

Catullus the Conversationalist: A Study of the Relationship between Narrator and Reader

By

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Abstract

Catullus shows his prowess as a poet by the wide range of tone and central characters included in his poetry. Due to these frequent changes, it can often be difficult to make general statements about the style and narrative voice of the corpus. The goal of this thesis is to demonstrate that by considering Catullus' methods in employing rhetorical strategies, such as direct address and rhetorical questions, it is possible to point out patterns in the ways that the poet creates a relationship between the narrator, the reader, and other characters in the poem. The first chapter will consider select poems from Catullus' invective, primarily those which deal with the character Mentula, or Mamurra. In these poems, the direct addresses and rhetorical questions strengthen the accusatory nature of the narrator's attacks. Chapter 2 explores how the speaker makes use of these strategies to create various comparisons between himself, his lover "Lesbia," and potential rivals or jealous onlookers. Finally, the third chapter discusses the narrator's use of these devices within the ekphrasis of the Ariadne coverlet of Poem 64 to make the reader "present" in the scenes and to draw attention to the speaker's subjective response to the coverlet and its figures.

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Introduction

As Marilyn B. Skinner acknowledges in her introduction to the *Blackwell Companion to Catullus*, very little is known about the historical figure C. Valerius Catullus.¹ In fact, much of what has been written about his life is conjecture based on the very few details that can be gleaned from his poems and from mentions of him in authors such as Suetonius. This lack of concrete facts about the poet lends him and his poetry an air of mystery and elusiveness. All attempts at pinning down information about the poet, or even the “Catullus” of the poems, is further frustrated by the great variety “in genre, meter, tone, and subject matter” of the poems.² The first 60 poems are generally termed “polymetric” and feature many different lyrical meters, with a high concentration of hendecasyllables. The majority of the remaining poems are written in elegiac couplets with the exception of 63 (galliambic) and 64 (dactylic hexameter). Across these divides in meter, Catullus also touches on themes of love, friendship, immorality, and marriage, to name a few. The tone of the poems is nearly as varied as the meters and themes. This diversity within the corpus often makes it difficult to create a clear picture of the style and the narrative voice of these poems. At first glance, the “Catullus,” who professes undying love for “Lesbia” in one breath (Poem 7) and curses her very existence in the next (Poem 8), is quite different from the man who attacks Mamurra in Poem 29, or the unnamed narrator of the ekphrasis of the coverlet at the wedding banquet in Poem 64. However, a closer look at common stylistic elements and rhetorical strategies that appear within the various meters, genres and themes of Catullus’ poems can begin to create a picture of a relationship between the narrator of the corpus and the readers of his poetry.

¹ Cf. Skinner (2007), 2.

² Skinner (2007), 5.

In recent years, one approach to Catullus' poetry has been to consider his use of silence. In his article, "Cum tacent, clamant: The Pragmatics of Silence in Catullus," Randall L.B. McNeill asserts that Catullus uses silence and natural pauses in his poems, similar to those which orators like Cicero would have used in a court room, to guide the reader in interpreting the poem.³ According to McNeill, Catullus employs similar techniques "to elucidate the rhetorically and linguistically complex terrain of his depicted social landscape."⁴ By a creative incorporation of silence in his "conversations" with his friends in his poems, Catullus shows one way in which the narrator and his friends comment on their relationships. However, for this use of silence to be effective, some member of the party must have the ability to impose a particular reading, or interpretation, on this silence. Thus, the narrator's capability to direct the effect of the silence correlates with how much control he has over the various factors in a given situation.⁵ This creative use of silence manipulates the reader's own interpretation of the interaction in the poem because it distorts his or her ability to perceive the entire situation enclosed in the depiction of the narrator's relationship with various members of his social circle. By including these silences, Catullus controls the amount of information that the reader receives and thus the basis for his or her interpretation of the conversation or interaction. His success in directing the reader's interpretation can serve as an indication of his position within the social pairing – whether or not he is the dominant member of the conversation. For example, by imposing silence on Flavius in Poem 6 he shows himself as the person controlling the conversation, whereas in Poem 10 Varus' girlfriend gains control and forces "Catullus" to stop speaking. Sometimes, though, the narrator relates silence in a way that skews the picture of which member is in control.

³ See McNeill (2010), 73-74, for a full discussion of how Cicero makes use of silence and pauses in his oratory.

⁴ McNeill (2010), 74.

⁵ Cf., McNeill (2010), 74.

In his book, *Silence in Catullus*, Benjamin Eldon Stevens suggests that even Catullus' speech at times hints at something that has not been said. This omission, in its own way, also provides the narrator a sort of authority and control over how his various relationships are perceived: "By saying aloud what *may not* be said or *should not* be said, Catullus hints at a sort of illicit, somewhat tacit relationship between his poetry and the actuality of lived experiences."⁶ The sentiments expressed in Catullus' poems are frequently not the types of opinions voiced in polite society. By giving voice to these thoughts in his poems, he invites the reader to view the represented conversation from his point of view, while drawing attention to the fact that the poem has speech where an actual conversation would have silence.⁷ Thus, under the pretext of sharing a conversation with a friend or "Lesbia," Catullus points out to the reader that he or she only receives this interaction as filtered through the narrator. His choice of what to say and what to leave out gives the reader a different impression than if the conversation was related from, say, Lesbia's point of view. Often, he creates these silences or provides this additional information through the use of authorial asides or rhetorical questions.

Both McNeill and Stevens approach the idea of Catullus' authority and control over the interpretation of a poem through the ways in which he makes use of periods of speech and silence, but particularly the reading of silence, to direct the reader's perception of the narrator and his social circle. Silence, however, is not the poet's only tool for creating a specific reading or directing the reader's view in a particular direction. Catullus also employs various rhetorical strategies to draw the reader into the realm of the poem and create a particular point of view from which he or she can gaze at the interactions between the narrator and his friends, foes or "Lesbia." In her article, "Constructing Characters in Propertius," Alison Sharrock discusses how

⁶ Stevens (2013), 8-9.

⁷ Cf., Stevens (2013), 10.

Propertius uses similar interactions with the poet-lover's friends and Cynthia to provide varying viewpoints on the character of Cynthia. Sharrock argues that Propertius addresses several of his friends to provide them with details about his lover, often something she said or an anecdote about something they did together. Through these addresses, the poet attempts to create a picture of Cynthia's behaviors and character through the varying viewpoints of Propertius' friends.

While her discussion focuses solely on love poetry, it has many parallels with the ways Catullus presents all of his characters – friends, rivals, political enemies, and “Lesbia.” Similar to the way that Sharrock sees Propertius creating Cynthia's character through the viewpoints of the poet's friends, Catullus crafts his “Catullus,” the narrator of the poems, through the various types of interactions and the way the narrator relates to the reader. Specifically, Catullus uses devices – such as direct address and rhetorical questions – to create a conversational atmosphere and to make the reader feel as if he or she actually enters the world of the poem and becomes a member of the narrator's social circle or, in the case of the mythological poems, a part of the described action.

Direct address by the narrator provides an internal character who will be the subject for whatever opinions and judgments “Catullus” intends to launch in the poem. It makes clear to both the addressee and the reader who is the intended recipient of the praise, or more typically the blame, contained in the rest of the poem. Since these addresses often come at the beginning of the poem, they also create a conversational tone, as if “Catullus” has just caught the addressee's attention to ask a question or share some joke or tidbit of information. In some cases, these addresses can also function as a sort of dedication, gifting the words of the poem to whomever the poet has chosen to address. In every case, the address sets up the addressee and

“Catullus” in a scene and invites the reader to “listen in” on the interaction between the narrator and his expressed addressee.

Rhetorical questions increase the conversational nature of the poem. Questions of any kind expect a response. Sometimes, “Catullus” provides an answer to his own questions. Occasionally, he voices the response of another character in the poem. Most of the time the questions go unanswered, lingering as something for the reader to ponder to him or herself while the rest of the scene unfolds. In many cases, careful consideration of the questions asked by the narrator can lead to a change in the reader’s perception of the interaction he or she is “witnessing.” The use of rhetorical questions, while creating a conversational atmosphere, ultimately emphasizes the one-sided nature of any conversation in poetry.

Catullus also occasionally employs first person verbs and pronouns – both singular and plural – in an effort to draw attention back to the narrator. Often these verbs show up in some sort of comment made to the reader, an authorial aside of sorts. In some cases, these verbs appear when the narrator is passing a judgment on one of the characters in the poem or when he is trying to make sense of his troubled relationship with Lesbia. The first person plural usually appears when “Catullus” seems to think that he has successfully won the reader over to his interpretation of the poem’s content and thus he can include the reader in whatever judgment he is about to voice. The appearance of the first person can sometimes indicate a feeling of loss of control by the narrator and an attempt on his part to regain his authority. The prevalence of references to “I” and “me” has the potential to lead the reader into believing he or she knows “Catullus” and can sympathize with him. In every case, these asides and first person verbs and pronouns draw the reader’s attention back to the narrator and his role in whatever is taking place.

These strategies appear in many of the various types of poems that can be found in Catullus' poems. The poet tailors the devices to the genre and the particular circumstances contained within the individual poem, but they are always used as a way to make the world of the poem present for the reader and to help the reader immerse him or herself in the conversation or situation at hand. At the same time, the strategies continuously draw attention back to the narrator and his role as the director of the poem's structure and the flow of information to the reader.

Poem 10 provides an example of the narrator employing several of these devices to persuade the reader to judge Varus' girlfriend as he does, but he ultimately fails in the attempt. In the poem, Catullus employs asides and a form of address to engage the reader in the conversation at hand and to sway how he or she perceives and judges Varus and his girlfriend. In this poem, Catullus encounters his friend, Varus, in the forum and leaves with him to meet his girlfriend.

What follows is a conversation about Catullus' time in Bithynia:

*Varus me meus ad suos amores
uisum duxerat e foro otiosum,
scortillum, ut mihi tum repente uisum est,
non sane illepidum neque inuenustum.*
huc ut uenimus, incidere nobis 5
*sermones uarii, in quibus, quid esset
iam Bithynia, quo modo se haberet,
et quonam mihi profuisset aere.*
 respondi id quod erat, nihil neque ipsis
nec praetoribus esse nec cohorti, 10
*cur quisquam caput unctius referret,
praesertim quibus esset irrumator
praetor, nec faceret pili cohortem.*
*'at certe tamen,' inquiunt 'quod illic
natum dicitur esse, comparasti* 15
*ad lecticam homines.' ego, ut puellae
unum me facerem beatiorum,
'non' inquam 'mihi tam fuit maligne,
ut, prouincia quod mala incidisset,
non possem octo homines parare rectos.'* 20

*at mi nullus erat nec hic neque illic,
 fractum qui ueteris pedem grabati
 in collo sibi collocare posset.
 hic illa, ut decuit cinaediorum,
 'quaeso', inquit 'mihi, mi Catulle, paulum 25
 istos commoda: nam uolo ad Serapim
 deferri.' 'mane,' inquit puellae,
 'istud quod modo dixeram me habere,
 fugit me ratio: meus sodalis –
 Cinna est Gaius – is sibi parauit. 30
 uerum, utrum illius an mei, quid ad me?
 utor tam bene quam mihi pararim.
 sed tu insulsa male et molesta uiuis,
 per quam non licet esse neglegentem.'⁸*

My Varus led me, seen at leisure, from the forum to his lover - a little prostitute (as she seemed to me then suddenly) indeed not uncharming nor unattractive. When we came here, various topics of conversation fell on us, among which: how Bithynia was now, in what way she held herself, and with what money she had benefited me. I responded that which was: there was nothing for those, neither for the praetors nor for the cohort, how any could bring back a head more oiled, especially those for whom the praetor was an *irrumator*, who did not value his cohort at a hair. "But surely nevertheless," they said, "A thing which is said to be born there – you bought men for a litter." I (so that I made myself as one more prosperous to the girl) said, "It was not so badly for me that, though a bad province befell me, I could not buy eight upright men." (But there was no one for me, neither here nor there, who could place the broken foot of an ancient couch on his neck.) That girl (as befits a more shameless one) said, "I ask, lend them to me for a little while, my Catullus: for I wish to be carried to Serapis." "Wait!" I said to the girl, "That which I had recently said that I have – reason flees me – my companion – Cinna, that is Gaius – he bought them for himself. But, whether his or mine, what is it to me? I use them as well as if I had bought them for myself. But you, witless and annoying, live badly, through whom no one can be careless."

In this poem, the speaker carries on two conversations: one is the conversation with the *scortillum*, which the poem relates; the other is with the reader, through the asides he makes in the narrative. The asides make it clear that the speaker wants the reader to perceive this situation in a particular way and that he is trying to impose upon his readers his point of view. At the same time, the relation of direct speech makes the reader feel as if he or she is actually witnessing the

⁸ Catullus 10.1-34.

conversation and can make an unbiased judgment about the parties involved. By the end of the poem, it is clear that the narrator cannot be trusted. As the “conversation” between “Catullus” and the *puella* progresses, the reader becomes more and more aware of the fact that he or she is not getting all of the information, but only what the narrator chooses to share. It also becomes clear that the opinions shared with the reader may not be based on fact, but rather on the speaker’s feelings toward the supposed *scortillum*.

The first two lines of the poem establish the friendship between Varus and the speaker. Varus is modified by the possessive adjective *meus* (line 1), which serves as a term of endearment. This man is more than a mere acquaintance. Varus has a new girlfriend and he wants “Catullus” to meet her. Since Catullus is not busy (*visum...otiosum*, line 2), the men leave from the forum and go to meet the girl. In her article “Ut decuit cinaediorum,” Marilyn B. Skinner remarks that the very idea of a young Roman male being idle casts suspicion on the speaker.⁹ He is seen (*visum*, 2) in the forum and then passes judgment on a fellow loiterer (*ut mihi...visum est*, 3). The repetition of *visum* in these two lines (once in reference to “Catullus” and once in reference to the girlfriend) implies some sort of connection between these two characters. When the narrator has free time, he hangs around the forum writing poetry of a questionable nature and making snap judgments. These actions suggest that he is up to no good and that his words should be doubted by anyone reading them. Thus, from the second line the reader should be skeptical about the person speaking and his perception of the scene that follows.

From the outset, the speaker tries to prejudice the audience against Varus’ girlfriend by calling her a *scortillum*.¹⁰ Not only is this a derogatory term, but it also objectifies the girl. The speaker does not even give her the dignity of referring to her with a feminine noun, but instead

⁹ Cf., Skinner (1989), 10-12.

¹⁰ Catullus 10.3: “A little prostitute”

uses the neuter *scortillum*. As of yet the reader has no reason to question the speaker, so while this may seem harsh, it is not implausible that it is true. The speaker attempts to soften the harshness with his first aside to the audience: *ut mihi tum repente uisum est*.¹¹ It was simply his first impression that she is a prostitute. As with all first impressions, perhaps he was wrong. He goes on to say that she was *non sane illepidum neque inuenustum*.¹² Perhaps she does have some good qualities after all, though as litotes it could also mean that she is “minimally attractive or passably charming.” The use of *uisum est* emphasizes the subjectivity of any judgment presented by this speaker.

The next nine lines (5-13) set up context for the conversation that the speaker is going to relate to the audience. The series of indirect questions serves to inform the audience that the speaker has recently been away from home in Bithynia. As is natural when a friend has been away, Varus and his girl want to know what Bithynia was like (*quid esset / iam Bithynia*¹³) and if “Catullus” brought back anything (*quonam mihi profuisset aere*¹⁴). The speaker initially tells the truth: that the excursion was not profitable for anyone.¹⁵ Up to this point, this has been a perfectly normal and seemingly truthful conversation between friends. However, Varus and the girl press Catullus for more information.

The speaker’s friends cannot believe that he got nothing from his time in Bithynia. Knowing that Bithynia is famous for producing litter-bearers, the friends say, “Surely, you were able to buy men for a litter!”¹⁶ At this point, the speaker is faced with a choice: he can either continue to maintain that he was not able to purchase anything or he can lie to make himself look

¹¹ Catullus 10.3: “as she seemed to me then suddenly.”

¹² Catullus 10.4: “indeed not uncharming nor unattractive.”

¹³ Catullus 10.6-7: “How it was now in Bithynia.”

¹⁴ Catullus 10.8: “with what money it had profited me.”

¹⁵ Cf. Catullus 10.9-13.

¹⁶ Catullus 10.14-16: ‘*at certe tamen, inquit quod illic / natum dicitur esse, comparasti / ad lecticam homines.*’

better. He chooses Option 2 and claims to have bought eight men. In an aside to the audience he states his reason: *ut puellae / unum me facerem beatiorum.*¹⁷ The speaker cares about what this supposed *scortillum* thinks about him. He wants to appear wealthy in her eyes. He creates further irony for his audience by admitting that there was absolutely no one for him to buy: *at mi nullus erat nec hic neque illic, / fractum qui ueteris pedem grabati / in collo sibi collocare posset.*¹⁸ Armed with this information, the reader should be prepared for something to go wrong, and it does.

Varus' girlfriend picks up on the fact that "Catullus" is lying and she decides to call his bluff. She asks to borrow the litter-bearers so that she can go to the temple of Serapis: *'mihi, mi Catulle, paulum / istos commoda: nam uolo ad Serapim / deferri.'*¹⁹ The speaker despises the fact that she has caught him in his lie. In an attempt to discredit her, he once again tries to make the audience believe that she is some sexually immoral person. In his mind, she is acting in a way that only people of ill-repute act: *ut decuit cinaediorem.*²⁰ As previously discussed, the adjective *cinaedus* has extremely negative connotations. By painting her in this sexually promiscuous light, the speaker hopes to make the audience ignore what she says, or at least to think badly of the way that she acts. As it becomes clear that his authority (in the narrative) is challenged, he increases his poetic authority by attempting to undermine the girlfriend with his vitriolic descriptions of her.

The speaker attempts to defend himself by claiming that he misspoke: *'fugit me ratio.'*²¹ These litter-bearers are not actually his, but his friend, C. Cinna's. "Catullus" maintains that this

¹⁷ Catullus 10.16-17: "so that I made myself as one more prosperous to the girl."

¹⁸ Catullus 10.21-23: "But there was no one for me, neither here nor there, who could place the broken foot of an ancient couch on his neck."

¹⁹ Catullus 10.25-27: "Lend them to me for a little while, my Catullus: for I wish to be carried to Serapis."

²⁰ Catullus 10.24: "as befits a more shameless one."

²¹ Catullus 10.29: "Reason flees me."

is really of no consequence because he can use them as if they belonged to him: *'utor tam bene quam mihi pararim'*.²² As if realizing that this would still make the girl's request valid, the speaker finally gives up trying to defend himself and turns to insulting the girl: *'sed tu insulsa male et molesta uiuis, / per quam non licet esse neglegentem.'*²³ Like a child, "Catullus" stoops to the level of name-calling when it becomes clear that he cannot win the battle of wits. Though he calls the girl *insulsa*, the reader knows from witnessing the conversation that she has in actuality outwitted the speaker. With the last two lines the suspicion that the narrator is not entirely truthful is completely solidified. Instead of proving that his initial judgment of the girl is correct, the narrator has shown himself to be a sore loser. More importantly, he has revealed his technique of painting characters in a particular light. This exchange shows both that his picture of the girl is disconnected from her actual personality and that his depiction is a way to assert his own authority as a poet.

This poem exhibits a failed attempt to align the reader with the narrator's point of view. The speaker engages the reader in the conversation from the beginning. Though he never directly addresses his audience, the speaker uses a series of asides to give the reader specific information about the situation. These asides range from giving information contrary to what is directly spoken in the conversation to passing judgment on Varus' girlfriend. The purpose of these asides seems to be to direct the reader into viewing the girl as a prostitute and inferior person so that he or she will side with the speaker. Unfortunately for "Catullus," these ungrounded accusations paired with what he says to the girl cause the reader to doubt his trustworthiness. In the end, the audience comes to side with the girl rather than the speaker. Though he successfully engages the reader's attention, Catullus fails to convince him or her that his position is the correct one.

²² Catullus 10.32: "I use them as well as if I had bought them for myself."

²³ Catullus 10.33-34: "But you, witless and annoying, live badly, through whom no one can be careless."

The rhetorical devices featured in many of Catullus' poems often highlight the silences in his "conversations." Direct addresses seem to indicate that the poem will focus on a conversation or incident with the addressee while often masking other members of party; for example, Poem 29 is addressed to Romulus, but is more a condemnation of Caesar, Pompey and Mamurra. These other characters initially lurk in the background, much like the reader's presence in the poetic world. Rhetorical questions are a way to make a statement without actually saying it. They indirectly lead the reader to the interpretation that the narrator intends. When "Catullus" addresses asides to the reader, he gives him or her information that was not included in the actual conversation or interaction. The asides both draw attention to the things left unsaid in the conversation and the information that the narrator shares with the reader in the safety of the poetic world. In helping to draw out these silences in the poems, these rhetorical devices demonstrate the poet's prowess in his craft and authority over the structure of the poem.

In Poem 10, the narrator's asides draw the reader into the conversation between himself and Varus' girlfriend. He sets the scene of a chance meeting between friends that leads to a conversation about his recent trip to Bithynia. By pretending to relate a direct conversation, Catullus makes the reader feel as if he or she is present in the forum listening to the exchange. The narrator pauses between exchanges to give the reader additional information about his opinions of Varus' girlfriend in an effort to make him or her view the *scortillum* as he does. However, the discrepancy between what "Catullus" says about the girlfriend and the actions and speeches he relates indicate that his judgments may not be entirely accurate.

As we have seen with Poem 10, Catullus often strives to bring the reader into the world of the poem and in a way to make him or her an observer of the conversation. In the process of doing this, he attempts to direct the reader's perception of events to match his own interpretation.

By making use of strategies such as direct address, rhetorical questions and asides to the reader, the narrator reveals his role in providing information and focusing the reader's attention. Thus, the "Catullus" of the poems can be seen as a presence both in the poem's events and as the craftsman of the poetics.

Chapter 1: Invective

A central issue to any discussion of the poems of Catullus is what persona provides the narration – Catullus himself or some voice adopted by the poet to speak on his behalf – and what this speaker’s purpose is in telling about the events he describes. Many of the poems seem autobiographical and several even include a “Catullus” character.²⁴ Yet, the question remains: who is the person speaking, and what is his relationship to the characters in the poem and to the reader? While the Lesbia poems seem to be written from the perspective of a lover, both successful and jilted, the mythological poems (Poems 61-68) are narrated by a distant observer. The invective poems show someone acutely aware of personal wrongs and the degradation of the Roman state. In each case, the poet uses certain stylistic and rhetorical strategies to direct the reader’s response to his often ambiguous poetry and to provide him or her with a specific interpretation of the events narrated, often inviting him or her to come to the same conclusions about the poem’s subject. These devices make the audience members aware of their own role as observers, while also inviting them to visualize themselves inside the realm of the poem. In some cases, the narrator makes use of direct address and second person verbs to create the feeling of a conversation between the poet and the reader. Other poems employ rhetorical strategies, such as rhetorical questions. In many cases, the poet’s diction puts the reader in a certain mindset. In the invective poems, Catullus uses all of these strategies as he attempts to show the reader the faults of his target. The use of rhetorical questions and propagandistic language in Poem 29 is a prime example of this type of focalization.

²⁴ For example, Poems 6, 8 and 51.

In Poem 29, Catullus discusses the excess and sexual immorality of Mamurra, one of Caesar's officers in Gaul and Britain. Through a series of seemingly generic addresses, Catullus accuses Caesar and Pompey of being complicit with these sins:

*Quis hoc potest uidere, quis potest pati,
nisi impudicus et uorax et aleo,
Mamurram habere quod Comata Gallia
habebat uncti et ultima Britannia?
cinaede Romule, haec uidebis et feres? 5
et ille nunc superbus et superfluens
perambulabit omnium cubilia,
ut albulus columbus aut Adoneus?
cinaede Romule, haec uidebis et feres?
es impudicus et uorax et aleo. 10
eone nomine, imperator unice,
fuiſti in ultima occidentis insula,
ut ista ueſtra diffututa mentula
ducenties comesset aut trecenties?
quid est alid sinistra liberalitas? 15
parum expatruit an parum elluatus est?
paterna prima lancinata sunt bona,
secunda praeda Pontica, inde tertia
Hibera, quam scit amnis aurifer Tagus:
nunc Galliae timetur et Britanniae. 20
quid hunc malum fouetis? aut quid hic potest
nisi uncta deuorare patrimonia?
eone nomine †urbis opulentissime†
socer generque, perdidistis omnia?²⁵*

Who is able to see this, who is able to endure, unless he is unchaste and greedy and a gamester, that Mamurra has what ointment Leafy Gaul and furthest Britain have? Wanton Romulus, will you look at and bear these things? And that man, now arrogant and overly abundant, wanders through the bedrooms of all men, just as a white pigeon or Adonis? Wanton Romulus, will you look at and bear these things? You are unchaste and greedy and a gamester. For this reason, O sole general, have you been in the furthest island of the west, in order that that *mentula* of yours, exhausted by indulgence, might eat through two-hundred or three-hundred? What else is perverse generosity? Has he squandered enough or has he devoured enough? First the ancestral possessions were mangled, then the Pontic booty, from there Spain was third, which the gold-bearing River Tagus knows: now he is feared in Gaul and Britain. Why do you cherish this evil? Or what is he

²⁵ Catullus 29.1-24. All Latin text is taken from the OCT.

capable of besides devouring sumptuous inheritances? For this reason, O most dutiful of the City, father-in-law and son-in-law, did you destroy everything?²⁶

The poet employs the use of ten rhetorical questions, all of which have an accusatory tone of “how can you allow this?” and are addressed to *Cinaede Romule* (line 5, 9). The use of second person verbs (*videbis, feres, fovebis, perdidistis*) highlights these questions as a direct attack on the addressee. The tone demonstrates that the speaker cannot believe that “Romulus,” the poem’s addressee, sees the actions of Mamurra and continues to do nothing about it. This lack of condemnation suggests that “Romulus” must also be a person of ill-repute, as Catullus suggests in the question posed in the third-person in lines 2-3: *quis potest pati / nisi impudicus et vorax et aleo...*²⁷ The narrator even goes as far as to assert that these insults accurately describe “Romulus” by repeating them, with the second person of *sum*, in line 10: *es impudicus et vorax et aleo*.²⁸ The indefinite pronoun, *quis*, of the initial question can clearly be linked to “Romulus,” as he appears in the next few lines; however, the indefinite nature of the *quis* implies that the reader may also be involved in this address as someone capable of allowing these actions (discussed fully in the following analysis of the poem). The following questions form a list of all of the misdeeds of Mamurra, deeds which “Romulus” (and possibly the reader) must be complicit in.

The severity of this accusation is increased once the reader understands whom the poet is addressing as “Romulus.” The name Romulus would have evoked ideas of kingship for the Roman readers. At the time this poem was written (55-54 BCE), a likely candidate for kingly references was Julius Caesar. This man, at this time as a member of the First Triumvirate, was continually increasing his power in Rome and within ten years he would be named dictator for

²⁶ All translations are my own.

²⁷ Catullus 29.2-3: “Who can allow this, unless (he is) unchaste and greedy and a gamester?”

²⁸ Catullus 29.10 (emphasis mine).

life. Clearly, his power was becoming increasingly like that of a king. This idea is confirmed by the conspirators who assassinated Caesar – they deemed it better to kill one prominent man than to return to the days of monarchy. Furthermore, the nickname “Romulus” was often used to indicate a man who made wide claims to power, Caesar to a fault.²⁹ The other addresses in the poem make abundantly clear that Caesar is the target. In line 11, he is called *imperator unice*,³⁰ an allusion to his conquest of Gaul. In the final line of the poem, Catullus addresses *socer generque*.³¹ This refers not only to Caesar, but also to Pompey, who was married to Caesar’s daughter, Julia. Through these references, Catullus makes it abundantly clear that Caesar and Pompey are the targets of the accusations expressed in this poem.

A further association with Caesar comes in the form of a reference to Venus.³² Mamurra is compared to a dove and Adonis: *ut albulus columbus aut Adoneus?*³³ The dove was Venus’ sacred animal and Adonis was a lover of Venus.³⁴ This comparison would remind a Roman reader that Caesar claimed to be descended from Aeneas, and thus from Venus. Catullus, by associating the lewd and immoral Mamurra with a lover of Venus, turns this relationship with Venus against Caesar.³⁵ If Venus, the goddess of love, takes such a disgusting man as a lover, can any of her descendants be good? By adding Venus into the poem, Catullus solidifies the inference that Caesar is meant to be the recipient of this invective.

While these references make it quite clear that Caesar is the intended recipient of this poem, Catullus uses his skill as a poet to broaden the audience implicated in these accusations.

From the very outset of the poem, he engages the attention and emotions of his readers. This first

²⁹ Both Garrison (1989) and Scott (1971) remark on this phenomenon and Catullus’ particular use of it in his poetry. It is perhaps particularly suitable for Caesar, given his claims to be a descendent of Aeneas through Romulus.

³⁰ Catullus 29.11: “sole ruler”

³¹ Catullus 29.24: “father-in-law and son-in-law.”

³² Minyard, “Critical Notes on Catullus,” 180.

³³ Catullus 29.8: “as a white dove or Adonis.”

³⁴ Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 10.

³⁵ Minyard, “Critical Notes on Catullus,” 180.

line poses two questions: *quis hoc potest uidere, quis potest pati*.³⁶ As previously mentioned, it would be quite logical to look forward to “Romulus” as the *quis* who allows these things; however, the lack of addressee in the first line and the postponement of “Romulus” allow this question immediately to involve the reader in the poem’s interrogation. Thus, from the very outset, Catullus has pulled the reader into a conversation with the narrator. The insults in line 2, which are repeated again in line 10 (*impudicus, vorax, aleo*), would make every reader want to distance him or herself from the type of person under consideration. At the same time, every reader likely could picture someone whom they would describe in this way. The address to “Romulus” in line 5 would seem to absolve the readers from any association with this condemnation; however, at this point Catullus has definitely caught the reader’s attention and stirred up a desire to know more about this wanton Romulus. Unfortunately, the readers may not like what they find in the rest of the poem.

In alignment with his tendency towards initial ambiguity, Catullus may use “Romulus” to address the Roman people as a whole. Catullus is notorious for having multiple meanings and references in mind with every word he uses or line he writes.³⁷ Thus, his repetition of the line, *Cinaede Romule, haec uidebis et feres?* (5, 9), indicates that he is thinking of “Romulus” in two different respects: once to address Caesar and a second time to address the Roman state. If this conjecture is accurate, then Catullus is also accusing the Roman people of condoning the actions of such men as Mamurra and Caesar. Such an association would cause the readers to question their own actions. The use of direct address and second person verbs forces the addressee to face

³⁶ Catullus 29.1: “Who is able to see this, who is able to allow this?”

³⁷ For this idea, see John-Douglas Minyard, “Critical Notes on Catullus 29” and William C. Scott, “Catullus and Caesar (C. 29).”

these accusations in a way that more traditional invective does not. In this respect, Catullus differs from other writers of invective, who normally wrote (or spoke) in the third person.³⁸

The poet further colors this address by adding the adjective *cinaedus*, wanton. The sexual connotations of this adjective increase the derogatory nature of the attack.³⁹ To the Romans, sexual immorality was one of the gravest qualities a citizen could possess.⁴⁰ As a result, addressing someone with a sexually charged adjective was considered particularly offensive. By indicating a lack of sexual morality, Catullus is once again aligning the addressee with Mamurra, one of the worst offenders.⁴¹ He also calls into question the morality of the men in charge of the state, especially Caesar, who had a dubious past. Taken as an address to the Roman state as a whole, this insult accuses all Roman men of this sexual immorality and moral corruption. With this one address, Catullus is effectively suggesting that the readers are complicit in (and perhaps responsible for) these actions by the simple fact that they passively stand by while this degradation occurs.⁴²

In his 1971 article “Critical Notes on Catullus 29,” John-Douglas Minyard suggests that Catullus’ diction in this poem aligns closely with prominent senatorial propaganda of this era: “one can discern the slogans and phrases used in the propaganda of the various political groups.”⁴³ In this poem, Catullus makes use of words common in senatorial propaganda: *malus*, *impudicus*, *perditus*, *liberalitas*, *corruptus*. These words appear in authors such as Sallust and

³⁸ Consider Cicero’s Verrine or Catiline orations or Sallust’s *Catalina*.

³⁹ For a full discussion of how insults function in address, see Dickey (2002), 163-185. In this chapter, she discusses the level of insult based on register (address among equals vs. free man to slave and so on) and type of adjective. The adjectives used here by Catullus are of the very lowest register and thus, quite offensive.

⁴⁰ See Edwards (1993), particularly the chapter “Sex in Literature,” for a full discussion of the nature of sexual transgressions in Ancient Rome.

⁴¹ Pavlock (2013) remarks on how the “sexually aggressive military man” allows his sexual appetite to infiltrate all aspects of his life.

⁴² In keeping with McNeill (2010)’s discussion of Catullus’ use of silence, the lack of a condemnation – thus, remaining silent about Mamurra’s actions – implies consent or approval.

⁴³ Minyard, “Critical Notes on Catullus 29,” 176.

Cicero as they criticize and condemn their colleagues for sexual immorality and greediness.⁴⁴

Use of this type of language emphasizes the invective nature of this poem and situates it in a particular genre of rhetoric used by a select class of citizens.

Catullus, however, innovates and makes these attacks personal by his use of second person verbs and direct address. Cicero and Sallust in their writing describe their opponents in the third person: Cicero generally uses this language in his orations as he is describing his opponent to the law court or the senate; Sallust describes the followers of Catiline and implies that the leader of such men must have a similar personality.⁴⁵ Thus, these men are one step removed from the men that they are rebuking because their accusations are not formulated as a direct attack on the person, but observations imparted to a third party. They engage the reader by painting a portrait for him or her to view, so to speak. In Catullus' poetry, on the other hand, the speaker directly addresses the target of his invective. This focuses the reader's attention on a certain type of man and even specific men who fit into that category. As previously discussed, Catullus may also include all Romans, and through them any other readers, with his address to "Romulus." Thus, he directly involves all his readers in these criticisms. In one respect, he emphasizes their role as spectators of these events with his questions about allowing these actions; yet, his direct address and use of the second person invite them to become a part of the poetic world. The series of questions increases the accusatory tone, anticipating a response from the reader that he or she does not condone these actions while the very nature of poetry denies him or her the ability to do so. The second person verbs force the addressee(s) to take heed of what the poet is saying by insinuating that the narrator has watched this person commit these acts and wants an explanation why the addressee has acted in this manner. This adds a strength to his

⁴⁴ Cf. Sallust's *Cat.* 14. 2-3, 35. 3; Cicero's *Att.* 14.

⁴⁵ Cf. Cicero *Att.* 2.21; Sallust *Cat.* 14.2-3, 48.5-8.

invective that is not found when the same accusations are made in the third person. When the speaker addresses “you,” it becomes much more difficult for a person to dodge the accusations. The second person points a finger directly at the poet’s target in a way that third person accusations do not. The reader asks, “who, *me?*” and Catullus responds, “Yes, *you,*” without naming names.

Now that we know some of the strategies Catullus used to focalize the reader’s response in Poem 29, it will be helpful to look at how he employs similar strategies in the other Mamurra poems. In the remainder of his corpus, Catullus refers to Mamurra by the nickname, “Mentula.” In Poem 94, a short two-line epigram about Mamurra’s adulterous nature, Catullus once again strikes up a conversation with his readers:

*Mentula moechatur. Moechatur mentula? Certe.
Hoc est quod dicunt: ipsa olera olla legit.*⁴⁶

The prick is an adulterer. Is the prick an adulterer? Truly.
This is what they say: The pot itself collects pot-herbs.

Catullus makes a statement, and then restates the sentiment as a question. Once again he draws the reader into a “conversation” by asking a question. Rather than leaving the answer up to the reader, Catullus provides an answer: “Surely.” The narrator provides a judgment, but then his question offers the reader the opportunity to judge for him/herself. However, the narrator quickly assures his audience that what he says is correct and then he makes a statement in support of his claim. The use of *dicunt* (2) to introduce this proverb references an unspecified group of people from outside the world of the poem. While this initially may seem to contradict the conversational tone of the epigram, even this statement can be interpreted as an appeal to the reader: “You know how the saying goes, don’t you?” It also implies that the reader will go

⁴⁶ Catullus 94.1-2.

against the opinion of the majority, if he or she attempts to defend Mamurra or to deny the claim made by the speaker. As with Poem 29, the narrator uses a form of address to draw the reader into a conversation. Once he has the reader's attention, he attempts to persuade him or her to see the matter as he does.

Another similarity between Poems 29 and 94 is the repetition of a phrase. Here in Poem 94, Catullus repeats the idea *mentula moechatur*. The repetition of the phrase and the change from a declaratory statement to a question creates an ambiguity of meaning. The first instance can be seen as simply a statement offered to anyone who might happen to chance upon it. It is easily ignored or overlooked. The inclusion of the second iteration, however, requires attention: why repeat this sentiment, and on top of that, why pose it as a question? It demands an acknowledgment of what he has said and the reader's agreement or contradiction. The repetition also invites a questioning of what the speaker is referring to with *mentula*. In his commentary on Catullus' poetry, Robinson Ellis suggests that the first use of *mentula* is as a nickname and the second refers to the *membrum virile* itself.⁴⁷ It is quite possible that the poet wants his reader to have both possible meanings in mind as he or she reads the rest of the poem. The word identifies the man himself as an adulterer through the use of his nickname. It also indicates the means through which this person commits his adultery, and thus how he got this nickname. Catullus once again demonstrates his mastery of ambiguity.

In Poem 114, Catullus once again attacks Mamurra under his nickname "Mentula." In this poem, he focuses on the deficiencies of Mamurra's estate at Firmum (modern Fermo) as a result of the master's greed:

*Firmano saltu non falso Mentula diues
fertur, qui tot res in se habet egregias,*

⁴⁷ Ellis (1889), 468.

aucipium omne genus, piscis, prata, arua ferasque.
nequiquam; fructus sumptibus exsuperat.
quare concedo sit diues, dum omnia desint. 5
*saltum laudemus, dum modo ipse egeat.*⁴⁸

Mentula is said to be rich with his not deceptive Firmian forest-pasture, which holds so many excellent items in itself, every type of bird-game, fish, meadows, ploughed fields and wild beasts. In vain: he exceeds the products with his spending. Therefore, I concede that he is a rich man, while he lacks all things. Let us praise forest-pasture, so long as he himself is poor.

In this poem, the speaker clearly states that he is making a value judgment: *quare concedo sit diues*.⁴⁹ The use of a first person singular verb tells the audience that everything previously said about Mamurra's country estate is the personal opinion of the narrator. His use of the verb *concedo* implies that the narrator is already involved in a discussion of Mamurra's wealth: it is as if he is responding to someone else's assertion that this man is indeed rich. In the last line the narrator then includes his audience in the conversation and these judgments about Mamurra: *saltum laudemus*.⁵⁰ The narrator believes that his audience, after hearing the list of resources that can be found in the forest on Mamurra's land, will naturally join him in praising this estate. Thus, he makes the assumption that he has persuaded the reader to agree with him and he or she will join him in his praise (and censure). The switch to the first person plural creates a new link between the narrator and the reader, joining them together in their attitude towards Mamurra.

In this poem, Catullus also uses asyndeton to convince the reader of his opinion about this "rich" man. He starts by telling the audience that the forest-pasture possesses "so many excellent things."⁵¹ The speaker follows this with a list of all of those many things: *aucipium omne genus, piscis, prata, arua ferasque*.⁵² The lack of connectives causes the list to rush upon

⁴⁸ Catullus 114.1-6.

⁴⁹ Catullus 114.5: "Therefore *I* concede that he is a rich man." (emphasis mine)

⁵⁰ Catullus 114. 6: "Let *us* praise the forest-pasture." (emphasis mine)

⁵¹ Catullus 114.2: *tot res...egregias*.

⁵² Catullus 114.3: "every type of bird-game, fish, meadows, ploughed fields and wild beasts"

the reader. The sheer number of resources to be found on Mamurra's estate overwhelms him or her. This effectively demonstrates the supposed wealth of Mamurra. The poet then chastises Mamurra's grandiose spending: *nequiquam; fructus sumptibus exsuperat*.⁵³ Despite the great amount of wealth, Mamurra spends more than his estate produces. Catullus seems to say that this should be enough riches for a man of Mamurra's status, yet this man overspends and eats up everything the land can offer. After setting up this contrast between Mamurra and his estate, the two first person verbs easily carry the reader along in the conversation until he or she is agreeing with Catullus and his opinion of Mamurra's excessiveness. Thus, this poem closely joins the narrator and speaker in their disdain for Mamurra.

In the following poem, Catullus continues the theme of criticizing Mamurra through a description of this estate at Firmum, providing a few more details to give the reader a clearer picture of the estate and the man who owns it:

*Mentula habet instar triginta iugera prati,
quadraginta arui: cetera sunt maria.
cur non diuitiis Croesum superare potis sit,
uno qui in saltu tot bona possideat,
prata arua ingentes siluas saltusque paludesque 5
usque ad Hyperboreos et mare ad Oceanum?
omnia magna haec sunt, tamen ipsest maximus ultro,
non homo, sed uero mentula magna minax.*⁵⁴

Mentula has approximately thirty acres of meadow, forty of ploughed fields: The rest are seas. Why can he not surpass Croesus in riches, he who possesses so many goods in one forest-pasture: meadows, ploughed fields, immense woods, and forest-pastures, and swamps, up to the Hyperboreans and to the sea, Ocean? All these things are great; nevertheless, the master himself is the greatest by far. Not a man, but truly a great menacing prick.

In this passage, Catullus uses a combination of rhetorical strategies to help the reader once again reach the conclusion that Mamurra is an imprudent, immoral man.⁵⁵ As with Poem 114, the

⁵³ Catullus 114.4: "In vain: he exceeds the products with his spending."

⁵⁴ Catullus 115.1-8.

narrator emphasizes the size of Mamurra's estate and the resources it has. Using asyndeton, he again creates an impressive list of the natural resources on the estate: *prata arua ingentes silvas saltusque paludesque*.⁵⁶ The lack of connectives causes the reader to rush through the list and leaves an impression that Mamurra's land is swimming in goods. The adjective *ingentes* helps to create a sense of vastness. At the end of the line, however, Catullus suddenly adds in conjunctions, the connective *-que*. It cannot be a coincidence that the two items offset by conjunctions – *saltus* and *paludes* – have little place in a list of productive assets. Meadows are good for grazing cattle and ploughed fields will produce grain and other crops. Woods will even produce berries and other edible items, as well as provide a place to hunt big game. A *saltus*, however, indicates a broken woodland area, a space only good for light grazing and hunting.⁵⁷ Swamps have absolutely no material value. Thus, in the space of a single line, the narrator forces the reader to re-evaluate the supposed wealth and prosperity of Mamurra's estate.

The position of these undesirable possessions at the end of the line, when a listener is poised to listen most attentively, increases the contrast between these two items and the rest of the list. The somewhat jarring inclusion of *saltus* and *paludes* indicates that something is not quite right about this estate. Thus, the reader is somewhat prepared to find out in the final line that this man is a *mentula magna minax*. Not only does Mamurra have so much greed that he includes swamps among his assets, but he is greedy in other respects as well. The suspicions aroused by the list in line 5 prove to be founded by the narrator's assertion in line 8. The speaker has effectively made his audience aware of their own ability to judge Mamurra and led them into the same opinion of the man's quality as he holds himself.

⁵⁵ Though it is not "conversational" in the way that the previously discussed devices are, the alliteration of *ingentes silvas saltusque paludesque* (line 5) and *mentula magna minax* (line 8) suggest that Catullus intended for the poem to be spoken.

⁵⁶ Catullus 115.5: "meadows, ploughed fields, immense woods, and springs, and swamps."

⁵⁷ Garrison, 168.

As with Poems 29 and 94, Catullus employs a question to make this poem seem more like a conversation. He poses a question to the reader: *cur non diuitiis Croesum superare potissit?*⁵⁸ The next lines both set up reasons why Mamurra should be wealthy and also explain why he is not: because he is *non homo, sed uero mentula magna minax*.⁵⁹ The question makes the reader consider why a man in possession of such an estate is not at least a little wealthy and then the narrator steps in to answer the question for the audience. Once again, the poet engages his readers in a conversation, pointing out questions they should be asking themselves and inviting them to judge Mamurra. By the end of the poem, he has shown them exactly how they should see the situation, giving them the answer to their unspoken questions, or rather, the questions he has placed in their minds through the course of the poem. By giving them the answer, the narrator has also reminded them of their own inability to respond to these questions.

In Poem 115, Catullus also makes use of repetition to highlight an aspect of his target's character. At the beginning of this poem, the narrator calls Mamurra by his nickname, "Mentula." From this point, the poem becomes more and more derogatory as it progresses. The last two lines drive home the poet's negative opinion of Mamurra and it is clear that he does not intend *mentula* to be some sort of cute nickname. Any disbelief on the reader's part that Catullus would be so brazen in speaking of a fellow Roman is entirely dispelled by the end of the poem with the targeted attack on this man and the use of the adjective *minax* to describe the *mentula*.

While these poems about Mamurra provide ample examples of Catullus' use of rhetorical strategies in his poetry, he does not constrain the use of such strategies to the Mamurra poems alone. He often uses various combinations of these techniques throughout his poetry. In many poems, he addresses a friend or acquaintance. These poems can have either light-hearted or

⁵⁸ Catullus 115.3: "Why can he not surpass Croesus in riches?"

⁵⁹ Catullus 115.8: "Not a man, but truly a great menacing prick."

accusatory tone or something in between. In some cases, it is ambiguous whether he intends the poem as a joke or an insult. In all of these poems, his conversational tone invites the reader to join in, whether friendly jest or malicious joke. Often, these criticisms have something to do with a girlfriend.

In Poem 6, Catullus jokes with his friend Flavius about Flavius' current girlfriend. The poem begins with a light-hearted teasing tone, but quickly shifts into an accusatory tone:

*Flavi, delicias tuas Catullo,
 ni sint illepidae atque inelegantes,
 uelles dicere nec tacere posses.
 uerum nescio quid febriculosi
 scorti diligis: hoc pudet fateri. 5
 nam te non uiduas iacere noctes
 nequiquam tacitum cubile clamat
 sertis ac Syrio fragrans oliuo,
 puluinusque peraeque et hic et ille
 attritus, tremulique quassa lecti 10
 argutatio inambulatioque.
 nam inista preualet nihil tacere.
 cur? non tam latera ecfututa pandas,
 ni tu quid facias ineptiarum.
 quare, quidquid habes boni malique, 15
 dic nobis. uolo te ac tuos amores
 ad caelum lepido uocare uersu.⁶⁰*

Flavius, unless she is uncharming and inelegant, you would wish to speak to Catullus, nor could you be silent, about your delight. But you love some little feverish prostitute: You are ashamed to confess it. For your bed, not at all silent, shouts that you spend non-celibate nights, the bed which is fragrant with garlands and Syrian olive oil. The cushion and the pillows, worn down both here and there, speak also, and the shaken creaking and walking about of the trembling couch, too. For remaining silent profits these things not at all. Why? You do not display your side worn out by sex, unless you do something frivolous. Therefore, whatever good and bad you have, tell us. I wish to call you and your love to the heavens with a charming verse.

The first word of the poem is a vocative address to Flavius. The use of a nomen (as opposed to cognomen, for example) informs the reader that the narrator and Flavius must be of equal social

⁶⁰ Catullus 6.1-17.

status.⁶¹ It also indicates some level of acquaintance between the two men, most likely friendship of some kind. Thus, from the outset Catullus has established that the main participants in this conversation are friends, or at the very least close acquaintances. This form of address helps to make the reader aware of the context of the “conversation” he or she is about to hear. To an extent, this also allows the reader to take on the role of a silent friend/acquaintance overhearing what the speaker has to say to his friend Flavius.⁶² The use of Catullus’ own name in the first line further enhances this idea. The balance of *Flavi* and *Catullo* at each end of line 1 invites the reader to envision these men as actors on a “stage” and him or herself as an audience member witnessing the scene as it unfolds.

The first three lines establish the tone of the poem and inform the audience what sort of conversation the speaker intends to have with Flavius. This poem is a request for information: Flavius has a new girlfriend and his friend wants to know about her. Thus, Catullus initially leads the reader to believe that this is a light-hearted exchange between friends about typical, daily life topics. However, difficulty arises because Flavius seems reluctant to talk about her: *uelles dicere nec tacere posses*.⁶³ This reluctance is first illustrated by the fact that the second person verb does not appear close to the address to Flavius, but two lines later: Flavius is so reluctant to speak that his verbs are delayed by two lines and instead the speaker seems to give the reader his own opinion of the girl, thus introducing the type of relationship that persists between the two men through the whole poem. Flavius refuses to speak and so the narrator speaks for him. This dynamic hooks the reader’s attention and excites a desire to know more about this girl that Flavius does not want to describe and the speaker cannot wait to do so.

⁶¹ For a discussion of how the choice of which name to use in an address can tell the reader about the relationship of speaker and addressee, see Dickey (2002).

⁶² In his article “Cum tacent, clamant,” McNeill remarks on Flavius’ silence as an indication of Catullus’ authority over the situation. In effect, Flavius has as little control of the conversation as the reader does.

⁶³ Catullus 6.3: “You would wish to speak, nor could you keep silent.”

The subjunctives in a contrary-to-fact condition further indicate that Flavius is withholding information in a situation in which he would normally gladly speak. The reader might question why this is the case and the speaker answers for it: *ni sint illepidae atque inelegantes*.⁶⁴ This statement casts suspicion on the nature of Flavius' girlfriend. Normally, he would be willing to talk about a girl, but he is not in this situation. The only reason he would refrain from speaking is if there is something wrong with her. Thus, his silence indicates that she is not charming or elegant. The speaker confirms this suspicion by calling Flavius' girl *nescio quid febriculosi / scorti*.⁶⁵ Not only is this girl inelegant, but she is also nothing more than a prostitute; of course, Flavius is ashamed to talk about her. While these seem to be harsh things to say about a friend's girlfriend, the speaker maintains a light-hearted joking tone. This contrast between the content and the tone of the poem creates confusion for the reader: the reader does not know if what has been said about the girl is true or if this is simply a case of friends teasing each other.

The next lines explain on what authority the speaker makes these claims about the nature of Flavius' girlfriend: the very bed has told him. In a still comical tone, the bed cries out about how its owner is spending his nights: *nam te non uiduas iacere noctes / nequiquam tacitum cubile clamat*.⁶⁶ The bed, an inanimate object, here announces for the entire world to hear what type of relationship Flavius has with his girlfriend. Indeed, this bed not only has the ability to shout; but in fact, it is not even capable of silence (*nequiquam tacitum*)! Added to the testimony of the bed is the evidence provided by the cushion (*pulvinus*, line 9), the pillows (*perae*, line 9), the creaking (*argutatio*, line 10), and the movement (*inambulatio*, line 10). With all of these objects providing a witness to his activity, Flavius has no hope of keeping the nature of his

⁶⁴ Catullus 6.2: "Unless she is uncharming and inelegant."

⁶⁵ Catullus 6.4-5: "Some little feverish prostitute."

⁶⁶ Catullus 6.6-7: "For your bed, not at all silent, shouts that you spend non-celibate nights."

girlfriend secret. By attributing speech to all of these objects, Catullus has made it clear to the reader how widespread Flavius' reputation is. Without saying it outright, Catullus has condemned Flavius of sexual promiscuity. By presenting the argument through the inanimate objects that take part in this act, he has brought the reader to this conclusion as well. In a few short lines, the poem's light-hearted joking between friends has been tainted by a somewhat heartless accusation.

The speech of the bed and pillows also calls into the question the nature of conversation: if a bed and pillows can speak, who is listening? These inanimate objects observed what took place between Flavius and his girlfriend and are now relaying that information to the speaker who then presents it to the reader. This simple reference to a talking bed draws attention to the very nature of how information is spread: rumor. Thus, perhaps the reader, who has received this information from his or her "observation" of the conversation between Flavius and "Catullus," is now supposed to pass on that information just as the bed and pillows (and the speaker) have. Though the reader has no ability to do this within the realm of the poem, Catullus invites him or her to follow the example of the bed (and himself) and to tell others what they have learned about Flavius and his girlfriend through reading the poem.

The speaker continues the attack on Flavius and completes the descent into harshness with lines 13-14: *non tam latera ecfututa pandas, / ni tu quid facias ineptiarum.*⁶⁷ The idea is that Flavius would not be ashamed to talk about these things if he was not doing something foolish or immoral. His very lack of speech condemns his actions. This sentiment is reminiscent of the opening lines, but the tone here is no longer joking. This is a serious accusation that Flavius is acting in an immoral way. The reader, as an observer of this conversation, realizes that he or she

⁶⁷ Catullus 6.13-14: "You do not display your side worn out by sex, unless you do something frivolous."

has just witnessed the speaker condemning Flavius and his way of life, a way of life that was popular in Rome at this time. This shift in tone clears any lingering confusion the reader might have from the light-hearted approach in the beginning of the poem. It is now clear to the reader that this is not a case of friend's joking together, but a malicious attack on and condemnation of Flavius and the new girl he has chosen to spend time with.

The ending lines of the poem attempt to return to the light-hearted joking of the opening by offering Flavius a chance to defend himself: *quare, quidquid habes boni malique, / dic nobis*.⁶⁸ He can say that he has something good (*quidquid...boni*, line 15). This is his opportunity to say that the bed has misrepresented him. After laying out what is reported about Flavius, the speaker supposedly gives the man himself a chance to tell his version. By telling Flavius to speak "to us" (*nobis*, line 16), "Catullus" calls the reader to witness Flavius' testimony. Since the reader has already heard "Catullus's" opinion of the situation, he or she is in the perfect position to judge which representation is true.

The final two lines express the poet's desire to immortalize Flavius and his girlfriend in poetry: *uolo te ac tuos amores / ad caelum lepido uocare uersu*.⁶⁹ From these lines it becomes clear that the speaker's plan the entire time has been to gain fodder for his own selfish purposes. He is looking for anything that he can write a poem about because a poem immortalizes not only its subject, but also the poet himself. The reader plays a crucial role in this immortalization as he or she perpetuates the author's reputation by discussing his poems and their content. On a closer look, the reader realizes that Catullus has deceived everyone. He says he wishes to immortalize Flavius through song. In the initial read, this statement seems to be referring to some time in the future. However, when we think about what the poet is actually saying, we realize that Catullus

⁶⁸ Catullus 6.15-16: "Therefore, whatever good and bad you have, tell us."

⁶⁹ Catullus 6.16-17: "I wish to call you and your love to the heavens with a charming verse."

has done just this. This wish is the last line of a poem that forever immortalizes Flavius' relationship. Thus, Catullus has deceived not only Flavius (in respect to the tone of the conversation), but also the reader (as to the actual purpose in writing) with this poem. The reader has unknowingly participated in the act of immortalization simply by reading the poem.

As with Poem 29, the direct address to Flavius along with the use of second person verbs serves to focalize the reader's attention on Catullus' target. These second person verbs set up a conversation with Flavius for which the readers serve as an audience. The poet places Flavius' reluctance to speak about his girlfriend in contrast with the unusual talkativeness of the bed, pillows, and cushion. The way the poet portrays the situation convinces the reader/audience that Flavius is immoral and worthy of reproach. At the very end through a twist, the reader realizes that he or she has been deceived, and in a way implicated, by the poet.

These poems demonstrate the methods that Catullus employs in his poetry to engage the reader's attention and to immerse him or her into the realm of the poem. His first task is always to pull the reader into the conversation in some way: by addressing the reader along with the addressee of the poem (Poem 29) or by making him or her observers of his interactions with friends (Poem 6). Once he has the reader's attention, he uses specific diction to convey a certain tone. He often uses ambiguity to make the reader question what is actually going on. In the end, a twist generally occurs to make the reader see that he or she has completely misjudged the situation as it was first presented. Throughout the poems, these devices include the reader in a "conversation" of sorts and invite him or her to cross the boundary between the poem itself and the world outside. These strategies often emphasize the reader's role as observer while simultaneously inviting him or her to take a more active part in what is happening in the poem.

By these invitations to the reader, the speaker asks him or her to enter a conversation that will always be one-sided.

Chapter 2: Lesbia and Love

Chapter 1 explored Catullus' use of rhetorical strategies to direct the reader's perception of a poem's theme – interactions with and feelings towards rivals and enemies – and to create a picture of the speaker, while simultaneously attacking political foes and so-called friends. Beginning with Poem 29 (criticism of Mamurra), I demonstrated some of the ways in which Catullus invites his reader to join him in criticism of political and social rivals. This survey pointed out that in his attacks the speaker of the poems shows little interest in disguising his criticism as balance or unbiased; and in fact, he often uses these rhetorical strategies to his own interpretation of the interactions with his enemies and to influence the reader's response or bias against the person in question. These strategies, however, are not confined to the invective poems. A look at the poems about love, particularly those pertaining to his love affair with "Lesbia," finds the poet employing many of the same techniques. With these poems, the speaker attempts to distance himself from the heartache he feels at Lesbia's betrayal; yet, he once again shows his readers that his portrayal of events is highly crafted to reveal a retrospective interpretation of this betrayal. By looking at the various ways the speaker's personal feelings affect his point of view, it is possible to draw conclusions about the image of nature and character that the speaker wants the reader to accept.

Even in a poem that is ostensibly about Lesbia, Catullus cannot keep from criticizing Mamurra, this time through his girlfriend Ameana. Catullus uses many of the same strategies seen in the invective poems in Poem 43. By bringing in another woman, Catullus opens the way for an introduction of Lesbia; yet, comparisons with Lesbia will provide another way to view the speaker himself. As the analysis of this poem will demonstrate, in the "Lesbia" cycle, these

strategies provide the reader with a picture of the speaker's subjective point of view as seen by the way he describes his lover:

*Salve, nec minimo puella naso
nec bello pede nec nigris ocellis
nec longis digitis nec ore sicco
nec sane nimis elegante lingua,
decoctoris amica Formiani. 5
ten prouincia narrat esse bellam?
tecum Lesbia nostra comparatur?
o saeclum insapiens et infacetum!*⁷⁰

Hello, girl with the not small nose, nor pretty feet, nor little black eyes, nor long fingers, nor a dry mouth, nor a really too elegant tongue, girlfriend of the bankrupt Formian. Does the province say that you are pretty? Is my Lesbia compared with you? O generation, unwise and not witty!

Once again, Catullus addresses the subject of his poem – *Salve...puella!* – making use of the vocative and an imperative, though he does not actually provide her name in this poem. The series of physical features, which follows (lines 1-4), invites the reader to create a mental picture of this girl; however, in the abstract. This is a list of negatives – “not small nose,” “not pretty feet,” and so on – which creates an alienating effect: the reader is left in a state where nothing *is*, but instead everything is *not*. Since these features are presented as things Ameana is not, the audience is left confused about her appearance. One must first decide what the speaker means by “small” or “long” and then try to picture a nose or fingers that do not fit into that description. To phrase it another way, the litotes of the poem necessitates work on the part of the reader to determine exactly what features this girl has (what does “not small” mean? “Big.” What does he mean by “big”? and so on). In an attempt to create a picture of all of the features Ameana does *not* have, the reader effectively visualizes her opposite: the beautiful girl. Given the comparison set up at the end of the poem, this positive image is likely the very picture of Lesbia that the poet

⁷⁰ Catullus 43.1-8.

wishes to convey to his audience. In asking the audience to visualize Aemeana, Catullus has compelled the reader to visualize Lesbia also.

A further conjecture about Aemeana's character comes from her connection with Mamurra: *decoctoris amica Formiani*.⁷¹ Catullus attacks Mamurra for his greed through references to his estate at Formiae in Poems 114 and 115. In this earlier poem, the poet links Aemeana with this social outcast, an association, which suggests that she possesses the same rapacious nature that her boyfriend does. Added to her crime of lacking beauty is the fact that she also lacks self-control. When we consider the sketch of Mamurra's character provided in Poems 29, 114, and 115, we must ask what sort of girl would consent to being his lover. This connection casts additional doubts about the exact character of Aemeana. This poem is a very pointed attack on her, as *amica* is in the vocative case. Once again, Catullus uses an address to make the target of his criticism unmistakable. Simultaneously, the connection of Mamurra and Aemeana as lovers invites the audience to consider what sort of man Lesbia's lover must be. If Lesbia herself is the exact opposite of Aemeana, then her lover, the speaker of this poem, must also be the exact opposite of Mamurra.

Catullus also uses two rhetorical questions to address the girl further, a method seen in the invective poetry. Both questions imply disbelief on the part of the speaker: "Does the province [*really*] say that you are pretty? Is my Lesbia [*really*] compared with you?"⁷² Given the features listed in the first four lines, it does not seem possible that this creature could be called beautiful or compare with Lesbia, the pinnacle of beauty and femininity, in any way. By asking these questions, Catullus is inviting the audience to laugh with him at this joke of a comparison while also asking them to visualize Lesbia as the positives of all of the features Aemeana does not

⁷¹ Catullus 43.5: "girlfriend of the bankrupt Formian."

⁷² Catullus 43.6-7

have – Lesbia *does* have a small nose, pretty feet, long fingers, and so on. The repetition of the pronoun, *te*, in these lines, combined with the use of the first person, possessive adjective, yet again underlines not only the relationship between Ameana and Lesbia, but also Lesbia and Catullus as the positive counterparts to Ameana and Mamurra.

By inviting the reader to visualize Lesbia through the lens of Ameana, the narrator not only criticizes his enemy, Mamurra, and his girlfriend, but he also provides a picture of the perfect Lesbia, which informs the reader about the speaker himself. This list of features conveys what qualities and characteristics he values in a woman. Also, the fact that such a beautiful woman would consent to be his lover raises his own status; he must have at least a few merits if such a woman could love him. Thus, through a description of Lesbia, the speaker allows the audience to get a better picture of his own character.

The final line of the poem indicates the speaker's disgust with those around him: *o saeculum insapiens et infacetum!*⁷³ This whole generation must lack wisdom and wit if they can believe Ameana pretty or on the same level as his beloved Lesbia. Similar to the *cinaede Romule* address (Catullus 29.5, 9), this exclamation includes all of Catullus' readers; thus, indicating that anyone in the audience is similarly *insapiens* and *infacetus* if he or she allows this comparison between Ameana and Lesbia. However, knowing how vitriolic Catullus was towards Mamurra in his invective poetry, the reader must question whether Catullus' perception of Ameana is not simply clouded by dislike of Mamurra...and love of Lesbia. This casts a doubt that Catullus might actually be *insapiens* and *infacetus* rather than the man excelling all others that he seems to wish the reader to see. In telling the audience that they should not compare these two women, the speaker has made the comparison himself. In making the comparison, his biases have likely

⁷³ Catullus 43.8.

led him to exaggerate both the negative qualities of Mamurra and Ameana and the positive qualities of himself and Lesbia.

Catullus provides the reader with a different sort of comparison in Poem 51: comparison of himself with another man who receives the attentions of Lesbia. As opposed to Poem 43, in which Lesbia was compared to another man's girlfriend, this poem creates a comparison between the speaker himself and another potential lover of Lesbia. In this poem, "Catullus" sees Lesbia interacting with another man and describes his physical reactions of jealousy to it. By creating a picture of one sort of man that Lesbia associates with, the reader is invited to compare the speaker, who is excluded from this conversation, to his potential rival:

*Ille mi par esse deo uidetur,
ille, si fas est, superare diuos
qui sedens aduersus identidem te
spectat et audit*

*dulce ridentem, misero quod omnis 5
eripit sensus mihi: nam simul te,
Lesbia, adspexi, nihil est super mi

*lingua sed torpet, tenuis sub artus 10
flamma demanat, sonitu suopte
tintinant aures, gemina teguntur
lumina nocte.*

*otium, Catulle, tibi molestum est:
otio exsultas nimiumque gestis.
otium et reges prius et beatas 15
perdidit urbes.⁷⁴*

That man seems to me to be equal to a god. He, if it is speakable, seems to surpass the gods, who sitting opposite repeatedly looks at and hears you as you laugh sweetly; a fact which snatches away all senses for wretched me: For, Lesbia, as soon as I look towards you, nothing remains for me. But, my tongue grows numb, a flame flows down under my tender limbs, my ears ring with their own sound, my eyes are covered by twin night. Leisure, Catullus, is annoying to you: you

⁷⁴ Catullus 51.1-16.

rejoice in leisure and you exult excessively. Leisure has previously destroyed both kings and happy cities.

From the very first line, the speaker alerts the reader to the fact that this encounter is being viewed through his eyes and recounted from his own point of view: *Ille mi par esse deo videtur* (emphasis mine).⁷⁵ The man with Lesbia *seems* equal to a god, but this is a judgment given by the speaker. As we find out from the rest of the poem, he is in a heightened state of emotion as he views Lesbia speaking and laughing with another man. With such intense emotion, it is doubtful that he can make clear observations about what he is seeing. Thus, the audience should hesitate to believe that the interaction occurred exactly as “Catullus” tells it.

Even if we could trust the speaker completely, we would have to question what the phrase “equal to a god” actually means. Is this a reference to his looks? Or possibly it is his command over those around him? Maybe this man excels in wit or humor. The speaker does not elaborate what aspects of a god this man equals, but the next line revises the statement: he is not just equal to the gods, but surpasses them (*superare divos*)!⁷⁶ As with Ameana in Poem 43, the audience is invited to visualize this man; yet, Catullus once again provides us with information that is difficult to form into a clear picture. Perhaps the speaker wants us to believe that simply the privilege of enjoying Lesbia’s company raises a man to divine status. By inviting this visualization of Lesbia’s conversation partner, the audience is invited to ask questions about the speaker’s own status: since he is not permitted to share in the conversation, does this mean he is not god-like? As a party excluded from the conversation, the speaker could be seen as a mere mortal receiving a brief glimpse of the interactions between a divine couple. His status as a mere observer, a person outside of the realm of the conversation, deprives him of any control over the

⁷⁵ Catullus 51.1: “He *seems to me* to be equal to a god.”

⁷⁶ It is also of interest to note that this idea does not appear in the original Sappho poem. This is an indication that Catullus is appropriating this poem for his own purposes, which will be discussed later.

situation and any opportunity to engage with Lesbia and her new lover. Whatever qualities it is that Catullus associates this ‘god-like’ man, it is clear that he wants to possess them himself so that he, too, can interact with Lesbia and regain control of his relationships. As the narrator becomes aware of his lack of control, so too the reader realizes that Lesbia has the upper hand in this situation.

The second stanza includes an address to Lesbia and the second person pronoun, *te*. This address, similar to those discussed in Chapter 1, serves to accuse Lesbia. For whatever reason, the speaker does not think that she should give her attention to this other man. Her interaction with another man, and thus the exclusion of the speaker, is what sends him into a physical (and probably emotional) breakdown. The tone indicates that the reader cannot believe that Lesbia would talk and laugh with some other guy. The speaker is jealous of any laughter bestowed on another person. He is also conscious of his own exclusion from this conversation. This address to Lesbia indicates an attempt to gain Lesbia’s attention and draw it away from her god-like companion, a desire that will prove to be in vain. In contrast to previous poems, in which direct address has successfully gained the attention of the addressee, in the present poem the narrator cannot even come close enough to Lesbia to engage with her. In fact, following his first address to her (*te, Lesbia, adspexi, 7*) the speaker is rendered *nihil* (7). His attempts at catching Lesbia’s attention only reinforce the fact that he is completely separated from her by this rival.

While the attempt to gain Lesbia’s attention seems fruitless, the speaker succeeds in drawing the reader’s focus away from the couple and onto himself. Throughout the first two stanzas, he makes use of first person pronouns – *mi, mihi* – to return attention to him as another member of the audience watching this interaction between Lesbia and another admirer.⁷⁷ Similar

⁷⁷ *Mi* or *mihi* appears three times: lines 1, 6 and 7.

to the readers of Catullus' poem, the narrator himself is only a spectator, not a participant, of this conversation. In fact, like the reader, he cannot hear the words spoken between Lesbia and her lover, making him almost as distant from the conversation as the reader is. While these pronouns alert the reader to his or her presence, they also serve to remind us that this entire encounter is being told from his point of view, and therefore likely colored by his insecurities. As the narrator focuses more and more attention on himself and his own reactions to what he has observed, he in a sense draws the reader into his own mind. He has just painted the picture from his own point of view and now he tells the reader how to react to the scene he or she has witnessed alongside the speaker.

While the third stanza lacks personal pronouns, it is filled with the speaker's physical reaction to seeing Lesbia with another man. Everything from his tongue to his eyes quit functioning. While his use of first person pronouns in the first two stanzas indicates a desire to catch Lesbia's attention, none of the physical reactions described would be apparent to Lesbia and her companion. It seems that he is not participating in the conversation as it is, so a numb tongue would not affect his participation, though this detail does once again call attention to his lack of control and inability to enter the conversation. A flame in his limbs would not manifest itself to his companions unless possibly someone touches him. A ringing in his ears simply prevents him from hearing Lesbia's laughter and a lack of sight keeps him from seeing their actions. At the same time, it seems as if the speaker is making an extra effort to describe these reactions to the reader. This inconsistency between what is happening in the moment and how the speaker describes it to the reader indicates that the narrator might be exaggerating to make himself seem more pitiable or more in love, simultaneously communicating the internal gnawing of jealousy. As he describes these physical, yet internal, reactions to what he sees, the speaker

draws further within himself. Since he has succeeded in drawing the audience's attention to himself, the readers are drawn along with him further into his personal thoughts and reflections on the situation.

At this point, it should be mentioned that this poem is an adaptation of Sappho fragment 31. Although the first three stanzas of Catullus' poem match closely with the Sappho poem, the poet manages to assert his own voice into the poem. Though this is a translation of Sappho, it is "strikingly refracted and personalized by the insertion of the names Lesbia and Catullus into the poem."⁷⁸ In addition to adding his own and Lesbia's names, he identifies the speaker as male with the masculine adjective *misero* (5). He also provides us with elements unique to his poem: the second line of his poem and his final stanza. The second line of Poem 51 does not match anything in Sappho's original and some scholars have suggested that it is an indication of Catullus' "Roman" thoughts permeating the Greek poem.⁷⁹ The use of the word *fas* conveys a sense of piety not found in the Sapphic original. It also contains a uniquely Roman sense of right and wrong. The assonance of the added verse with the first line also indicates Catullus' own stylistic preferences. This break from Greek thought and sensibility is completed in Catullus' final stanza, which indicates that he has made this poem his own and intends the entirety to be read in his voice in connection with the other poems about Lesbia.

When it comes to the fourth stanza, Catullus makes an even clearer departure from his Sapphic inspiration. In the Sappho fragment, the fourth stanza seems to continue the description of the narrator's physical reaction to seeing the beloved interacting with someone else. Catullus,

⁷⁸ Wray (2001), 90.

⁷⁹ Cf., Wray (2001), 91. Also, Ferrari (1938), Fordyce (1961) and Quinn (1970).

on the other hand, uses the fourth stanza of his poem to address himself.⁸⁰ After having withdrawn into his own physical pain in the third stanza, the fourth stanza seems to present his internal thoughts and reflection on what he has just seen, thus giving the reader a glimpse into his psyche. Continuing the idea of second person address being used to criticize the addressee, the speaker is here calling out “Catullus” for spending too much time in leisure. Thus, through a second person address, the narrator externalizes “Catullus” in the midst of a deeply internal reflection. By the repetition of *otium* in these lines, the narrator draws attention to the lack of business as what has given him the opportunity to witness this exchange between Lesbia and her admirer. The last line reminds Catullus that leisure is often destructive: *otium et reges prius et beatas / perdidit urbes*.⁸¹ Leisure destroys life or, at least, those who have too much of it. In this poem, the speaker has to remind “Catullus,” that is himself, that he is not acting like a proper Roman male. This address attempts to distance Catullus from this poisonous relationship with Lesbia. At the same time, this rebuke can also be seen as a criticism of Lesbia’s admirer – he also is spending too much time in leisure and should return to his proper business.

While Poem 51 primarily compares the two male subjects, the poet also sets up a connection between Lesbia and the poetess, Sappho. The very name “Lesbia” recalls another “Lesbia” (a.k.a. the resident of Lesbos), Sappho. Thus in a way, we can equate Lesbia with the female poet. According to Benjamin Eldon Stevens, Sappho was “revered as a poet in a way that seemed generally to remove her from comparison with ordinary women as well as men.”⁸² Once again, we have a woman above comparison, just as Catullus seems to want us to view Lesbia in Poem 43. Sappho’s skill as a poet would only ingratiate her to a fellow poet, making Lesbia’s

⁸⁰ Clark (2008) argues that Catullus leaves this stanza of the Sappho out to avoid making the voice of the poem too feminine. In Republican Rome, it was not acceptable for a man to exhibit visible signs of emotion. Wray (2001) furthers this idea by discussing the masculinity of this final stanza in the Catullus poem.

⁸¹ Catullus 51.15-16: “Leisure has previously destroyed both kings and happy cities.”

⁸² Stevens (2013), 255.

association with her another reason for Catullus to desire Lesbia's company. At the same time, Catullus seems to want to gain control over both Sappho and Lesbia. Poem 51 appears to be an attempt by the poet to take one of Sappho's poems and make it his own. By changing the voice and making his own additions, it can be argued that he succeeds in gaining control over the poetess. In a similar way, it is clear that the speaker would like to have control of Lesbia, to stop her from speaking and laughing with another man. Perhaps immortalizing this event in a poem successfully accomplishes that goal. In any case, the poem ends with a final image of Catullus, rather than of Lesbia with a new lover, thus cementing his position of power.

Both Poem 43 and Poem 51 provide examples of Catullus using comparisons involving Lesbia to give the audience a glimpse at his own character. Poem 43 compares her with Mamurra's girlfriend, Ameana. This comparison invites the reader to visualize Lesbia, but also to make conclusions about what type of person the speaker is in comparison with Mamurra. Poem 51, on the other hand, directly compares the speaker with another man, one who benefits from Lesbia's attention. In making the comparison, the narrator prompts the reader to picture the scene of Lesbia speaking with another man, thus in a way making the reader an observer of this elicited conversation and present to witness the speaker's reaction to it. Simultaneously, the connection between Lesbia and Sappho allows more insight into the poet's desires. Both of these poems demonstrate that Catullus uses instances surrounding Lesbia to invite the reader to create mental pictures that then lead to a revelation about something pertaining to the narrator. In this way, the "Lesbia" cycle can be seen as yet another way in which the poet directs the reader's attention until he or she arrives at some information about the speaker's character, wishes, and desires. With this in mind, a look at some other "Lesbia" poems will help us to draw a better picture of "Catullus," the speaker.

Poem 8, though never actually naming Lesbia, provides another illuminating comparison: the lovers as they once were with their relationship post-break up. The bits and pieces of information that the speaker provides in this poem help the audience to piece together a picture of this troubled relationship. Through the progression of the poem, the speaker reflects on what their relationship was like, how he currently feels, and what he should do next. He also invites the reader to witness his internal shift from passionate misery to resolved indifference:

*Miser Catulle, desinas ineptire,
 et quod uides perisse perditum ducas.
 fulsere quondam candidi tibi soles,
 cum uentitabas quo puella ducebat
 amata nobis quantum amabitur nulla. 5
 ibi illa multa cum iocosa fiebant,
 quae tu uolebas nec puella nolebat,
 fulsere uere candidi tibi soles.
 nunc iam illa non uolt: tu quoque inpote<ns noli>,
 nec quae fugit sectare, nec miser uiue, 10
 sed obstinata mente perfer, obdura.
 uale, puella. iam Catullus obdurat,
 nec te requiret nec rogabit inuitam.
 at tu dolebis, cum rogaberis nulla.
 scelestas, uae te, quae tibi manet uita? 15
 quis nunc te adibit? cui uideberis bella?
 quem nunc amabis? cuius esse diceris?
 quem basiabis? cui labella mordebis?
 at tu, Catulle, destinatus obdura.⁸³*

Wretched Catullus, you should cease to play the fool, and what you see has perished, you should consider that it has been destroyed. Bright suns once shone for you, when you were flitting about where the girl was leading, beloved by me as much as no girl will be loved. There many things came about with her full of jokes, things which you were wishing for and the girl was not unwilling; indeed, bright suns shone for you. Now that girl is not longer willing: you also, don't wish to be powerless, nor pursue the one, who flees, nor live as a wretch, but endure with a mind made strong, persist. Good-bye, girl. Now Catullus persists; he will not seek after you, nor will he ask for you, unwilling. But you will grieve, when you will be asked for not at all. Wicked girl, woe to you, what life remains for you? Who now will approach you? To whom will you seem beautiful? Whom

⁸³ Catullus 8.1-19.

now will you love? Whose will you be said to be? Whom will you kiss? Whose lips will you bite? But you, O Catullus, having been hardened, persist.

This poem is ringed by addresses to “Catullus” in both the first and last line; thus, it would seem that this poem is written from the view point of a third party witness to this grand love affair. The reference to *nobis* in line 5, however, indicates that the speaker from the previous poem (the lover who will never receive enough kisses from Lesbia) has been retained, showing perhaps that this is an internal dialogue about the state of his relationship with Lesbia. The plural may indicate a conflation of the blinded-by-love speaker of Poem 7 and this bereft “Catullus” in Poem 8. Despite the apparent rupture in their relationship, it appears that in the speaker’s mind he and Lesbia are still closely linked. Lesbia is never given a name in this poem, but *puella* appears three times throughout the poem – the same number of times as the name “Catullus.” In fact, line 12 links the names in an almost chiasmic word order: *vale, puella. iam Catullus obdurat.* Although this poem seems a reflection on an emotional break up, the connection of *puella* and “Catullus” shows that the narrator has yet to separate the lovers in his mind.

The structure of the poem itself invites the reader to compare the happy times of the height of Catullus and Lesbia’s relationship with this low point following their break up. After an initial two lines exhorting a wretched Catullus to come to his senses, the reader is given a brief description of what Catullus’ relationship with Lesbia was like before the break up: he flattered about after her (8.4: *cum ventitabas quo puella ducebat*), loved her more than any girl will ever be loved (8.5: *amata nobis quantum amabitur nulla*), and joked about with her (8.6: *ibi illa multa cum iocosa fiebant*). All of these actions create the picture of a couple thoroughly saturated with love or, at least, of a man who completely adored his lover. This reflection on their past love is framed by the idea that even the sun shone its approval on their relationship: *fulsere...candidi*

tibi soles.⁸⁴ The perfect verb implies a contrast between the sunny (*soles*), bright (*candidi*) time filled with love and his present gloomy and depressed state. The sentiment even makes it seem that there is some pleasure in remembering how much he loved Lesbia; or, perhaps it recreates the affair as “sunnier” in retrospect than it was in reality. The repetition of the line signals a change from passive reflection on past happiness to a proactive plan to cope with his present distress.

The middle portion of the poem employs a sequence of imperatives to command “Catullus” into overcoming his despair at the loss of Lesbia. In line 9, this transition from past to present is emphasized by the first two words: *nunc iam (non)*. The past is gone and the speaker must focus on how to move on with his life. The following three lines use five imperatives to stir up “Catullus” to the required hardness of heart. He begins by telling himself not to be powerless, pursue the girl that left him or live a wretched life: *tu quoque inpotens noli / nec quae fugit sectare, nec miser vive*.⁸⁵ He follows these methods of coping with two exhortations to remain firm in his resolution: *sed obstinata mente perfer, obdura*.⁸⁶ With these commands, “Catullus” decisively takes control of his emotions and begins the process of moving on. He rounds off this section with a salutation to the girl and a definitive statement that he is standing his ground.

As “Catullus” contemplates what will happen in the future as a result of his decision to stand his ground, the transition from present tense verbs to verbs in the future tense reflect the speaker’s transformation from a man, who is so freshly wounded by his break up that he cannot see past the happy times he had with his lover, to someone who is bitter at the idea that this girl could hope for anyone better than he is. This shift in tone is once again signaled by a repetition, this time of the verb *obdurare*. Line 11 ended with the imperative, *obdura*, telling “Catullus” to

⁸⁴ Catullus 8.3, 8.

⁸⁵ Catullus 8.9-10.

⁸⁶ Catullus 8.11.

persist in this course. At the end of line 12, *obdurat* tells us that, for the present time at least, he is succeeding in that goal. He then proceeds to tell Lesbia that he will no longer seek her out: *nec te requiret nec rogabit invitam*.⁸⁷ The speaker continues with a direct attack on the girl, asking her to contemplate what other man would love a wicked (*scelestas*, 15) girl like her. To do this, he utilizes seven rhetorical questions, reminiscent of those leveled at Mamurra and *Cinaede Romule* in Poem 29.⁸⁸ It is quite easy to imagine Catullus firing these questions rapidly at Lesbia, emphasizing *you* in each. The shift from the second person pronoun in an oblique case (*te*, 13) to several second person verbs (14, 16-18) further emphasizes Lesbia's agency in the misfortune that has transpired. She is the person who caused the rupture in their relationship and "Catullus" wants her to take responsibility for her actions. The tone leaves no doubt that the speaker does not believe that there is anyone who will do these things for Lesbia now that she has left Catullus. Following this attack on the hateful, former girlfriend, the poem ends with a final exhortation to "Catullus" to persist in his path away from gloom and despair at the loss of one silly girl.

The shifts in time and tone invite the reader to create a mental picture of Catullus' process of working through his break up with Lesbia. The description of his happy pastimes with Lesbia leads the audience to picture a young couple laughing with each other and joking about, with the young man hanging on the girl's every word. The addition of the repeated line about the sun shining adds to the upbeat and cheerful picture of these lovers, but also indicates a certain transitory quality in their relationship. As the poem moves into the string of imperatives addressing "Catullus," we are invited to visualize a young man, grieved at the loss of his beloved, giving himself a pep talk so that he can somehow continue living without his girlfriend.

⁸⁷ Catullus 8.13.

⁸⁸ In fact, Poem 29, with eight questions, is the only poem in the Catullan corpus that has more questions than Poem 8.

This is a man strengthening his mind against love and endeavoring to persevere in his apathy towards the former lover. With a final good-bye to the girl, the speaker begins to look towards the future. As he contemplates what will happen next, the scene shifts from a despairing, abandoned lover to a man embittered and finding fault with the *scelesta puella*. The series of questions asks us to envision a young man enraged at the very thought that his lover might find someone to rival him and obsessed at the possibility of such a rival existing.

This entire shift is reflected in the change of types of commands from the first line to the last. In the first line, wretched “Catullus” is mildly commanded to stop being foolish with the jussive subjunctive, *desinas*. He knows that he should stop obsessing over Lesbia, but his heart is not really in the effort. After going through the shift in attitude described above, the final line demonstrates his resolve with a perfect passive participle (*destinatus*) and an imperative (*obdura*): “Having been made firm, persist!” At the end of the poem, the speaker shows us a Catullus who has worked through his obsession with Lesbia and is ready to move on with his life or, at least, this is the impression he wants to give his audience. The obsessive quality of the preceding lines perhaps undermines this picture of indifference.

“Catullus’s” picture of himself is further clarified by the comparison with his phantom rival implied by the rhetorical questions in lines 15-18. As the speaker himself questions what sort of person the girl will love (*amabis*, line 17) and kiss (*basiabis*, line 18), he invites the reader to perform the same act: what sort of person could replace this emotional poet in Lesbia’s affections? It is quite possible that Catullus has in mind the very man that it seems Lesbia has left him for or that he has created a fantasy of such a man, which he wishes to convey to his audience. Regardless, the tone of the questions indicates that “Catullus” sees himself as the pinnacle of lovers and that he is convinced that Lesbia will not be able to find someone better.

He believes that her life is ended now that she is no longer involved with him: *quae tibi manet vita?*⁸⁹ In this way, it is clear that he cannot envision any man to rival himself nor Lesbia “existing” without him at her side.

As with Poems 43 and 51, the reader is invited to visualize someone and indulge in comparison between this rival and Catullus. In each case, the speaker provides us with a certain set of information to use in creating this picture and making the comparison. The choices about what information to give and how to create the appearance of similarities and differences tend to align the reader with the narrator’s point of view. Yet, the strength of emotion involved in all of the poems causes hesitations in fully accepting the interpretation of “Catullus.” In Poem 43, we know that his hatred for Mamurra and love for Lesbia color the comparison between the two girlfriends. In Poem 51, the speaker is blinded and rendered useless by his jealousy of a rival receiving attention from Lesbia. In Poem 8, the very circumstances of the poem – what appears to be a break up – indicate that Lesbia has already found someone to replace “Catullus,” though that seems impossible in his mind. The entire poem immortalizes an indulgence of his obsession with Lesbia by allowing himself to spend 19 lines reflecting on the ended relationship and fantasizing about a dream man to whom Lesbia has moved. While Poem 8 provides a picture of emotional transformation, the transformation is from one strong emotion to another. Throughout these poems, the speaker shows us a “Catullus” who allows his emotions to control his life and often to cloud his judgment. By leading the reader through this process of visualization and comparison in each poem, the speaker attempts to persuade him or her of his own interpretations; yet, his excessive emotion yields only varying degrees of success.

⁸⁹ Catullus 8.15.

Despite this almost constant comparison with other people, “Catullus” would like to give the impression that he does not care what the outside world thinks of him. Poem 5 demonstrates how much he loves Lesbia (through the number of kisses) and how little he cares how they are judged for it:

*Viuamus, mea Lesbia, atque amemus,
rumoresque senum seueriorum
omnes unius aestimemus assis!
soles occidere et redire possunt:
nobis cum semel occidit breuis lux, 5
nox est perpetua una dormienda.
da mi basia mille, deinde centum,
dein mille altera, dein secunda centum,
deinde usque altera mille, deinde centum.
dein, cum milia multa fecerimus, 10
conturbabimus illa, ne sciamus,
aut ne quis malus inuidere possit,
cum tantum sciat esse basiorum.⁹⁰*

Let us live, my Lesbia, and let us love, and let us value all the opinions of more severe old men at one *as*! Suns are able to fall and to return: When a brief light falls at one time, we must sleep one perpetual night. Give me a thousand kisses, then a hundred, then another thousand, then a second hundred, then all the way to another thousand, then a hundred. Then, when we have made many thousand, we will stir them all together, so that we do not know, or so that any evil man can hate us, when he knows how many kisses there are.

The poem begins with an address to his lover with three desires: that they live (*viuamus*, 1), they love (*amemus*, 1), and they value (*aestimemus*, 3). He then moves into a discussion of how little they should care about the opinions of others. Lines 2 and 3 state that Catullus and Lesbia should dismiss what the old men say as practically worthless: *rumoresque senum seueriorum / omnes unius aestimemus assis!*⁹¹ These men are old and severe, so their judgments can be ignored. Instead, “Catullus” and Lesbia need to make the best use of what little time they have, since they only have a small amount of light before darkness sets in: *nobis cum semel occidit breuis lux,*

⁹⁰ Catullus 5.1-13.

⁹¹ Catullus 5.2-3: “And let us value the opinions of more severe old men at one *as*!”

*lnox est perpetua una dormienda.*⁹² While this could be a reference to an individual day and the need to make use of the time before nightfall, this statement is also probably an encouragement to live passionately until the very time of their deaths.

After saying that he does not care if they are judged for their actions, the speaker provides us with plenty of reasons to judge their love – the many thousands of kisses they exchange. He spends three lines of the poem telling us that they exchange thousands and hundreds of kisses. This fact is presumably the reason why the severe old men from line 2 judged them in the first place. By giving the readers this information, Catullus invites them to fantasize about his encounter with Lesbia, thus leading them to grow jealous of Catullus and Lesbia’s deep love for each other and to pass judgment along with these old men. He provides the very information needed to pass judgment, but denies the force of these lines.

The speaker seems to realize that he has opened up this possibility because he finishes the poem with the idea that Lesbia and Catullus should mix up their kisses so that no one will judge them for their love: *conturbabimus illa... / aut ne quis malus invidere possit, / cum tantum sciat esse basiorum.*⁹³ Some people may envy or hate them for how in love they are, so they should prevent them from having information to do so. This statement once again sets up a comparison between Catullus and/or Lesbia and some other person. Just as “Catullus” got upset in Poem 51 when he, as an onlooker, saw Lesbia’s interactions with another man, some other person seeing Catullus and Lesbia exchange these kisses may react with judgment and jealousy. Leaving this as an indefinite “someone” opens the path for the reader to take the place of this person and pass judgment on the relationship on display.

⁹² Catullus 5.5-6.

⁹³ Catullus 5.11, 12-13.

Through this assimilation of the reader with the *quis* of Poem 5, the speaker solidly places him or her as a viewer of this scene from his relationship with Lesbia. He anticipates the reader's visualization based on the details he has given and the subsequent jealousy that will arise as a result of the deep passion displayed in this relationship. Through his remarks about how little he values the opinions of old men and the obscuring of the kisses to keep someone from becoming jealous, the narrator attempts to remove any possibility that the reader has the ability to influence the world of the poem. This removal of control places the reader in the same position that "Catullus" found himself in Poem 51 – a witness to the interaction of the lovers, but unable to engage with them. If we remember the criticism of "Catullus" in that poem, here the narrator is rebuking the reader for the very viewership he has led him or her into and giving a warning to leave the realm of the poem.

These four poems – 5, 8, 43, and 51 – demonstrate that Catullus often describes his relationship with Lesbia by inviting the readers to make comparisons. The speaker provides us with information that guides us in understanding at least a portion of the events described or referred to in the poem. Through the selected information offered, the reader is often initially led to interpret the results as it seems "Catullus" himself does. Upon further consideration, there are often slight indications that what we have been told is subjective. Thus, the reader is drawn into the situation and forced to rethink what is taking place. Catullus makes use of devices, such as direct address and rhetorical questions, to help draw the reader out of the external world and into the realm of the poem.

Chapter 3: Mythology

Chapter 2 demonstrated how Catullus employs the same rhetorical strategies, which were used to criticize and condemn his opponents in his invective poetry, to create various triangles between Lesbia (sometimes paired with a lover), the speaker, and another “character,” who is often aligned with the reader. Through the use of these devices, the speaker invites the reader to visualize a scene and the various characters involved and to make comparisons between the different characters, the narrator, and occasionally him or herself. In both the invective poems and the Lesbia cycle, this visualization draws the reader into the daily life of the poet and his friends, inviting him or her to become another member of the speaker’s societal circle. In doing so, the reader leaves behind the world outside the poem, his or her own reality, and enters the realm of the poem. While it is clear in these epigrams and short poems how these strategies create a conversational tone between the speaker and the audience, it remains to be seen if Catullus manages to create the same tone in his longer, mythological poems, such as Poem 64. Does he even employ these rhetorical strategies when telling a story rather than writing a short reflection on a seemingly every day interaction between friend, enemies, and lovers? The present chapter will demonstrate that Catullus does indeed make use of these rhetorical devices and that once again strategies, such as rhetorical questions and direct address, serve to create a conversation triangle between the narrator, the audience, and the characters of the poem which invites the reader out of his or her own reality and into the world of the poem. At the same time, the narrator seeks to remind the readers that this is a world he has contrived through the use of his poetic skill.

Catullus 64 contains the first surviving ekphrasis in Roman literature – that of the coverlet on the marriage bed of Thetis and Peleus, which depicts Ariadne abandoned on Naxos.⁹⁴ By nature ekphrases seek to bring before the eyes of the reader a work of art or architecture that is not actually seen, but rather described so vividly that the reader can envision it. This goal necessitates some sort of attempt by the narrator of the ekphrasis to break the boundaries separating him from anyone reading the text. Very often, as with the ekphrasis of Juno’s Temple in *Aeneid* 1, the author introduces the descriptive passage by having some character in the text viewing the artwork about to be described. This sort of introduction creates a relationship between the speaker, the character of the text, who is depicted in the act of viewing, and the reader. Through the ekphrasis, the reader’s view is typically filtered through the gaze of the character from the text, as Jaś Elsner indicates in his book, *Roman Eyes: Visuality and Subjectivity in Art and Text*; however, throughout Poem 64, the narrator uses rhetorical devices to make his own presence and directing hand known to the reader, thus undercutting the audience’s immersion in the world of the ekphrasis.

In his chapter “Ekphrasis and the Gaze,” Elsner argues that in Poem 64 Catullus uses the act of gazing to penetrate the outside world – both the characters outside the ekphrasis and the readers.⁹⁵ The speaker draws attention to the attendees of the wedding, the young men of Thessaly and various gods and goddesses, as they gaze at the covering on the marriage bed. Depicted on this covering, Ariadne gazes at Theseus’ receding ship after she has been abandoned on Naxos. Gazing out to sea, she is gazed at by the wedding guests, and thus “objectified by Catullus as the subject of a gaze from outside the image...whether this be his own gaze and ours

⁹⁴ Elsner (2007), 68. Also, Dufallo (2013), 39.

⁹⁵ Elsner (2007), 72.

as his readers or that of the young men of Thessaly within the narrative.”⁹⁶ The reader becomes aligned with the wedding guests in the act of viewing and both guests and readers begin to view the scene through Ariadne’s gaze. Catullus draws the reader not only into the role of a wedding guest, but also into the very scene on the coverlet.⁹⁷

While Elsner’s argument focuses on the act of gazing as the bridge between the ekphrasis and the readers of the poem, Catullus’ use of rhetorical strategies, as seen in Poem 64, achieves the same goal. As discussed in the two previous chapters, direct address of characters, asides by the narrator, and rhetorical questions all serve to create a conversational tone between the various members of the triangle – speaker, Ariadne, and reader (as aligned with the young men of Thessaly). These devices allow Ariadne and the other characters in the ekphrasis to break down the barrier between work of art and audience. At the same time, these same rhetorical devices can often jar the reader out of his or her immersion in the world of the ekphrasis and draw attention to the very act of writing or description by the narrator.

The Background: The Meeting of Peleus and Thetis

Catullus begins his poem by setting up the circumstances for the marriage between Thetis and Peleus – the sailing of the Argo. The first few lines provide the background story of why the Argo was built and why these young men set out from Greece. Our first triangle of the poem then appears: the Argonauts (including Peleus), the Nereids (including Thetis), and the audience (including both speaker and reader). The audience views the scene as the young sailors gaze at the bare-chested Nereids and these nymphs gazed back at the men:

*illa rudem cursu prima imbuit Amphitriten;
quae simul ac rostro uentosum proscidit aequor
tortaque remigio spumis incanuit unda*

⁹⁶ Elsner (2007), 69.

⁹⁷ Elsner (2007) uses an analysis of depictions of Ariadne in wall paintings in Pompeii to illustrate the Roman desire to pass through the boundaries of the proverbial fourth wall.

*emersere freti candenti e gurgite uultus
aequoreae monstrum Nereides admirantes. 15
illa, atque <haud> alia, uiderunt luce marinas
mortales oculis nudato corpore Nymphas
nutricum tenuis exstantes e gurgite cano.*⁹⁸

That (ship) first tainted the wild sea with its course; and as soon as the ship cleaved the windy expanse with its prow and the wave stirred up by the oar grew white with foam, the faces of the marine Nereids rose from the white whirlpool of the strait, wondering at the portent. On that day, and not yet on any other, mortals with their eyes saw the sea-nymphs, with nude bodies and delicate breasts, rising up from the white whirlpool.

This passage transports the reader back to mythological times and asks him or her to visualize this first meeting between sea nymphs and mortals. The speaker emphasizes the newness of this experience with phrases, such as *illa...prima imbuat* (11) and *illa, atque <haud> alia...luce* (16). The verbs *admirantes* (15) and *viderunt* (16) and the reference to *oculis* (17) highlight the visual nature of this passage. The image is further clarified by the repeated indications of the white color of the various objects in the scene: *incanuit* (13), *candenti* (14), *cano* (18). The visual aspect is also accentuated by the view of the nymphs rising above the surface of the sea, coming from the unseen depths to a plane on which men can see them: *emersere...e gurgite* (14) and *exstantes e gurgite cano* (18). The heavy description in this passage invites the reader to visualize the nymphs as if he or she were one of the Argonauts seeing them for the first time. While we are actually receiving this picture through the voice of the narrator, he invites us to compare ourselves with the Argonauts and to place ourselves in the boat beside them as they see the Nereids. Establishing this first triangle of gazing conditions the reader to fall into a similar role of gazing and alignment with the internal viewer when the speaker begins to describe the coverlet in line 50.

⁹⁸ Catullus 64.11-18.

Catullus follows this description of the sailors and nymphs gazing at each other with an address to the young heroes and his first of numerous authorial assertions in the poem. This address to the heroes is followed by an address to Peleus and two rhetorical questions, all devices that have been discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. This passage not only gives background context for the ekphrasis, but also provides a first look at how Catullus uses rhetorical strategies in this mythological poem:

*O nimis optato saeculorum tempore nati
 heroes, saluete, deum genus! o bona matrum
 progenies, saluete iter<um... 23b
 uos ego saepe, meo uos carmine compellabo.
 teque adeo eximie taedis felicibus aucte, 25
 Thessaliae columen Peleu, cui Iuppiter ipse,
 ipse suos diuum genitor concessit amores;
 tene Thetis tenuit pulcerrima Nereine?
 tene suam Tethys concessit ducere neptem,
 Oceanusque, mari totum qui amplectitur orbem?⁹⁹ 30*

O heroes, born in the time of the ages excessively wished for, hail, race of the gods! O good offspring of mothers, hail again! You often, yes you, I will address with my song. And, having increased yourself excellently with happy marriage torches, o pillar of Thessaly, Peleus, to whom Jupiter himself (the father of the gods himself!) yields his own love; does the most beautiful Nereid, Thetis, hold you? Does Tethys allow you to marry her own granddaughter? And Ocean, who embraces the entire world with the sea?

These heroes are presumably the Argonauts that he described in the previous lines, noble wanderers setting off in search of the Golden Fleece. These men are divine or semi-divine (*deum genus*, 23) and they lived in a better time (*nimis optato...tempore*, 22).¹⁰⁰ In this first of his editorial remarks, the speaker informs us that he will address these heroes throughout the poem: *vos ego saepe, meo vos carmine compellabo*.¹⁰¹ Since the audience was invited to take on the role of one of these Argonauts while viewing the Nereids, it is reasonable to assume that these

⁹⁹ Catullus 64.22-30.

¹⁰⁰ These men potentially provide contrasts with *Cinaedus Romulus* in Poem 29 and the unwise generation in Poem 46.

¹⁰¹ Catullus 64.24.

addresses to the “heroes” are also meant to address the reader. As he addresses these young sailors and the audience, the speaker also asserts his authority over his subject matter and draws the audience’s attention back to himself. In his chapter, “Becoming Ariadne,” Basil Dufallo comments on this strategy of the narrator: “the apostrophe of the heroes...seem[s] to focus attention on the addressee, but in fact shine[s] a spotlight on the speaking persona.”¹⁰² The very nature of an address invites contemplation on the person speaking, as we have seen in the earlier chapters. Initially, the reader focuses on the dazzling young men who are addressed and praised for their deeds; however, the introduction of a first person verb quickly draws attention away from these heroes and onto the speaker. This passage introduces the readers to the type of the relationship of viewing that the narrator seeks to establish between himself, the audience, and the various characters in the poem.

While the address to Peleus makes use of many of the same rhetorical strategies seen to criticize the extravagance and unsavoriness of Mamurra and others in the invective poems, the tone of this address is mere incredulity at Peleus’ good fortune in obtaining a marriage with Thetis.¹⁰³ The speaker calls Peleus the *Thessaliae columen*, the pillar of Thessaly, which likely indicates that he is a mighty warrior and a noble man.¹⁰⁴ The tone of the questions addressed to Peleus, however, suggests some incredulity that Peleus has won the hand of Thetis, the *pulcherrima Nereine*.¹⁰⁵ He is first described as “having increased [him]self excellently with happy marriage torches” (*teque...aucte*, 25). Yes, his status has increased, but the adverb *eximie*

¹⁰² Dufallo (2013), 45. While Dufallo is primarily concerned with the conflation of the narrator and the poet (an occurrence that points to the possible philhellenic nature of the poem), his observations often point out these moments when the narrator calls the attention of the reader back to himself.

¹⁰³ The idea that Peleus may be the more invested of the two lovers is first suggested by Catullus 64.19-21: Peleus is kindled with love for Thetis; Thetis does not despise a human marriage, and Jupiter things the union ought to take place.

¹⁰⁴ Catullus 64.26.

¹⁰⁵ Catullus 64.28. The use of the evaluative adjective *pulcherrima* here also calls into question from whose point of view this scene is described, who is the one calling her “very beautiful” – Peleus? The narrator? The world?

can mean “uncommonly.” This increase is “uncommon” or “excellent” by means of happy marriage torches (*taedis felicibus*). Thus, the indication is that the only reason Peleus has distinction is because he somehow managed to marry Thetis.

This suggestion of unworthiness of Peleus’ part is further accentuated by the fact that Thetis’ previous love was the father of the gods himself, Jupiter: *cui Iuppiter ipse, / ipse suos divum genitor concessit amores*.¹⁰⁶ Not only is Jupiter named, but he is also given the title *divum genitor* and the speaker repeats the intensifier, *ipse*. As if the name itself was not prestigious enough, four other of the nine words in the phrase are directly modifying him. If you add in the reflexive adjective *suos*, there are only three words in the clause not directly referring to Jupiter: *cui, concessit, amores*. The repetition of *ipse* seems to indicate a need to confirm that Jupiter, father of the gods, is indeed the subject of this clause. As if Peleus’ insignificance needed further emphasizing, the action performed by Jupiter is yielding his love to Peleus. Peleus only has the privilege of marrying Thetis because Jupiter allows him to do so. This concession by Jupiter sets up a triangle similar to that of Poem 51: Thetis as the desired woman (Lesbia), Jupiter as the god she has a relationship with (the “godlike” man), and Peleus as the somewhat lesser lover who appears on the fringe (“Catullus”). This relationship invites the reader to draw comparisons between Jupiter and Peleus just as he or she compared “Catullus” to Lesbia’s other lover in Poem 51.

Though he has established Peleus’ great fortune (and unworthiness) in marrying Thetis in lines 25-27, the speaker feels the need to address two questions to Peleus. In each question Peleus appears only as an unnamed “you” in the accusative case (*te*, 28 and 29). First, the speaker questions whether or not Thetis embraces him. The reference to her status as a beautiful

¹⁰⁶ Catullus 64.26-27.

Nereid (*pulcerrima Nereine*) creates disbelief that she would love or marry a mere mortal man. The second question indicates the implausibility of her family allowing such a marriage when it asks if Tethys and Oceans allowed (*concessit*, 29) Peleus to marry their granddaughter. Through his own disbelief at the truth of this event, the speaker invites the reader to question the circumstances also. By using these rhetorical devices to introduce skepticism about Peleus and Thetis' marriage, Catullus gives us a model of the approach we should take towards the ekphrasis that is coming up. By inviting us to visualize these characters, who will also view the ekphrasis of the coverlet, Catullus indicates that we, the readers, will also take on the role of viewership in the next portion of the poem.

The Ekphrasis, Part I: Narrative Voice

After a somewhat depressing passage describing the countryside, deserted as everyone journeys to the wedding, Catullus gives us a brief description of Peleus and Thetis' marriage bed covered by a purple drapery (48-49).¹⁰⁷ Finally, in line 50 the ekphrasis of the coverlet begins with the image of a woman abandoned on the beach, looking out to the sea where her lover's ship is receding in the distance (52-57). This is Ariadne. The next 200 plus lines relate her tragic story before the narrator turns his attention back to the wedding of Peleus and Thetis. In the process of describing this scene and telling the story of Ariadne and Theseus, the narrator uses various strategies to remind us that we are not actually present on the beach with Ariadne, or even looking at the coverlet with the wedding guests, but are outside the realm of the narrative. Thus, he manages to preserve a triangular relationship between himself, the characters in the poem, and the audience, while simultaneously drawing the reader further and further into the narrative. As the vividness of the descriptions draws the reader into the world of the ekphrasis

¹⁰⁷ Dufallo (2013), 47, suggests a connection between this shift in tone and the ambivalence demonstrated by the Catullan lover in poems, such as 8, 11, and 51 (discussed in Chapter 2).

and, in a sense, collapses the distinctions the narrator has made between characters and readers, he uses these devices to redraw the lines.

One such strategy that the speaker uses to reassert his authority over the narrative is an appearance of first person verbs commenting on his plan in writing the poem. The first example of such an interjection has already been discussed: his assertion in line 24 that he will often address the heroes in his song.¹⁰⁸ This sentence draws attention to the very act of writing and to the speaker himself. Another such interjection appears in line 116: *sed quid ego a primo digressus carmine plura / commemorem*.¹⁰⁹ This statement appears just after Catullus has narrated the fight between Theseus and the Minotaur. In a mere 50 lines, the thread of the narrative has travelled a long way into the past and far away from Ariadne standing on the beach after having been abandoned. While this provides backstory so that the reader can better understand the events leading to Ariadne's abandonment, the episode has very little to do with the actual scene on the coverlet. The narrator seems to realize at this point that he has strayed from describing the coverlet (*a primo digressus carmine*) and that he should return to his original task. The change in person signified by *ego* jars the reader out of the story and reminds him or her that he or she is not actually watching this scene played out, but "listening" to someone tell the story.¹¹⁰ By phrasing this interjection as a question (*quid...plura / commemorem?*), the speaker effectively addresses his audience in a way that sounds conversational, yet allows no power of responding. In this way, he reestablishes his authority by suggesting that he has the ability to withhold and provide information. At the same time, the reader is prompted to question the purpose of this interjection and the information it conveys and how it pertains to the

¹⁰⁸ Catullus 64.24: *vos ego saepe, meo vos carmine compellabo*.

¹⁰⁹ Catullus 64.116-117: "But why, having stepped away from my first song, should I recount more stories?"

¹¹⁰ Dufallo (2013) suggests "the remark...challenges the audience to ask itself about the relevance of what it is hearing to the image it has been encouraged to see." (62).

description of the coverlet that is supposed to be the subject of this poem. The invitation to question the progress of the poem both reminds the reader that this is simply a poem written by the speaker, rather than an actual scene he or she is witnessing, and it brings to light the relationship between narrator, provider of information; audience, recipients and observers; and poem/characters.

This interjection also demonstrates the narrator's authorial authority by completely disregarding the substance of his question. He indicates that he should move on from his digression, but in asking the question he outlines the subjects he could digress further on, thus continuing the digression. In the very act of saying he should return to the scene(s) on the coverlet, the speaker takes off on another tangent that ultimately leads to relating a speech by Ariadne, yet another digression from the task originally taken up. While the narrator has caught our attention and drawn the audience back out of the narrative for a few moments – thus, reasserting the triangle between speaker, characters, and audience – he does not return to his original subject and so the description of the coverlet will have to wait a little longer. Once again his digression reminds us who has authority over this narrative and control of the information flowing to the reader.

Another rhetorical strategy Catullus employs to remind the reader of his presence is direct address of the characters in the poem or gods and goddess, often in pairs. These addresses are often paired with a second person verb or pronoun, thereby drawing attention to the fact that this is a narration, not an actual scene being seen. The first such pairing of addresses appears early in the ekphrasis just after his initial description of Ariadne. He addresses first Theseus and then Ariadne, though her name is not mentioned in the lines:

*sed neque tum mitrae neque tum fluitantis amictus
illa uicem curans toto ex te pectore, Theseu,*

toto animo, tota pendebat perdita mente. 70
a misera, assiduis quam luctibus externauit
spinosas Erycina serens in pectore curas,
illa tempestate, ferox quo ex tempore Theseus
egressus curuis e litoribus Piraei
attigit iniusti regis Gortynia templa. ¹¹¹ 75

But then caring about the change neither of her headband nor of her flowing garment, completely destroyed, she was hanging on you, O Theseus, with her entire heart, her entire spirit, her entire mind. O wretched girl, whom Venus frightened with continuous grief, sowing thorny worries in your heart, in that period, from the time when savage Theseus, having set out from the curved shores of Piraeus, approached the Cretan temples of an unjust king.

The misdeeds of Theseus are too egregious to narrate simply in the third person. The situation requires directly addressing him to make sure that he realizes that he is the one who has done these things to Ariadne and left her in this distraught state. The remembrance of these misfortunes also prompts an address to the “wretched girl” and an assertion that her torments come from Venus and her son. Yet, even after addressing Ariadne, the narrator returns to the idea that all of this tragedy was set in motion by Theseus leaving Athens.

The two addresses and the use of the second person pronoun remind us that the narrator is describing a coverlet to us. The vivid description of Ariadne on the beach that precedes this address to Theseus has likely drawn the reader into a reverie of sorts and he or she is invited to visualize this scene. By this brief shift into the second person, the speaker both gives a more forceful condemnation of Theseus for his actions and reminds the reader that the story is being told, not actually viewed. Once again, the speaker draws attention from the actual poem onto his role as the narrator controlling the information. At the same time, the lack of second person verbs departs from the structure of such addresses as discussed in connection to the invective poems. By maintaining the third person, the narrator attempts to keep up the pretense of describing this

¹¹¹ Catullus 64.68-75.

scene for a third party, namely the reader. Perhaps this is meant to draw attention to the fact that the reader only “sees” what the narrator chooses for him or her to see.

The chiasmic structure of nominatives and vocatives in this passage further emphasizes the poet’s craft encompassed in this poem. Both Ariadne and Theseus are described and addressed in the passage: the description of Ariadne includes an address to Theseus (71) while the description of Theseus comes after an address to Ariadne (72, 73). This chiasmus in connection with direct address perhaps draws attention to this new use of the rhetorical device to draw attention to the narrator’s authority over his ekphrasis. In the very process of using this second person address, he also employs the highly poetic device, chiasmus, thus exhibiting his skills as a poet.

Another pairing of direct addresses comes twenty lines later, where the narrator addresses both Cupid and Venus. This instance of address is also paired with several accusatory questions to the god and goddess of love because of the suffering Ariadne endures as a result of her love for Theseus.¹¹² After giving a brief explanation why Theseus had come to Crete and how he and Ariadne met, the narrator addresses Cupid and Venus to criticize them for making Ariadne fall in love with Theseus:

*heu misere exagitans immiti corde furores
sancte puer, curis hominum qui gaudia misces, 95
quaeque regis Golgos quaeque Idalium frondosum,
qualibus incensam iactastis mente puellam
fluctibus, in flauo saepe hospite suspirantem!
quantos illa tulit languenti corde timores!
quanto saepe magis fulgore expalluit auri, 100
cum saeuum cupiens contra contendere monstrum
aut mortem appeteret Theseus aut praemia laudis!*¹¹³

Alas, holy boy! wretchedly stirring up passions with a harsh heart, you who mingle the joys and cares of humans. And you, oh Lady, who rule Golgi and leafy Idalium, on what waves you tossed that girl, kindled in her mind, often sighing over the blonde guest! What great fears she bore in her fainting heart! By how

¹¹² In most texts these lines are written as exclamations, but I shall argue for reading them as rhetorical questions.

¹¹³ Catullus 64.94-102.

much more than the glitter of gold did she often pale, when desiring to fight
against the fierce monster, Theseus sought either death or the rewards of praise!

As with the address to the heroes in lines 22-30, this address to Cupid begins with a line of description before the speaker actually addresses his subject. In that line, the reader finds out that this is a person who maliciously plays with a person's passions. From just that line, most readers would probably guess that something about Cupid or Venus is coming before the *sancte puer* is addressed in line 95. Cupid is then the subject of the second person verb *miscet*, mingling joys and cares. As is typical of a boy, he plays with those placed in his power. The focus then shifts to Venus, though she is never actually named. The speaker simply addresses a feminine person (*quaeque*) who rules (*regis*) both Golgi and Idalium, places on Cyprus, Venus' sacred island. The speaker then addresses both Cupid and Venus (*iactastis*) with a series of accusations about what they did to Ariadne when they made her fall in love with Theseus.

Though most editors have these lines marked as exclamations, I think these lines should be read in line with the accusatory questions found in the invective poems, such as Poem 29.¹¹⁴ In the lines prior to this address, the speaker takes care to emphasize Ariadne's young age and innocence: Ariadne is described as a maiden (*virgo*, 86), sleeping in a chaste bed (*castus...lectulus*, 87-88), and in her mother's embrace (*in molli complex matris*, 88). This is a girl who is still protected by her mother and has not yet begun to think of love. The only indication that something might be amiss is her desirous gaze (*cupido...lumine*, 86). These gods of love then exploit this innocence by making her fall in love with a hero destined to break her heart. The narrator draws attention to Ariadne's sexual awakening by informing the reader that it is the sight of Theseus that makes her feel desire (*hunc simul ac...conspexit*, 86). These gods are creating a change in Ariadne that will ultimately lead to misfortune and heartache, in effect

¹¹⁴ The OCT, Garrison (1992), Thompson (1996) and Green (2005) all punctuate with exclamation marks. I have not found any editions which punctuate these lines with questions as I would like to.

ripping her from her mother's embrace. Reading lines 87-100 as questions, the speaker implies some incredulity that Venus and Cupid would do this to an innocent girl. These questions become not just details of the story, but accusations that these gods have mistreated Ariadne: why have they caused so much pain to this innocent child? Through both the address and the questions, the speaker brings attention to himself as director of the narrative and he invites his readers to question the motives of Venus and Cupid with him. The questions perhaps even remind the reader of Catullus' poetry that the narrator himself has experienced such trouble in love and thus demonstrate how he could sympathize with the pain Ariadne is about to experience. They also bring a conversational aspect to the ekphrasis: these are the types of questions that might be asked by the Thessalian wedding guests after seeing the coverlet or hearing Ariadne's story. Thus, the narrator is in some way mimicking a conversation he might have with the reader if both were standing in the chamber looking at the coverlet.

A final address of this type by the narrator comes after the ekphrasis has ended. In line 265, the scene shifts back to the wedding of Peleus and Thetis. The Thessalian youths, having completed their gazing on the coverlet, leave the palace and in their place the gods come down from Olympus to bring gifts to the newlyweds and to see the coverlet for themselves. In line 278 the procession of gods and a description of their gifts begins. These lines invite the reader to visualize what the procession looks like and the various gifts, thus drawing him or her into the narrative. The speaker once again breaks the illusion by a direct address, this time to Phoebus:

*inde pater diuum sancta cum conjugē natisque
 aduenit caelo, te solum, Phoebē, relinquens
 unigenamque simul cultricem montibus Idri: 300
 Peleā nam tecum pariter soror aspernata est,
 nec Thetidis taedas uoluit celebrare iugalis.*¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ Catullus 64.298-300.

Thence the father of the gods with his holy spouse and children came from heaven, leaving behind you alone, oh Phoebus, and also your sister, dweller of Idrus' mountain: For your sister spurned Peleus equally with you, nor did she think to celebrate the marital torches of Thetis.

By addressing Phoebus directly, the narrator draws additional attention to the fact that Apollo and Diana are the only gods who do not attend the wedding. Therefore, this address has the force of an accusation: you, and only you (*te solum*) did not bless this marriage. Yet, the reader is then jarred by the *simul* in the following line. The narrator led us to believe that Phoebus was alone in his scorn, but then we find out that his sister, his partner in all things, also neglects to attend the wedding. By postponing the detail that Diana also scorns the marriage, the speaker again draws attention to his control over the information that the reader receives.

Through the address, the speaker is calling for Apollo to defend himself and give the reasons that he and his sister scorned Peleus and Thetis in a way very similar to the demands he makes of Flavius in Poem 6 or of Lesbia in Poem 8. The address seems to imply that this neglect reflects badly on Apollo and Diana because they have no good reason to stay away. While censuring the divine twins, the use of second person pronouns once again draws attention back to the speaker as the director of this poem: he seems to know why the twins neglected to attend the wedding and he invites Phoebus to enlighten the audience as well. This address insinuates that the narrator serves as a go-between gods and mortals much as he is the middle ground between the realm of the ekphrasis and the reader.

The Ekphrasis, Part II: Ariadne's Speech

In the middle of the ekphrasis, the narrator digresses into a 70-line speech made by Ariadne blaming Theseus for abandoning her on the beach. Within this speech, Ariadne poses many questions to the absent Theseus and calls on both Jupiter and the Furies to come to her aid. To the reader of Catullus' poetry, Ariadne's speech should call to mind the questions posed to

Mamurra and *Cinaede Romule* in Poem 29 or those asked of Lesbia at the end of Poem 8: accusations that the addressee has erred in some way and must make a defense for him or herself. Ariadne embodies the typical abandoned lover of elegy in much the same way as the scorned “Catullus” of the Lesbia poems did. In the process of relaying this speech, the speaker takes on the identity of Ariadne and the reader becomes Theseus.¹¹⁶

Ariadne’s speech opens with a series of questions addressed to *perfide Theseu* (133). These are the wildly emotional questions of a woman who has just discovered that her lover abandoned her. Ariadne’s main accusation is that Theseus has left her behind on Naxos, thus breaking his promises and betraying the help that she gave him in vanquishing the Minotaur which resulted in the betrayal of her own family:

*sicine me patriis auectam, perfide, ab aris,
perfide, deserto liquisti in litore, Theseu?
sicine discedens neglecto numine diuum,
immemor a! deuota domum periuria portas? 135
nullane res potuit crudelis flectere mentis
consilium? tibi nulla fuit clementia praesto,
immite ut nostri uellet miserescere pectus?¹¹⁷*

Thus, having carried me away from my ancestral altars, traitor, have you left me on an abandoned shore, treacherous Theseus? Thus, forsaking the neglected will of the gods, o unmindful man! do you carry home cursed lies? Is any matter able to bend the plan of a cruel mind? Was there no kindness at hand for you, so that your hard heart would wish to pity us?

Theseus is addressed twice as *perfidus* (132, 133) and once as *immemor* (135). The repetition of *perfide* emphasizes just how treacherously Ariadne thinks Theseus has acted. She drives this point further by using words, such as *periuria* (135), *crudelis* (136), and *immite* (138), to refer to Theseus and his deeds. She also emphasizes the fact that he has taken her from home both with the phrase, *me patriis auectam...ab aris* (132) and the words *deserto* (133) and *neglecto* (134).

¹¹⁶ See Dufallo (2013) for a detailed discussion of the narrator as Ariadne. The reader’s role as Theseus will be discussed as we progress through Ariadne’s speech.

¹¹⁷ Catullus 64.132-138.

Ariadne's diction leaves no doubt that she believes Theseus has committed a crime and is at fault for her present state of misery. The rapid-fire questions addressed to *perfide Theseu* have every mark of an abandoned or scorned lover and could easily have been spoken by many of mythology's tragic heroines or even the "Catullus" of the Lesbia poems. We do not have to look any farther than Poem 8 to find a litany of questions addressed to Lesbia condemning her for leaving him. Just as Ariadne wonders at Theseus' possible motives for leaving her on the beach, in Poem 9 "Catullus" questions Lesbia's motives for turning to another lover. As Ariadne questions Theseus' parentage in lines 154-157 implying that he was born from a monster, "Catullus" accuses Lesbia of having a lioness or Scylla as her mother in Poem 60. In many ways, the narrator channels his own emotions towards Lesbia in the ways that he presents Ariadne's accusations against Theseus.

The address to Theseus and the series of second person verbs also solidly break away from the narrative that has just preceded the speech. No longer are the audience and the speaker calmly observing a scene on a coverlet. With the first *perfide*, Ariadne successfully draws us into her world as witnesses to Theseus' treachery, just as Catullus does in the Mamurra poems, e.g. She wants the reader either to attempt a defense of Theseus or to join her in condemning his actions. Either way, she does not leave us the option of remaining passive bystanders.

The idea that the audience stands in place of the treacherous Theseus is further emphasized by Ariadne's acknowledgement that she is alone on the beach. After several more questions to Theseus and a wish that no other woman will suffer what she has suffered (143-148), Ariadne becomes somewhat subdued and enters on a reflection about her present situation. As she says that there is no one to hear or reply to her, the audience is made aware of its own

presence in the story. While we cannot reply to her, we hear her many complaints against

Theseus:

*sed quid ego ignaris nequiquam conquerar auris,
externata malo, quae nullis sensibus auctae 165
nec missas audire queunt nec reddere uoces?
ille autem prope iam mediis uersatur in undis,
nec quisquam apparet uacua mortalis in alga.*¹¹⁸

But why do I, driven mad by evil, complain in vain to the heedless breezes, which nourished by no senses, can neither hear my uttered words, nor reply? That man, moreover, now is tossed nearly in the middle of the waves and no other mortal appears in the empty sea.

Theseus is far away continuing his journey to Athens and no other person is in sight. The only company she has is the wind, which has no ears or mouth, so there is no possibility of a response to her numerous questions. The audience, however, has listened to every word of her speech. Though not physically present on the beach, we have heard her complaints and questions and pondered their meaning and possible responses to them. At the same time, her acknowledgement of her desolation reminds the reader that he or she has not *actually* heard the speech, but had it related to him or her through the medium of the narrator. This reminder also reinforces the reader's position as an observer who has no ability to affect the events taking place in the ekphrasis. Thus, these lines reinforce the triangular relationship between narrator, audience, and Ariadne. The narrator is describing the scene and directing the progress of the ekphrasis, while the reader stands at the side as an observer and Ariadne remains the object viewed by narrator and reader. By calling attention to the reader's inability to respond, the narrator also emphasizes his power over all elements of the poem and its readers.

Ariadne's question also recalls the narrator's own deliberation about his course of action in line 116, thus embodying the narrator to a certain extent. Both questions begin with the same

¹¹⁸ Catullus 64.164-168.

three words: *sed quid ego*.¹¹⁹ The first person pronoun, *ego*, emphasizes the self-reflection about what has been said previously and what is about to be said. The conjunction, *sed*, seems to indicate that a change of course is coming, though as we saw in the previous passage, this is a false indication. The question word, *quid*, sets up the reflection: why do I do this? By drawing us back to his question about digressions, the speaker invites the audience to question the purpose of Ariadne's speech in the larger plan of the ekphrasis. Thus, the narrator reminds us of his hand in writing the lines that we have gotten caught up in yet again. He also draws attention to Ariadne's role, as the spokesperson for the narrator, in pointing out wrongdoing or bad behavior to the reader.

Similarly, Ariadne's prayer to the Fates that they listen to her complaints at line 192 also makes the reader aware of his or her position outside the world of the poem. She has just asked herself (and the audience who is overhearing this speech) a series of questions about what her next move is. Her request to the Fates for an audience reminds the reader once again that he or she is not actually present for Ariadne's speech:

*quare facta uirum multantes uindice poena
Eumenides, quibus anguino redimita capillo
frons exspirantis praeporat pectoris iras,
huc huc aduentate, meas audite querellas, 195
quas ego, uae misera, extremis proferre medullis
cogor inops, ardens, amenti caeca furore.*¹²⁰

Whereby, O Fates, punishing the deeds of men with an avenging punishment, whose foreheads surrounded by snaky hair carry forth the angers of the dying heart, here approach here, listen to my complaints, which I, wretched, am compelled to produce from my deepest marrow – helpless, burning, blinded by senseless madness.

Ariadne follows this summons with a wish that Theseus will die as a punishment for his deeds.

By summoning the Fates to be her audience, Ariadne reinforces the fact that she is actually alone

¹¹⁹ Catullus 64.116, 164.

¹²⁰ Catullus 64.192-197.

on the beach, that we as the readers are simply hearing her speech as the narrator relates it to us. In case we had been drawn into believing ourselves standing on the beach next to her, we once again receive a reminder that we are from the world outside the poem and that we only get to hear what the speaker chooses to relay. Yet, we are privileged in hearing this speech as there are no other listeners present in the scene. As always, “Catullus” draws the audience’s attention to the triangular relationships through strategies like direct address. He emphasizes Ariadne’s position as the object of our gaze, his own position as the link between ekphrasis and reader, and the reader’s position as a simple observer of the scene.

Conclusions

Though delving into the many layers of an ekphrasis such as we see in Poem 64 often obscures the lines between the world of the poem and the outside world for the reader, throughout his poem Catullus makes use of the strategies we have become familiar with (rhetorical questions, direct address, and authorial interjections) to draw the audience back into the world of the reader and to alert us to the presence of the narrator in the story that so engrosses us. As the reader is invited to leave behind the outside world and visualize the palace of Peleus, the coverlet, and the various scenes of the Ariadne and Theseus story, the speaker occasionally thrusts us back into the outside world by making us aware of our own position in relation to him and the characters of the poem. Despite the difference in subject matter, the narrator employs the rhetorical strategies in much the same way as we saw in the invective poems of Chapter 1 and the love poems of Chapter 2.

Similar to the series of questions addressed to Mamurra and *Cinaede Romule* in Poem 29, Ariadne (through the voice of the narrator) uses questions to condemn Theseus for abandoning her on a beach. Theseus is nowhere near and thus cannot hear the accusations leveled at him

through Ariadne's questions. Just as the narrator of Poem 29 insinuates that Mamurra has acted in completely unforgivable ways, so too Ariadne passes judgment on Theseus. The use of questions in both poems seems to ask for a defense that can never be given within the realm of the poem itself. As we overhear these questions being asked of Mamurra or Theseus, the readers are invited to join with Ariadne and the narrator in their censure of these men's actions.

The questions of Ariadne also recall the self-reflection of "Catullus" in Poem 8. Once her passion has subsided somewhat, she begins to reflect on her predicament and what course of action she can take. The reflections are similar to the reactions of "Catullus" upon finding out that Lesbia has been unfaithful to him. As with Ariadne's accusatory questions to Theseus, in Poem 8 "Catullus" questions Lesbia's motives as well. These self-reflections and continued questioning of the wronged lover allow the reader to glimpse the internal thoughts and emotions of the narrator – whether it is the spoken voice of Ariadne in Poem 64 or the voice of "Catullus" in Poem 8.

Throughout the poems, the narrator also makes use of direct address to catch the attention not only of the person addressed, but also of the audience. In the invective poems discussed in Chapter 1, the addressee is under scrutiny for some action. The address makes it impossible for him or her to ignore the remarks of the narrator. Similarly, Ariadne's address to Theseus or the narrator's rebuke of Phoebus, though the addressee is not actually present, forces each to take notice of the accusations made by the speaker.

Using all of these strategies, Catullus strives toward the goal of making the reader aware of triangular relationships within the poems. In the invective poems, the triangle is usually composed of the speaker, the accused, and the audience as bystander or witness to the conversation. Similarly, the triangle usually consists of the speaker, Lesbia (occasionally with

another lover), and the reader. In Poem 64, the poet creates a number of different triangles, starting with the Argonauts, the Nereids and the speaker/audience as viewers. Catullus then gives us the narrator, the figures on the coverlet, and the Thessalian wedding guests (including the reader) viewing the coverlet. Within the ekphrasis, a triangular relationship exists between the speaker as Ariadne, Theseus or other addressees, and the audience.

At the same time that these strategies draw attention to the audience member's position as an outsider and witness to the activity of the poem, the reader is always invited to visualize the scene and place him or herself into the world of the poem. In Poem 29, the reader is conflated with *Cinaede Romulus*; in Poem 10, we are aligned with the silent Varus watching the *scortillum* put "Catullus" in his place; in Poem 51, we join with "Catullus" watching as he witnesses the interaction between Lesbia and her other lover; in Poem 5, we are like one of the old men passing judgment on the number of kisses the couple shares; in Poem 64, the reader joins, in turn, with the Argonauts, the wedding guests, the absent Theseus and the Fates. The narrator of the poems manages to keep the audience in a balance between immersed in the world of the poem and aware of their place outside of the realm of the poem.

By keeping the audience aware of this balance and the various relationships between the poem's subjects and the poem's readers, the narrator also continuously draws attention to himself. In the invective poems, he makes his opinions and interpretations known to the reader through these rhetorical devices and asks us to join him in his judgment of his acquaintances and their actions. In the Lesbia poems, repeated uses of his own name and first person verbs along with invitations to visualize the scene from his point of view often reveal his inner thoughts and turn our attention back to his role in the poem's events. In poem 64, he constantly uses direct address and rhetorical questions to remind the reader that he is the one describing the coverlet

and narrating the events, choosing what details to share with the audience. The narrator never allows his audience to forget about his presence in the poem. In the end, every rhetorical device and structure is in the service of drawing attention to “Catullus” and the various relationships he creates within the poems.

While these devices are used in similar ways throughout Catullus’ poetry, Poem 64 differs from the rest of the corpus in many ways. In the invective and Lesbia poems, the speaker creates conversation and draws the reader into the realm of the poem by making him or her a member of the narrator’s sphere of friends and acquaintances. The rhetorical devices serve to engage the reader as though a participant in the daily life of the poet and his friends. In Poem 64, the narrator draws us into the world of the ekphrasis through his use of vivid language. In this poem, his use of rhetorical devices often jolts the reader out of his or her immersion in the ekphrasis and draws attention to the narrator’s own hand in the crafting of this poem. At the same time, the speech of Ariadne brings to mind many of the other poems in the corpus and invites the reader to delve back into the realm of the poem. Throughout the poem, the speaker balances, on the one hand, a blurring of the lines between narrator as describer, reader as outside observer and Ariadne (or other characters) as the object of viewing; and, on the other hand, a redrawing of these lines by calling attention to his own narration and craft. The reader is constantly in motion between immersion in the world of the ekphrasis and awareness of his or her own position outside the poem.

As the narrator, “Catullus,” aligns himself with Ariadne in Poem 64, Lesbia and Theseus become a pair. Though Poem 64 never directly compares the two couples, the rhetoric of “Catullus” and Ariadne and the actions attributed to Lesbia and Theseus have many parallels. These parallels invite a comparison similar to that made between “Catullus” and Lesbia and

Mamurra and Ameana in Poem 41. Both “Catullus” and Ariadne employ *topoi* common to the abandoned lovers of elegy, such as calling the abandoner *perfidus* (or *perfida*) and questioning his (or her) parentage. Both question how these misfortunes could have befallen them. Thus, it seems likely that taking on the voice of Ariadne is one method that “Catullus” uses to vent his feelings about Lesbia betraying him for a new lover. In both cases, the reader becomes a witness to the complaints of “Catullus”/Ariadne against Lesbia/Theseus. In one sense, the audience is asked to act as judge between these sets of lovers, though we only have one side of the story and no actual power over events within the world of the poems.

Conclusion

In his book chapter, “Crossing the threshold,” Duncan F. Kennedy explores various ways in which the reader would have encountered the physical text of Catullus’ poetry. Drawing on Gérard Genette’s theories of narratology, Kennedy suggests different methods through which the readers of Catullus would have gained access to the text and how this would have informed their experience of it and reactions to it. After a brief discussion of how the Catullan corpus was originally published (2014: 22-25), Kennedy moves on to theories about how various contemporaries of Catullus might have reacted to these poems.¹²¹ For the basis of this argument, Kennedy considers how Catullus describes other poets and their works in his own poetry.

Kennedy begins with a discussion of Calvus’ Saturnalia present discussed in Poem 14. In this poem, Catullus recounts that Calvus gave him a collection of quite horrid poetry (14.12: *di magni, horribilem et sacrum libellum!*). As the poem goes on, Catullus says he will go out to the booksellers and gather worse poets, including Caesius, Aquinus and Suffenus, to punish Calvus for giving Catullus this wretched book. Catullus himself provides his negative opinion of Suffenus’ poetry in Poem 22, so this is likely meant to be a very dire threat. It seems that Calvus and Catullus enjoyed trading these “collections” to see who could gather the worst set of poems.¹²² Because these two poets have the same aesthetic judgment of these poems, these exchanges are somewhat of a joke. Poem 50, read in the light of this interpretation of Poem 14, calls into question how Calvus would take the idea of his own poetry being placed in a scroll alongside some of Catullus’ poems. Kennedy suggests that this is Catullus’ plan when he references getting together with Calvus the morning after they have spent their leisure

¹²¹ Kennedy (2014) argues against the idea that these poems were originally published in one volume and instead favors some version of select poems published in multiple scrolls.

¹²² Cf., Kennedy (2014), 25-26.

exchanging verses.¹²³ By entrusting his poetry to publication, and thus to a public sphere, Catullus opens up his poetry to criticism by others, much in the same way he has criticized fellow poets. He has no way of knowing, for example, “what Calvus will do with the roll come the next Saturnalia.”¹²⁴ So also, the poet has no control over what the many other anonymous readers of his poetry will say about it to their friends.

While Kennedy is primarily concerned with responses to the physical text – the number of poems in a scroll, the quality of the paper, the poems of another poet that might be included – he does bring up the important question how the reader was meant to interact with Catullus’ poems. The modern book is quite different from the scroll or the codex through which Catullus’ original readers would have experienced his poems. The content, however, should still incite similar responses in readers of the twenty-first century AD as it did those of the first century BC. His word choices, questions, addresses, and asides should invite conversation no matter in what form the reader receives the poems. In publishing his poetry, no matter what form the poems were published in or how they were organized, Catullus in a sense gifted the poems to his readership and invited the formulation of opinions and discussion of his poetry. Publication of the poems allows them to become public property, to an extent. While the collection includes several acknowledged dedicatees (for example, Cornelius Nepos in Poem 1), the use of second person address also in a way dedicates a specific poem to its addressee (for example, Flavius in Poem 6). We can imagine Catullus handing Flavius a slip of parchment with Poem 6 written on it, thus “gifting” it to him. Official publication also “gifts” the poems to the reader, in that the poet thereby offers his poems for public consumption. In some ways, the method of publication in Catullus’ own time makes little difference since modern readers do not receive a scroll or

¹²³ Cf., Catullus 50.14-17. Also, Kennedy (2014), 26.

¹²⁴ Kennedy (2014), 27.

embossed codex. While we will never definitively know his own intentions or purposes for any of the poems, by focusing on the content of his poetry, my comparison of the different themes and his uses of various rhetorical strategies or other structures provides important insight into the relationship between the narrator of the poems and the readers who receive them.

As I have demonstrated in the chapters of this thesis, Catullus employs rhetorical devices such as direct address, second person verbs, and rhetorical questions to invite the reader into the realm of his poems. Through the use of these techniques, the narrator prompts the reader to visualize a scene or an event and to place him or herself in the role of an observer of the action. Once the reader has entered the world of the poem, he or she is then often included in the conversation or interaction of the characters. The questions posed to the addressee of the poem seem to be directed at the reader. These questions often cause the reader to stop and to rethink the implications of the information the narrator has chosen to share or the opinion of the person that the speaker seems to hold. Thus, the reader is invited to form his or her own opinion about what he or she has “observed,” though often the narrator has carefully filtered the information in an effort to lead the reader into seeing the situation from his point of view.

In many of the poems, the narrator’s invitation to visualize characters or interactions between various people also prompts comparisons that then lead to a glimpse of how the speaker sees himself or those around him. These comparisons occur most often in connection with “Lesbia,” though a basis for such comparisons can be found in Catullus’ other poems. In relating brief episodes from his time spent with Lesbia, the narrator either compares her with another woman or contrasts himself with a rival for Lesbia’s affections. These poems often draw the reader into what seems to be the speaker’s thoughts about his relationship with Lesbia, usually his pain at some betrayal on her part. As the reader is invited further into the realm of the poems,

he or she is provided with information that would seem to allow him or her to form opinions about this very passionate relationship. This information is almost always colored by the narrator's feelings toward Lesbia at that particular moment. Yet, the reader is often so captivated by the narrator's presentation of the affair, becoming so absorbed in the immediacy of the conversation or interaction between characters, that he or she ceases to distinguish between his or her viewpoint and that of the narrator. Thus, it is necessary for the reader to take a step back after reading the poem in order to realize how the speaker has used various strategies to convince him or her of "Catullus's" interpretation of the event or characters.

In the end, though Catullus uses these rhetorical devices in vastly different ways throughout his poetry, they are always employed first to invite the reader to step away from his or her own life and surroundings and then to enter the world of the poem. Once inside the circumstances of the particular poem, the reader becomes a part of the conversation, as much as is possible when one cannot actually answer the questions or provide feedback, and is steered into forming opinions about the people and places encountered. Through the use of these rhetorical strategies, Catullus seeks to create a sort of liminal space in which the reader feels as if he or she can interact with the narrator and other characters, while occasionally forcing him or her to face the physical reality of his or her own place outside the poem. This immersion in the world of the poem and subsequent reminder of the reader's distance and place outside the poem usually makes him or her aware of both the narrator's presence within the realm of the poem and the fact that the poet is directing it from the outside.

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