architectural' arrangement;[26] in this connection, we might note that poems 9 and 13

[23] See esp. Barwick 1958: 312–14; Segal 1968; Skinner 1981: 39–43; Miller 1994: 63–72; Du Quesnay 2021: 179–80.

[24] See esp. Beck 1996. Cf. Stroh 1990; Hubbard 2005; Du Quesnay 2021: 179–85.

[25] Martial (4.14.13–14) writes – anachronistically – of Catullus perhaps sending his 'Sparrow' to Virgil: it is clear from the context that *passer* refers to a poetry book. Cf. Mart. 1.7, 11.6.14–16 (discussed further in Chapter 6).

[26] So e.g. Wiseman 1969: 7–16 (now modified by Wiseman 2023: 13–45); Skinner 1981: 39–68; Stroh 1990; Schafer 2020: 81–133.

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introduce us – respectively – to Veranius and Fabullus, the two friends who (as suggested above) might be seen as positive counterparts of Furius and Aurelius. The latter pair also appear as the addressees of poem 11, the final farewell to Lesbia. So the opening sequence can be seen to interlock with other cycles within the polymetrics, as well as reverberating with Lesbia poems elsewhere in the collection.

The practice of interspersing closely related poems with others on apparently unconnected themes is perhaps the clearest organizing principle of the entire collection, though not consistently applied throughout.[27] The famous 'kiss poems', 5 and 7, for example, are punctuated by poem 6, addressed to the poet's friend Flavius and asking rather pruriently after his putative girlfriend. Similarly, the two poems attacking Mamurra's girl Ameana[28] (41 and 43) are separated by 42, an attempt to shame the unnamed addressee into returning the speaker's notebook; two epigrams mocking malodorous men (or perhaps the same man, named in 69 as Rufus) interlock with two on Lesbia's false promises in an ABAB sequence (69, 70, 71, and 72); and so forth. But once again we cannot be sure whether these are the tantalizing remnants of a more thorough-going architectural scheme created by the poet, or whether they should be understood rather as part and parcel of the subtler structural patterns identified by critics who argue for authorial arrangement of the collection as a whole – or neither.

Again, too, suggestions of a new beginning have been detected elsewhere in the collection, most persuasively in poem 65, where the poet promises, in the wake of his brother's death, that he will henceforth sing only sad songs (*maesta ... carmina*; 65.12). It has been thought significant that this pledge appears at the beginning of the part of the collection composed exclusively in elegiac couplets (that is, the last four of the *carmina maiora* plus the epigrams): elegiacs had strong funereal associations in the ancient world, as a metre commonly used for epitaphs, and are often thought of as inherently sorrowful. A phrase from this poem – *carmina Battiadae*, 'poems of Battus' son' (meaning the Hellenistic poet Callimachus) (65.16) – is strikingly echoed in the last poem of our collection, at 116.2, so that again we appear to have a

[27] Thus, related poems are directly juxtaposed at 2–3 (unless '2b' is regarded as a fragment of a separate poem), 23–4, 28–9, 61–2, 75–6, 88–91, 97–8, 110–11, and 114–15, to cite only the more obvious instances.

[28] The name may be corrupt: it appears as *a me an a* in the manuscripts, and is otherwise unattested. For the identification of 'the bankrupt of Formiae' (41.4 = 43.5) with Mamurra/Mentula, see n. 22 above.

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frame or ring-structure enclosing all the elegiacs: poem 116 has been plausibly read as closing off the collection with a kind of 'anti-dedication', threatening as it does a poetic *assault* on the implacable Gellius, where a dedication typically promises poetic *praise* for an appreciative dedicatee. Accordingly, some have proposed that the tripartite structure mentioned above should be modified, with the three sections or books consisting of poems 1–60, 61–4, and 65–116.[29]

Amid this plethora of arguments both for and against authorial arrangement, recent work on the book trade and the whole issue of 'publication' in the ancient world has cast a rather different light on the question.[30] Until recently, it was generally assumed that the poet himself must either have put together the collection as we have it, or have issued his poems in some other form, which was subsequently modified by a putative posthumous compiler or editor. But it has come to seem at least equally probable that the poems circulated in different formats even during the poet's lifetime: individual poems might have been performed – at dinner parties, say, or in the kind of semi-formal poetry recital (*recitatio*) that had become institutionalized a few decades after the period we are considering – and only later grouped together to form a written collection. As noted above, the longer poems were perhaps initially issued separately, but this does not preclude a subsequent 'collected edition' assembled by the author himself. Equally, we have

[29] Frequently invoked in support of this tripartite division is the argument (apparently first advanced by Süss 1876: 23–4) that 61 and 65 can be identified, alongside 1, as dedication poems: the epithalamium for Manlius Torquatus may be read as an implicit dedication for the second 'book', with its recurrent theme of marriage, while the *carmina Battiadae* offered to Hortalus at 65.16 could, in a broad sense, subsume all the following elegiacs and epigrams, in addition to the more obviously Callimachean 66. It has been pointed out, too, that all three poems contain addresses or reference to the Muses, assuming that the 'virgin patroness' of 1.9 is so identified (cf. 61.2, where the marriage god Hymen is addressed as *Vraniae genus*, 'offspring of [the Muse] Urania', and 65.2 *a doctis . . . uirginibus*, 'from the learned maidens' (i.e. the Muses); so Wiseman 1979a: 176–9, 1985: 266). Internal evidence for a three-book edition is perhaps corroborated by some peculiarities of MS O (a direct descendant of the now lost archetype, V), which begins a new page – contrary to the scribe's usual practice – at 61.1, and from poem 65 onwards introduces each poem (where divisions are indicated at all) with an illuminated initial and capitalized second letter (see Thomson 1997: 7–8).

[30] On 'publication' and the book trade in the Roman world, see especially Kenney 1982; Starr 1987; White 2009; Winsbury 2009. Also relevant here is evidence derived principally from Greek papyri, which suggests that poetry collections might have circulated in different forms simultaneously (see e.g. Gutzwiller 2012: 86–7, with further bibliography at n. 14). See also Heerink 2009, who makes a concise case for considering the term 'publication' anachronistic when applied to Catullus and to ancient books in general.

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plenty of evidence for collections arranged by someone other than the author, whether an 'editor' in something like the modern sense, or an individual reader assembling an anthology for personal use.[31] In a world where 'publication' amounted, in effect, to little more than making one's work available for (professional or amateur) copying, the author was simply not in a position to exercise consistent control over the format in which his work was disseminated.

An influential example of the editorially arranged collection is the anthology of epigrams by a number of earlier and contemporary poets assembled by Meleager of Gadara at the beginning of the first century BC, the ultimate ancestor of the Byzantine collection known to us as *The Greek Anthology*. This work was evidently familiar to Catullus and his contemporaries, and was presumably the context in which they most commonly encountered the Greek epigrams. The introductory poem of the collection, in which the epigrammatists are compared to a wreath of sweet-smelling plants, gives the work its name, the *Stephanos* or *Garland*. The metaphor is itself suggestive of artistic arrangement, and Meleager's collection does indeed appear to have been structured with self-conscious care. It has a significant bearing on the issue under discussion, then, that Catullus' first poem opens with an echo of Meleager's:

Cui dono *lepidum nouum libellum*
*arida modo pumice expolitum?*
Corneli, tibi*: namque tu solebas*
*meas esse aliquid putare nugas*
*iam tum, cum ausus es unus Italorum* 5
*omne aeuum tribus explicare cartis*
*doctis, Iuppiter, et laboriosis.*
*quare habe tibi quidquid hoc libelli*
*qualecumque; quod, <o> patrona uirgo,*
*plus uno maneat perenne saeclo!* 10

*To whom do I give* this smart new booklet, freshly polished with dry pumice? *Cornelius, to you*: for you were accustomed to think something of my trifles, at that very time when you, alone of the Italians, had the audacity to unravel all of time in three volumes – learned ones, God knows, and hard work! So take for yourself this booklet, such as it is, for what it's worth; o virgin patroness, may it last through the years, for more than one generation.

[31] As Catullus plans to do in poem 14, where he threatens to send Calvus a collection of bad poetry in retaliation for his friend's similar 'gift'. See Barchiesi 2005, esp. 337–9; Hutchinson 2008: 110–11; Gaisser 2009: 30–1; Gutzwiller 2012: 86–7.

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Compare Meleager, *Greek Anthology*, 4.1.1–4:[32]

> Μοῦσα φίλα, **τίνι** τάνδε **φέρεις** πάγκαρπον ἀοιδὰν
> ἢ τίς ὁ καὶ τεύξας ὑμνοθετᾶν στέφανον;
> ἄνυσε μὲν Μελέαγρος· **ἀριζάλῳ δὲ Διοκλεῖ**
> μναμόσυνον ταύταν ἐξεπόνησε χάριν·

*To whom*, dear Muse, *are you taking* this song, rich in every kind of fruit? And who was it that made this garland of poets? Meleager accomplished it, and he laboured at this memorial as a gift *for splendid Diocles* . . .

This opening quotation may be seen as a pointer to the reader to expect the same kind of artful arrangement in the Roman poet's collection as is suggested in Meleager's case by the garland metaphor.[33] Ironically, though, the echo might also put us in mind of the fact that such patterning can result from intervention by a later editor, like Meleager, rather than revealing the author's own hand.

It is worth asking how much difference, ultimately, it makes to our reading of Catullus whether any patterns we may detect were created – consciously or otherwise – by the poet himself. Arguably, it would still be legitimate to see significance in juxtaposition and balance between poems, even if we could be certain that the poems were *not* authorially arranged. What makes such patterning meaningful is that it serves to bring out continuities and contrasts of theme, style, and tone: but the continuities and contrasts would still be there, in some sense, even without the patterning. To take a particularly striking example, poems 50 and 51 are both concerned with the speaker's intense reaction to a close personal contact: in 50 with fellow-poet Licinius Calvus; in 51 with Lesbia. The first of the pair describes the experience of poetic improvisation and exchange in highly eroticized language, which makes the pairing particularly suggestive: the poet plays off the literary against the sexual in ways that hint at both similarities and differences between the two.[34] A further connection is the striking prominence of the word *otium*, 'leisure', at the beginning of 50 (Catullus and Calvus are 'at leisure', *otiosi*; 50.1) and in the final stanza of 51 (where the speaker berates himself for the lack of occupation, *otium*,

[32] Book 4 of our *Greek Anthology* consists of what were originally the introductory poems of the separate collections amalgamated by the Byzantine compiler: 4.1 is identified in the manuscripts as 'Meleager's *Garland*'.

[33] So Barchiesi 2005: 322–3.

[34] On this aspect of Poem 50, see further Chapter 3, pp. 53–5, below.

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which fosters his incipient erotic obsession). The juxtaposition brings these connections to the fore; but they would still exist, and be open for interpretation, even if the poems were widely separated within the collection.

Whether such patterns are attributable to the author or an editor, then, we can see them as aiding our reading, or foregrounding certain aspects of the poems in question, in the same way that – say – a commentary, or the experience of reading and discussing the work in class with other students, might do. Patterns within the collection, such as those discussed above, do seem to exist, though we can argue about how extensive and pervasive they are. And once we have seen such a pattern, it may help to shape our understanding of the poems, whether or not we attribute it to the hand of the poet himself.

## 2. Political and social milieu

If, as we have seen, the introductory poem 1, via its allusion to Meleager's *Garland*, raises the issue of authorial, or editorial, arrangement, it also has the more explicit function – as noted above – of dedicating the work to Cornelius Nepos. The opening question-and-answer is performative: it does what it represents as being done. The symbolic gesture of handing over the new book-roll to Cornelius can be understood, in turn, as a strategic move within the system of reciprocal favours or *officia* that underpinned the social interaction of the Roman elite. Cornelius expresses his admiration for Catullus' poetry (3–4): Catullus responds with a witty compliment (5–7),[35] and at the same time enshrines Cornelius' name within a work which he hopes will prove long-lasting (the understated 'more than one generation' [10] is most easily understood as mock-modest, like the label *nugae* or 'trifles' applied to the book's contents at line 4).

It has long been recognized that the description of the book in lines 1–2 is programmatic – that is, it advertises the literary ideals that the

[35] Some critics, e.g. Gibson 1995, have seen irony in the rather hyperbolic praise of Cornelius' three-volume historical work, the *Chronica*, particularly the grandiose *omne aeuum*, 'all of time' (6), coupled with the interjection *Iuppiter* (7). The adjective *laboriosis*, 'hard work' (7), too, might be taken to imply that the three volumes were tough going for the reader, as well as complimenting the writer's scholarly credentials. Such ironies might be interpreted, however, as friendly teasing rather than serious criticism. On (Catullus and) Nepos, see also Cairns 1969; Wiseman 1979a: 154–66; W. J. Tatum 1997: 485–8.

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poems seek to instantiate: the 'smart new booklet freshly polished with dry pumice' is both the elegant presentation copy that we are to imagine Catullus as sending his friend (pumice was used in deluxe editions to smooth the rough edges of the papyrus roll), and, metaphorically, a description of its contents.[36] The phrasing hints at the ideals of verbal wit (*lepidum*), innovativeness (*nouum*), concision (implicit in the diminutive form *libellum*), and refinement or artistic 'polish' (*politum*) consistently upheld by the poet elsewhere in the collection, and thus amounts to a literary manifesto. Implicitly, the poet can be seen to declare an affiliation to the artistic principles associated with the name of Callimachus, who, in the prologue to his *Aetia*, had famously set the standard to which many writers of Catullus' generation, and their Augustan successors, would aspire. Callimachus relates how, when he first began to compose poetry, Apollo appeared to him and admonished him to cultivate the 'slender' Muse and to drive his (poetic) chariot along narrow, less-travelled pathways.[37] The poetics of the fresh, unexpected, small-scale, and highly refined – and the concomitant avoidance of the grandiose, overblown, and hackneyed – developed in this celebrated passage maps easily onto the terms in which Catullus' dedication is framed.

This programmatic element, in turn, reinforces the sense of solidarity between poet and dedicatee that is more explicitly suggested by the mutual compliments and admiration of lines 3–7. Nepos, Catullus hints, shares his literary ideals: the 'daring' (*ausus*; 5), 'learnedness' (*doctis*; 7) and careful scholarship (*laboriosis*; 7) that characterize Cornelius' history, as well as the concision implied by the compression of 'all time' into 'three volumes' (or, more literally, 'three sheets', *tribus . . . cartis*; 6) can all be taken to point in this direction. Like the poet, his dedicatee appears to prize freshness (his work is unprecedented; 5) and brevity; *doctrina* or 'learning', too, is for Catullus an attribute of the Muses (35.17, 65.2), and is often ascribed to the poet himself by later writers;[38] and the 'laboriousness' (7) of the historian's work resonates with the 'polish' (2) of the poet's book-roll.

[36] For programmatic readings of poem 1, see esp. Elder 1967; Cairns 1969; Latta 1972; Singleton 1972; Syndikus 1984–90: i.71–7; Batstone 1998, 2007: 236. For a different approach, see McMaster 2014 (esp. 201–2), for whom the emphasis on the book's refinement and novelty serves to enhance its value within a system of gift exchange.

[37] Callim. *Aetia* fr. 1.21–8 Pfeiffer.

[38] E.g. Ovid, *Am.* 3.9.62; [Tibullus] 3.6.41; Mart. 7.99.7, 8.73.8, 14.100.1.

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In this opening poem, then, poetics and social performance come together. The dedication serves as a vehicle for the declaration of shared ideals, cementing the friendship between Catullus and Cornelius both by means of the declaration itself and through the performative speech-act of gift-giving.[39] At the same time, the literary and social relationship between the two men is put on display for other readers of the collection: here and elsewhere, Catullus sketches for us a picture of a coterie of like-minded friends, who are united both by their literary tastes and by a certain social finesse. To a greater or lesser extent, many of the poems are concerned to rule named individuals in or out of this 'in-crowd': the poet's friends are praised for their charm (*uenustas*), wit (*lepos*, *facetiae*, *sal*), and sophisticated elegance of manner; those who are excluded from the group are conversely pronounced *illepidus*, *inuenustus*, or *infacetus* ('un-witty', 'un-charming'), or associated with a rustic cloddishness (*rusticitas*) opposed to the city smartness encapsulated in the key term *urbanitas* ('refinement', 'sophistication', from *urbs*, 'the city').[40] Social and literary ideals once again coincide in many of these poems, which condemn unsophisticated and old-fashioned poetry (like that of Suffenus, poem 22, or Volusius, poem 36) in much the same terms as the social faux pas of Asinius (poem 12), Varus' girlfriend (poem 10), or the Spaniard Egnatius (poem 39).

In this sense, Catullus' poetry can be seen as representative of the highly competitive society in which it was written. The focus of Catullan criticism in recent decades has undergone something of a shift, from the emphasis on poetics and on formal and structural features of the poems, which was dominant in the 1970s and '80s, towards a style of reading more concerned with the ideology and cultural values that inform the collection.[41] The two approaches are not, of course, incompatible, and indeed – as we have seen – poetics and interpersonal relationships are closely and explicitly connected in Catullus' oeuvre. But recent critics have been less willing than their predecessors to take the poet at his word in the judgements he pronounces on friends, enemies, and literary or erotic rivals, and have instead been on the lookout for strategies of self-

[39] On literary dedication as social practice, see Stroup 2010 and – on poem 1 specifically – McMaster 2014; Gale 2016. See also Johnson 2009, 2010, which explore the 'sociology of reading' among the Roman elite of the High Empire, but contain much of relevance also to Catullus and the Late Republic.

[40] On *urbanitas* and related concepts, see Ramage 1973; Seager 1974; Wiltshire 1977; Fitzgerald 1995: 87–113; and especially Krostenko 2001.

[41] Ideologically inflected readings of Catullus include Skinner 1979, 1989, 2003; Fitzgerald 1995; Krostenko 2001; Nappa 2001; Wray 2001.

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representation, and for the poems' construction of an elite masculine identity or identities. From this perspective, many of the poems may be read as attempts on the poet's part to negotiate a place for himself within the hierarchical social structures and networks of male friendship and acquaintance that constituted the communal life of the Roman elite.

Catullus positions himself in various ways as both an insider and an outsider. While thoroughly at home, and even exercising some authority, in his immediate social group, he betrays at times an element of anxiety in relation to his provincial origins.[42] This is clearest in poem 39, where 'urbane' behaviour is implicitly linked to Roman birth: the social ineptitude of Egnatius' determination to display his brilliant smile on the most inappropriate occasions is bad enough, but is compounded by his non-Roman origins (he hails from Spain, where, allegedly, they brush their teeth with their own urine). Yet Catullus draws attention quite explicitly in line 13 to the fact that he, too, is a provincial (*aut Transpadanus, ut meos quoque attingam*, '. . . or a man from across the Po, to mention my own people too').[43] Does this circumstance, then, call his own carefully cultivated *urbanitas* into question?

The sense of marginalization barely hinted at here is more clearly present in poems dealing with politically prominent individuals and launching attacks on the political exclusiveness and corruption of the age. As we have seen, our best guess at the date of the collection is the mid- to late 50s BC, when the Republican system was heading rapidly towards its final collapse. While competition for status and political office remained fierce among members of the senatorial families (and some 'new men', such as Cicero), power was becoming increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few individuals, notably the members of the so-called First Triumvirate, formed by Caesar, Pompey, and Crassus in 60 BC and renewed in 56. Catullus attacks Caesar and Pompey in poem 29 for the high-handedness and political favouritism manifested in their indulgence of the wastrel Mamurra, who was appointed by Caesar as *praefectus fabrum* (Prefect of Engineers) during

[42] For a nuanced discussion of Catullus' 'conflicted cultural identity', see Fitzgerald 1995: 185–211, esp. 201–7 (quoted phrase at 185).

[43] See p. 1 above. The free population of Cisalpine Gaul was fully enfranchised by Caesar in 49 BC, and the province was formally incorporated into Italy only in 42, after the probable date of the poet's death.

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his campaigns in Gaul.[44] Other poems, too, attack Caesarian partisans, and in poem 57 Catullus goes so far as to imply that Mamurra and Caesar are lovers, as well as serial adulterers.[45] But it is questionable whether these broadsides are to be understood as 'political' in the narrow sense: Catullus has no word of praise for any public figure, as opposed to his personal friends, and there has been a tendency in recent criticism to see disenchantment with public life in general as the dominant theme of these poems.[46] This reading is borne out by the series of poems (10, 28, and 47) dealing with the speaker's own experience, and that of his friends Veranius and Fabullus, on the staff of provincial governors. A standard first step on the political ladder at this period was to serve as an informal aide-de-camp in the *cohors amicorum* (literally, 'corps of friends') personally selected by the governor to accompany him abroad and assist him in the day-to-day business of his office: in the process, such *amici* were naturally expected to gain some experience of provincial administration, but casual references in the letters of Cicero suggest that the privilege was also widely abused in the interests of financial profiteering.[47]

It appears from poems 10 and 28 that Catullus travelled to the province of Bithynia as a member of the *cohors* of Gaius Memmius (praetor in 58 BC and so presumably governor in 57/56); Veranius and Fabullus are represented as having obtained a similar posting under Piso.[48]

[44] Pliny, *HN* 36.48.

[45] Attacks on associates of Caesar: poems 28 and 47 (Piso, probably to be identified with Caesar's father-in-law [see n. 48 below]); 29, 41, 43, 57, 94, 105, 114 and 115 (Mamurra/Mentula); 52 (Vatinius, for whom see also 14.3 and 53.2); and 54 (where the obscure Otho, Libo, and Fufidius [?] appear, on the basis of lines 6–7, to be singled out as Caesarians).

[46] See e.g. Quinn 1972: 267–77; Nappa 2001: 85–105; Skinner 2003: esp. 23–4, 137–42; Konstan 2007; Roman 2014: 59–66, all of whom tend to view Catullus as 'profoundly estranged' from Roman politics (Konstan 2007: 78), though varying in the extent to which they perceive this estrangement as part of a broader critique of elite Roman *mores* and public life (Nappa, e.g., writes of Catullus' 'sustained scrutiny and criticism of Roman society' [Nappa 2001: 23; cf. Konstan 2007: 75]). W. J. Tatum 1997: esp. 482–5 and 2007 argues cogently against the imposition of rigid distinctions between the 'political' and the 'personal' in the interpretation of Catullus' poetry. For the contrary view – that Catullus' poetry is strongly partisan and aligned with aristocratic opposition to Caesarism – see esp. Syndikus 1986 (with a useful survey of earlier scholarship at 34–5). See also Bellandi 2012, who reads poems 29, 52, 54, and 57 as 'bitterly anti-Caesarian', but seeks to restrict this alignment on the poet's part to the years 56–54 BC. Benferhat 2005: esp. 139–40 writes more judiciously of Catullus' studiously maintained *independence* from Caesar.

[47] See e.g. Cic. *QFr.* 1.1.12–14; *Att.* 5.16.2–3, 6.1.2, 7.1.6.

[48] Probably L. Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus, the target of Cicero's invective *In Pisonem*, though the identification is not certain (Syme 1956; contrast Wiseman 1969: 38–40). Wiseman (1985: 99–101; 1987b: 336–40) argues that Catullus' expedition to Bithynia was as much a business trip as it was an administrative posting; but (even if Wiseman's deductions about the commercial interests of the Valerii Catulli are accepted) the pursuit of private business affairs was evidently not regarded as in any way incompatible with political ambitions (thus, Cicero tells us at *Pro Caelio* 73 that

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But Catullus complains that both he and his friends have been denied the opportunities that such a position should have offered them: employing vividly sexual imagery, he depicts Memmius and Piso as having 'shafted' their juniors, denying them the profits that they clearly expected to make. The poet appears particularly resentful of the arbitrary favouritism displayed by the great and good, which he depicts as an abuse of power and privilege: Caesar and Pompey condone Mamurra's licentious and extravagant lifestyle (poem 29); Piso bestows dinner invitations on his disreputable cronies, while ignoring Catullus' friends (poem 47).[49] Poem 28 ends with a bitterly sarcastic reflection on the advice to 'seek out noble friends' (*pete nobiles amicos*; 28.13) which was evidently directed at young men in the poet's position: Piso and Memmius, he implies, have abused the traditional system of patronage whereby established statesmen were supposed to help their juniors to a start in a public career. Instead, their partiality and close-fistedness have 'brought shame upon Romulus and Remus' (*opprobria Romuli Remique*; 28.15).

Catullus' attacks on a corrupt system are, then, nothing if not personal. The juxtaposition of poems 28 and 29 is striking: there is a very strong irony in the poet's first attacking Memmius for preventing his protégés from turning a profit, and then excoriating Caesar and Pompey for *not* doing so. It has even been proposed that Catullus has set himself up here as a self-discrediting speaker, whose complaints ultimately redound to Memmius' credit: indeed, the niggardliness of which Memmius is accused by Catullus seems not very different from the financial scrupulousness that Cicero was to boast of during his governorship of Cilicia.[50] But the highly insulting language used of both Piso and Memmius makes it difficult to accept that Catullus ultimately presents either of the two in a positive light.

Thus, the invectives aimed at politically prominent individuals are perhaps best understood not as partisan interventions in the power struggles of the Republic's final decades, but as indicating a sense of

Marcus Caelius Rufus travelled to Africa as a *contubernalis* of Quintus Pompeius both to gain administrative experience and because his father owned land in that province).

[49] 'Socration' should probably be taken as a mocking soubriquet for the Epicurean philosopher Philodemus, a protégé of Calpurnius Piso and similarly depicted by Cicero (*Pis.* 68–72) as a kind of partner in debauchery, albeit a rather reluctant one. Porcius ('Piggy') seems likely to be a pseudonym too: no conclusive identification has been established, though Cairns 2003: 184–7 makes a good case for Plotius Tucca, a known associate of Philodemus', and later the literary executor of Virgil.

[50] See esp. Cic. *Att.* 5.21.7, 6.1.2, 6.2.4–5. For Catullus as self-discrediting speaker, see Braund 1996.

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disillusion with the political sphere in general, and a retreat into a personal world of literature, love, and friendship. In some respects, such a reading appears justified: as we shall see in more detail in Chapter 2, much of the terminology that the poet uses in writing of his personal friendships, and especially his relationship with Lesbia, resonates with the language of political alliance and public duty. In redeploying this vocabulary, he inverts the traditional valorization of the public over the private sphere, substituting erotic and interpersonal obligation for a more abstract duty to the Republic. On the other hand, the notion of a clear dividing line between the public and private realms is problematic, both for Catullus and for the world of the Roman elite at large. The ideal of *amicitia*, 'friendship' broadly conceived, embraces both personal ties of affection and the more formal alliances of the public sphere; conversely, attacks on an individual's social and sexual behaviour are equally at home in political rhetoric and in invective poetry.[51] With more specific regard to Catullus' poetry, it is striking how the corruption of public life is paralleled by a lack of *fides* (loyalty, trustworthiness) that seems endemic too in the speaker's personal relationships: friends such as Alfenus (poem 30) and Rufus (poem 77) appear no more trustworthy than the *nobiles amici* of the 'political' poems; and, of course, the poet is, on his own account, mistreated no less by Lesbia than by Memmius.

A particularly striking instance of this kind of overlap may be found in poem 79, which has been read both as a political broadside against the aristocratic circle of Lesbia and Lesbius (the coincidence of name suggests a brother–sister pair) and as the complaint of a disillusioned lover:

> *Lesbius est pulcer. quid ni? quem Lesbia malit*
> *quam te cum tota gente, Catulle, tua.*
> *sed tamen hic pulcer uendat cum gente Catullum,*
> *si tria notorum suauia reppererit.*

Lesbius is good-looking. No doubt, since Lesbia prefers him to you and all your clan, Catullus. And yet that good-looking fellow is welcome to put Catullus and his whole clan up for sale, if he can get so much as three kisses from his acquaintance.

The opening line is usually taken to imply an incestuous relationship between the brother and sister; but incest can itself be read as a

[51] For the broad semantic range of Latin *amicitia*, see esp. Brunt 1988; C. A. Williams 2012: 44–54. On invective in literature and political life, see Chapter 4 below.

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metaphor for the exclusiveness and solidarity of the aristocratic family, and its disdainful attitude towards social inferiors. Such a reading is suggested particularly by the phrasing of lines 2 and 3: Lesbia prefers her brother to Catullus *and his entire clan* (*cum tota gente*; 2), and Lesbius is invited to sell the whole family (presumably into slavery) if he can show himself free of sexual or moral corruption. The second couplet turns on a common motif of invective poetry, that of the *os impurum* or 'impure mouth': the practice of fellatio or cunnilingus – according to Roman sexual ideology, the most demeaning of sexual acts – is supposed to cause bad breath, and this is why none of his acquaintance want to kiss Lesbius (so Catullus implies), for all his social superiority.[52] The alliance between Lesbius and Lesbia and the transgressiveness of their behaviour appear to be both erotic and socio-political: it is artificial to impose a clean separation between the two spheres, as some critics have attempted to do.[53]

Careful self-positioning on the poet's part is apparent, then, in both the political poems and those dealing with personal friendships and rivalries – and even to some extent in the love poems and those concerned with literary matters. As a *domi nobilis* – a member of the provincial aristocracy, but on the fringes of the politically active elite of Rome itself – the poet, or his literary persona, symbolically occupies both centre and periphery within the world of his poems.[54] His exclusion from – or lack of interest in – competition for political power is counterbalanced by his mastery within the social sphere. Here, social capital – the *savoir faire* that shows one to be a person of superior rank – is crucial. Many of Catullus' poems can be seen as thematizing or even enacting this kind of competition: the behaviour of an Asinius (poem 12) or a Thallus (poem 25) excludes him from the elite club of the *urbani*, while the charm and wit of Pollio (12.8–9), Fabullus (13.6), and Caecilius (35.18) win them the poet's imprimatur.[55]

[52] See Richlin 1992: 26–7, 69; C. A. Williams 1999: 198; Krenkel 2006a [1980]: 213–15. On Roman sexual ideology and the classification of sex acts, see further pp. 74–6 below. Social kissing between males appears to have been the norm in Roman upper-class society at this date: see e.g. Cic. *Att.* 16.5.2; Cic. *Fam.* 16.27.2; Suet. *Tib.* 34.2.

[53] For a range of views on the personal and/or political nature of the attack on Lesbius, see esp. Skinner 1982a; W. J. Tatum 1993; Butrica 2002: 507–13; Watson 2006: 44–8.

[54] On the ambiguities of Catullus' status as a member of the municipal elite, see esp. W. J. Tatum 1997.

[55] The centrality of competitive social performance to Catullus' poetry is emphasized, in slightly different ways, by Fitzgerald 1995: 87–113; Krostenko 2001: 233–90; and Wray 2001: esp. 56–63 and 124–9.

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Catullus' circle, as he depicts it, bears some striking resemblances to Cicero's derisive portraits of the raffish young acolytes of Catiline, or Clodia's stylish clique as depicted in the *Pro Caelio*.[56] In passages such as these, Cicero draws a strong contrast between the effete and amoral character of the *jeunesse dorée* and the tough, manly virtue of more traditionally minded conservatives such as himself. Catullus, correspondingly, parades his smart modernity and rejection of traditional values, particularly in celebrating what is overtly an adulterous love affair (Lesbia is explicitly depicted as a married woman at 68.143–6, and the *vir* ['man'] of poem 83 is usually taken to be her husband, though the term is not necessarily so specific in itself). Closely related to this rejection of old-fashioned *mores* is the high value set on literary innovation, which has as its counterpart a contemptuous disparagement of hackneyed literary forms: the *Annales* of Volusius, for example, on which the poet pours scorn in poems 36 and 95, appears from its title to have been a historical epic in the style of Ennius.[57] Yet Catullus' dedication to *urbanitas* and the cultivation of the self does not necessarily place him at such a remove from Cicero as is sometimes supposed: as recent scholarship has emphasized, Cicero and his peers were acutely conscious of the image they presented to the world, and a sophisticated elegance of manner was clearly regarded as a desirable component of that image, though one that should not be over-valued.[58]

### 3. The 'New Poetry'; literary models and intertextuality

I noted above that Catullus' dedication to Cornelius Nepos can be seen as both a personal and a literary tribute; and it is significant, by the same token, that many of the friends addressed in his more personal poems are also writers. Social and literary *urbanitas* are thus closely intertwined throughout the collection. Can we go a step further and identify a 'school' or movement constituted by the group of poets surrounding Catullus, with its shared ideals of sophistication and refinement, careful craftsmanship, innovativeness, and lightness of touch (as opposed to the grandiose, old-fashioned epic style embodied in the despised *Annales* of Volusius)?

[56] Cic. *Cat.* 2.22–3; *Cael.* 66–7.

[57] Nothing is known of Volusius beyond what can be inferred from these two poems, and Catullus' prediction in poem 95 that his work would not survive has proved accurate: no identifiable fragments have been preserved.

[58] On *urbanitas* and social performance in Cicero, see esp. Krostenko 2001:154–232.

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Three brief references in Cicero have been thought to point to the existence in the 50s and 40s BC of a well-defined coterie of 'avant-garde' or 'modernist' poets. Writing to Atticus in November 50, Cicero improvises the hexameter line *flauit ab Epiro lenissimus Onchesmites*, 'the gentlest of winds of Onchesmus blew from Epirus',[59] and makes a gift of it to his correspondent, who, he says, can sell it if he wishes to any of the *neōteroi* (literally, 'more recent' or 'latter-day' writers).[60] These *neōteroi* are probably to be more or less closely identified with the 'eulogists' or 'imitators' of Euphorion (*cantores Euphorionis*, with reference to the notoriously obscure third-century poet Euphorion of Chalcis), who are said at *Tusculans* 3.45 to despise the 'great poet' Ennius. Finally, at *Orator* 161 Cicero mentions that the 'new' or 'modern poets' make a practice of avoiding the suppression (ecthlipsis) of a final *s* before a word beginning with a consonant, which had been normal practice in earlier poetry and is still found with some frequency in Catullus' contemporary Lucretius.

Though it has been doubted that these passing allusions offer sufficient evidence for a distinct literary school or movement, it has become common to refer to Catullus and his circle as the 'new poets' or 'neoterics'.[61] Certainly, we need to exercise some caution in taking the Ciceronian phrases to refer directly to a 'Catullan' circle: Catullus himself may well have been dead by the time the *Orator* and *Tusculans* were composed, in 46–45 BC, and it is not self-evident that Cicero has a particular group, as opposed to more general fashions or tendencies, in mind in any of the three passages. On the other hand, the fragmentary remains of and testimonia to the work of the fellow-poets named by Catullus (C. Licinius Calvus, C. Helvius Cinna, Q. Cornificius, Caecilius, and perhaps Valerius Cato, if he is to be identified with the addressee of poem 56) do seem to point to shared interests and stylistic traits.[62] In particular, as Lyne (1978) argues in detail, they all appear to have written 'short epics' or epyllia in the mode of Catullus 64: the best attested are Calvus' *Io* and the *Smyrna* of Cinna (praised by Catullus in

[59] The self-conscious obscurity of the wind name is presumably part of the stylistic parody, alongside the fifth-foot spondee: compare the recherché Greek name *Apheliotes* for the east wind at Catullus 26.3.

[60] Cic. *Att.* 7.2.1.

[61] On the 'new poetry' and the usefulness (or otherwise) of the label 'neoteric', see esp. Clausen 1964; Crowther 1970; Wiseman 1974: 51–3; Tuplin 1976; Lyne 1978; Courtney 1993: 189–91; Lightfoot 1999: 54–8; Hollis 2007: 1–2.

[62] For what is known of these contemporary poets, and the fairly minimal surviving fragments, see the relevant entries in Courtney 1993 and Hollis 2007: none of Valerius Cato's work has survived, and Caecilius is known to us only from Catullus poem 35.

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poem 95). Caecilius, as appears from poem 35, wrote a *Magna Mater*, perhaps bearing some resemblance to Catullus 63, and Cornificius a *Glaucus*, which seems likely to have been a mythological narrative in similar style. Finally, Cato's *Diana* or *Dictynna* is celebrated in a fragment of Cinna which notably echoes, or is echoed by, Catullus' praise of Cinna's poem and his more restrained hopes for the future of his own work: compare *saecula permaneat nostri Dictynna Catonis* ('may the *Dictynna* of my friend Cato last for generations'; Cinna fr. 14 Courtney) with Catullus' *Smyrnam cana diu saecula peruoluent* ('future generations shall pore over *Smyrna* till they are white-haired'; 95.6) and *plus uno maneat perenne saeclo* ('may [my book] last through the years, for more than one generation'; 1.10).

A key model in this and other respects was Callimachus, whose now-fragmentary epyllion *Hecale* established the short epic as a genre, or sub-genre, in its own right. As we have seen, Catullus hails 'the son of Battus' in poems 65 and 116; poem 66 is a fairly close translation of Callimachus' *Coma Berenices* (*Aetia* fr. 110 Pfeiffer); and poem 70 is based more loosely on *Epigram* 25 Pf.[63] But most important for Catullus (and for subsequent Roman poets) are the prologue to the *Aetia* and the programmatic coda at the end of *Hymn* 2, which, taken together, offer a manifesto for the composition of small-scale poetry in a refined and elegant style. As Clausen points out, the contrasting images of the slow-moving, muddy Euphrates and the pure spring of Demeter, used by Callimachus in *Hymn* 2 to represent the rejected and preferred styles of poetry, are echoed in Catullus 95.[64] Here, Catullus writes that Volusius' *Annales* will perish right by the (broad, slow-running) Padua, where presumably they were composed, whereas Cinna's *Smyrna* will find audiences as far off as the Satrachus, a river in Cyprus where the poem's narrative was set. The text of line 5 is uncertain,[65] but the latter river was probably characterized as 'swift' (*citus*) or 'deep-channelled' (*cauus*), hinting at a small, fast-running stream in contrast to the sluggish Padua:

[63] Note also the references to Battus and Cyrene (Callimachus' place of birth) at 7.4–6, and the apple simile at the end of poem 65, which is (probably) evocative of the Acontius and Cydippe story related in *Aetia* 3 (frs. 67–75 Pfeiffer; see further Chapter 5, p. 99, below). Bibliography on Catullus and Callimachus is too extensive to list in full here: helpful starting points are Clausen 1964; Wray 2001: 186–203; Fantuzzi and Hunter 2004: 464–85; Hunter 2006: 88–108, 144–6; Knox 2007; Acosta-Hughes and Stephens 2012: 214–33.

[64] Callim. *Hymn* 2.108–12; Clausen 1964: 188–91.

[65] The earliest manuscripts read *canas*, which is both unmetrical and clearly anticipated in error from the following line. Most editors accept the early correction *cauas*; *citas* is the suggestion of McKie 2009: 243–4, n. 113; see also Nisbet 1978: 111.

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the two rivers thus emblematize the two poems' contrasting fates, and serve as (Callimachean) metaphors for their varying styles.

Callimachus, we should recognize, had been a significant influence on Roman poetry as early as Ennius, whose epic began with a dream-narrative modelled on the opening of the *Aetia*;[66] but he does appear to have been an object of particular devotion to Catullus and his friends, perhaps owing in part to the influence of the Greek poet and scholar Parthenius, author of a (prose) collection of bizarre and tragic love stories, the *Erōtika Pathēmata*, which have much in common with the typical themes of the 'neoteric' epyllia. Parthenius was brought to Italy from his native Nicaea in Bithynia as a captive of the Mithridatic Wars (89–63 BC), and subsequently freed out of respect for his learning. His captor, we are told, was Cinna – whether the poet himself or his father – who has accordingly been seen as a kind of founding father of the 'neoteric' circle, with Parthenius acting as his mentor and inspiring a renewed interest in the poetry and poetics of Callimachus.[67]

We should be cautious, however, in speaking of a 'Catullan revolution', in Kenneth Quinn's phrase.[68] Continuities with earlier Roman poetry are also apparent: the fragmentary remains of the earlier first-century poet Laevius, for example, suggest a strikingly experimental writer, and it seems probable that Catullus' handling of the myth of Protesilaus and Laodamia in poem 68b owes something to his *Protesilaodamia*, though the surviving fragments (13–19 Courtney) give us little to go on. Cicero, too, for all his disdainful attitude towards the *cantores Euphorionis*, had in his younger days written poems – the *Glaucus Pontius* and the *Alcyones* – that sound remarkably like 'neoteric' epyllia, as well as translating the *Phaenomena* of Callimachus' admired friend Aratus.[69] Other contemporaries, such as Furius Bibaculus (perhaps the Furius of poems 11, 16, 23, and 26), the orator Hortensius Hortalus (likely the addressee of poem 65), and even Memmius are said to have written iambic invective or risqué love poetry, perhaps not very different in style from that of Catullus and Calvus (both Ovid and Pliny list Calvus, Memmius, and Hortensius together, in justifying their own poetic output, and Tacitus pairs Bibaculus with Catullus as a writer of scurrilous attacks on Caesar).[70]

[66] Skutsch 1985: 147–50.
[67] So Clausen 1964: 187–93; Wiseman 1974: 51–8. For a more sceptical review of the evidence, see Lightfoot 1999: 50–76.
[68] Quinn 1969.
[69] Though see now Knox 2011, who argues against labelling these works as 'Callimachean'.
[70] Ov. *Tr.* 2.427–41, Plin. *Ep.* 5.3.5; Tac. *Ann.* 4.34; cf. also Gell. *NA* 19.9.7.

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With all due caution, however, it seems reasonable to accept the scholarly consensus that Catullus, Calvus, Cinna, and others formed a loose group of friends and fellow-poets, with shared literary ideals and commitment to a particular style.[71] There seems no strong reason not to use Cicero's phrase 'new poets' as a convenient label for this group – particularly in view of Catullus' own tendency to define his literary affiliations in opposition to the more traditional style presumably represented by Volusius' *Annales* – provided that we recognize that 'newness' is relative, and that the 'movement', if such it was, is unlikely to have been as clearly demarcated as, say, the Bloomsbury Group in the early twentieth century.

One of the stylistic elements that makes this poetry so Callimachean is its allusiveness and its constant reference not just to Callimachus himself but to a broad spectrum of earlier poets, both Greek and Roman. Exemplary here is Richard Thomas' influential essay on the opening lines of poem 64 (Thomas 1982), which persuasively demonstrates how Catullus' narrative draws on, and expects its reader to recognize, a series of earlier texts (Euripides' *Medea* and Latin adaptations by Ennius and Accius; the *Argonautica* of Apollonius of Rhodes; Callimachus' *Aetia*; Ennius' *Annales*). For Thomas, these echoes are programmatic and polemical: intertextuality is a way for the poet to stake out his literary ground in relation to his predecessors.[72] This line of interpretation has been an influential and productive one in Catullan criticism, and continues to be so. At the same time, however, there is now a wide consensus among Classicists that intertextual echoes of this kind not only comment in a self-referential way on the poetics of the writer but are also constitutive of meaning in a much more general sense: the Euripidean, Apollonian, and Ennian echoes in Catullus 64, for example, surreptitiously introduce the figures of Jason and Medea as 'absent presences', standing behind their mythical counterparts

[71] It is noteworthy that Catullus and Calvus are regularly paired by later writers: see e.g. Hor. *Sat.* 1.10.19; Prop. 2.25.4; Ov. *Am.* 3.9.62.

[72] The term 'intertextuality' is preferable to the more traditional 'allusion' as (i) broader in application, denoting as it does *any* relationship between texts, not only those involving close verbal resemblance; and (ii) not implying anything about the (unknowable) intentions of the historical author. Intertextual relationships (as opposed to incidental 'allusions') are typically perceived too as constitutive of meaning, rather than as a kind of 'optional extra': the reading process always, arguably, involves conscious or unconscious comparison with previously encountered texts, though some works may be said to invite intertextual awareness more strongly than others. For helpful discussion of the terminology, see esp. Fowler 1997.

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Theseus and Ariadne;[73] and this tends to put the figure of Ariadne, in particular, in a rather different light from the narrator's overtly sympathetic stance towards her. Medea strikingly resembles Ariadne as the heroine seduced and abandoned: her shadowy presence perhaps hints at a more threatening side to Catullus' heroine than overtly appears, at least until the point when she pronounces her fateful curse upon Theseus and his family. This, in turn, may have broader implications for the poet's construction of gender, agency, and interpersonal relationships, both in this poem and elsewhere in the corpus.

In the shorter poems, as we might expect, the clearest intertextual connections are with the 'lower' genres: comedy, iambic invective, and epigram. Here, the distinction drawn by Conte between what he calls the 'exemplary model' (*modello esemplare*) and the 'code model' (*modello codice*) is particularly useful.[74] Thus, a number of individual poems call specific models to mind: poem 70, a fairly close translation of Callimachus, *Epigram* 25 Pf., has already been mentioned; in a more antagonistic vein, poem 13, the invitation (or 'anti-invitation') to Fabullus, can be read as a parody of an epigram by the Epicurean philosopher-poet Philodemus (*Anth. Pal.* 11.44).[75] Philodemus asks his patron Piso to dinner, apologizing for the humble fare that is all he can provide, but promising that it will be compensated for by the company of true friends and the joys of philosophical conversation: Catullus goes one further, not merely excusing himself for the simplicity of the meal, but explaining, outrageously, that Fabullus will have to bring everything (food, wine, salt, a girl . . . ) himself. Like Philodemus, Catullus offers something in compensation: *meros amores*, or 'pure love/love poetry' and a mysterious perfume given to his girl by the gods of love. This is perhaps best taken as a Catullan version of the philosophical friendship offered by Philodemus: what he promises Fabullus is comradeship of a somewhat different kind, and the pure essence of everything that is stylish, elegant, and sophisticated (the perfume, on this reading, symbolizes the girl's desirability, compounded of all these qualities as well as her physical attractiveness).[76]

[73] See further Chapter 5 below. On the narrative and thematic complexities introduced via the echoes of Euripides, Apollonius, and Ennius, see especially Zetzel 1983; Gaisser 1995; Clare 1996; De Brohun 2007; Fernandelli 2012: 160–210.

[74] Conte 1986: 31.

[75] On the relationship between the two poems, see esp. Hiltbrünner 1972; Carilli 1975: 942–5; Marcovich 1982; Dettmer 1989; Gale 2022: 89–94.

[76] The significance of the *unguentum* has been much debated: see especially Vessey 1971; Littman 1977; Hallett 1978; Marcovich 1982; Bernstein 1984; Gowers 1993: 229–44.

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But more striking, arguably, than these 'exemplary' models are the 'code' models constituted by the epigrammatic, comic, and iambic genres *as a whole*. This is clearest in the case of Hellenistic and post-Hellenistic epigram, which is particularly given to variations on a theme: poet after poet adopts familiar *topoi* or commonplaces from his predecessors, and rearranges them, or gives them a novel twist of some kind, to produce a poem that is both new and made up of familiar elements. The brilliance of many of Catullus' shorter poems lies, it can be argued, in his manipulation and revivification of this well-established technique. The famous *passer* poems, 2 and 3, for example, draw on a tradition of animal epitaphs and other epigrams, represented for us by poems 189–216 in Book 7 of *The Greek Anthology*. Poem 2 is particularly close to a pair of examples by Meleager, who appeals to a locust and a cicada to lull him to sleep with their music, and so afford him relief from the pain of love (*Anth. Pal.* 7.195, 196). But Catullus lends a new complexity and emotional nuance to the form in two characteristic ways. First, the two *passer* poems are made part of the Lesbia cycle: the *passer* is not just *any* pet bird, but belongs to the girl that the speaker so fiercely desires. Secondly, the language in both poems is highly sexualized: the bird is the girl's 'pet' (*deliciae*), she plays with it (*ludere*), holds it in her lap (or her bosom: *in sinu*), provokes it to bite her – phrases which might all be applied with equal appropriateness to a lover.[77] There is some – much disputed – evidence, too, that *passer* was a slang term for the penis: if so, then poem 3 can be seen as an ingenious combination of the animal epitaph with another well-attested epigram type, the impotence poem.[78] If the 'bird' that has 'died' is the speaker's erection, poem 3 takes on a very different, and distinctly less maudlin, sense than appears on its apparently innocent surface.

A similar fusion of different epigram types, together with what we might call personalization of conventional *topoi*, can be found in several

[77] Catullus may have taken his impetus here from another poem of Meleager, *Anth. Pal.* 7.207, on the death of Phanion's pet hare (so Thomas 1993: 134–5), where the language is perhaps mildly suggestive. In particular, Phanion, like Catullus' girl, is imagined as cradling her pet in her bosom/lap (ἐν κόλποις στέργουσα; 3).

[78] The 'obscene' reading of poems 2 and 3 goes back to the Renaissance scholar-poet Poliziano (Gaisser 1993: 75–8); modern adherents include Genovese (1974), Giangrande (1975), Nadeau (1980), and Miller (1994: 66–70). For the contrary view, see especially Jocelyn 1980; Adams 1982: 32–3; and Jones 1998. The key witness is the second-century AD lexicographer Festus, who reports (p. 410 Lindsay) that the male member was referred to in mime as *strutheum, a salacitate uidelicet passeris, qui Graece strouthos dicitur* ('evidently from the wantonness of the sparrow, which is called *strouthos* in Greek'); the sparrow's *salacitas* is similarly noted by Cicero (*Fin.* 2.75) and Pliny (*HN* 10.107). Also relevant is a double entendre on the word *passer* in the epigrams of Martial, on which see Chapter 6, p. 124, below.

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other poems, particularly among the polymetrics. Poem 4, for example, on the *phaselus* or yacht, combines elements of the sepulchral and dedicatory epigrams, in both of which the deceased or dedicated object may be represented as addressing the passer-by. Once again, Catullus adds an apparently personal gloss, by having the boat make roughly the same trip, from Bithynia to Italy, that he represents himself as having made (or being about to make) in other poems. At the same time, a gently parodic or satiric note is imported, through the characterization of the boat (which has hints of a foreign 'accent', and seems to think of itself too as a kind of latter-day Argo[79]) and the distancing effect created by the use of reported speech throughout the poem.[80] Poem 99 fuses the common epigrammatic themes of the theft of kisses and the bitter-sweetness of love (Juventius' honey-sweet kisses are transformed into bitter poison as he tortures his lover for having stolen one). Again, 6, 41, and 43 offer a new 'take' on other epigram types well represented in the *Anthology*: respectively, the friend who gives away his secret love by showing physical symptoms; the faded charms of the ageing courtesan; and the *blason anatomique* or catalogue of body parts (usually those of the beautiful beloved). In the first of the three, Catullus innovates by wittily transferring the symptoms from Flavius himself to his rumpled bed; the latter pair attack Mamurra's girlfriend by cataloguing her body parts in negative terms (she does *not* have a small nose or a pretty foot or long fingers . . . ), and implicitly likening her to the superannuated prostitutes of the epigram tradition.[81]

[79] There are several similarities with the opening lines of poem 64, where the Argo, too, is said (in imitation of the opening lines of Euripides' *Medea* and Ennius' Latin version) to have begun life as a tree (4.10–17, 64.1): both ships have 'palms' (*palm[ul]ae*, i.e oar blades; 4.4 and 17, 64.7) and 'swim' (4.3 *natantis*, 64.2 *nasse*) through the waves; the verb *imbuo*, meaning both to 'wet (for the first time)' and to 'initiate', is used of both vessels (4.17, 64.11); and both are swift (4.2 *celerrimus*, 64.6 *cita . . . puppi*) – significantly so, since one of the several ancient etymologies for the name Argo derived it from the Greek *argos*, 'swift-footed'. The route of the *phaselus* approximately reverses that of the Argo (to Colchis at the eastern end of the Black Sea). See Hornsby 1963.

[80] See M. Schmidt 1955; Khan 1967; Coleman 1981; Fitzgerald 1995: 104–10; Davis 2002; Roman 2014: 76–7.

[81] Superannuated prostitutes: e.g. Meleager, *Anth. Pal.* 5.204 (catalogue of body parts); [Plato] *Anth. Pal.* 6.1; Philetas of Samos, *Anth. Pal.* 6.210.3–4 (ageing courtesans dedicate the mirrors they no longer need or wish to use, a *topos* perhaps recalled and inverted by Ameana's failure to look in the mirror). Catullus' anatomization of his victim in poem 43 may also have in view a contemporary epigram, *Anth. Pal.* 5.132, in which Philodemus lists Flora's physical charms ('o foot, o calf, o thighs . . . ') and dismisses her lack of culture and sophistication ('so what if she's a country girl and . . . can't sing the poems of Sappho?'). Ameana, in contrast, has *neither* physical attractions nor stylishness to recommend her (the last item on Catullus' list is *nec . . . nimis elegante lingua*, 'none too stylish a tongue').

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Rather less obvious than Catullus' engagement with the epigrammatic tradition, but if anything more important for our reception of the collection as a whole – especially the Lesbia poems – is the exploitation of comic stereotypes. The rebellious young man, ridiculously but not unsympathetically in love with an (at least apparently) unsuitable woman; the clever prostitute; the braggart soldier; and the parasite, eager to cadge a free lunch at every opportunity, can all be seen to underlie Catullus' depiction of his own cast of characters. Mamurra, with his philandering ways and unshakeable confidence in his own charms, is reminiscent, particularly in poem 29, of Plautine characters such as Pyrgopolynices, the titular *miles gloriosus* in the play of that name. More surprisingly, Fabullus and Veranius can be read in certain poems (especially 47) as versions of the comic parasite, a stereotype which points to a more derisive and less sympathetic attitude towards their attempts at self-enrichment than we might otherwise detect in this sequence.[82] Of course, since Catullus explicitly associates himself with his friends in their shared experience on the staff of provincial governors, a strongly self-ironic note is also introduced into the picture. So too in poem 10, where Varus' girlfriend catches the speaker out in a lie – he boasts of having acquired a team of litter-bearers during his time in Bithynia, which turns out in fact to belong to his friend Cinna – the depiction of the girl bears a strong resemblance to the comic prostitute, not necessarily an unsympathetic figure, who is often involved in plots to bamboozle 'blocking characters' such as the hero's father.[83]

Most striking of all is Catullus' appropriation of the persona of the comic hero, which is particularly apparent in the poems of indecision and internal conflict.[84] We shall consider this aspect of the Lesbia cycle in more detail in Chapter 2, but for now it is worth noting how the sequence beginning with poem 70 and culminating in the dual climax of 76 (where the speaker laments his inability to free himself from his tormenting passion) and 85 (where the conflicting feelings explored in the preceding sequence are distilled into a single couplet, the celebrated *odi et amo*) draws on this stereotype. The speaker's indecision and irresolution throughout this sequence are reminiscent of many a comic lover, perhaps especially the Phaedria of Terence's *Eunuch*:

[82] So Skinner 1979.
[83] Cf. Skinner 1989.
[84] See e.g. Skinner 1971; Dyson 1973; Thomas 1984; Nappa 2001: 71–5; Uden 2006; Polt 2021: 107–25.

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*nunc ego*
*et illam scelestam esse et me miserum sentio:*
*et taedet et amore ardeo, et prudens sciens,*
*uiuos uidensque pereo, nec quid agam scio.* (*Eun.* 70–3)

Now I know that she's heartless and I'm a poor wretch: I've had enough, and yet I'm on fire with passion; in full knowledge, clear-eyed and wide awake I'm dying of love, and I don't know what to do about it.

Here, the connection with the particular situation in the *Eunuch* seems less important than the wider comic stereotype represented by Phaedria. Once again, Catullus' appropriation of this comic model lends his epigrams a strongly self-ironic nuance, underlining the speaker's rejection of convention and authority, yet defying us to take him seriously. At the same time, techniques borrowed from the epigrammatic tradition are turned to powerful use: the almost obsessive reworking of the same ideas through poems 70, 72, 75, 76, 85, 87, and 109 exploits the pattern of theme and variation that was characteristic of the Hellenistic epigram collection to create a powerful impression of introspective analysis. Catullus also capitalizes in this sequence on the use of antithesis and rhetorical balance to which epigrammatic form lends itself, and which serve as effective vehicles for the expression of sharply conflicting emotions, and of the speaker's inability to resolve them.

What is striking here is that the sense of immediacy experienced by so many readers of the collection is belied by the intricate interweaving of literary traditions that underpins the poet's depiction of self and others. Indeed, the immediacy could itself be understood as a literary 'effect', created through the personalizing technique touched on above. As we read through the collection, we encounter connected sequences of poems addressed to or concerned with the same set of individuals,[85] and more formal compositions interspersed with anecdotal poems such as 10 or 53 (on a court-room incident involving the poet's friend Calvus): these configurations tend to create a powerful sense of lived experience. But we should not forget – and the intertextual relationships discussed in this section should remind us – that these poems are 'made out of' literature as much as life.

[85] This technique, we should note, is not as wholly unprecedented as is sometimes claimed: contemporary epigrammatists, such as Meleager and Philodemus, also address or write about the same mistress (or boy) in several poems. But what seems new in Catullus is the sense of continuity – of a developing narrative – created largely through the use of internal echoes, which invite us to read the Lesbia cycle in particular as a sequence.

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That is not necessarily to say that the poems and the experiences they describe are purely fictive, as some have argued.[86] I return here to the performative aspect of Catullus' poetry, touched on earlier in connection with poem 1. It is particularly clear in the case of the invectives and poems of friendship that what Catullus writes does not just reflect 'real life' but has a direct bearing upon it, not just describing but forging and shaping connections external to the poetry book, which thus serves as a vehicle for conducting interpersonal relationships. In this sense, Catullus' collection as a whole can be understood, at least in part, as a performance of the social, literary, and erotic self, whereby the poet creates and reflects upon his own identity, as part of a group of smart young urbanites; as an adherent of a modernist literary movement, loosely defined; as an idealistic and (inevitably?) disappointed lover; and as socio-political critic, engaging indirectly in the power struggles that dominated the life of the ruling elite through the closing decades of the Republic.

[86] The most thoroughgoing recent proponent of this view is Niklas Holzberg (2000, 2002), who sees the poem's speaker or persona as a wholly artificial creation, not necessarily bearing any relation to the collection's 'hidden' author. Similarly, Lesbia, for Holzberg, should be seen as entirely fictive: see further Chapter 2, pp. 40–2, below.

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