

Multus Homo Es:
Desire, Conquest, and Identity in Catullus' *Carmina*

by

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*To my parents, whose unwavering support made this thesis
(and all other things in my life) possible.*

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Abstract

The Roman poet Catullus has occupied a curious place in the hearts of scholars and lovers of literature alike. On the one hand, he writes some of the most violent and hateful poetry to have survived from the Ancient World, but on the other hand, he also seems to be indebted to a profoundly thoughtful and intellectual poetic tradition. Balancing these two moments, this thesis strives to understand both as essential parts to what I argue is Catullus' ongoing efforts to critique and correct a misunderstanding at the centre of his Roman community. This entails challenging not only the privilege and standing of the violent masculine behaviour that is common place in Roman culture, but also the power and priority of the idea of Empire itself.

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Chapter 1—Introduction

Catullan scholarship has undergone a renaissance in the past three decades. Emerging from highly literal readings championed by such texts as Kenneth Quinn's *The Catullan Revolution*, published in 1959, and T.P. Wiseman's 1986 work, *Catullus and His World: A Reappraisal*, more recent scholarship has developed these ideas and introduced a change of tone. Marilyn B. Skinner's writing, for example, has heavily challenged the position of masculine behaviour in Catullus' poetry and has even begun to question the identity of, and Catullus' relationship with, Lesbia. Her books and articles have encouraged a plethora of new work, from Micaela Janan's 1994 book "*When the Lamp is Shattered: Desire and Narrative in Catullus*" to Ellen Greene's 1998 masterpiece *The Erotics of Domination: Male Desire and the Mistress in Latin Love Poetry*, which carefully unravel new and vibrant threads in Catullus' work. Erotic relationships are no longer romanticized or idealized, as they are, for example, in David Mulroy's 1978 article, "An Interpretation of Catullus 11," but are rather the site of empowering and revolutionary conversations concerning life-styles alternative to the prevailing masculine and violent options. Even David Wray's 2001 *Catullus and the Poetics of Roman Manhood*, which argues for a reconsideration of Catullus' relationship to the practice of the *viri* who stalked the streets of Rome in the 1st century BCE, is highly attentive to the nuance and poetic power at play in the poet's work. The product of this serious and thorough revisiting of such an exciting, sappy, and—at times—raunchy poet, has produced incredibly challenging, progressive, and thought-provoking conclusions.

Not only has this not always been the case, but Catullus has often held a mired reputation: he has been construed as an ally for chauvinists, and exploited as an excuse for misogynistic behaviour. In addition to a scholarly obsession with the Catullan biography and the ways it allegedly informs his poetry, there have been a surprising number of literary reenactments of his life, almost all of which focus heavily on Catullus' profanity and hatred for his (fictional) partner, Lesbia. Take, for example, Aubrey Beardsley's translation of c. 101—Catullus' lament for his dead brother—

By ways remote and distant waters sped
Brother, to thy sad grave-side am I come,
That I may give the last gifts to the dead,
And vainly parley with thine ashes dumb.
Since she who now bestows and now denies
Hath ta'en thee hapless brother, from mine eyes.
But lo! these gifts, the heirlooms of past years,
Are made sad things to grace thy coffin shell;
Take them, all drenched with a brother's tears,
And, brother, for all time, hail and farewell.¹

In what is an otherwise fairly innocuous translation, the fifth line's rendering of *fortuna* (fortune) is highly suspicious. William Fitzgerald himself says it best, pointing that “she who now bestows and now denies” is “a description that might apply equally to the erratic Lesbia of Catullus' poems.”² This is a dangerous conflation that puts forward the woman who does not bend the man's will and desires as a nefarious outlier, who is somehow implicated the death of loved one. Furthermore, it establishes a fraternal bond

¹ Quoted by Eleanor Duckett, *Catullus in Poetry* (Northampton: Smith College, 1925), 197-198.

² William Fitzgerald, *Catullan Provocations: Lyric Poetry and the Drama of Position*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 216.

in opposition to the feminine. Indeed, the newly formed brotherhood exists *in spite of* the feminine and attempts to insulate itself from the dangers that the other sex presents.

Even more troubling is Gael Turnbull's poem "After Catullus," which invokes Catullus solely for the purpose of being an "alibi for [his] petulant and insulting outburst."³ Consider what he, adopting the persona of a married man having an affair, says about his new mistress:

You ask me?—her?—flat chest, varicose veins and teeth
in need of care—true, agile hips, smooth belly and snug
crotch (despite four healthy children)—but slow to come
and hysterical—gabbling in panic—incoherent phone
calls—always writing that she'll write another letter next
time (always next time)—

and goes on to conclude his rant with:

and I,
at the age of forty-three (know better?)—with wife and
kids I'm fond of, more than fond—to fall in love—and
she, hung up her husband, anyway—⁴

The narrator's description of his new lover is hardly flattering and again we find frustration at a woman withholding something (explicitly a letter, implicitly sex). But what does Catullus have to do with this shifty relationship? Fitzgerald responds nicely in the following sentence: "The speaker of Turnbull's poem is addicted ... and uses the authority of Catullus to mythologize this addiction."⁵ That is, the author—or perhaps just the narrator—uses Catullus to legitimize his (sexual) frustration and uses the poet's company as an excuse to be unabashedly crass. There are many more stories and poems

³ *Ibid.*, 233.

⁴ Quoted in *ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

written in this style,⁶ which are all equally disturbing in the degree to which they put forward an idea of “brotherhood” that “has as its concomitant, or even its motivation, a rejection of the woman,” and amount to nothing more than “misogyny.”⁷ Catullus, it would seem, is thoroughly entangled in the realm of masculine affairs, but is this truly where he allegiance lies? Is he actually a misogynist, or has he been misappropriated by this contemporary seekers of fraternity?

The confusion surrounding Catullus’ place within such a masculine and fraternity takes us precisely to where this thesis begins: at the question of Catullus’ relationship to the violent trends in masculine behaviour prevalent in Rome in the 1st century BCE. As will be repeated often in chapter two, Roman men’s relationship to their sexuality and gender is distinctively construed. Unable to simply defer to their genitalia or emotions, they pit themselves in a complex and adversarial competition, where a *vir*’s ability to outdo and have more than everyone else is the sole guarantor of the ethereal title of “man.” This competition, which I will refer to as the “masculine game,” hinges on very strict binaries such as active and passive, masculine and feminine, and hard and soft, and privileges a strong and one-sided sexual vocabulary. Words such as *irrumare* and *pedicare*, whose etymology and English translation will occupy an important part of the chapter, play a central role in this competition and also grant us insight into the violence that is integral to this “masculine game.” Both of these words, especially in the context of Catullus’ poetry, are more closely aligned with rape than consensual sexual relationships, and highly prioritize the active “penetrator” over the passive “penetrated.” These terms

⁶ Cf. in particular James Baxter, *Runes* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973); and John Cotton, “Catullus at Sirmio,” *Ambit* 89: 54-55.

⁷ Fitzgerald, *Catullan Provocations*, 212, 214.

carry weight outside of the sexual arena as well, and the stark distinction they draw between active and passive carries over into public and even political affairs, as we will see in poems such as c. 33. Given their frequent and prominent use in Catullus' poetry, perhaps it is not surprising that the Roman poet has so often been seen a proponent of these practices and seen as an ally to modern men seeking to affirm and reaffirm their own claim to masculinity.

Yet there are resources in Catullus' writing that allow us to begin questioning this line of thinking. Indeed, he often portrays the participants in this game as living highly unsustainable lives and in constant search of confirmation that they are, in fact, men. This leads to a very curious situation, since it turns out that Rome's *vir*i are engaged in contradictory activity. On the one hand, they are looking to outdo everyone else in order to confirm their own masculine prowess, but on the other hand, their opponents need to have enough agency to confirm our initial man as manly. So as a *vir* looks to subordinate and dominate other men, at the same time he becomes reliant on them to be recognized as a man in the first place. Chapter two concludes with this *aporia*. The more a man looks to be manly, and by extension independent, ironically he becomes more and more dependent on the very things he is seeking to overcome. Catullus, it would appear, is at the very least suspicious of his fellow men and their activity; his use of their loaded and highly sexual language, it turns out, is not entirely sincere.

The dependence that chapter two gradually uncovers is essential to the general progression of chapter three, which focuses less on Catullus' invective, masculine poetry, and more on his erotic poems. Although the third chapter initially attempts to find clear solutions to the problem of masculine aggression and sexual violence, in particular

through the institution of marriage, the chapter ultimately reaches a disturbing conclusion. Instead of controlling or channeling these dangerous masculine tendencies, marriage inadvertently produces and reproduces the very thing it was hoping to overcome. The bride, who is supposed to distract and contain her husband's *virtus*—his masculine prowess—turns out to be nothing more than an unsatisfactory offering, and perhaps even a sacrifice, to what Catullus begins to clearly identify as a threat to the stability of Roman society itself.

However, such a pessimistic conclusion does not mean there is no solution to the rampant problem of violent masculinity that is beginning to emerge in my reading of Catullus' poetry. In fact, with the help of Catullus' Greek predecessors, Sappho and Theocritus,⁸ the fourth chapter points in an alternative direction. Contrary to Roman notions of masculinity and the danger to other Roman citizens and subjects it harbours, Catullus' lyric poetry revels in a shared experience of the world that prioritizes community and friendship over the exclusion and violence the *vir* finds so appealing. However, just because it does not seek out isolation and insulation does not mean that Catullus' poetry looks to render the individual subordinate to his friends and fellow humans. Instead, it places a great deal of emphasis on an experience of mutual fragmentation, in which all the actors—whether two lovers or members of a larger community—find self-affirmation and completion in and through their shared activity. (This is, of course, in complete contrast to the *vir*, who only finds value in the elevation of himself over others.)

⁸ And, as we will see, in chapter three, the nineteenth century German, G.W.F. Hegel.

The language of audience is important here. Whereas Roman masculinity found itself at odds with its very source of confirmation—those who receive it—I will argue that Catullus’ erotic poetry shows acute awareness of this relationship. In fact, it understands that only when the individual creates space for and receives those who receive *him*, can he truly begin to understand himself. This is most clearly expressed in Catullus’ explicitly amorous poems, such as c. 7 and c. 45,⁹ both of which present us with a repetitious and unresolvable activity that constantly turns the actor into the audience, and vice versa. Everyone involved is seen to the same extent that they see; each voice is heard, but leaves room to hear the other. What this ultimately comes down to is a recognition of recognition. While the *vir* endlessly struggles to overcome the perceived inconvenience of his audience, Catullus’ amorous actors are highly aware of their place within a larger whole and their dependency on others. In other words, what they come realize is that their experience of fragmentation or dependence is not an isolated event that must be overcome, but rather a fundamental and unavoidable part of their lives.

Unfortunately, despite the establishment of a culture and activity contrary to the dominant masculine system, one problem still remains that resists my reading of Catullus’ poetry. Even if Catullus is practicing, or at the very least advocating for, the aforementioned acceptance and exploration of fragmentation and dependence, which I will call either his “lyric lifestyle” or “poetic project,” the question arises as to whether or not he is able to avoid or overcome the violence and danger present in the Roman ideal of masculinity. As chapter five demonstrates, *viri* are not confined to the city of Rome, but

⁹ Which involve the fantastical relationship with his on-again off-again lover, Lesbia, and his many adventures with his numerous friends.

rather spread their toxic behaviour through the ever-expanding and border-defying power of the Roman empire. Through close attention to c. 11 and 29, I argue that the universal empire itself, led by Catullus' rival, Julius Caesar, is beholden to similar ideals and objectives as the individual *vir* in chapter two. Constant expansion and exclusion play a leading role in Catullus' portrayal of Rome's military activity, and the "monuments" that scholars like Ernst Fredericksmeier see as positive accounts of Roman glory,¹⁰ in the end are nothing more than memorials of violence, destruction, and oppression.¹¹ This expansion, and by extension the dissemination of Roman masculinity, is not only relentless, but much to Catullus and Catullus scholars' dismay also extraordinarily far-reaching.

In response to this ideology of empire, there has been a large push in Catullan scholarship to locate a space beyond the clutches of the Roman Empire for the poet to practice and cultivate his "lyric lifestyle." However, as the chapter concludes, these ambitions are too lofty. For example, Catullus makes constant reference to Caesar's conquest of Britain, with particular emphasis on how far away the island is. Britain lies beyond the borders of the Roman world and, as such, the success of the Roman expedition across the channel begins to call into question the possibility of an "escape" from Roman violence. Catullus himself makes this abundantly clear given the adjective he uses for the island—*ultimus*—which both describes Britain *and* the field in which he finds himself at the end of c. 11. This hyperbolic word choice heavily restricts the possibility of a place outside of Rome's grasp where Catullus would be able to practice

¹⁰ Cf. Ernst Fredericksmeier, "Method and Interpretation: Catullus 11," *Helios* 20 (1993): 94.

¹¹ Cf. Michael Putnam, "Catullus 11: The Ironies of Integrity," in *Oxford Readings in Classical Studies: Catullus*, ed. Julia Haig Gaisser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 88.

his poetic project. If Caesar is able to conquer Britain, which lies beyond the previously impassable boundary of the sea, where is Catullus supposed to hide that will be free of Rome's toxic influence?

The answer, I will propose, is nowhere. Instead of fleeing from his masculine opponents and their way of life, Catullus' poetry remains firmly engaged with the very thing it so strongly opposes. His poetry challenges and subverts the well-established tenets of masculinity, but not by ignoring them. Instead it whole-heartedly employs the same violent and oppressive language, but with the goal of exposing flaws and shortcomings in the system of Roman masculinity, as opposed to glorifying the egocentric behaviour we have already condemned. The upshot of this tactic is that Catullus' poetry does not itself overcome and eliminate the *vir*i of whom it is so suspicious,¹² but rather constantly reorients those very men towards the observations and corrections we made in chapter two. Again and again the relationship with the audience (and thus the individual's dependency on others) is raised and examined and again and again the *vir*'s insistence on overcoming this relationship is challenged and corrected. Neither dependency, finitude, nor community are, I will have argued, obstacles or barriers to the fulfillment or "actualization" of the self, but rather constitutive moments in the individual's identity. What Catullus' poetry ultimately proposes, then, is a mere change in perspective. All of the *vir*'s relationships remain the same in his poetry, but the ways the individual can approach them are radically different.

Such a change of perspective is what I conclude this thesis by calling Catullus' revolution. It is not some Catilinian uprising or pathetic escape plan, but a calculated and

¹² And therefore reproduce the very system of oppression and exclusion to which it is so opposed.

daring effort to subvert and reconfigure the central axes around which Roman social behaviour rotated in the first century B.C.E.. In this way he is not abandoning his city, but redeeming it; through Catullus' poetry, Rome—the centre of the empire's community—can slowly realize itself as a meeting place and space in which voices and individuals can appear, be heard, and be responded to. The contradictory masculine efforts of independence and insulation, then, were simply mistaken attempts to come to terms with the individual's place within a larger, communal, whole.

Of course, this revolution never actually came to pass and, for the most part, has gone largely unnoticed. Only at times in their profound readings of Catullus have scholars such as Greene and Skinner explored the possibility of not just Catullus' dissatisfaction with the masculine order,¹³ but also of the opportunity for recovery and change. However, the observations that I hope I have added to the discussion are in no way intended to critique and dismiss their work. On the contrary, I merely have sought to follow their logic to its conclusion and introduce to it what the reader may recognize as Hegelian suggestions.¹⁴ Too often, I think, the scholarship surrounding Catullus remains mired in an “us or them” dichotomy, which positions the persona of Catullus on one side and his wonderfully constructed Roman *viri* on the other. Yet, from this opposition, I have hopefully begun to show how what initially appears as an impasse, ultimately allows for real conversation between and transformation of all actors within the society Catullus reimagines.

¹³ Cf. Greene, *Erotics of Domination*; Marilyn B. Skinner, *Ut Decuit Cinaediorum and Catullan Obscenity*.

¹⁴ This will be addressed explicitly in chapter three.

We should note, before moving on, that “Catullus” and “revolution” have been bedfellows before. Indeed, one of the most influential texts of the 20th century on Catullus, Quinn’s *The Catullan Revolution*, explicitly deals with this subject matter. However, whereas we will focus on the importance of the relationship between the actor and the audience, Quinn and those who follow him see a very different revolution taking place: Catullus, he tells us, “thrust the educated community at large aside from [its] traditional position at the centre of the poet’s intentions while writing,” and that “less concerned with his public audience, [he] became concern first with an intimate clique, and ultimately with himself.”¹⁵ As I have cautioned earlier, these lines of argumentation are dangerous, since they do not necessarily serve to work through and overcome the stark masculine binaries that dominate Roman social life, but actually often perpetuate their negative consequences. Separating himself from the very people who can confirm and celebrate his identity, Catullus would be no more effective at being a member of the human community than one of his detested *viri*. Following Quinn’s argument, the status quo remains the same; the only thing that has changed is who is excluding whom.

Nevertheless, this language of status quo is interesting. In fact, the more I worked on this thesis, the more I was reminded of the Jewish account of Walter Benjamin’s retelling of an old messianic parable: “A rabbi,” we are told, “once said that in order to establish the reign of peace it is not necessary to destroy everything nor to begin a completely new world. It is sufficient to displace this cup or this bush or this stone just a

¹⁵ Kenneth Quinn, *The Catullan Revolution* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1959), 87. This sharp distinction that Quinn establishes even has strong footing in books such as Greene’s *The Erotics of Domination*, whose second chapter, “Gendered Domains: Public and Private in Catullus,” is constantly grappling with Catullus’ suspicion of the masculine, possession obsessed culture in which he finds himself.

little, and thus everything.” Benjamin goes on to correct the story, however, and, according to his disciple, Giorgio Agamben, tells us that

The *Hassidim* tell a story about the world to come that says everything there will be just as it is here. Just as our room is now, so it will be in the world to come; where our baby sleeps now, there too it will sleep in the other world. And the clothes we wear in this world, those too we will wear there. Everything will be as it is now, just a little different.¹⁶

This second account entails nothing more than a change in perspective. Nothing has changed, Benjamin repeatedly insists, but this does not mean that the way we understand the world has stayed the same. Yet here while nothing has ostensibly changed, it would be difficult to say that the status quo has stayed the same; the networks of meaning and power structures in the world can be radically revisited in this new, redeemed world.

So too is Catullus’ world unchanged by his revolution. Just as *viri* fill the forum and streets of Rome, so too will they congregate after the revolution; where the lovers sleep, there too will they sleep in the new community. Just as there is an actor and the audience, so too will the individual remain fragmented in the community to come. Everything, we can say with Benjamin, will be as it is now, just a little different.

¹⁶ Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, trans. Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 52.

Chapter 2—Odi

Catullus, as David Wray is quick to point out,¹⁷ is a poet primarily concerned with men. Indeed, his invective poetry almost exclusively features masculine victims and closely ties Catullus to the Roman game of masculinity. It has often been assumed that these hate poems implicate the poet in this game's violent proceedings as both an advocate for Roman masculine practices and as an expert in their implementation. Before we can reach any such conclusions, however, we first must investigate what exactly defines a Roman man and what governs his interactions with others. In particular, one of the guiding questions of this chapter will be whether "the game of Roman masculinity" is simply a social phenomenon or instead a feature of the Roman institution *par excellence*, namely, *imperium*. That is, is it possible to separate masculine activity from imperial activity? How is virility transmitted, and is it even possible for a man to successfully claim the prized title of *vir*? All of this will depend on the complex rules of masculine performance, which ultimately raises the questions: (1) who is the audience; and (2) if it is the *vir*'s goal to achieve complete independence from others, where does this leave those who are watching? Can the man escape the public eye, how violent must his performance be to do so, and, finally, (3) if he finds that he must depend on others after all, will he ultimately be able to come to terms with this constitutive and inescapable relationship?

2.1 A Dangerous Game to be Sure—Definitions of Roman Masculinity

¹⁷ Cf. David Wray, *Catullus and the Poetics of Roman Manhood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 64-112.

As many scholars have noted, there is nothing intrinsically self-evident about being a *vir* for the Romans; one cannot simply defer to their genitalia to confirm his or her gender. Instead, one must take part in an elaborate performance in order to prove their virility. As Elizabeth Manwell indicates, “a real *vir* is *fortis* (strong), *durus* (hard), *sanus* (sound), and *integer* (whole),”¹⁸ and in contrast, he who does not appear to exhibit these characteristics is considered less of a man, if a man at all. All four of these adjectives convey a similar force: to be free of external influence. A strong, hard man does not, theoretically, rely on others to secure his well-being, but rather is self-contained through his wholeness and in control of his emotions. In contrast, as Williams points out, “a man who cedes control over his own desires and fears is less than fully masculine.”¹⁹ This lack of control can manifest itself in many ways and is often associated with men whose public performance would have been “considered luxurious, hedonistic, self-indulgent, or avaricious,” again with an emphasis on the “control of one’s desires.”²⁰ In these examples, the man in question places too much stock in things that are mere extensions of himself, and admits that he as an individual is incapable of offering an effective social performance without the aids of his props, whether they be jewelry, perfume, or fine clothes. Additionally, his emphasis on external, luxurious things exhibits his inability to be content within himself, which certainly does not befit someone who claims to be *integer*, and puts him more in the camp of a slave than a Roman man.

¹⁸ Elizabeth Manwell, “Gender and Masculinity,” in *A Companion to Catullus*, ed. Marilyn B. Skinner (Malden: Blackwell, 2007), 113-114.

¹⁹ Craig Williams, *Roman Homosexuality: Ideologies of Masculinity in Classical Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 139.

Cicero, talking about Marius, a man who elected to undergo surgery on one leg without being tied down (but asked to be bound for the second side), notes that *ita et tulit dolorem ut vir et ut homo maiorem fere sine causa necessaria noluit*,²¹ and goes on to argue: *totum igitur in eo est, ut tibi imperes ... sed hoc quidem in dolore maxime est providendum, ne quid timide, ne quid ignave, ne quid serviliter muliebriterve faciamus*.²² Marius succeeds at exhibiting his masculinity here on two levels. First of all, he initially refuses to be determined by something external—the pain of the surgery—demonstrating that he is in complete control of himself. Secondly, after proving his virility during the first half of the surgery, he does not give into excess and is bound for the remainder of the procedure. Although in his second round Marius seems to be giving into an external force—the pain was too great—Cicero’s language of *sine causa necessaria* suggests that Marius also understands his limitations as not just a *vir* but also a *homo* (human). If Marius had continued his performance, he would have gone too far and fallen into excess. That is, he has already succeeded in proving his *virtus* (his manliness) and any further demonstration would be just as self-indulgent as lavish clothing or quaffed hair. His masculine performance, then, is as equally an exercise in moderation as it is in control. He not only sets out to prove that he is in complete control of his emotions and desires, but also knows at what point said demonstration can risk slipping into precisely what he is trying to avoid.

²¹ *Cic. Tusc.*, 2.53: “And thus he bore pain like a man and as a human did not wish to bear more without real cause.” Translation is my own.

²² Cicero, *Tusculan*, 2.53, 55: “The whole affair, then, is in this: that you rule yourself ... but certainly we must take the highest precautions while in pain, lest we do something timidly, sluggishly, like a slave or like a woman.”

This degree of self-awareness, however, is quite rare and more frequently men are defined almost exclusively through their ability to be dominant and have power. This does not solely extend to his own actions either; indeed “a man must exercise dominion over his own body and own desires as well as the bodies and desires of those under his jurisdiction . . . just as the Roman citizenry as a whole ideally dominates most of the rest of the world.”²³ Any social failings of subordinates, then, reflect poorly on the man himself, which in turn extend beyond the individual again—this time to the whole of Rome. The actions of others can shame our *vir*, but such a disgrace not only embarrasses him, but indeed the whole of Rome. Williams is astute, then, when he writes that “the status of being a Roman man is associated with dominion or *imperium*,”²⁴ and Cicero’s injunction rings all the clearer: *ut tibi imperes!* Everything within the *vir*’s domain, from his emotions to his servants, must be watched closely, lest a single mistake question his integrity and potentially challenge his hard-won masculinity. Crucially, if a servant were to err, perhaps by dressing too lavishly, not only would the man no longer sufficiently have dominion over his slave, but he would equally have become submissive to this other person, since their action would be able to determine the *vir*’s social reception. Therefore, just as Rome rules over and maintains her empire, so too must the *vir* rule over what is his. Should he fail, Rome’s ability to rule over her own citizens would be drawn into question just as much as his ability to manage his *domus*.

This distinction between domination and submission is only one of many interlaced dichotomies. Although the most important of these is the distinction between

²³ *Ibid.*, 141.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 135.

masculine and feminine, Williams notes that this can be aligned “with various other binaries: moderation/excess; hardness/softness; courage/timidity; strength/weakness; activity/passivity; sexual penetration/being sexually penetrated; and ... domination/submission.”²⁵ These binaries give very little room for interpretation, and Williams does not acknowledge any space for a middle ground between the two extremes. “Either one is a man,” he writes, “or else one is a despised effeminate.”²⁶ Even one mistake in any category leads not only to one transition from the favoured left to the suspicious right, but to a total shift in every dichotomy, at least as far as the public is concerned. In Williams’ words, “if a man breaks just one rule, he loses the game; in the balancing act of masculinity, one stumble can ruin the entire performance.”²⁷ *Viri*, then, very clearly take part in a dangerous competition, in which constant vigilance is necessary to even gain entry.

It is within this context that Roman men privilege the penetrative role in sexual acts so highly. There is no other choice: either one dominates another (here sexually), or is dominated by them. The language implicit in these exchanges carries a lot of weight, with particular force given to the verb *irrumare*, a Catullan favourite. Originally the verb “to extend the breast,” or “to give suck,” in reference to a mother breastfeeding her child, *Lewis and Short* only offers “to treat in a foul or shameful manner” and “abuse”²⁸ to explain the verb’s sexual connotations. This does as little to convey the violence and domination implied in the verb as does its substantive *irrumator*, which is gently given as

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 142.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 154.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 142.

²⁸ Charlton Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 1003.

“one who practices beastly obscenity.”²⁹ William Fitzgerald expands on its context, commenting that it “denotes an action that is not specifiable in English except by extension of other terms (‘fuck the mouth,’ ‘oral rape’),”³⁰ which, although disturbing, are not clean translations of the Latin. Thus he goes on to offer a potential translation in “Eat it!” but remains pessimistic, since “in English the action, even when degrading to the person who performs it, is all on the side of the fellator,”³¹ which within our Roman masculine model would of course render our *irrumator* as passive and dependent on the actions of the other party.

Ultimately it is David Wray’s translation as “facefuck”³² that captures what is at stake in the linguistic treatment of Roman oral sex more cleanly than Fitzgerald’s “fuck the mouth.” The crucial aspect that comes across here is not only the activity on the part of the *irrumator*—the “facefucker”—but also the complete passivity of the *cinaedus*—the “facefuckee.” That is to say, “oral sex” and other modern expressions can hardly encapsulate what is at stake in this terminology. Consider “to suck a dick” or “to give head;” both of these examples do not place the agency in the loins of the *vir*, but rather in the mouth of the *cinaedus*. Yet the verb *irrumare* leaves no room for this! In the act of irrumation, the irrumated party is precisely the one who *cannot* participate in the masculine categories of any of the binaries above. While the irrumator is literally hard, the *cinaedus*’ mouth is soft; the latter submits while the former dominates; and, in a distinction that is more than grammatical, the *vir* is entirely active (he is fucking) while

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ William Fitzgerald, *Catullan Provocation: Lyric Poetry and the Drama of Position* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 65.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 65.

³² David Wray, *Catullus and the Poetics of Roman Manhood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 81.

the irrumated person is left entirely passive (they are *fucked*). Fitzgerald expands on this even more, and, tracing its etymology, notes that because “*irrumatio* is, after all, the means by which the mother silences the noisy baby ... in its metaphorical sense as sexual threat it is intended to reduce the victim to a status comparable to that of the baby (*infans*, i.e. not speaking) in relation to the all-powerful adult who silences it.”³³ This observation is apt, since the act of irrumation quite literally deprives the irrumated of their voice (and it is hard to imagine that they could create any intelligible sound at all). In non-sexual terms, the *vir* is so active that he not only drowns out the other’s voice, but continually interrupts the very process of its creation.

Descriptions of this nature are not confined solely to descriptions of irrumation either. For instance, Williams recounts a series of Roman dirty jokes which reveal a similar dynamic at the anal end of Roman sexual practice. Some of the jokes are relatively harmless, such as this Lucilian fragment: “if he has shoved a thick water-snake with a head into your butt.”³⁴ Unfortunately, others begin to express a trend in a set phrase with close ties to *irrumatio*: “to shit out a dick.” Consider the threat that, if someone steals from the speaker, “he should consider ‘how heavy a load of dick [he] will have to shit out,’” or the observation that “there’s nothing for you to eat, but if you want something to shit out, there’s plenty!”³⁵ Although it is curiously worded, the implication of these threats should not be overlooked: “[the *vir*] will fill [the victim’s] anus with his substantial member.”³⁶ In a binary similar to the ones above, these jokes grow less and

³³ Fitzgerald, *Catullan Provocations*, 65.

³⁴ Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 29.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 30.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

less funny the more violent they become and the more the man begins to insert his authority at the expense of another. Just like *irrumare*, which has two clearly defined and opposite roles, *pedicare*, its anal counterpart, always privileges someone over another. Williams find this “fascinating, for not only does it evoke the physical realities of anal penetration with characteristically Roman bluntness, but it seems also to represent the sensations of the receptive partner as his insertive partner withdraws.”³⁷ This imagery is not kind to the receptive “partner” (if the language of partner can even be used). Whereas a *vir* strives to be in control of his body and his mind, the *pathicus*—the object of *pedicare*—has no control in moments of “shitting out a dick.” Even the possibility of his being the agent of the defecation has been taken away from him, since it is the other party who controls the experience. Additionally, one can imagine the physical and aural sensation as not only physically distressing, but embarrassing and uncontrollable.³⁹

Both of these verbs, *irrumare* and *pedicare*, can be seen in their masculine contexts in c. 16:

*Pedicabo ego vos et irrumabo,
Aureli pathice et cinaede Furi,
qui me ex versiculis meis putastis,
quod sunt molliculi, parum pudicum.
nam castum esse decet pium poetam
ipsum, versiculos nihil necesse est;
qui tum denique habent salem ac leporem,
si sunt molliculi ac parum pudici,
et quod pruriant incitare possunt,
non dico pueris, sed his pilosis*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁹ It is worth noting that Williams sees a slight hole in the *vir*'s facade here, since “this is not an image, one could argue, that would have been used by men who had never had the experience of being anally penetrated A reminder that the same men who swear allegiance to the ideal of impenetrability were one those very boys whose penetrability made them so desirable” (*ibid.*).

*qui duros nequeunt movere lumbos.
vos, quod milia multa basiorum
legistis, male me marem putatis?
pedicabo ego vos et irrumabo.*

I will sodomize and facefuck you,
Aurelius, you catamite, and Furius, you bitch,
who believed that I was not chaste enough
based on my little verses, which are soft.
For it is proper for a real poet himself to be
chaste, but it is not necessary for his verses to be so;
Now indeed they have taste and wit,
if they are soft and insufficiently chaste,
and if they can incite that which itches—
I am not speaking about boys here, but those shaggy men,
who are unable to move their stiff loins.
You, because you read my many thousands of
kisses, believe me barely a man?
I will sodomize and facefuck you.

The language here is unambiguous. In the face of an earlier attack on his virility, Catullus not only deploys *pedicare* and *irrumare* as the centerpieces of his counter-offensive, but also explicitly introduces many of the masculine binaries and raises the question of what makes a good or bad man (*male marum*). It is worth pointing out that the adverb *male* here does not carry any connotations of moral deficiency. Rather, as David Wray argues, it is tied to the quality of a man's masculine performance, and thus Catullus is less focused "on being a good man, than on being good at being a man."⁴⁰ Additionally, the translation of *cinaedus* as "bitch" also immediately points us back to the power dynamic between the irrumator and the irrumated as well as the powerlessness and submission of the receiving party, in a way that a literal rendering of the adjective in English is not

⁴⁰ David Wray, *Roman Manhood*, 67.

always capable. By mobilizing this language, Catullus' poetic persona is able to deflect the earlier insinuations from Aurelius and Furius "directly back onto its originators, declaring himself ready, willing, and to subject them to his phallic power."⁴¹ Williams' language of "phallic power" here is key, since even if Catullus does not follow through with his threats, the attack is still very real according to the masculine game and the poet has asserted himself as the dominant man through his poetry, rendering his opponents as submissive and weak. Indeed, how could *they* ever have thought that *he* was *male marum*, after they were so irrumated by his poetic onslaught!

Catullus also appears to exhibit this kind of masculine behavior in other poems, such as c. 33:

*O Furum optime balneariorum
Vibenni pater et cinaede fili
(nam dextra pater inquinatio,
culo filius est voracior),
cur non exilium malasque in oras
itis? quandoquidem patris rapinae
notae sunt populo, et natis pilosas,
fili, non potes asse venditare.*

O finest of the thieves that haunt the baths,
Vibennius Sr., and you too, little faggot Jr.
(Sr.'s the one with the itchier fingers,
Jr.'s the one with the hungrier hole),
why not head for exile and some sick
shore? I mean, after all, Sr.'s pilfering is
public knowledge by now. And Jr., you can't get a
dime for those hairy buttcakes.⁴²

⁴¹ Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 165.

⁴² This translation belongs to David Wray (119) and is simply too good not to include.

Here it is not too difficult to see at play the same masculine language we have identified earlier. The Catullan attack centers around the language of the penetrated—*cinaede*—although now it explicitly looks to exclude its victims from the community (i.e. offer them no agency within Rome). Wray picks up on this, noting that “the text constitutes a social and political act of a sort: the invitation to opt for self-exile (33.5-6), with its silent threat of unlovely things to come if that invitation is declined, recalls some of the rhetoric of Cicero’s first speech against Catiline.”⁴³ The charges against the Vibennii for their unsatisfactory masculine performance, if Wray is correct, are quite severe. Indeed, their exhibition of excess (Sr. is stealing people’s togas—and long enough for his deed to be *notae populo*—and Jr.’s sexual appetites are *voraciore*) and Jr.’s desire to be penetrated disgust Catullus so much that he does not simply look to render them subordinate to himself, but rather hopes to see them completely removed from his community.⁴⁴ This helps to bring out the extent to which these masculine activities deprive individuals of their ability to exist socially, just like the subject of irrumation’s words are prevented from even being spoken, let alone heard: the suggestion of exile, as Wray points out, goes hand-in-hand with the “silent threat” of irrumation and further sexual assault, and highlights the level of exclusion that is implicit in other social masculine activities. That is, the emasculated male has no real place within Roman society, as Catullus’ poetry “appears chiefly to express and embody the sheer enjoyment of heaping ... derisive laughter upon victims who lack recourse of defense of any kind.”⁴⁵ It follows, then, that

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁴⁴ It is worth noting, though, that Catullus is not only willing to indulge Jr.’s desire to be penetrated, but also contradicts his closing lines that nobody wants his “buttcakes,” since the “silent threat” implies that Catullus will come after them if father and son refuse to leave.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 122.

the power of irrumation is far from simply sexual and carries a very social force; the *vir*'s activity excludes others to the point that should father and son elect to stay in the city, the potential irrumation they might suffer would render them as helpless and voiceless as they otherwise would have been stateless. In c. 16, Aurelius and Furius now have all the more reason to be careful, since the poem's attack potentially seeks not only to shame them, but completely to deny them a voice within their community.

The Vibennii, whether fictional or real, are not alone in suffering extreme social consequences for their insufficient performance of masculinity. In what has now become a famous incident, "Cato ... expelled a certain Manilius from the senate" because he "kissed his wife in broad daylight while his daughter was looking on."⁴⁶ Although the agent behind the kissing, Manilius has nevertheless exhibited more than a "careful and moderate indulgence"⁴⁷ and thus demonstrates a lack of self-control. In particular, the desire to kiss someone has different connotations than the sexual vocabulary we explored above, as it carries with it neither the one-sided silencing of *irrumare* or the embarrassing sounds of *pedicare*. While being-kissed may make it difficult to speak, not only does it lack the same *infans*-rendering force of irrumation (for one's mouth is no longer full), but the kisser himself loses his faculty of speech as much as the one he is kissing. Thus Manilius' performance in the forum does nothing to align him with the masculine half of the Roman social dichotomies and in fact associates him with the other, softer, quieter, more feminine half. Additionally, just as in c. 33, the ramifications can be severe, as he is not only shamed, but removed from office—the same punishment that was given to L.

⁴⁶ J. Bradford Churchill, "The Lucky Cato and his Wife," *Phoenix*, vol. 55 (2001), 98.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 106.

Quinctius Flaminius “for allegedly holding an execution at dinner to amuse his lover.”⁴⁸

In light of this and Wray’s observations on c. 33, it should now be clear that the distinction between the social and the political is, at the very least, blurred. To be silenced socially, whether through sexual or social irrumation, is tantamount to losing one’s voice within the political community or can even result in (suggested) exile. Thus there is as much at stake in acting inappropriately (or simply even unimpressively) as there is in committing actual crimes, and one’s success as a Roman citizen appears to hinge just as much on “being good at being a man” as it does on helping steer the ship of state. Failing to perform one’s masculinity, then, has serious consequences and is not something in which a man can simply elect to take part. Insofar as he is a man he is already a contestant in the game and must remain constantly vigilant lest he appears less than fully masculine.

Poetry, and in particular the role it plays in Roman education, re-enforces these masculine paradigms and reaffirms the importance of hardness, wholeness, and strength for Roman youth. This, however, is not a distinctly Roman phenomenon and traces of it can be found in Ancient Greek writing as well. Take, for example, Alison Keith’s observation that a character in Xenophon’s *Symposium* “lays bare the gender-bias ... when he reports his father’s belief that familiarity with Homeric poetry forms the basis of the good *man*’s character.”⁴⁹ That is, knowing the deeds and feats of Iliadic heroes, i.e. real men, is important in defining oneself as a good man (here ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός); they stand as examples of proper conduct and as models of successful masculine performances.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 102.

⁴⁹ Allison Keith, *Engendering Rome: Women in Latin Epic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 3.

Plato himself also recognizes something similar when he comments in the *Phaedrus* at 245a4-5 that poetry “honouring the countless deeds of men of old, teaches them to those to come.”⁵⁰ Here poetry again has a didactic purpose in that it preserves and conveys the deeds of old as exemplars for the current generation of readers.

The Roman’s pedagogical relationship to poetry is no different, for when “ancient Roman educators undertook to school their (mostly male) pupils in Roman conventions of manliness,” they

accomplished this ... through linguistic instruction imparted in the form of the exposition of heroic narrative—Ennius’ *Annales*, Virgil’s *Aeneid* Simultaneously, the rituals of the ancient classroom trained elite Roman youths in ‘male friendship, mentorship, entitlement, and rivalry,’ in short the conventions of ‘homosocial’ intercourse Familiarity with Roman epic thus constituted an essential component of the ancient Roman’s ‘cultural capital,’ and confirmed his membership in the social and political elite.⁵¹

What this introduces to our discussion of Roman manhood is not some new characteristic or definition, but rather the degree to which the idea of masculinity is entrenched within Roman institutions. That is, this is not a technique implemented by some to obtain power (or remove others from their community), or a social “fad,” but something that is repeatedly drilled into Roman minds. It is a framework that Roman youths are not only taught, but taught to respect, for should they not, they would lose access to the “currency” that confirms them as real citizens and the institution that can grant them power and political office. Poetry, then, is the site of masculine enactment, where masculine and heroic deeds are perpetrated and celebrated. As Keith goes on to recount, many of the

⁵⁰ Plato, *Phaedrus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 245a4-5: poetry, μυρία τῶν παλαιῶν ἔργα κοσμοῦσα τοὺς ἐπιγιγνομένους παιδεύει.

⁵¹ Keith, *Engendering Rome*, 11.

commentators from ancient Rome, such as Quintilian and Servius, heavily stress the privileged position of the male over the female, while focussing on examples from the *Aeneid* that look down on the “bodily weakness and mental dissolution”⁵² of women, or even womanly characteristics and clothing, from a lofty masculine standpoint.⁵³ Therefore, through this “exposure to heroic epic”⁵⁴ the Roman youth is taught both about the power and success of ancient heroes and also a deep-seated historical precedent for the masculine practices in which he is being schooled. Indeed, it ultimately

[shaped] the elite Roman male’s understanding of the world he was socially destined to govern, and it naturalized and legitimated social hierarchies of class, nationality and gender. In this way, the ancient Roman educational system helps to provide the Roman elite with a practical justification of its own privilege.⁵⁵

Regardless of the poet’s intent, Keith’s argument is clear: Roman society uses epic poetry to confirm its own worldview and justify the actions that men (and Rome) commit against other men, other genders, and other nations.

Interestingly, accounts of this self-privileging and other-dominating behavior are found in Greek philosophy as well, although cast in a much more disparaging light, in particular during Plato’s description of the tyrant in Book VIII of the *Republic*. The worst form of government according to Socrates is the tyrant’s, who—much like the *vir*—is continually seeking self-affirmation through his actions, which almost exclusively take place at the expense of other. Having risen to the top of the political ladder, he rules alone

⁵² *Ibid.*, 22. Cf. 8-35.

⁵³ Cf. the discussion of clothing around *Aeneid* 9.617.

⁵⁴ Keith, *Engendering Rome*, 15.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 35.

and subjugates everyone else to his will, frequently resorting to violence and theft to get his way (if his sheer political power is for some reason insufficient). In this way he is entirely insulated from the rest of the community and completely unaffected by their needs and desires. That is, he is entirely *integer*—entirely in control—insofar as every decision he makes only aims at fulfilling his desires and is only made because he decides it should be. To this end, Plato describes him saying that "αὐτὸς ἀξιώσει νεώτερος ὢν πατρός τε καὶ μητρὸς πλέον ἔχειν."⁵⁶ This is interesting for two reasons. First of all, his desire to outdo or have more (πλέον ἔχειν) clearly highlights the extent to which he not only excludes others from his decision-making but also necessarily impedes and subordinates them through his actions. In order for him to have more, others have to have less, and in order to “outdo” someone, one person has to be bested while the other rises triumphant; the tyrant only plays a zero sum game, where in order for him to be elevated above the community, everyone else has to fall.

Secondly, not even his own family is safe from his actions, as they too must become subordinate to him. “Being born” and owing one’s life to one’s parents constitutes too much of a dependency for the tyrant and interferes with his efforts to become completely self-sufficient. Indeed, earlier in the dialogue it is hinted that the tyrant is a πατραλοία⁵⁷ or a parricide. Here, the consequences of his desire to πλέον ἔχειν not only disregard what others want, as we had noted earlier, but in fact eliminate those others altogether! Even more importantly, he is not only “outdoing” those whose desires might interfere with his, but those who bore him and therefore those closest to

⁵⁶ Plato, *Res Publica*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 569b: “Being young, he thinks that he deserves to outdo both his father and his mother.”

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 74a.

him are the one who are in all the more danger. Family, friends, and enemies are all the same for the tyrant, as he ceaselessly pursues isolated domination. Ultimately, then, in order to be free of all relationships, he must also be free of his family members, and thus in order for the tyrant to attain his desired independence, even those who brought him into the world have to be overcome. He is completely self-sufficient—completely *integer*—and completely in-command (*ut tibi imperes!*). Only now can he be the sole guarantor of his own existence, free of all restrictions and relationships.⁵⁸

The parallel between the tyrant and the *vir* is as striking as it is disturbing. While they bear a number of similarities, particularly regarding their twin desires for independence, self-sufficiency and control, what is especially important here is the degree to which everyone is excluded from the tyrant's world, for even his family has been marginalized by his actions. The question arises whether or not it is possible for the *vir* to have friends or relations beyond himself. If he is truly to exhibit the masculine characteristics we highlighted earlier and privilege the language and activity of *irrumare* and *pedicare* over more “feminine” or “soft” behaviours, is there any way that he will not by necessity need to *πλέον ἔχειν* than everyone just as the tyrant did? Perhaps it is only here, in the presence of said tyrant that the implications of Roman masculinity can truly begin to come forward. Take, for example, the language that surrounds sexual practices: there is no room for subtlety here, since you can either penetrate or be penetrated, you are

⁵⁸ In *The Philosophy of Right* Hegel describes this manner of self-definition well: "The element of pure indeterminacy or that pure reflection of the I into itself which involves the dissolution of every restriction and every content either immediately presented by nature, by needs, desires, and impulses, or given and determined by any means whatever" (Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. T.M. Knox [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008], 28). Nothing else matters for this person other than himself. He is determined by nothing, and thus nothing restricts his decisions, neither necessity, nor other humans. He is entirely self-contained.

either winning or losing, πλέον ἔχειν or μῆ. Notably, we noticed how in this type of interaction the irrumator not only physically dominated the irrumated, but more terrifyingly completely robbed the passive party of their voice and thus their ability to be active in the first place. This act of devouring the other lends itself well to what I want to define as “hyperactivity” or an activity that is so active that it closes off the possibility for someone else to speak, act, fuck, or assert themselves in any way.

This leads to a curious conclusion: in any given situation there can only be one *vir*, for the rules of the game dictate that a *vir* can only truly be a *vir* if his activity continues to overpower everyone else around him. What a real man must insist upon, then, and what poetry confirms and institutionalizes, is complete domination and an unwavering commitment to insulation and subordination. Every effort must be made to ensure that no outside influence can interfere with the *vir*'s performance and that the entire community must watch captively as he incessantly threatens, *pedicabo ego vos et irrumabo!* No one is safe, not even—theoretically—the *vir*'s family, as he repeatedly asserts and inserts himself, as if a giant penis, slowly penetrating every corner of Roman society. Perhaps nowhere is this clearer than in the rarely read (and more rarely treated) c. 115:

*Mentula habet instar triginta iugera prati,
quadraginta arui: cetera sunt maria.
cur non divitiis Croesum superare potis sit,
uno qui in saltu tot bona possideat,
prata arva ingentes silvas saltusque paludesque
usque ad Hyperboreos et mare ad Oceanum?
omnia magna haec sunt, tamen ipse est maximus ultro,
non homo, sed vero mentula magna minax.*

The cock has nearly 30 acres of meadow,
40 of fields: the rest is water.
Why should he not be able to surpass Croesus in riches,
he, the very one who possesses so many good things in one estate:
meadows, fields, giant forests, glens, and swamps,
all the way out to the Hyperboreans and the sea out to Ocean?
All these things are great, but the greatest over and above them is he himself,
not a man, but truly a great menacing cock.

“The cock”—Caesar’s friend Mamurra—is so active that his behaviour cannot even be contained by the metre, and literally bursts out of a ruptured fifth line. Even with two initial elisions the line still has too many syllables for the first half of the elegiac couplet (although we should note that the final *-que* elides with the sixth line to save Catullus and charge of poetic incompetence). The heavy spondaic opening (*prata arva ingentes silvas saltu-*) sets the tone, as our *vir* tromps onto the scene, crushing his immense holdings under his massive weight. Meadows, glens, and even *ingentes silvae* are not enough to either contain or satisfy him, as he continues his conquest all the way from Rome to the very ocean on the edge of the Roman empire. As a “real” man, there is hardly any distinction between what Mamurra has become and the very tool with which he irrumates; even if his activity is not explicitly sexual, the *vir* nevertheless remains a *mentula magna minax*.

2.2 *duros nequeunt movere lumbos*—Dependence and Instability

There is a second half to Cato’s tale: despite all of his masculine posturing, Plutarch still associates the Roman statesman with the following phrase:

αὐτῷ δ' ἔφη τὴν γυναῖκα μηδέποτε πλὴν βροντῆς μεγάλης γενομένης περιπλακῆναι, καὶ μετὰ παιδιᾶς εἰπεῖν αὐτὸν ὡς μακάριός ἐστι τοῦ Διὸς βροντῶνος.⁵⁹

And he said that his wife never embraced him except for when there was a loud crash of thunder, and between jokes she said that he was blessed when Jupiter thundered.

As Churchill argues in his essay, there is a grammatical ambiguity here, in which both Cato and his wife can be seen as the subject of περιπλακῆναι (the embracing) and εἰπεῖν (the speaking). If this were the case, our Cato would be in trouble, since his charge against Manilius would be entirely hypocritical (for he would also be a man who shows affection to his wife). Embracing someone else—especially out of fear following a thunderclap—and thus leaning on them for support and protection, are hardly the actions of our *vir* and indeed if they are true, then Cato himself will have committed something far more feminine than poor Manilius. After all, while showing affection through a kiss shows an enjoyment and appreciation of the others, embracing the other out of fear shows a complete lack of the stable, self-controlled self that we have identified as a core part of the Roman man. The attentive student of Greek, however, will note that περιπλακῆναι cannot take an accusative object, only dative, and thus correctly render the phrase as “his wife never embraced him except...” and save Cato (for now) from any alleged hypocrisy.⁶⁰ Additionally, the act of being embraced itself is worth exploring, since it seems to entail being enveloped by the other, and, in our masculine language, almost

⁵⁹ Plutarch, *Cat. Mai.* 17.7.

⁶⁰ Additionally, the wife has to also be the subject of the εἰπεῖν, since the αὐτὸν would have to be nominative if the initial subject of the main clause was reintroduced as the subject of the second infinitive. Cato is still in control, though, since ultimately the whole phrase represents his own words, and he determines how and to what degree the information is disseminated.

consumed by them. Cato however, is able to escape this charge as well, since, given our observation regarding the Greek, his wife comes to him not in order to overwhelm or possess him, but rather runs to him for protection and as a site of safety and strength. Therefore, in the process of being hugged Cato is still able to reinforce his masculine presence and maintain his manly prowess.

Yet this anecdote does not simply establish and reify the tenets masculine. In fact, it does just the opposite, as it slowly unravels the assumed self-sufficiency of the *vir*. To that end, there is a crucial difference between how Manilius and Cato both relate to their respective interactions with their wives, with the crucial difference lying in the degree to which they are both able to present their kiss/hug within the context of their masculine performance. Cato has complete control of the situation. After all, he is the subject of the ἔφη, and thus is able to turn any moment of potential tenderness/femininity into a joke, ultimately at the expense of his wife (who runs for cover at a natural phenomenon). Cato, then, escapes any potential feminine contamination. Manilius, on the other hand, is completely *unable* to recover from his kiss as a part of his performance and not only exhibits a lack of self-control in that instance, but also cedes control to Cato's performance in general, rendering himself an inferior man and ultimately losing his political seat. But this completely depends on how the two men are received by others and how well they are able to control and manage that reception. For example, if no one had seen Manilius kiss his wife, would his actions still have been so problematic? Alternatively, if Cato was not so deft at coming up with marital jokes, would he have been able to maintain such a strong masculine exterior? The question I want to raise here and explore for the remainder of the chapter is to what extent can the *vir* actually be free

of others and self-sufficient if his very definition of himself as a *vir* ultimately depends on how those others receive him in the first place? That is to say, is the independence of the tyrant a realistic possibility, or does our Roman man always find himself in relation with an audience who receives, judges, and ultimately appreciates or dismisses his efforts in the masculine game?

For example, consider c. 12, which features Marrucinus Assinius, a would-be-*vir* who assumes that his “sticky fingers” can elevate him to a place among Rome’s manly men:

*Marrucine Asini, manu sinistra
non belle uteris: in ioco atque vino
tollis linthea neglegentiorum.
hoc salsum esse putas? fugit te, inepte:
quamvis sordida res et invenusta est.
non credis mihi? crede Pollioni
fratri, qui tua furta vel talento
mutari velit: est enim leporum
differtus puer ac facetiarum.
quare aut hendecasyllabos trecentos
exspecta, aut mihi lintheum remitte,
quod me non movet aestimatione,
verum est mnemosynum mei sodalis.
nam sudaria Saetaba ex Hiberis
miserunt mihi muneri Fabullus
et Veranius: haec amem necesse est
ut Veraniolum meum et Fabullum.*

Marrucinus Asinius, you do not use your left hand well: you steal the napkins of those who are rather heedless in joking and [drinking] wine. Do you think that this is charming? Get away from me, you fool: It is an extremely sordid and uncharming thing. You don’t believe me? Believe Pollionius,

your brother, who, if you prefer, would rather
your crimes be undone with a coin: For he is a boy
brimming with pleasantry and wit.
Therefore either expect threehundred of my
hendecasyllables or give me back my napkin,
which does not move me due to its value,
but is truly a reminder of a friendship.
For Fabullus and Veranius sent these
Saetabian napkins to me as a gift
from Spain: thus it is necessary that I love them
just as I love my dear Veranius and Fabullus.

Although the language has shifted from the overtly masculine tone we saw above, Marricinus has clearly failed in his efforts to be respected as a *vir*. He tries to assert himself through his performance by stealing napkins, but his audience is having none of it and immediately rejects his efforts as unsatisfactory. Also, the relationship between the two men remains the same as earlier: Marricinus is trying to “outdo” other men by stealing their belongings, and Catullus’ response equally leaves little room for his opponent to escape a public shaming. Indeed, even though Catullus seems to be offering Marricinus a chance by offering to withhold his poetic onslaught (*hendecasyllabos trecentos exspecta*), in reality the very offer is itself the threatened attack, thus leaving his victim little recourse and elevating its author at the expense of the other man. Marricinus’ performance has failed in no small part due to his audience’s refusal to validate his actions.⁶¹ No matter how much effort he puts into overcoming other men and asserting himself as a *vir*, each man will always have to depend on said others to confirm his *virilitas*. On the other hand, if no one believes Catullus’ poetry, then the poet, instead of

⁶¹ We can also look back to c. 33 for another example of a failed performance on the part of father and son.

his victim, will have his masculine persona questioned and potentially discredited.⁶² (It is curious, however, that Catullus also acknowledges his dependence on others, when he admits that he loves his napkin because it reminds about how much he loves his friends.)

Williams also comments on this aspect of Roman masculine life, noting that

if a certain man actually played the receptive role in the majority of his sexual encounters, yet managed to keep that fact a secret known only to himself and his partners, and otherwise maintained the appearance of a fully masculine man, then practically speaking he *was* a fully masculine man in *the all-important arena of public discourse*, despite the fact that he actually was breaking the rules behind closed doors. By contrast, if there were persistent rumours to the effect that a man liked to play the receptive role in intercourse, even if the man himself has never actually been penetrated, he was *ipso facto* a marked man, metaphorically ‘fucked’ even though not literally so.⁶³

Again we see how impactful the audience’s reception of the *vir* can be. No matter how effective a man’s actions might be, if the audience is not buying it, the more difficult it will be for him to succeed. His ability to protect his reputation is thus tied to this reception, since it is the community, upon hearing a rumour that he has been irrumated, that has control over his masculine identity. If they were to accept the rumour, then even the manliest of men would have trouble recovering from the damage that would be dealt to his reputation, since, no matter the outcome, his ability to obey Cicero’s imperative (*tibi imperes!*) would be brought into question and, even if just for a time, the community

⁶² Also consider the relationship between the robber and the robbed. Even though one clearly has the upper hand in their interaction, the two nevertheless depend on each other in their very definitions. The robber, after all, can only be a robber if there is someone else to rob. Even in a more heinous relation, like the one between Catullus and the Vibennii, even if the *vir* destroys the other, his claim to his *virtus* will nevertheless include the other he conquered, since the very fact that he is a *vir* now entirely depends on the fact that *that other man* was overcome. To what degree, then, is the *vir* actually capable of achieving his longed-for independence?

⁶³ Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 10; second emphasis is mine.

would have determined his degree of manliness instead of the *vir* himself. The “arena of public discourse” that Williams highlights is inescapable, and is something with which even the most virile *vir* must inevitably contend.

Let us consider another Catullan example, c. 39, in which Egnatius tries to assert himself into the public “arena” with the use of his ever-present smile. Again we will see that Catullus—here the audience of Egnatius’ actions—is wholly unimpressed, and manages to completely write off his victim’s chances of being recognized as a *vir*:

*Egnatius, quod candidos habet dentes,
renidet usque quaque. si ad rei ventum est
subsellium, cum orator excitat fletum,
renidet ille; si ad pii rogum fili
lugetur, orba cum flet unicum mater,
renidet ille. quidquid est, ubicumque est,
quodcumque agit, renidet: hunc habet morbum,
neque elegantem, ut arbitror, neque urbanum.*

....

*nunc Celtiber es: Celtiberia in terra,
quod quisque minxit, hoc sibi solet mane
dentem atque russam defricare gingivam,
ut quo iste vester expolitor dens est,
hoc te amplius bibisse praedicet loti.*

Egnatius, because he has bright white teeth,
is always grinning wherever he goes.
If he is by the bench of the defendant,
when the lawyer is exciting tears,
he is grinning. If there is mourning at the funeral
of a pious son, when a bereaved mother weeps for her only son,
he is grinning. Whatever is happening, wherever he is,
whatever he is doing, he’s grinning. He has this habit,
neither elegant nor urbane in my view.

....

Now you are Celtiberian: in Celtiberian lands,

whatever one has pissed, this they are accustomed
to rub on their teeth and red gums in the morning,
so that the shinier your teeth are,
indicates how much more of your own piss you have drunk.

Like Marricinus, Egnatius is unable to win over his audience and his performance fails to such a degree that his mode of self-assertion—his grin—becomes his undoing. Again, the would-be-*vir* depends on the audience for confirmation of his masculinity, which is precisely the opposite of what he sets out to achieve. There also seems to be an element in Egnatius' performance that is desperate and craving recognition. While a smile could be the winning tool of a more accomplished man, Catullus' Celtiberian victim does not know how to employ it properly, and constantly smiles inappropriately, no matter where he is, as if he does not know how else to "be manly." Considering William's point that the masculine game "was a matter of control,"⁶⁴ Egnatius has clearly lost on all counts, for his performance begs to be received and from the beginning is already looking toward the audience in anticipation of their approval. Ultimately, then, he becomes a slave to his own desire to become a *vir* and has completely lost control of himself, as he insatiably looks again and again to the audience and what he is not in an attempt to confirm that he has overcome and separated himself from those very things. This, of course, cannot succeed, since the more effort he puts into elevating himself above others, the more he ultimately entrenches their hold on him. Ironically, the more he wants to be a *vir*, the more feminine he becomes, to the point that it is the audience who has the power and Egnatius who is subordinate.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 141.

But let us consider a more accomplished man, who has already established himself as a successful and respected *vir*: Mamurra, the star of c. 115. His performance seems to have already done its job, and—at least within the context of Catullus’ poetry—he does not break the fourth wall like Egnatius and constantly look to the audience for confirmation. His reach is also substantial, encompassing not only the Hyperboreans and the Ocean, but all of Gaul and Britannia,⁶⁵ to the point where the entire Roman empire no longer remains as an obstacle for to our exemplary *vir*, for he rules over it all. More disturbingly, he not only claims land as his own, but also people. Take, for example, the passage in which Catullus questions Julius Caesar’s motive for invading Britain:

*et ille nunc superbus et superfluens
perambulabit omnium cubilia,
ut albulus columbus aut Adoneus?*

....

*eone nomine, imperator unice,
fuisti in ultima occidentis insula,
ut ista vestra diffututa mentula
ducenties comesset aut trecenties?*

And now that man, haughty and overflowing,
will wander through everyone’s bedroom
as a white dove or an Adonis?

...

Was it in his name, oh unparalleled imperator,
that you were in the far-off island of the West,
so that your own Cock, fucked to exhaustion,
might revel his way through two or three million? (c. 29.6-8, 11-14)

Mamurra’s appetite is insatiable, as he prowls through the beds of Rome, continuously claiming more and more in his name. The language Catullus uses to describe him

⁶⁵ c. 29.3-4.

indicates a degree of elevation (*superbus* and *superfluens*) and we should also note that Mamurra has been busy moving from bed to bed in increasing numbers (he is, after all, *diffututa*). The *omnium cubilia* in Rome are not enough for him either, and in the second half he moves west to conquer new beds and obtain more wealth (for we should take the suggestion of *ducenties aut trecenties* as an extension of his adonic adventures). His thrust west with Caesar also seems to bear little concern for those who will now be subjugated and constantly places priority on the individual over the community. (Indeed, Catullus questions whether or not there was any purpose for the conquest of the islands other than offering more for Mamurra to consume.)⁶⁶ The Mentula appears to be in control here, and is certainly more capable in his performance than either the hapless Marricinus or the gleaming Egnatius. By all accounts it seems that we have found our *vir*, free from a judging audience and able to thrust himself upon the world.

Yet despite Mamurra's performance, David Konstan is still suspicious. He picks up on a second way that the *vir* can be affected by those other than himself, writing that "Mamurra is ... caricatured as a figure of hyperbolic craving, in the first instance for sex [c. 29], but also, by analogy, for possessions in general. The effect of his extreme passion is that he is the consummate consumer, who forever exceeds the resources, however great, that he may have at his command."⁶⁷ In other words, Mamurra's desire to possess and consume is too great. Although he takes advantage of others and bolsters himself with his possessions, his desire to have more propels him farther and farther into the

⁶⁶ There is also an unavoidable connection here between Mamurra's masculine domination and the Roman Empire's expansion. If the stability of the truly successful Roman male ends up coming into question, what will this imply about the capacity of the Empire itself?

⁶⁷ David Konstan, "Sex, Self, and Empire in Catullus: the Construction of Decentred Identity," in *Diotima: Materials for the Study of Women and Gender in the Ancient World*, 4-5.

Roman frontier, and into more and more beds. His audience may be completely silenced by his thorough irrumation, but the fact that there are more people to fuck and to bear witness to his great masculinity, propels him ever onward. Konstan's suggestion that Mamurra "forever exceeds the resources" captures this nicely, but we can improve upon it. While it is true that Mamurra exceeds his possessions insofar as his magnitude cannot be reduced to the people he had irrumated and the belonging he has taken, the formula also works when reversed: "the resources forever exceed Mamurra." Caesar's friend is never satisfied by what he has and has to repeatedly look elsewhere, so that no matter how much he has, there will always be something or somewhere else that needs his attention. In this way, no matter how successfully Mamurra performs his masculinity, in the very effort of asserting himself, he continually becomes subservient to what remains outside of him, and thus jeopardizes his desired self-sufficiency in the moment he secures it. That is, there will always be another bed to ravage and our Mentula will find himself in a never-ending pattern, constantly propelled by what does not yet belong to him. Perhaps then, even though he has overcome the audience that confirms his *virilitas*, he is ultimately no better than the grinning Egnatius, who is always looking to others to confirm his masculinity.

Catullus seems to find Caesar and Mamurra's behavior laughable, and in c. 29, 115, and his third poem on Caesar and Mamurra, c. 57, he continually insists that it is in fact these two men who are *cinaedi* and *pathici*, even if this seems completely contrary to their behavior (they are, after all, the ones who are irrumating). While it can of course be the case that Catullus is simply getting his punches in where he can, there does seem to be something profound about his accusations. In consuming everything they encounter, his

invective victims attempt to define themselves by overcoming anything that stands in their way, and thus become *integer* and attain the longed-for wholeness that defines the Roman man. That is, by leaving no room for others in their activity, Caesar and his Mentula are defining the space they occupy and share with others as their own.⁶⁸ Unfortunately for our manly men, this ironically moves them further and further away from their objective, and justifies Catullus in his accusations. Despite presenting themselves as the best *vir*i in Rome, if not the entire empire, given the necessity of their consumption, it would appear that, despite their efforts to be self-sustainable, Mamurra and Caesar are ultimately still defined by their relationship to the things that stand against them. Indeed, propelled in a constant conquest of the world, what-is-not-Mamurra is forcing his hand more than he is willing to acknowledge, since its very presence is something he cannot abide and thus it thrusts him headlong into new lands and new beds. In other words, Mamurra's actions are hardly governed by the Mentula himself, but rather by the very things he seeks to overcome. In this way, once a proud *irrumator*, rapist, and thief, Mamurra has now been reduced to the lowliest *pathicus*, constantly dependent on something other than himself. Catullus' insults, then, now ring all the clearer, and his comment in c. 114 lands all the harder: *sit dives, dum omnia desint*—may he be rich so long as he is in need of everything. On paper Mamurra may possess a lot, but he has woefully fallen short of what he needs.

Where does this leave the Roman man? Is the *vir* even a logical possibility, in light of Mamurra's failure to achieve his desired independence, and, perhaps even more

⁶⁸ We have even gone so far as to claim that their activity is an effort to label other people themselves as their property and as subservient to them.

urgently, where does Catullus belong within this complex network of performances? If we cannot escape the other, then we are going to have to identify a new way of reconciling our Roman men with the world in which they live. The key to this within Catullus' poetry is going to come from the opposite end of his poetic spectrum: his love poetry. Only there, where the individual and the object of his desire become at times deliberately confused can we begin to develop a solution to the problem of the *vir*, which has now turned into nothing more than simple question of identity. How is the Roman ever to define himself in world where the possibility of self-sufficiency, and thus a clear, isolated and independent self, has become almost entirely impossible?

Chapter 3—Et

There is strong compliment to this masculine dilemma in the work of G.W.F. Hegel.

Although the two authors are almost two thousand years apart, there are parallels between the efforts of Catullus' *vir* to be whole, and Hegel's account of the Self's effort to be independent. Particularly striking about this comparison is Hegel's solution, which suggests, however obliquely, a way out of the aporia we have reached in our reading of Catullan masculinity.

In his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel writes that the world is a constitutive part of the individual that nevertheless remains separate. This individual, like the *vir*, wants to overcome this confusion and, as a result, finds itself defined by its urge to fulfill itself by consuming the world around it. To this effect, Hegel writes that

[for] self-consciousness ... the whole expanse of the sensuous world is preserved ... as a connection with ... the unity of self-consciousness with itself; and hence the sensuous world is for it an enduring existence which, however, is only appearance, or a difference which, in itself, is no difference. This antithesis of its appearance and its truth has, however, for its essence only the truth, viz. the unity of self-consciousness with itself; this unity must become essential to self-consciousness, i.e. self-consciousness is desire in general.⁶⁹

Hegel's essential argument here is that even though the appearance of self-consciousness is one of separation (I am here and the world is there), its truth is one of unity (the Self and the world are one). That is, what the Self experiences as separate it simultaneously understands as its own. Since what is other than the Self is now constitutive of it, self-consciousness starts to seek itself in the world and attempt to bring about what is true

⁶⁹ G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 105

implicitly, but not explicitly — a whole, unified ‘I.’ Therefore it seeks to claim and consume everything that it sees in the world in an effort to shore-up its perceived fragmentation.

This analysis is fruitfully applied to the dilemma of Catullus’ *vir*, who continually try to dominate and irrumate the world. In the same way, Hegel’s “I” “destroys the independent object and thereby gives itself the certainty of itself as a *true* certainty, certainty which has become explicit for self-consciousness itself *in an objective manner*.”⁷⁰ The Self presses itself upon the world and devours as much as possible, hoping that if it possesses these things it will be able to achieve an immediate certainty of itself in a tangible, objective way.⁷¹ The most obvious example of this for Hegel is eating. By eating something, someone destroys the food (the object) in question and assimilates it into themselves. The food is now ‘theirs’ and is one less obstacle in the world that denies the Self its independence. But this does not ease the Self’s desire. Instead, it only further points to the “I’s” dependence on the external world. Indeed, “Desire and the self-certainty obtained in its gratification, are conditioned by the object, for self-certainty comes from superseding this other: in order that this supersession can take place, there must be this other.”⁷² Every time the Self eats an apple,⁷³ desire demands that they move on to the next one, since that too remains opposed to individuality. In the process of conquering the other, the Self is actually being determined by precisely that which it hoped to consume, and thus finds itself in a rather pathetic position. Truly, all it has

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 109.

⁷¹ That is, it is looking for the same brand of wholeness as Mamurra.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 109.

⁷³ Or the *vir* finds a new bed to plunder.

managed to do is damage and fracture itself even more. Desire in Hegel, then, is a repetitive structure, which constantly reproduces itself in new objects, such that violent, masculine approaches to overcome it only serve to damage the Self (and the man) and move them farther and farther away from a proper understanding of themselves.

But how does Hegel's theory impact our understanding of the Roman man? The philosopher highlights the fundamental experience between the individual and the world, in which the 'I' recognizes itself in what it sees around it and thus begins a cyclical attempt to claim what it believes to be its own. Within our Roman context, the *vir* follows a similar pattern: in his efforts to be *integer* and self-sufficient, everything that stands outside of him has to be consumed and possessed, so that it will no longer exist as a challenge to his hard-won independence. In the same way, Mamurra must constantly claim more and more in order to maintain his masculinity. However, as we have seen, Hegel does not see this as a sustainable activity. By eliminating the other, the Roman man is only reinforcing the fact that in reality he is dependent on what is outside of him, and so not yet his, and consequently still removed from any sense of self-sufficiency.

While this discussion of Hegel's desire does not introduce anything new to our discussion of Roman masculinity, the manner in which Hegel *resolves* this problem is suggests a helpful way out of the Catullan aporia. Consider his comments in *The Encyclopaedia of Logic*:

In its immediate shape spiritual life appears first as innocence and simple trust; but it is of the essence of spirit to sublimate this immediate state ... In like manner, however, this stage of schism must itself be sublated in turn, and spirit must return through its own agency to union with itself. This resulting

union is a spiritual one, and the guiding principle of that return lies in thinking itself. It is thinking that both inflicts the wound and heals it again.⁷⁴

This is an exciting passage. What Hegel suggests is a new kind of union of subject and object that is able to satisfy desire without resorting to violence or consumption. This resolution hinges on the activity of what Hegel calls Spirit, namely the governing metaphysical activity of thinking, which initially created the problem (i.e. fragmentation), itself becoming the solution. That is, the solution to desire is not found in closing or satisfying it, but in allowing it to remain open. No longer is it some problem or an inconvenience, but quite simply an existential fact of the Self. So long as Spirit is Spirit, and therefore something that thinks, there will be fragmentation. Therefore, only when it comes to accept itself as itself and return to a ‘union with itself,’ can it come to realize that this fragmentation is necessarily part of its own existence. Rebecca Comay summarizes this nicely, writing that “the only way to close the wound, or rather to undo its coercive power, is to reopen it: to become what we are.”⁷⁵ In other words, Spirit, the Self, and the ‘I’ all only exist *as fragments*. The desire to be whole in isolation has only ever been a misunderstanding.

With this change of perspective in mind, perhaps our Roman *vir* can also resolve his dilemma by paying proper attention to the importance of his relationship with his audience. After all, it is the tension between these two poles—the individual and the other—that led to the insufficiency in his behaviour. Perhaps, following

⁷⁴ G.W.F. Hegel, *The Encyclopedia of Logic*, trans. T.F. Geraets, W.A. Suchting, and H.S. Harris (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1991), 61-62.

⁷⁵ Rebecca Comay, *Mourning Sickness: Hegel and the French Revolution* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 130.

Hegel, we can begin to break down the power and privilege of our masculine binaries and finally become *integer*. That is, perhaps Catullus' characters can finally come to understand themselves in their entirety, as necessarily in relation to these poles. Moving forward into chapter two and Catullus' love poetry, I will try to say with Hegel that "surely it is ridiculous to call this nature of self-consciousness, namely, that the 'I' thinks itself, that the 'I' cannot be thought without its being the 'I' that thinks, an *inconvenience*."⁷⁶ Surely, it is ridiculous to strive to silence and dominate precisely that which confirms you as you.

⁷⁶ G.W.F. Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (New York: Humanities Press, 1976), 777.

Chapter 4—Amo

In Catullus' invective poetry, there is a clear delineation between the *vir* and the world that he seeks to overcome. It would seem, at least at first glance, that Catullus' love poetry presents the opposite position, where one must try to celebrate and confirm the difference between oneself and the world, rather than consume or destroy it. The experience of love, as it appears in Catullus' work, clearly places emphasis on someone *other* than the *vir*, and explores the space that exists between two individuals. If the object of love should be overcome or devoured in Mamurrian fashion, then the experience of love would be incomplete, since it is that very object which inspires and propels the infatuation at play. Take, for example, what happens in c. 50.7-13, where the love (sexual or otherwise) experienced by Catullus for his friend Licinius following a day of poetry and wine, desperately looks to reunite with its object and set aside ambitions of solidarity for something more communal:

*Hesterno, Licini, die otiosi
multum lusimus in meis tabellis,
ut convenerat esse delicatos:
scribens versiculos uterque nostrum
ludebat numero modo hoc modo illoc,
reddens mutua per iocum atque vinum.
atque illinc abii tuo lepore
incensus, Licini, facetiisque,
ut nec me miserum cibus iuaret
nec somnus tegeter quiete ocellos,
sed toto indomitus furore lecto
versarer, cupiens videre lucem,
ut tecum loquerer, simulque ut essem.*

Yesterday, Licinius, while at our leisure,

We played much in my writing tablets,
As it had been agreed to be frivolous:
Each of us writing little verses,
Playing with this metre, now that,
Returning exchanges through jokes and wine.

And when I went away, Licinius, I was burning
With your charm and jests,
So that neither could food help me in my wretched state,
Nor could sleep touch my eyes with rest,
But unrestrained with madness I was turning all over my bed
Desiring to see the light,
So that I could speak, and be together, with you.

These are clearly not the words of a bonafide *vir*, whose main goal, as we saw earlier, was complete independence and self-sufficiency. Here, in contrast, absence and separation only make the “Catullus” of the poem more dependent and helpless, more *indomitus* and *miserum*, than before.

This declaration of love is all the more interesting since it is entirely social, rather than sexual. In this way, it escapes the heavily loaded language that surrounds Roman masculine behaviour. Terms such as *irrumo* and *pedico* have no place here, and neither does the clear and distinct power structure that they perpetuate. If anything, Catullus is looking for the opposite and is willing to subordinate *himself* to his friend. Curiously, just as earlier characters like Mamurra were possessed of a ravenous appetite, the self-subordination that Catullus expresses has a similar sense of insatiability. Neither *cibus* nor *somnus*, after all, could do anything to temper his desire, and, although the experience expressed in c. 50 deviates from typical masculine behaviour, it nevertheless finds itself tied up in a very similar relationship to the object of its desire. However, while Mamurra struggles against this relationship, and continually looks to dominate everything that

stands opposed to his independence, Catullus in c. 50 is not so quick to dismiss the feeling of lack and dependence that he finds as he lies in bed, *cupiens videre lucem*. Indeed, instead of identifying any moment of dependence as a problem that has to be undone, he looks to fulfil his desire in a different way: through conversation—*tecum loquerer*—and even more simply through a moment of communion—*simulque essem*—or play—*ludere*—which appears in both line 2 and 5 in c. 50.

The ultimate goal of the poem, however, does not seem to be complete subordination of Catullus' friend, but rather a shared moment of recognition between both him and Licinius (c. 50.16-20):

at defessa labore membra postquam
semimortua lectulo iacebant,
hoc, iucunde, tibi poema feci,
ex quo perspiceres meum dolorem.
nunc audax cave sis, precesque nostras,
oramus, cave despuas, ocelle.

But after, my limbs, exhausted from work,
Were lying half-dead on the little bed,
I made this poem for you, you delightful man,
From which you might catch sight of my pain.
Now beware: don't be rash, and, I beseech you,
Don't reject my prayers, my dear.

This passage is a little confusing; what exactly is Catullus praying for here? Dana Burgess sees what he calls a “poetic obligation” here, which involves “an ongoing game of reciprocal poetic composition.”⁷⁷ That is, c. 50 is itself a request for more poetry and the prayer that Catullus hopes Licinius does not ignore is simply an answer to his plea.

⁷⁷ Dana Burgess, “Catullus c. 50: The Exchange of Poetry,” *The American Journal of Philology*, vol. 107, no. 4 (Winter, 1986): 584.

Burgess also highlights here the importance of the response by noting that “as the poets competed at their game of reciprocal composition they seemed as equals.”⁷⁸ So long as Licinius remains silent, their relationship remains uneven and Catullus is subordinate to his friend, but should his fellow poet continue to play at their poetic game, then *neither party* will be secondary to the other. Here, perhaps, is the real force of *ludere* and by extension *amare*; both mark the celebration and elevation of the other which in turn celebrates and elevates the self, for we can certainly assume that Licinius’ response will itself look for a reply from Catullus. This behaviour is clearly in stark contrast to how a conventional *vir* would behave, but is also not entirely obvious in and of itself. It will therefore be the goal of this chapter to explore Catullus’ love poetry, and begin to expound upon this theory of “elevation.” In the end we will understand how this amorous experience can resolve the tension that we previously observed between the *vir*’s desire to overcome his audience and the necessity of that audience in the first place.

4.1 *obdura*—The Remnants of Masculine Binaries

Though we have remarked the insufficiency and instability of the concept of *vir* in chapter two and noted a movement away from masculine behaviour above in c. 50, there are still parts of his oeuvre in which desire for domination and, in particular, self-control, need to be examined. Indeed, in his love poetry more than anywhere else we can catch glimpses of a struggle between the appetite for a self-sufficient, individual identity and the longing to be loved (i.e. dependent). However, while Catullus’ invective poetry is characterized by frustrated libido and feints at domination, his love poems challenge such

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 583.

a masculine lifestyle. Instead of constantly trying to reaffirm the values of masculine identity, their engagement with *vir*i and *vir*-like-behaviour looks to dissolve this tension in a peaceful manner that is not marked by the consumption and destruction of others, but rather, as we saw in c. 50, by the celebration and confirmation of the individual's relationships with precisely those things which he earlier sought to overcome.

It is clear in poems such as c. 8 that despite raising concerns about masculinity, Catullus' poetry is hardly free of such concerns itself. Indeed, the more he pines after Lesbia, the more concerned his poetic voice is with having lost any semblance of manliness or *virtus*, which leads to two distinct voices, Catullus "the lover" and Catullus "the *vir*." The former sees chasing after Lesbia (or here simply the *puella*) as not only foolish, but detrimental, while Catullus "the lover" can hardly find value in anything else. Thus we come across a struggle to maintain and cultivate a more masculine and self-sufficient position:

*Miser Catulle, desinas ineptire,
et quod vides perisse perditum ducas.
fulsere quondam candidi tibi soles,
cum ventitabas quo puella ducebat
amata nobis quantum amabitur nulla.
ibi illa multa cum iocosa fiebant,
quae tu volebas nec puella nolebat,
fulsere vere candidi tibi soles.
nunc iam illa non vult: tu quoque impotens noli,
nec quae fugit sectare, nec miser vive,
sed obstinata mente perfer, obdura.
vale puella, iam Catullus obdurat,
nec te requiret nec rogabit invitam.
at tu dolebis, cum rogaberis nulla.
scelesti, vae te, quae tibi manet vita?*

*quis nunc te adibit? cui videberis bella?
quem nunc amabis? cuius esse diceris?
quem basiabis? cui labella mordebis?
at tu, Catulle, destinatus obdura.*

Poor Catullus, stop being absurd, and
Count as lost what you see to have been lost.
The sun shone brightly for you once,
When you used to often go wherever your girl was leading,
Who was loved by us as much as no one else will ever be loved.
Back then when there were many happy affairs,
Which you used to desire, and your girl did not not desire,
Truly the sun shone brightly for you.
Now, however, she does not desire these things: you, now dispossessed, shouldn't
 desire them either
Don't hunt what flees you, don't live like wretch,
But be strong; endure!
Goodbye, my girl, now Catullus endures;
Neither will he chase after you again, nor will he ask after you against your will.
But you will ache, when you will not be asked after at all.
O you wretched girl, what life remains for you?
Who will accost you now? To whom will you appear beautiful?
Whom will you love now? Whose will you be said to be?
Whom will you kiss? Whose lips will you bite?
... But you, Catullus, standing fixed, endure.

From the very beginning, the language of this poem clearly laments a deviation away from masculine norms. In line 4, for example, Catullus “the lover” is following while the girl is leading (*ducebat*), while in line 6 he does not bring about the proceedings himself, but they simply happen *to* him. To make matters worse, these moments of passivity were not decisions made in the past, but rather decisions that continue to influence his behavior in the present, leading to the opening command of line 1: *desinas*. With this opening admonition—stop!—we immediately find the central struggle: a Catullus who is unable to reconcile his desire to be a *vir* and to be a lover, to *dominate* or

be *dominated*. This is picked up on by the *ineptire* that follows, which expresses not only the embarrassment that Catullus “the *vir*” is experiencing at the hands of “the lover,” but more specifically his inability to maintain the self-control that is expected of a Roman man. This love inspired madness seems to express an inconsistency in his actions, which is further supported by the *impotens* of line 9. This language implies that “the lover” cannot even control himself, that he is inconsistent (which my translation of *ineptire* as “being absurd” hopes to achieve), and that he is not only sexually, but socially impotent.

These concerns also find a voice in “the lover’s” inability to reconcile himself to reality that we can see as early as line 2 (*et quod vides perisse perditum ducas*) and in the repeated phrase *fulsere quondam candidi tibi soles*. This heightens the tension in c. 8, since it is not just between the two Catulli, but also between Catullus and the world. Even though he knows perfectly well that his relationship with the *puella* is over—for he is being constantly reminded by “the *vir*”—he nevertheless is unable to come to terms with his present situation and can only find value in the past. It is also worth noting the shift that happens between lines 3 and 8, where the *quondam*, which clearly distinguishes between past and present, is replaced with *vere*, which, Ellen Greene argues, “signals the change in the speaker’s mind from distanced reflection on the past to a complete absorption in it.”⁷⁹ To “the lover’s” mind, the possibility of value and happiness in the present, and even the future, is suspect, since the joy and warmth of his affair have eclipsed everything else. For him, the sun *really was* shining brightly, and anything to come is merely a semblance of that happiness. Yet happiness that is only guaranteed by

⁷⁹ Ellen Greene, “The Catullan Ego: Fragmentation and the Erotic Self,” *The American Journal of Philology*, Vol. 116, No. 1 (Spring, 1995), 80.

someone else (here the *puella*) is hardly masculine and Catullus “the *vir*” continues to find charges to level against his amorous other half.

However, just because Catullus “the *vir*” has these concerns should by no means suggest that his position is valid or even successful. Indeed, every time he mentions the girl, two things happen. First, the language switches from disdainful to loving, such as the transition from line 4 to line 5. At first “the *vir*” is chastising “the lover” for blindly pursuing the girl, but this is immediately followed by *amata nobis quantum amabitur nulla*, which not only signals a relapse into love-induced madness, but also focusses on the singularity as their love, which is hyperbolized here; no other girl *will ever* be loved like his girl was loved by him. Second, it becomes difficult to see how the two voices—the lover and the man—are distinguished in these moments. Lines 4 and 5 are the same sentence and thus the shift in sentiment occurs mid-thought, so that it is now possible that “the *vir*” is beginning to have these nostalgic thoughts himself. This is what Greene suggests when she writes that “although the speaker is clearly trying to dissuade ‘Catullus [the lover]’ from his silly passion with the *puella*, his nostalgic imaginings of past erotic fulfillment confuse the distinction between the speaker and ‘Catullus’ the tormented lover.”⁸⁰ That is, Catullus’ use of two voices begins to detract from the masculine position and shows it at best as equal to “the lover,” if not even more *impotens*. Yet, although they are two distinct voices, the passion that propels “the lover” headlong into his madness also affects “the *vir*” with the result that they are truly two sides of the same coin, both coping with the same experience with a different technique. One looks to

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 80.

close off his dependence on the past, while the other hopes to find his fulfillment in nostalgic reenactment.

The divide between the two voices continues to narrow later in the poem, when, in a penultimate effort to restore his lost masculinity, “the *vir*” slanders the girl (*scelesta!*). However, just as before this word acts as a seamless transition between *vir* and lover. In what appears to start as an attack on the *puella*, “the lover” once again takes over (*vae te, quae tibi manet vita?*). As before, the transition is not marked by punctuation, but happens in the middle of the sentence, lending two meanings to the *scelesta*: to “the *vir*” she is impious, but “the lover” feels sadness at this slander, looking back to the opening line (*miser Catulle*) and looking forward to the concern that permeates lines 16-18. After all, these questions (which Greene acutely describes as “brief, breathless questions to the girl about who her new lovers will be”⁸¹) both address his loss (since he is pining after her), and also hers (since, at least to “the lover,” no one else is capable of loving quite like he is [cf. line 5]). In this light, we can take *scelesta* as pathetic and pitiable instead of aggressively slanderous.⁸² While Greene’s observation continues to be correct, as both voices begin to become confused with one another when

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 83

⁸² *Scelestus*, -a, -um is generally understood as a negative adjective, taken as wicked or accursed, etc., but we should not overlook the definitions farther down in dictionary entry: “unlucky, unfortunate” (Charlton Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969], 1640). Curiously, then, in the moment where Catullus and the *puella* are farthest apart, their adjectives are the most similar. Ellis, Fordyce, and Merrill all echo this sentiment. Robinson Ellis, *A Commentary on Catullus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1889), 27: “It is hard to determine whether **Scelesta** is (1) ‘vile,’ mainly in reference to Lesbia’s desertion of Catullus ... or (2) ‘unfortunate,’ as often in Plautus The general drift of the passage is in favour of the second view; possibly *scelestus* united both, as both are to some extent combined in our ‘miserable,’ ‘a wretch;’” C.J. Fordyce, *Catullus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 112: “**scelesta**: ‘unfortunate,’ as often in comedy Both this and the common meaning ‘wicked’ are derived from a primitive religious use, ‘accursed’; *scelus* is the taboo which an offence brings upon the doer, putting him outside the pale of his community;” E.T. Merrill, *Catullus* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1893), 19: “**scelesta**: Catullus fans his anger and waxes more indignantly reproachful, and yet so immediately runs into the details of past happiness ... he almost seems to be wishing to tempt Lesbia back to himself.”

“‘Catullus’ passion for his mistress is taking over,”⁸³ we can take it even further. Not only are the two Catulli conflated, but equally so are Catullus and the *puella* through their shared wretchedness (*miser* and *scelestus*). This widens the problem that we have already identified, since Catullus is pulled even more strongly in two directions: toward being a *vir*, and toward his *puella*. By identifying their shared state, Catullus links his misery with hers, and thus begins to find just as much value in the outer world of relationships than in the masculine insulated and independent identity.

The poem’s final lines do nothing to offer a definitive conclusion to this conflict. Although the last words are clearly spoken by “the *vir*,” their position at the end does nothing to lend his voice any authority. Emerging from the desperate series of questions, Greene sees very little stability in this final imperative, noting that “the emphatic position of *at* in the last line stresses the ambivalence and confusion inherent in the lover’s situation.”⁸⁴ In light of this, we cannot take the presence of the masculine to be an endorsement of its legitimacy. Instead, the position taken by “the *vir*” actually serves to show how the tension we identified in chapter two between the individual and the world continues to be an issue in Catullus’ love poetry and that the solution to the masculine dilemma will equally resolve the tribulations of the lover.

Another aspect of Catullus’ poetry that has often been seen as a positive moment in his writing, and even as a solution to masculine desire, are his epithalamia, in which marriage has the potential to constrain and limit the negative effects of masculine

⁸³ Greene, “The Catullan Ego,” 83.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 84. I have tried to capture this sentiment in my translation with an ellipsis indicating some desperation or acceptance leading to his final words. As far as I can tell, no other translator of Catullus has acknowledged this in their interpretation (Greene does not offer a full translation in her paper).

behaviour. It is, of course, nothing new that marital language plays an important role in Catullus' work, but in c. 61 in particular there is a clear connection between the language of marriage and an effort to restrain the desires and excessive behaviour of the husband, which has not always been explored. The scene in this poem is clear: a new bride is being presented to her husband and is being called out to join the procession from her previous, familial home, to her new *domus* and *dominus*. Consider the poem's language:

*flet quod ire necesse est.
flere desine. non tibi Au-
runculeia periculum est,
ne qua femina pulcrior
clarum ab Oceano diem
uiderit venientem.*

*talis in vario solet
divitis domini hortulo
stare flos hyacinthinus.
sed moraris, abit dies.
prodeas nova nupta.*

*prodeas nova nupta, si
iam videtur, et audias
nostra verba. viden? faces
aureas quatiunt comas:
prodeas nova nupta.*

*non tuus levis in mala
deditus vir adultera,
probra turpia persequens,
a tuis teneris volet
secubare papillis,*

*lenta sed velut adsitas
vitis implicat arbores,*

*implicabitur in tuum
complexum. sed abit dies:
prodeas nova nupta.*

She weeps because it is necessary to go.
Stop weeping. For you there is no danger,
Aurunculeia, that any woman more beautiful
Has seen the bright day
Coming from the ocean.

Just as a hyacinth flower is accustomed
To stand out in the varied garden
Of its divine lord.
But you are delaying, the day is departing.
Come out, new bride.

Come out, new bride,
If you are ready yet,
And hear our words. Do you see?
The torches are shaking their golden hair:
Come out, new bride.

Your husband, not petty
Or abandoned among evil adulteries
And hunting after foul affairs,
Will not want to sleep apart
From your tender breasts,

But just as the supple grape vine
Envelops the nearby tree,
He will be enveloped in your
Embrace. But the day departs:
Come out, new bride. (c. 61.81-106)

Although the poetic chorus is assuring the *nova nupta* that her husband is not looking elsewhere for pleasure or sexual satisfaction, we cannot help but notice the overarching concern about this kind of behaviour. After all, we must remember that this is the same

husband who is being ordered to leave behind a carefree life of enjoyment and debauchery with his *concupinus* or male sexual companion (cf. 61.134-136).⁸⁵ At the very least we must note that there is something apparently unnatural in the control and stability that the marriage puts in place, leading to what Ronnie Ancona describes as “an uneasiness about the competing demands of desire and social responsibility.”⁸⁶ The question we must ask, then, is: does marriage as an institution overcome the system of masculine binaries that we identified in chapter two or does it simply confine, while at the same time maintaining, the same essential relation between the *vir* and what stands opposite and against him?

Although some interpretations see c. 61 “as holding forth unambiguously a vision of faithful marital love,”⁸⁷ we are nevertheless left with the sense that, despite this fidelity, “marital love” itself falls short of the solution we were previously seeking. In the larger passage above, we see that despite the chorus’ assurances, nothing actually curbs or redirects the husband’s desire; instead, he is simply distracted momentarily. Indeed, it seems that it is only her *teneris papillis* that are keeping him faithful, and even then she still must “envelop” her husband-to-be. That means even her present beauty—for no one, after all is *pulchrrior*—is not enough and ultimately does nothing to change the way the way that our *vir* interacts with the world. In other words, the desire to be *deditus adultera* and *probra turpia persequens* are not absent from her husband by nature, but rather by

⁸⁵ *Diceris male te a tuis | unguentate glabris marite | abstinere, sed abstine*: “You are said to abstain from your beardless slaves with difficulty, you perfumed husband, but abstain you must.”

⁸⁶ Ronnie Ancona, “(Un)Constrained Male Desire: An Intertextual Reading of Horace Odes 2.8 and Catullus Poem 61,” in *Gendered Dynamics in Latin Love Poetry*, ed. Ronnie Ancona and Ellen Greene (The John Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, 2005), 51.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 44.

distraction.⁸⁸ For the moment she alone entices him and this presents the opportunity to tie him down to his new family and household.⁸⁹ This decision cannot be separated from the chorus' insistence that *abit dies*: the day is departing. As her wedding day passes, so too does time and therefore her beauty, which in turn places even more pressure on the strength of her envelopment, since her appearance will one day no longer draw him in. These reassurances are made even more suspect in light of the *sed* in line 102 and seem to suggest that the chorus is aware of the necessity of entanglement. Just as before, the distraction is only temporary and necessarily leads to the entrapment of the husband in marriage, for the reader has no doubt that he would otherwise soon return to his masculine routine.

Additionally, this marriage does not nothing to overcome the binary structure of relationships that we have already seen mark Roman masculine behaviour. In fact, it comes across as an almost desperate attempt to curb masculine desire, as the chorus makes explicit later on:

scimus haec tibi quae licent
sola cognita, sed marito
ista non eadem licent.

....

nupta, tu quoque quae tuus
vir petet cave ne neges,
ni petitum aliunde eat.

We know that these things which are permitted to you,
Are the only things you have known, but

⁸⁸ As Ancona comments: "while the groom ... is expected to have a sexually exclusive relationship with the bride, it is her attractiveness (cf. the tender breasts) ... that [is] established as the constraining power that creates his fidelity" (47).

⁸⁹ Cf. Horace 2.8 for what happens when this attempt to contain desire no longer succeeds.

Such things are not permitted to a husband.

....

Bride, you as well: beware!

Don't refuse the things your husband will seek,

Lest he go looking for them elsewhere. (c. 61.139-146)

Although the chiding of the first strophe presented here seems to be directing the *vir* away from his previous infatuation with activity and irrumation, the lines immediately following it show that this is not in fact the case. After all, “the groom’s not seeking sexual activity elsewhere is now specifically tied to the bride ‘not saying no,’” and although “the language of mastery belongs, in one sense, to the bride,” she is ultimately unable to alter her binary relation to her husband and achieve any degree of masculine activity.⁹⁰ She has to say yes and thus remains passive and submissive. So, while the husband is constrained by his wife’s beauty, nothing has actually changed, and marriage, which initially sought to restrain masculinity, remains captive to the very thing it is seeking most desperately to capture. Catullus’ words in c. 62, then, are all the more fitting.⁹¹

*Hespera, quis caelo fertur crudelior ignis?
qui natam possis complexu avellere matris,
complexu matris retinentem avellere natam,
et iuveni ardenti castam donare puellam.
quid faciunt hostes capta crudelius urbe?*

Hesperus, which flame in the sky is said to be more cruel?
You who are able to snatch a daughter away from the embrace of her mother,
To snatch a shining daughter away from the embrace of her mother,
And give the chaste girl to a burning youth.
What crueller thing does the enemy do in a captured city? (c. 62.20-24)

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁹¹ My emphasis.

The young women being taken away from her families here are explicitly contrasted with those who have been snatched away from their homes in war and are no more an equal partner in their relationship than these war victims. Although “their captive city is purely hypothetical,” as Nappa notes, “its capture [is] a metaphor for their view of marriage.”⁹² there is no power for them in their interactions with their husbands. The *vir* continues to rule supreme.

The anxiety surrounding this transition can also be seen in c. 64, when Ariadne, who has just found herself abandoned on Naxos, recounts the comforts of her old palace life:

*hunc simul ac cupido conspexit lumine virgo
regia, quam suavis exspirans castus odores
lectulus in molli complexu matris alebat,
quales Eurotae praecingunt flumina myrtus
aurave distinctos educit verna colores,
non prius ex illo flagrantia declinavit
lumina, quam cuncto concepit corpore flammam
funditus atque imis exarsit tota medullis.*

And once the royal maiden caught sight of him with a desiring eye,
She whom the chaste little bed, breathing out sweet
Smells, was nourishing in the soft lap of her mother,
Just as the myrtle trees gird the river of Eurota
Or the spring breezes bring out impressive colours,
No sooner did she turn her burning eyes away from him,
Than did she take up a flame deep in her whole body
And blazed entirely deep in her marrow. (64.86-93)

⁹² Christopher Nappa, “Catullus and Virgil,” in *A Companion to Catullus*, ed. Marilyn B. Skinner (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 382.

Note here how the language describing the mother's comfort is the same in both c. 62 and c. 64: *complexu* or embrace. The metre of c. 64.89 adds to this sense of security with four heavy spondees slowly leading to the final two feet, the only line in the quoted sentence to do so. It is important, I think, that these spondees accompany this line in particular, as they expand on the comfort and safety of her former home. Just as the encircling myrtle trees gird the river, so too did Ariadne's comforts—foremost the *complexu matris*—keep her safe (a safety that the regularity and stability of the eight long syllables mirrors in the metre). This, then, simply confirms what we have already observed: this small cluster of Catullan poetry that deals with marriage does not find anything in marriage that even begins to correct a *vir*'s behaviour. Indeed, marriage institutionalizes such behaviour, offering the wife up almost as a sacrifice to the man's insatiable desires.

This leads to a conclusion that suggests marriage, from this less-than-austere beginning, not only maintains, but ultimately produces the opposite of what it has set out to achieve. That is, despite the attempt to restrain masculine desire, both c. 61 and 64 end with a new child, who in both cases ultimately propagates and further legitimizes masculine behaviour. Consider the prophecy at the end of c. 64, where the new couple, Peleus and Thetis, learn of their son's future deeds:

*nascetur vobis expers terroris Achilles,
hostibus haud tergo, sed forti pectore notus,
qui persaepe vago victor certamine cursus
flammea praevertet celeris vestigia cervae.*

*non illi quisquam bello se conferet heros,
cum Phrygii Teucro manabunt sanguine campi
Troicaque obsidens longinquo moenia bello,*

periuri Pelopis vastabit tertius heres.

*illius egregias virtutes claraque facta
saepe fatebuntur gnatorum in funere matres,
cum incultum cano solvent a vertice crinem,
putridaque infirmis variabunt pectora palmis.*

*namque velut densas praecerpens messor aristas
sole sub ardenti flaventia demetit arua,
Troiuenum infesto prosternet corpora ferro.*

Achilles will be born to you, free from fear,
Not known to the enemy by his back, but by his strong chest,
Who so often a victor in a far-ranging race,
Will outstrip the flaming stride of the swift deer.

No hero will compare himself to him in war,
When the Phrygian fields will flow with Teucric blood,
And sieging the Trojan walls in a long war,
The third heir of perjured Pelops shall lay waste to them.

At the funeral of their sons, mothers will often acknowledge
His distinguished values and shining deeds,
When they loosen their neglected hair from their white heads,
And they shall bruise their withered chests with their feeble hands.

For just as the reaper who prematurely gathering the thick wheat,
Harvests the golden fields under the burning sun,
He will destroy the bodies of the Trojan sons with with his dangerous blade. (c.
64.338-355)

This itinerary is problematic. Although it initially outlines Achilles' positive qualities (his courage, his strength, and his speed), it quickly deteriorates into violence. We must also pick up on the *virtutes* in the ninth line quoted above; Achilles' accomplishments are nothing more than a pure demonstration of *virtus* and an example of unbridled masculinity. David Konstan, in particular, is disturbed by this development, arguing that

“it is only through their effect on the victims that Catullus portrays Achilles’ exemplary qualities and acts of valour,” and commenting further that “military *virtus* ... is here reduced to its essential element: power.”⁹³ His masculine performance comes at the cost of Trojan lives and leaves grief its wake. It is important too, I think, that the reaper in the simile is *praecipens* (gathering prematurely) and thus fulfilling the masculine objective we identified in chapter two. He is active to such an extent that everything that stands against him must be rendered entirely passive, here perhaps even denied the possibility of becoming active in the first place. Truly, “heroic *virtus* ... appears as savage brutality.”⁹⁴ This catalogue of Achilles’ *egregias virtutes claraque facta* also disrupts the very thing that c. 64 (along with c. 61) is praising: the family. Mothers, whose task we already saw in c. 61 was to contain masculine desire, here are its victims, lamenting their fallen sons.

We can find further images of domination a few lines down in the poem, which depict the capture and subsequent sacrifice of Polyxena, the princess of Troy:

*nam simul ac fessis dederit fors copiam Achivis
urbis Dardaniae Neptunia solvere vincla,
alta Polyxenia madefient caede sepulcra;
quae, velut ancipiti succumbens victima ferro,
proiciet truncum summisso poplite corpus.*

For as soon as Fortune will have granted to the Greeks
The means to untie the Neptunian knots around the Dardanian city,
[Achilles’] high tomb will be wet with Polyxenian slaughter
Who, just like a beast overcome by a two-headed blade,
Shall fall prostrate, knees folded, as a mutilated corpse. (c. 64.366-370)

⁹³ David Konstan, *Catullus’ Indictment of Rome* (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1977), 47.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

Once again, Achilles' legacy is intimately associated with blood and death. Indeed, such is the power of his *virtus* that now, even though he is dead, he can still terrorize his victims. The language used to describe Polyxena's corpse also highlights the extent to which Achilles' activity continues to force others into submissive passivity. She is, after all, *truncum corpus*, a mutilated body, almost divorced from its own identity, her distinguishing features erased by Achilles' conquest. Furthermore, she is likened to a *victim*, a beast, which continues to strip her of her status as human and renders her as simply another of the sacrificial animals. Her death is also paired with the destruction of an entire city and the destruction of more unique characteristics.⁹⁵ Konstan's language picks up on this when he writes that *virtus* here "may also result in the cold destruction of a defenseless and innocent woman."⁹⁶ Destruction, rather than sacrifice, depicts this loss of identity perfectly, as does the *caede* in line 368. There is nothing left of the Trojan princess, save the memory of Achilles' glory (it is his tomb, in the end, that is described).⁹⁷

In macabre fashion, however, Polyxena is not entirely left behind. Although the poem quickly returns to Peleus and Thetis, E.E. Beyers has noted that this slaughter, "followed as it is by the immediate transference of interest to the marriage feast, sets

⁹⁵ As Fordyce tells us, the *vincla Neptunia* are not just any walls, but "the walls built for Laomedon by Poseidon" (Fordyce, *Catullus*, 321).

⁹⁶ Konstan, *Catullus' Indictment*, 49.

⁹⁷ E. E. Beyers comments on this section nicely: "Verse 368 '*alta Polyxenia madefient caede sepulcra*' itself builds up to the *madedfient*, communicating in its word order what is otherwise incommunicable. Pictures rise successively in the mind to make us aware of an elevation as yet without outline, of all the associations of the Polyxena, and of a moistening as yet unexplained. Only now do we see the whole immolation of the tomb. Catullus has condemned the slaughter in the very manner of the description ("The Refrain in the Song of the Fates in Catullus c. 64," *Acta Classica* 3 [Jan, 1960]: 89).

Polyxena before us as a bride in a strange form of marriage.”⁹⁸ This heavily undermines the value of the union c. 64 goes on to describe, since the very product of the encouraged consummation (Achilles) becomes a disturbing mockery of the union that gave it birth. Konstan even goes so far as to claim that “the sacrifice, as a symbol of Achilles’ *virtus*, is presented as the reason or purpose of the marriage of Peleus and Thetis,” concluding that “it is difficult to escape the conclusion that Catullus saw the sacrifice of Polyxena as the issue of the marriage.”⁹⁹ The superficial joy of c. 64 cannot, then, be separated from the sorrow to follow, and marriage too, with all of its *virtus*-restraining promises, becomes inseparable from the violence and destruction of masculine hyper-activity. Perhaps it will not produce a *vir* as accomplished as Achilles, but certainly as violent.

These concerns can also be read back into c. 61, which also ends in anticipation of sons-to-come:

*Talis illius a bona
Matre laus genus approbet
Qualis unica ab optima
Matre Telemacho manet
Fama Penelopeo*

May his praise be evidence of
Descent from a good mother
Just as the singular fame
That remains for Telemachos
From his most excellent mother, Penelope. (c. 61.219-223)

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* This opinion is seconded by Ulrich Von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff: “Zu leugnen ist freilich nicht, dass das Verweilen bei Polyxena in das Shicksallied nicht passt” (*Hellenistische Dichtung in der Zeit des Kallimachos* [Berlin, 1924] vol. 2, 308).

⁹⁹ Konstan, *Catullus’ Indictment*, 49.

Despite the maternal source of fame, the Homeric allusions continue to cast a shadow over the marriage's fated child, and raise the question as whether Telemachos' *fama* will differ from Achilles' *facta*. Will he be praised as a thoughtful member of society, or will his actions be marked by the same violence that was produced by Peleus and Thetis? To what extent will this marriage be free of the destructive *virtus* of c. 64? Furthermore, Ancona goes on to point out that "the reader is left to supply the missing Odysseus, whose presence necessarily undercuts, to some extent, the ideal of a sexually exclusive marriage."¹⁰⁰ Once again, marriage's potential to control masculine desire seems suspect. Although it is the mother who grants the child his *fama*, Ancona's argument denies even this victory to the poem, since the very moment of feminine power, we are immediately concerned that she has failed to properly entangle her virile husband.

This makes the poem's otherwise happy conclusion slightly unsettling. As the procession begins to retreat we are left with the following, final, strophe:

*claudite ostia, virgines:
 lusimus satis. at boni
 coniuges, bene vivite et
 munere assiduo valentem
 exercete iuventam.*

Close the doors, maidens;
 We have played enough. But good
 Husband and wife, live well and
 Exercise your youthful vigour
 In continual service. (c. 61.224-228)

The young bride, once pressured into ensnaring her husband, is now herself trapped by masculine desire. The doors are shut, the jesting stops, and the *complexu matris* is left far

¹⁰⁰ Ancona, "(Un)constrained Male Desire," 8.

behind. Despite the hopes of scholars such as Wiseman,¹⁰¹ instead of opening the *vir* onto the world, marriage has shut the *virgine* in with him, as merely another victim on Achilles' tomb.

4.2 *o di, reddite mi*— Recognition and Fulfillment

Up until this point in our study, we have observed that Catullus' poetry is marked by the desire to overcome some present reality, whether that be expressed in the *vir*'s effort to dominate the world, in society's struggle to contain masculinity, or in Catullus' poetic persona's desire to relive his happy past. The individual is fragmented between lover and *vir*, between feminine and masculine, and constantly struggles to mend this fragmentation (often by eliminating the separation altogether). Catullus even goes so far in c. 76 to describe this struggle as an illness, from which he would give anything to be free, concluding the poem as follows:

*o di, si vestrum est misereri, aut si quibus umquam
extremam iam ipsa in morte tulistis opem,
me miserum aspiciate et, si vitam puriter egi,
eripite hanc pestem perniciemque mihi,
quae mihi subrepens imos ut torpor in artus
expulit ex omni pectore laetitas.
non iam illud quaero, contra me ut diligat illa,
aut, quod non potis est, esse pudica velit:
ipse valere opto et taetrum hunc deponere morbum.
o di, reddite mi hoc pro pietate mea.*

O gods, if compassion is yours, or if you ever brought
Your greatest aid to a man even at the moment of his death,

¹⁰¹ Cf. *Catullus and His World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 115-116.

Look upon miserable me, if I have led my life correctly,
Free me from this pestilence and curse,
Which, creeping into me as a numbness into my deepest joints,
has driven out joy from my entire body. (c. 76.17-26)
Now I do not desire this, that she love me in return,
Or, because it is not possible, that she wish to be chaste:
I myself wish to be strong and leave behind this offensive illness.
O gods, restore this to me in return for my piety.

This wish, however, is not so simple, since the language he uses to describe the “illness” he hopes to overcome demonstrates just how constitutive this “illness” really is. It is *imos ut torpor in artus* (c. 76.21)—totally permeating—and hence not only an aspect of his relationships with others, but more importantly a fundamental part of Catullus (and hence the individual) himself. In other words, the lack that Catullus “the lover” tries to eliminate with respect to the *puella*, or the *vir* with respect to the world, is not simply an obstacle, but rather reality—a fact of his existence. It is understandable, then, to reach the conclusion with Greene that “Catullus suggests... the solution to erotic conflict may, at least, begin with the awareness that the lover’s frenzy is a sickness. Moreover ... [he] expresses the hope that the lover’s ability to see himself as part of a larger social context may be a cure for his private anguish.”¹⁰² This initially seems to be a compelling argument. It is not “the *vir*’s” voice in c. 8—which advocated for abandoning one’s desire for another altogether—but it is equally not the voice of “the lover,” who looked to reduce the space between himself and the *puella* as much as possible. While both of these stances treat fragmentation as inconvenience, Greene’s argument here places c. 76 in a different light. That is, the poem presents a stance of *recognition* that takes this “illness” seriously. Frenzy, which was originally problematic and inconvenient, becomes sickness,

¹⁰² Greene, “The Catullan Ego,” 91; her emphasis.

which is identifiable and—more importantly—*curable*. This shift takes the troubling “gap” between the individual and the world seriously, allows Catullus the room to navigate it properly, and potentially be free of it all together.

But how, exactly, does this occur? In this regard the second half of Greene’s comment is especially enlightening. What she hopes to draw out from c. 76, I think, is that Catullus’ recognition is simultaneously both a reification of frenzy and an identification of his condition not simply as something that belongs to him alone, but rather to the human experience in general. As we have already seen, both the *vir* and the lover experience the same phenomenon. Fragmentation— as this universal human condition—does not turn Catullus away from frenzy and towards a normalized, stable self. Rather, following what I take Greene to be saying, fragmentation actually is that normalized self, albeit not stable (at least not in the way that the *vir* wants to understand the word). In other words, what Catullus has up to this point taken to be his own private pain, is in reality something shared and common. This, according to Greene, is the first step in “curing” the “illness” of desire that has plagued both Catulli. Unfortunately her paper ends all too soon, and does not satisfactorily unpack how this cure can actually happen. I hope, then, that my following explication will complement and unpack her observations.

Up to this point, we have taken desire to be transitive (*I want that*), which has developed into a stark opposition between the individual and the world, since the transitive understanding continually sets up the dichotomy of subject and object (and hence of active and passive). There always has to be the ego that wants and the object it desires, which produces a great deal of anxiety in both Catullus and his other poetic

characters.¹⁰³ The resolution of this tension is what I have already termed “recognition,” which I hope to clarify as an *intransitive* way of understanding this problem of desire. This is what I have tried to express with my language of universal or normalized; that desire is *not* some obstacle that the individual needs to overcome in order to be complete, but rather exists as a constitutive aspect of that individual’s existence. Recognising the function in Catullus’ oeuvre of “recognition,” I argue, can relieve the tension between subject and object, and allow us to observe the relationship between individuals properly.¹⁰⁴ To clarify the idea that informs this approach, though, we first must look to two of Catullus’ influences, Sappho and Theocritus, in order to satisfactorily develop our understanding of the phenomenon of “recognition.”

Sappho 1 reveals an analogous tension between subject and object, and the need for “recognition” to resolve that tension, in the poet’s prayer to Aphrodite. Once again we find a lover vexed by the object of their love and beseeching the gods to help them ease their pain. Particularly interesting, in this case, are the final three strophes:

ποικιλόθρον' ἀθανάτ' Ἀφρόδιτα,
 παῖ Δίος δολόπλοκε, λίσσομαί σε,
 μή μ' ἄσαισι μηδ' ὀνίαισι δάμνα,
 πότνια, θῦμον,

ἀλλὰ τυίδ' ἔλθ', αἶ ποτα κατέρωτα
 τὰς ἔμας αὔδαυ ἀίοισα πῆλοι
 ἔκλυες, πάτρου δὲ δόμον λίποισα
 χρύσιον ἦλθες

¹⁰³ We have already seen in chapter two—especially in the case of Mamurra—how this way of thinking is entirely unsustainable.

¹⁰⁴ Of course, the tension is only “relieved” insofar as it is no longer understood to be problematic. The conditions that produced the tension remain; it is our perspective on it that changes.

ἄρμ' ὑπασδεύξαισα· κάλοι δέ σ' ἄγον
ῶκεες στρουῖθοι περὶ γᾶς μελαίνας
πύκνα δίνεντες πτέρ' ἀπ' ὠράνωϊθε-
ρος διὰ μέσσω,

αἴψα δ' ἐξίκοντο· σὺ δ', ὦ μάκαιρα,
μειδιαίσαισ' ἀθανάτω προσώπῳ
ἦρε' ὅτι δηῖτε πέπονθα κῶττι
δηῖτε κάλημμι,

κῶττι μοι μάλιστα θέλω γένεσθαι
μαινόλα θυμῷ· τίνα δηῖτε πείθω
ἄψ σ' ἄγην ἐς φᾶν φιλότατα; τίς σ', ὦ
Ψάφ', ἀδικήει;

καὶ γὰρ αἰ φεύγει, ταχέως διώξει·
αἰ δὲ δῶρα μὴ δέκετ', ἀλλὰ δώσει·
αἰ δὲ μὴ φίλει, ταχέως φιλήσει
κωὺκ ἐθέλοισα.

ἔλθε μοι καὶ νῦν, χαλέπαν δὲ λῦσον
ἐκ μερίμναν, ὄσσα δέ μοι τέλεσσαι
θῦμος ἰμέρρει, τέλεσον· σὺ δ' αὐτα
σύμμαχος ἔσσο.¹⁰⁵

Deathless Aphrodite of the golden throne,
Daughter of Zeus, weaver of wiles, I beseech you,
Do not subject my longing to sorrows and sadness,
O Queen,

But come here, who earlier
Hearing my voice far away
Listened to me and, leaving the golden house of
Your father, came,

Having yoked your chariot; and beautiful swift sparrows
Whipping their compact feathers, were leading you
Over the dark ground, out of heaven,

¹⁰⁵ Greek from David A. Campbell, *Greek Lyric Poetry: An Anthology* (Bristol Classical Press, 1991). The translation is mine.

Through the middle of the air,

And speedily they arrived; and you, o blessed one,
Smiling with your immortal countenance
Asked what—once again—I suffered, and
Why—once again—I was calling her this time,

And what I most desired to be mine,
In my frenzied longing; ‘Who—once again—am I persuading
To lead you back to her love? Who, Sappho,
Is wronging you?’

For indeed, she who flees will soon be chasing,
She who denies gifts, will give them,
She who does not love, will soon, herself, be in love,
Even against her will.’

Come to me now, and free me from
These painful thoughts, fulfil everything
My longing desires to fulfil, and you yourself,
Be my ally.

Sappho here is invoking language similar to what we have seen already in Catullus’ love poetry. Although there may be no narrow philological basis for a comparison between the Roman *imus* and the Greek *θυμός*, I want to argue that these words fulfil a similar role in their respective poems. Just as the deep-seated nature of Catullus’ desire permeates his whole body, so too is Sappho’s erotic experience tied up with her very existence.

Translated here tentatively as “longing,” *θυμός* also carries with it more existential qualities and can also be understood as “soul,” or even “seat of life.”¹⁰⁶ In light of these semantic possibilities, Sappho’s unrequited love can be imagined to have not merely superficial implications, but a resonance that vibrates throughout Sappho’s entire being.

That is, her relationship to another defines and structures her very identity. The *ἀδικήει* of

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Brooke Holmes, *The Symptom and the Subject: The Emergence of the Physical Body in Ancient Greece* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 61-62; and Ruth Padel, *In and Out of the Mind: Greek Images of the Tragic Self* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

line twenty clearly reflects this relationship and indicates something deeper than a simple injury, perhaps even an affront to order and stability, or an “injustice” as Anne Giacomelli argues.¹⁰⁷ However, these observations lead into the larger argument in scholarship about the final fourteen lines: what, exactly, is Aphrodite’s solution to Sappho’s problem?

The traditional reading, emphasized by Kenneth Dover, is as follows: Aphrodite will return Sappho’s love to her. “The other person, who now refuses gifts and flees,” he writes, “will not merely yield and “grant favours” but will pursue Sappho, and will herself offer gifts.”¹⁰⁸ This seems to be a rather neat resolution; Sappho asks (ἀλλ’ σ’ ἄγην ἐς φᾶν φιλότατα) and Aphrodite provides. However, as Giacomelli points out, “Aphrodite’s statements contain no direct objects. She does not say that the girl will pursue Sappho She merely says that the girl will pursue, give gifts and love.”¹⁰⁹ This distinction between taking these verbs as “transitive” or “intransitive” changes the whole meaning of the goddess’ answer. She is not, according to this line of argumentation, promising Sappho a return of affections, but simply that her beloved will one day undergo the same anguish. Sappho, as the current rejected lover, then, can find comfort, since “the unresponsive beloved will one day grow up and become a lover ... [she] will come to ‘know what it feels like’ to be rejected.”¹¹⁰ This also picks up on the κωὸκ ἐθέλοισα of line 24, which heightens the pathetic nature of Sappho’s beloved, since she is helpless to insulate herself against the progression of time (which we find in the constant

¹⁰⁷ “The Justice of Aphrodite in Sappho fr. 1,” in *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, Vol. 110 (1980): 135.

¹⁰⁸ K.J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 177.

¹⁰⁹ Giacomelli, “The Justice of Aphrodite,” 136.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 137.

repetition of the temporal adverbs δηῦτε and ταχέως). All too quickly will she know Sappho's pain, which, in a moment of schadenfreude, will in turn "release [Sappho] from erotic tyranny."¹¹¹ Thus, with revenge in mind, the poem concludes.

There is something about this interpretation that is both offputting and inadequate. First of all, it fails to address how this solution adequately tends to the profundity of ἄλγος. Surely, if my reading of the word is correct, the beloved's pain should do nothing to resolve Sappho's existential anxiety, since it is too deeply-seated to be easily effected by a change in fortunes of the beloved; just because she too is in pain can do nothing to improve Sappho's condition. In fact, given the existential quality of the love, it would only serve to harm Sappho further, since someone who plays such a fundamental role in her identity is damaged. While seeing (or at least anticipating) another in similar erotic anguish might be comforting, I do not see how Giacomelli's argument actually *resolves* this tension. The individual has been wronged, and her recourse can only be found in the injury of another. Just like the *viri* we observed earlier, however, it seems that this action does nothing to actually free Sappho from her desire and the resulting anxiety. Thus, I want to propose an alternate reading of Sappho 1. I take the intransitive reading of the penultimate strophe to be correct, but pointing toward a different conclusion. Instead of simply suggesting that Sappho's *puella* will share in her misery, I want to suggest that there is a far more universal claim in Aphrodite's response.

This reading begins by returning to the temporal adverbs that Giacomelli highlights—δηῦτε and ταχέως. While she is right to draw out their ability to point

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 141.

forward into the future, δηῦτε can just as equally look *backwards*. This is something that Anne Carson expresses very cleanly in her book *If Not, Winter*, writing that the word

peers past the present moment to a series of repeated actions stretching behind; it intercepts the new and binds it into history, as if to say ‘Not for the first time!’ Sappho’s [δηῦτε] does more than mark repetition as a theme of her poem, it instantiates the difference between mortal and immortal perspectives on this painful feature of erotic life: Sappho is stuck in the pain of the ‘now,’ Aphrodite calmly surveys a larger pattern of ‘agains.’¹¹²

What Carson begins to express here, I think, is the universality of Sappho’s experience. What the poet sees as a unique and personal moment of anxiety, the goddess perceives as one more prayer among many. Aphrodite’s solution to Sappho’s problem, then, is not the assurance that this particular beloved will one day feel the same anguish, but the affirmation of a collective experience involving desire that has both already happened and will happen again. The resolution here of Sappho’s anxiety is not found in individual retribution, but through a shared recognition. The girl will one day know Sappho’s erotic fate, but neither should Sappho look forward gleefully to her beloved’s pain, nor should the girl callously look back to her lover’s agony. Instead, Aphrodite offers the ability to recognize their shared fate, the pain of love, as a human reality. What to their mortal eyes is something distressing that must be overcome, to the goddess is a mere fact of being mortal. Thus Sappho’s χαλέπαν μερίμναν changes from lamentable to celebratory; the distance between her and the beloved which was previously so toxic, is now the affirmation of that other in Sappho’s life. Whether or not her love is returned, her experience *of* that love reveals the communal nature of her human experience.

¹¹² Anne Carson, *If Not, Winter* (New York: Random House, 2002), 357-358.

This reading of the resolution of Sappho's love has further implications with the penultimate verb τέλεισον. This imperative does not necessarily carry with it the force that we might expect. Instead of assuming that Sappho is beseeching Aphrodite to give her exactly what she wants, we must wonder—especially considering the verb's proximity to ἄμω in this strophe—whether the “fulfillment” or “accomplishment” τελέω implies is the immediate handing over of the girl to the poet, or the profound realization of the deep-seated nature of her desire. After all, if Sappho is actually trying to align herself with the goddess' immortal perspective, and thus reconcile herself with her own human nature, then we should at the very least be a little suspicious about how the physical possession of another could do anything to appease Sappho's thumotic anxiety. Instead I want to argue that this verb fits perfectly at the end of the poem given the reading discussed in the paragraph above. The fulfillment of Sappho's desire is *not* the resolution of her own, private fragmentation, but the realization of her mortal, universal condition. ἄμω, as the seat of desire in Sappho 1, is precisely what makes her human—her finitude—and therefore its fulfillment is not a movement to complete self-sufficiency (the movement so desired by Catullus' *virī*), but the actual *acceptance* of that finitude itself. Just as in c. 76, where I drew a distinction between transitive and intransitive desire, and in Sappho 1, where φεύγει may or may not take a direct object, so too we must consider here whether Sappho's desire is solely tied to its object (the *puella*) or rather is revealing a way of being. Taken *intransitively*, it is no longer entirely concerned with closing the distance between lover and loved, but now looks to nourish and revel in that very space.

We find a similar ambiguity in σύμμαχος, the final noun of the poem. Taken literally, it calls upon Aphrodite to be Sappho's ally (literally her “with-fighter”) in her

quest to possess her beloved. According to our intransitive reading, however, the word no longer points to a friend in this one erotic instance alone, but rather to the necessity and place of friendship at the core of Sappho’s poetic identity. Indeed, it has been noted by Michael Sampson that Aphrodite would not make a good military ally. Hers “is not the usual kind of warfare,” he writes, pointing out that she is “already out of place on the battlefield in Homer” and that she “is decidedly un-Homeric, revealing a playful poetic sensibility that stands in contrast to the gravity and fatality of epic, heroic combat.”¹¹³ Given these observations, Aphrodite clearly cannot be a conventional σύμμαχος, and as such her invocation cannot point toward the need for a particular military ally. Instead of summoning the goddess in an effort to possess and dominate her beloved, Sappho is beginning to recognize the importance of friendship and companions in general.¹¹⁴ To return to the language of c. 76, the cure for Sappho’s “illness” is not really a cure at all, in the sense that it actively removes the cause of the sickness. On the contrary, it is simply a change of perspective on what was previously so anxiety-inducing. The “illness” may still be present, although only with difficulty could we continue to call it such.

A discussion of love as something that needs to be cured can also be found in Theocritus’ eleventh Idyll, which opens with the following claim:

οὐδὲν πὸτ τὸν ἔρωτα πεφύκει φάρμακον ἄλλο
 Νικία οὔτ’ ἔγχριστον, ἐμὴν δοκεῖ, οὔτ’ ἐπίπαστον,
 ἢ ται Πιερίδες· κοῦφον δέ τι τοῦτο καὶ ἀδὺ
 γίνετ’ ἐπ’ ἀνθρώποις, εὐρεῖν δ’ οὐ ράδιόν ἐστι.

¹¹³ C. Michael Sampson, “Sappho 44: Troy via Mytilene” (Presentation, Dalhousie Classics Department Seminar, Halifax, NS, March 19, 2015), 5-6. Cf. J.J. Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire: the Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 167-170.

¹¹⁴ I am grateful to Jessica Elbert Decker from the University of California San Marcos for helping me develop this reading of σύμμαχος.

There is no cure for love,
Nikias, neither ointment, it seems to me, nor herbs,
Other than the muses: and this is light and pleasant
For humans, but it is not easy to find.¹¹⁵

Recounting the Cyclops' love for Galateia to his friend Nikias, Theocritus questions whether or not an ostensible, physical solution to Polyphemus' anxious desire is possible at all. The problem that needs curing is, of course, the same erotic madness we found in Sappho,¹¹⁶ and interestingly it is poetry itself (expressed here in the form of the Muses) that is the solution. Wray, who sees a strong analogy with Catullus' writing, wants to say that the Cyclops' "poetic performance ... appears to feature poetry as a therapy, or at least a response, a 'working through,' in the face of a passion whose symptoms are portrayed in a language close to clinical symptomatology."¹¹⁷ This entails that the language of "illness" we first found in c. 76 is present here as well, but just as equally needs to find an alternative resolution. Indeed, consider the circumstance in which the reader first finds the Cyclops:

αὐτόθ' ἐπ' αἰόνοσ κατατάκετο φυκιοέσσας
ἐξ ἀοῦς, ἔχθιστον ἔχων ὑποκάρδιον ἔλκος
Κύπριδος ἐκ μεγάλας, τό οἱ ἥπατι πᾶξε βέλεμνον.

He was standing in the same spot on the weedy shore
From dawn until dusk, holding a most hateful wound in his heart
From great Aphrodite, which she sprinkled upon his liver as an arrow.

¹¹⁵ Greek from A.S.F. Gow, *Theocritus, 2nd edition, Vol. I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973). Translation mine.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Wray, *Catullus and the Poetics of Roman Manhood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 95.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Clearly Polyphemos is frozen in place, rendered unable to work, and deeply troubled. The wound is not superficial, but, as with Sappho before and Catullus after him, deep in his body, and clearly affecting his very nature (he lives, after all, on land, and is only wading in the sea to get closer to his beloved).¹¹⁸ The language that Wray uses of disease and symptom, then, is extremely helpful, both in situating Theocritus' poetry with the other poets, and in setting up the eventual conclusion at the end of the poem. Just as in Sappho 1, the ultimate solution comes as a change in perspective that shakes the Cyclops loose from his desire-induced stasis and turns his attention back to his present reality:

ὦ Κύκλωψ Κύκλωψ, πᾶ τὰς φρένας ἐκπεπότασαι;
αἴκ' ἐνθὼν θαλάρωσ τε πλέκοις καὶ θαλλὸν ἀμάσας
ταῖς ἄρνεσσι φέροις, τάχα κα πολὺ μᾶλλον ἔχοις νῶν.
τὰν παρεοῖσαν ἄμελγε. τί τὸν φεύγοντα διώκεις;
εὐρησεῖς Γαλάτειαν ἴσως καὶ καλλίον' ἄλλαν.
πολλαὶ συμπαῖσδέν με κόραι τὰν νύκτα κέλονται,
κιγλίζοντι δὲ πᾶσαι, κ' αὐταῖς ὑπακούσω
δῆλον ὅ τ' ἐν τᾷ γᾶ κήγῳ τις φαίνομαι ἦμεν.

O Cyclops, Cyclops, whither have you flown in your thoughts?
If you, having gone, would both plait cheese crates, and after you've reaped the
corn,
You would bring it for your lambs, you would presently have more sense by far.
Milk the ewe that is present. Why do you pursue the one who is fleeing?
Perhaps you will find another, fairer Galateia.
Many maidens call me to play throughout the night,
And they all giggle, whenever I answer them.
It is clear that I at least seem to be somebody on land.

¹¹⁸ Notice once again the image of trying to close and overcome the space between the subject and the object. Cf. Id. 11.42-43: “ἀλλ' ἀφίκευσο ποθ' ἀμέ, καὶ ἐξεῖς οὐδὲν ἔλασσον, τὰν γλαυκὰν δὲ θάλασσαν ἔα ποτὶ χέρσον ὀρεχθεῖν (But come to me and you will have nothing less, Leave the bright sea to roar upon the dryland).”

Two things happen here. First of all, instead of continually pining after his beloved (or trying to possess her), Polyphemos comes to accept his condition as a fact of his existence, rather than as an individual problem. Secondly, in doing so he is able to move himself away from a fixation on a singular desired romantic relationship to imaginining the possibility of a plurality of relationships. One *puella* becomes many; the shepherd returns to his flock and his duties and relations are given new meaning.¹¹⁹ Through his song, his symptoms are reified and made tangible, just as we saw in c. 76, and they are therefore confrontable. This confrontation, however, does not result in either the possession of the beloved (as Dover argued in Sappho 1), or the complete abandonment of the beloved for the sake of the individual (as Giacomelli suggested). Instead, it entails a new posture that is able to understand the nature of desire in an *intransitive*, and thus in a constitutive, way.

A.S.F. Gow disagrees with this conclusion in his commentary, as he traces the development of the poem in the following way: “The greater part of the idyll (19-79) is occupied with an example of Polyphemus’s songs in which he pleads with Galatea, holds out to attract her his own wealth and devotion, and finally upbraids himself for wasting his time upon one so wayward.”¹²⁰ The final clause is important here—in Gow’s view the Cyclops’ desire has not been productive or meaningful, but merely a hindrance. Escaping from Galateia, then, is a purely positive outcome. Yet, despite this argument, Gow goes on to undermine himself, writing later that the ἀείδων of line 13 “raises a difficult

¹¹⁹ For earlier the Cyclops ἤρατο ... ὀρθαῖς μανίαις, ἀγεῖτο δὲ πάντα πάρεργα (Was loving ... with genuine madness, and counting everything else as secondary.)

¹²⁰ *Theocritus*, 2nd edition, Vol. II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 208.

problem Which shows Polyphemos very far from cured.”¹²¹ Gow is in this respect right—the cure for the Cyclops’ anxiety does not stop him from singing (an activity which continually circles around his love for Galateia). Therefore, Polyphemos has *not* been able to separate himself from his beloved as Gow originally argued, but remains in contact with her and with his desire for her.

But Polyphemos’ failure confirms our initial reading that the “cure” of the “illness” is not the removal of the “illness” itself, but rather a change in the “patient’s” perspective. The Cyclops’ poetry does just this, as it allows him to—in Wray’s language—“work through” his anxiety without actually altering the condition that created it. Others—whether Galateia or the other κόραι—remain a part of his life and his songs create, nourish, and emphasize the space that he shares with them. No longer trying to drown himself in the sea, nor trying to drag his beloved Nymph up onto land, Polyphemos has finally come to terms with his own reality and can now say and understand δῆλον ὅ τ’ ἐν τᾷ γᾷ κίγῳ τις φαίνομαι ἤμεν. Poetry has allowed its author to reconcile with his desire and to acknowledge the place of others and of friendship in his life. “Οὔτω,” as Theocritus concludes Id. 11, “Πολύφαμος ἐποίμαιεν τὸν ἔρωτα | μουσίσδων, ῥᾶον δὲ διᾶγ’ ἢ εἰ χρυσὸν ἔδωκεν; Thus Polyphemos was herding his flock, singing | about his love, and he was living easier than if he’d spent money.”

Now, emerging from our Greek detour, we can return to c. 76 with a stronger idea of what is at stake in the Roman poet’s plea to the gods. Let us reexamine Greene’s suggestion that “the solution to erotic conflict may, at least, begin with the awareness that the lover’s frenzy is a sickness. Moreover ... Catullus expresses the hope that the lover’s

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 211.

ability to see himself as part of a larger social context may be a cure for his private anguish.”¹²² What was initially compelling here is now little suspect. As we have seen in Sappho and Theocritus, the solution is not simply found in identifying the lover’s frenzy as an “illness,” but in finding a way to recognize the important place of that “illness” in the lover’s life. Such a recognition does not actually change the conditions of erotic frenzy, but reorients the lover *to* these conditions and thus maintains the relationship between lover and loved, and frees both parties from the violence and domination that was so prevalent in our account of masculinity in Catullus’ poems. This new perspective entails that the fragmentation we saw in poems such as c. 8 is *not* a problem the self must overcome, but in fact a constitutive part of an individual’s identity; others are not obstacles to be overcome but necessary parts of a fragmented whole. Our argument here breaks away from Greene’s, since she seems suspicious of fragmentation and is unsure whether Catullus is entirely content with this conclusion.¹²³ Nevertheless, I intend to stand firm by my reading of the central place of fragmentation and recognition in Catullan identity through a close engagement with several of his other love poems. Indeed, we will see that both grammatically and thematically, Catullus is continually deprioritizing the distinction between subject and object—the lover and the loved—and reinforcing the necessity and place of intransitive desire.

¹²² Greene, “The Catullan Ego,” 91.

¹²³ Although she does admit that Catullus’ “poetic discourse does not reconstitute the fragmentation of the lover” (*ibid.*), it is not clear in her paper whether or not he is actively trying to do so, but failing, or actually embracing this new form of individuality.

4.3 *amant amantur*—The Erotic Self

Up to this point we have only seen examples where fragmentation is still problematic for the poem's characters, so let us turn to more positive accounts of intransitive desire. These moments clearly move away from the language of insulation and independence that so heavily marked chapter two and even earlier accounts presented above. Instead, the stance *par excellence* in the following poems is one of vulnerability. These characters are only able to find themselves by affirming the lack of the masculine binary in their relationship and overcoming the previous, so problematic, subject/object distinction. Importantly here, I intend to argue that the poetic structure between lover and loved remains the same as in c. 8 and c. 76. However, using poetry (or, at the very least, conversation) each persona is able to work through their pain in order to affirm and embrace their condition rather than rail against it.

Consider c. 45, which portrays two lovers engaged in a very unique form of competition:

*Acmen Septimius suos amores
tenens in gremio 'mea' inquit 'Acme,
ni te perdite amo atque amare porro
omnes sum assidue paratus annos,
quantum qui pote plurimum perire,
solus in Libya Indiaque tosta
caesio veniam obvius leoni.'
hoc ut dixit, Amor sinistra ut ante
dextra sternuit approbationem.
at Acme leviter caput reflectens
et dulcis pueri ebrios ocellos
illo purpureo ore suaviata,
'sic' inquit 'mea vita Septimille,
huic uni domino usque serviamus,*

*ut multo mihi maior acriorque
ignis mollibus ardet in medullis.'
hoc ut dixit, Amor sinistra ut ante
dextra sternuit approbationem.*

*nunc ab auspicio bono profecti
mutuis animis amant amantur.
unam Septimius misellus Acmen
mauult quam Syrias Britanniasque:
uno in Septimio fidelis Acme
facit delicias libidinisque.
quis ullos homines beatiores
vidit, quis Venerem auspiciorem?*

Septimius, holding his love, Acme,
In his lap, said: "My Acme,
If I do not love you desperately and am not prepared
To love you continuously through all my years,
As much as he who loves you most of all,
May I, all alone in Libya and scorched India,
Come across the path of a grey-eyed lion."
As he said this, Love sneezed his approval,
On his left as he did before on his right.

But Acme, lightly turning her head,
And having kissed the intoxicated eyes
Of her sweet boy with her wine-stained mouth
Said: "Therefore Septimius, my life,
Let us continually serve this one master,
As a flame much greater and more hot
Burns in my tender marrow."
As she said this, Love sneezed his approval,
On his left as he did before on his right.

Now having set off from this good omen,
They (are) love(d) with mutual spirits.
Poor little Septimius prefers Acme alone
Over Syria and Britain:
Faithful Acme takes delight
And pleasure only in Septimius.
Who has seen anyone more blessed?
Who has seen a more auspicious love?

We need to be careful approaching this poem, since much of the scholarship that surrounds it is mired with unclear language. Dana Burgess exemplifies this with his comment that “Septimius’ declaration of love provokes Acme to a response capping the words of the first speaker.”¹²⁴ This language of “capping” is problematic, since it can easily imply that each party is looking to outdo and best the other. “Capping” has been used in this way in Gordon Williams’ discussion of Horace 3.9, who, drawing a connection with Catullus, writes that there is a competitive element “[residing] in the requirement that the second singer should follow the form and subject-matter of the first but ‘cap’ him each time.”¹²⁵ Hans Peter Syndikus also picks up on a similar trend, here drawing an explicit comparison between Horace 3.9 and c. 45: “Das Gedicht ist keine realistische Dialogszene, sondern wie Horaz c. 3,9 ein kunstvoll stilisiertes Rollengedicht In den jeweils einleitenden Versen schildert der Dichter die Liebessituation, in der dem dann sprechenden Partner die aktive Rolle zufällt.”¹²⁶ These two accounts, I think, could not be clearer in their intention. Syndikus and Williams’ use of “capping” indicates a continuous attempt to reassert the individual over the other and maintain a clear distinction between the *aktive und passive Rolle*. Syndikus’ choice to emphasize *Rollengedicht* (monologue) over *Dialog* also points towards the same conclusion: that both Septimius and Acme are merely speaking for their own benefit and without any

¹²⁴ Burgess, “Catullus c. 50,” 580.

¹²⁵ Gordon Williams, *The Third Book of Horace’s Odes* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1969), 75. Williams’ input I find especially relevant, considering the prominence of his teacher, C.J. Fordyce, in Catullan scholarship.

¹²⁶ *Catull: Eine Interpretation (Erster Teil, Die Kleinen Gedichte [1-60])* (Wissenschaft Buchgesellschaft: Darmstadt, 1984), 236.

concern for the other. But this language is irresponsible to the text and overlooks too much.

For example, notice here how each claim in c. 45 explicitly highlights how essential both Acme and Septimius are in each other's lives. Without Acme, Septimius is lost in a foreign land, a meal for a lion, while Acme, without Septimius, is unable to sufficiently to serve her lord. He quite literally is the life (*mea vita*)¹²⁷ that sustains her, the fire that moves her, while she is his sustenance and home. The language of intoxication in the middle of the poem supports this as well, as both lovers are modified by adjectives of drunkenness, he by *ebrios* and she by *purpureo*. These words not only refer to the wine they have drunk, however, but also to how entwined the two lovers are with each other. The participles in question at these lines (*reflectens* and *suaviata*) move us even further away from the readings put forward by Williams and Syndikus, since they imply both a movement towards each other (Acme turns back to Septimius, not away from him when she begins speaking) and a movement away from the loaded sexual language that permeated masculine sexual activity in chapter two. Kissing, unlike *irrumo*, does not associate itself so readily with violence and subordination, but rather points toward a mutual activity between two consenting parties.

Additionally, the love that Septimius lauds so highly is not *amare*, but *perire*, which can also mean "to pass away," or "perish." Therefore, in contrast with Williams and Syndikus, Septimius in loving Acme is giving up his masculine claim to isolation and independence, and allowing himself to "be lost" or "pass away" out of himself and into

¹²⁷ Williams sees a connection between *mea vita* and *meus animus*, my soul, "the only element of man eligible to achieve immortality" (*Horace's Odes*, 76).

another; he steps out of comfort and stability and allows himself to be vulnerable and exposed to another.¹²⁸ This idea gains a real footing in c. 45 at line 20, which features the *amant amantur*. Nowhere else in Catullus, as far as I can tell, are two verbs connected in this fashion without any conjunction or punctuation¹²⁹ and the force of this along with the pairing of active and passive presents a strong argument against the language of “capping” (at least according to Williams’ definition). This love does *not* set up a sharp distinction between the active and the passive, but rather continually confuses the two.¹³⁰ And yet, it is precisely what produced so much anxiety for Catullus in c. 8, Sappho in Sappho 1 and Theocritus in Id. 11, that we discover here, only no longer do the characters struggle against it. Instead of carving out his (her) own identity either by abandoning Acme (Septimius) or by dominating her (him), Septimius (Acme) wholeheartedly gives into his (her) erotic experience. Friendship—and not violence—marks them as individuals, constantly defining and redefining themselves in relation to themselves and one another.¹³¹

Our line of argumentation here leads to an alternative way of understanding how Burgess uses the concept of “capping” in his essay. Opposed to language that belongs to a zero-sum game, it instead points toward something far more productive. Each lover’s address looks not to outdo, but to elevate the other’s, so that both individuals come to a

¹²⁸ This picks up on a trend that we noticed briefly in Catullus’ marriage poems. However, there we only observed *puellae* being removed from the *complexu matris* either unwillingly or with unfortunate consequences.

¹²⁹ It is also quite rare in the Latin canon. Cf. Cic. *Cat.* 2.10; Phaedr. 2.2.2; Tac. *Germ.* 38; and Tac. *An.* 6.35.

¹³⁰ This is what I have hoped to convey with my translation of “they (are) love(d).”

¹³¹ This picks up on Gow’s concerns regarding Id. XI. Just as the Cyclops continues to sing, despite after supposedly being cured, so too do Septimius and Acme continue to circle in their erotic game. The identities that they cherish are not stagnant, but fluid, since their relationship to the other can always change. Anything else would move too close back to the masculine dichotomies from which we have tried to distance ourselves.

better understanding of themselves through their exchange. Acme is hardly left behind in Septimius' speech, but rather her importance in his life is magnified. In response, Acme shows Septimius how important *he* is and does *not* silence or subordinate him. Neither "wins" through exclusion, but rather through mutual celebration. Neither strives for masculine "hyper-activity," but instead together they flourish through their recognition of what I have been trying to establish as intransitive desire. Who these lovers are is not identified in isolation, subordination, or consumption, but in recognizing the importance of the other's recognition. Desire, as a common human experience, is no longer what drives the lovers mad, but precisely that which allows them to truly explore their own identity. Each "capping" necessarily looks forward to being "capped" itself, so that neither lover is ever prioritized over the other.

Similar erotic experiences can be found elsewhere in Catullus' poetry, such as c. 7, which features a very helpful grammatical ambiguity:

*Quaeris, quot mihi basiationes
tuae, Lesbia, sint satis superque.
quam magnus numerus Libyssae harenae
lasarpiciferis iacet Cyrenis
oraclum Iovis inter aestuosi
et Batti veteris sacrum sepulcrum;
aut quam sidera multa, cum tacet nox,
furtivos hominum vident amores:
tam te basia multa basiare
vesano satis et super Catullo est,
quae nec pernumerare curiosi
possint nec mala fascinare lingua.*

You ask, Lesbia, how many of your kisses
Would be enough and more for me.

As great as the number of Libyan sand
 In Assafoetida-bearing Cyreni, that lies
 Between the oracle of fiery Jove
 And the sacred tomb of ancient Battus;
 Or as many as the stars, which, when the night is silent,
 Gaze upon the furtive loves of men:
 For it is enough and more for mad Catullus
 To (be) kiss(ed) (by) you (with) so many kisses,
 that neither can the curious count them,
 Nor an evil tongue bewitch them.

The Latin in lines 9 and 10 has received almost no critical attention, but is extraordinarily important to our argument. Although line 10 is clear (“it is enough and more for mad Catullus”), grammatical commentaries cannot agree on how to understand line 9. The teacher of Williams, C.J. Fordyce observes that “*basiare* is here constructed with two accusatives,” and admits that *te* could be “taken as the subject of *basiare* and the whole phrase as subject of *satis est*,” but suggests that is “an awkward and unlikely construction.”¹³² These comments result in the following translation: “it is enough and more for mad Catullus to kiss you so many kisses.” E.T. Merrill, however, offers the opposite opinion: “*te*: subject, not object of *basiare*,”¹³³ leaving us with the indirect statement, “it is enough and more for mad Catullus that *you* kiss *him* so many kisses.” This is clearly problematic grammatically, but there are problems thematically as well. Kenneth Quinn in his commentary is intrigued by the *vesano*, noting that it is an “unexpectedly strong word [that] momentarily cuts through the persiflage,” and goes on

¹³² Fordyce, *Catullus*, 109-110. Robinson Ellis agrees with Fordyce: “**te**, objective accusative ... **basiare** will then be constructed with two accusatives” (*A Commentary on Catullus* [Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1898], 25).

¹³³ E.T. Merrill, *Catullus*, 17.

to argue that “*Catullo*, not *mihi*—a detached judgement.”¹³⁴ The grammar and Quinn’s observations go hand-in-hand. The madness he identified in *vesano* and the shift from first person to third are mirrored in the protean lines 9 and 10. Subject becomes object and vice-versa, which in turn produces what Syndikus calls “aufgestauten Spannung,”¹³⁵ pent-up tension, which he believes is looking for a “*Lösung*.” Therefore, what was previously a fairly innocent love poem finds itself at the forefront of our discussion of erotic identity. With every utterance, lines 9 and 10 turn the lover into the loved, the *vir* into the *femina*, and just as equally the opposite. There is no way to express the Latin that prioritizes one over the other, as both sides of our maligned masculine binaries constantly fold back into one another.

Daniel Seldon picks up on this power of grammatical ambiguities in Catullus, writing, albeit about c. 40,¹³⁶ that “as the grammar polarizes meaning into antithetical extremes, the alternatives are so disposed as to resist the possibility of mediation: they cannot be related as literal to figurative; one neither cancels nor subordinates the other, nor can their difference be exceeded or dialecticized in any way.”¹³⁷ His suggestion here is extremely helpful in understanding what occurs in c. 7, since Seldon does not want to say that one reading is correct—both Fordyce and Merrill are wrong so long as they refuse to acknowledge the validity of the other’s position. Instead, both readings are held together through the potentiality of the Latin language. Just as we saw playing out in c.

¹³⁴ *Catullus: The Poems* (London: St. Martin’s Press, 1973), 115. The experience of love is actively fragmenting Catullus between the first and third person.

¹³⁵ Syndikus, *Catull: Eine Interpretation*, 104.

¹³⁶ This comes up in Seldon’s effort to determine whether the poem is panegyric or invective. Cf. Daniel Seldon, “*Caveat Lector*: Catullus and the Rhetoric of Performance,” *Innovations of Antiquity*, eds. Ralph J. Hexter and Daniel L. Seldon (New York: Routledge, 1992), 464-5.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 467.

45, here too neither reading trumps the other, so that the lines exist *grammatically* as Septimius and Acme do *erotically*.¹³⁸

Seldon, however, does not reach the same conclusion regarding fragmentation, and, like almost every other scholar, seems to lament our inability to resolve this tension. “To the extent,” he writes “that this dissolution is a fundamental product of the text, it leaves us with a series of lacunae which [we] can readily recover, but lack the power to repair.”¹³⁹ Although he has clearly pointed out the place of ambiguity—or in his words, dissolution—in Catullus’ poetry, nevertheless, at least in this moment, he himself is troubled by our inability to close these gaps and uncover a clear and distinct meaning in the text. However, as I have tried to show above, it is not simply the case that erotic frenzy is a problem that we lack the tools to “repair.” The solution, as I have pointed out again and again, is not the resolution of tension, but rather a proper recognition of the place that tension has in the individual’s identity (the grammar in c. 7 is unresolvable—he is both kissing and being kissed). In other words, the “lacunae” do not represent a lack, but rather the constitutive importance of others and community in each person’s identity.¹⁴⁰ To seek to “repair” them would be no different than to return to the language of domination in which Mamurra and Caesar take refuge; to “close the gap” is only to reaffirm insulated and self-sufficient identity at the expense of community. However, of

¹³⁸ Nor would this have been some error or oversight in Catullus’ writing. Indeed, Seldon highlights the fact that “Romans learned to read poetry by carefully observing all features of grammar, syntax, and figuration before proceeding to interpretation” (*ibid.*, 491), with the result that this indissoluble grammatical tension would not have been hidden or tacit, but at the forefront of their initial encounter with the text.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 476.

¹⁴⁰ Micaela Janan expresses something similar, I think, when she writes that the subject is “conceived, not as a substance (stone), but as a site through which social, cultural, institutional and unconscious forces move. The model is the grammatical subject, governed from outside itself by rules of grammar and syntax making up a linguistic structure—rules that grant the ‘I’ its meaning” (*When the Lamp is Shattered: Desire and Narrative in Catullus* [Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1994], x).

course, once the importance of this gap is recognized, it no longer needs to be repaired, since the anxiety surrounding its closure only ever arose from human insecurity. Once the individuals have reconciled themselves to their own fragmentation then “the gap” ceases to be a problem, but that does not mean it ceases to exist.¹⁴¹

Perhaps now we are properly equipped to return at last to c. 50 and understand what is at stake in Catullus’ longing for a response from his friend, Licinius. It is not simply an alternative to a more virile lifestyle, but in fact a thorough attempt to truly work through his desire. Instead of denying the object of his love, Catullus constantly reaffirms his importance in his life, not merely as something other-than-Catullus, but as something as important to his own existence as *cibus* and *somnus*. Unlike Mamurra, then, Catullus is explicitly aware of the impact his friend is having on his actions, and as a result in the end he does not blindly follow after his passions, but actively explores his fragmentation, regardless of how passive it renders him. This distinction is important. Whereas we previously argued (in chapter two) that Mamurra and Caesar were ultimately rendering themselves more and more passive through their hyper-masculine activity, and thus moving themselves farther and farther away from the status of *integer*, Catullus achieves the opposite in c. 50. Indeed, by allowing himself to submit to Licinius—and thus ostensibly become a *pathicus*—Catullus *actively* engages with a constitutive part of his own identity—his friend—and therefore moves closer and closer to being *integer*. He is able to actually account for and recognize the central role his fragmentation and no longer finds himself in competition with himself, but rather in a state of play.

¹⁴¹ After all, Amor is always there in between the two lovers, constantly approving and reapproving of their relationship.

Importantly, the end goal in c. 50 is not the domination of Licinius, but simply *ut tecum loquerer, simulque ut essem*, conversation and company.¹⁴²

This goal—this coexistence—which I have traced as the core of this erotic identity, is nicely captured in Catullus’ use of *ludere*, or play, at the beginning of the c. 50. It marks the celebration and elevation of the other which in turn celebrates and elevates the self, so that the structure that gave our *vir*i so much trouble is itself affirmed again and again as a central and important moment in the individual’s identity. To return to the language of chapter two, a person’s performance relies on the audience’s reception. (Recall that a *vir* who was not received as such was hardly considered a *vir* at all.) As opposed to the masculine approach, which strove so desperately to silence this audience and deny it its ability to have its own performance, Catullus’ advocacy for *ludere* and *amare* wholly recognizes the audience’s role in constantly confirming his identity, while in turn allowing himself to receive that audience’s own performance. This is the constant circling of c. 7 and c. 45, that becomes complete, whole, or *integer*, not by stopping, insulating, or galvanizing itself, but by continually losing itself in the other. That is, just like the *vir*’s, the erotic desire we have discovered in this chapter is insatiable. However, what distinguishes the two is how Catullus preserves his insatiability as the site which allows him and his audience to truly recognize the importance of one another. Just as the grammar of c. 7 can never have a definitive reading, so too can the lover and the loved never stop playing.

¹⁴² Note Guy Lee’s translation of *thereddens* of line 6: “Capping” (*Catullus: The Complete Poems* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989], 49). Yet this is certainly not the ‘capping’ of Williams and Syndikus, but precisely what we have argued for: not subordination, but a completion that itself looks to be completed (and perhaps is not very different from the Sapphic τέλεσον).

Chapter 5—Revolution

The discussion of eroticism in chapter two makes clear that there should be a sharp distinction between the postures of irrumation and domination that inform the Roman concept of masculinity, and the play and celebration we found in fragmentation.

However, although we uncovered a potential solution to the problem of identity with which *viri* are so obsessed, it does seem to be far removed from the very public displays of masculinity we saw in chapter two. Catullus is constantly exploring and confirming his identity through *private* relationships and able to hide from the violence that is happening in the city and the empire beyond. But is this really satisfactory? Does Catullus simply escape from the irrumation and domination that is not only occurring in, but being perpetuated by, the state of which he is a citizen? The answer, I think, is a definite no. Certain poems we have already examined, such as c. 115, present not just a danger to Catullus as an individual, but to the entirety of the known world. Perpetually hungry, Mamurra will not be satisfied until he thrusts his way into every last corner of Europe, Africa, and the Near-East, to say nothing of private homes in Rome. The effects of his conquest are undeniable; the world suffers at his eternally greedy *membra*. To make matters worse, the famous c. 11 casts doubt on whether or not it is even possible to hide from public masculinity in his private relationships. Lesbia, who in chapter two was such a perfect erotic counterpart, here acts as vilely and violently as Catullus' hated male rivals. But what does this mean? Is Catullus doomed to be a victim of sexual violence? Is there any room for him to practice his poetic project on the outskirts of the empire, outside of Rome's reach?

Again, the answer is no. As we will see in c. 11, Rome is simply too powerful to outrun. No matter where Catullus flees, Caesar and Rome's armies will not be far behind. Instead, I propose that the purpose of c. 11, along with its counterpart c. 29, is not to depict the futility of Catullus' lyric lifestyle, but rather to turn his audience's attention back to the very Roman machinations of which he is so suspicious. That is, Rome does not exist as something he must escape, but something he must save. By exploring and challenging the logic and privilege of masculinity and violence, perhaps Catullus is able to recover some of Rome's lost voices, whether they be the victims of sexual violence, or the foreign casualties of military expansion. *Viri*, regardless of their ambitions to be otherwise, are necessarily dependent on those they repress, and by creating space for these silenced voices to re-enter the human community, Catullus is not only countering the toxic culture we have repeatedly identified, but also offering that culture the very thing that can free it from itself. In other words, Catullus' poetry does not hide or run away from Rome, but rather consistently critiques and reorients it towards the central place of fragmentation in the human community. This is Catullus' revolution: not a violent or reactionary escape from the empire, but a concerted and powerful critique of the very institutions by which it legitimizes its violent behaviour.

5.1 *ilia rumpens*—The Foul Adulteress and the Impersonal Imperator

Previously, in Chapter Two, we had at least hinted that there is a strong parallel between masculine behaviour and Roman imperial activity.¹⁴³ Just as the *vir* imposes himself upon his audience, irrumates his opponents, and seeks to have more and outdo everyone else,

¹⁴³ Cf. note 63 in chapter two.

so too does Roman expansion (as we will see in c. 11 and 29) overpower, ravish, and silence the peoples and cultures with which it comes into contact. Take, for example, c. 29, which explicitly links Mamurra's sexual violence with Caesar's imperial conquests:

*Quis hoc potest videre, quis potest pati,
nisi impudicus et vorax et aleo,
Mamurram habere quod Comata Gallia
habebat uncti et ultima Britannia?
cinaede Romule haec videbis et feres?
et ille nunc superbus et superfluens
perambulabit omnium cubilia,
ut albulus columbus aut Adoneus?
cinaede Romule, haec videbis et feres?
es impudicus et vorax et aleo.
eone nomine, imperator unice,
fuisti in ultima occidentis insula,
ut ista vestra diffututa mentula
ducenties comesset aut trecenties?
quid est alid sinistra liberalitas?
parum expatratum an parum elluatum est?
paterna prima lancinata sunt bona,
secunda praeda Pontica, inde tertia
Hibera, quam scit amnis aurifer Tagus:
nunc Galliae timetur et Britanniae.
quid hunc malum fovetis? aut quid hic potest
nisi uncta devorare patrimonia?
eone nomine urbis opulentissime
socer generumque, perdidistis omnia?*

Who can see, who can bear the fact,
Unless shameless, and ravenous and a gambler,
That Mamurra has whatever of luxury longhaired Gaul
Used to have and Britain, so far away?
You Romulan faggot, do you see and bear these things?
And will that man, insolent and excessive, now
Ramble through the beds of all,
As a white dove or an Adoneus?

You Romulan faggot, do you see and bear these things?
 You are shameless, ravenous, a gambler!
 Was it in his name, o Generalissimo,
 That you were in that island of the west, so far away,
 So that cock of yours—fucked to exhaustion—
 might revel in two or three thousand?
 Was is this, if not perverted generosity?
 Hasn't he wasted—no, squandered!—enough?
 First his paternal inheritance was exhausted,
 Then his Pontic spoils, then Iberian!
 (Which the gold-bearing river Tagus knows all too well.)
 Now the Gauls and Britons are full of dread.
 Why do you endorse this malicious man? What can this man do
 Other than devour his anointed estate?
 Was it in his name that you, the most opulent
 Father and son-in-law in the city, squandered everything?

The language here is unambiguous. The *diffututa* of line 13, taken with the hyperbolic numbers that follow,¹⁴⁴ is hardly the result of consensual activity, just as the *devorare* of line 22 is hardly sustainable. As we have already argued, Mamurra is solely concerned about *himself*, *his* pleasure, and *his* wealth, and often achieves this at the expense of others.¹⁴⁵ His sexual victims here are too numerous to have an identity—they are simply one more in a seemingly infinite collection—and are quickly consumed just as carelessly as his inheritance is devoured. There is no care in these actions, only an appetite that eradicates its victims and leaves behind only husks.¹⁴⁶ The wealth of Pontus cannot satisfy his desire, nor can that of Spain, as both are drained to appease this excessive *vir*. Gaul and Britain, the next in Mamurra's long line of victims, truly have cause to *timere*.

¹⁴⁴ “*Ducenti* as well as *trecenti* ... is used of indefinitely large number[s]” (E.T. Merrill, 54).

¹⁴⁵ After all, his wealth requires others to be impoverished. What he has now once belonged to someone else. Cf. c.29.3-4.

¹⁴⁶ Think back to Polyxena as the *victima* of c. 64.

Catullus clearly sees a connection between Mamurra's activity and Caesar's campaigns, and even questions whether the victories were solely to expand Mentula's masculine domain. The repetition of *eone nomine* constantly returns our attention to this fact, and refuses to separate these two moments (the military and the masculine). That is, imperialism in c. 29 seems necessarily to contain within it a Mamurrian, masculine desire. Rome's desire to conquer, just like the *vir*'s desire to dominate, needs to consume constantly, and will endlessly look elsewhere for more to call its own. Konstan deepens this argument, suggesting that "Catullus goes so far as to suggest that the greed and straitened circumstances of lecherous spendthrifts like Mamurra may be the chief motive for the military campaigns undertaken by Caesar."¹⁴⁷ If this is the case, then conquest and masculinity are not simply two sides of the same coin. Rather, conquest only exists to feed and provide for the ravenous *vir*. More than for resources or glory, Rome conquers in an effort to appease the masculine desire to dominate.

It should be no surprise, then, that *ultima Britannia* plays such an important role in the list of Caesar's conquests. In order to conquer the far-off island, Mary Beard tells us, Caesar crossed "over what Romans called 'the Ocean,' the waterway that separated the known world from the great unknown, to set foot briefly on the remote ... island It was a symbolic victory that resonated loudly back home."¹⁴⁸ This campaign is the ultimate achievement for Rome, since it marks a complete domination over the world. Even that island which lies beyond the limits of the known world, untouched by imperial hands, has now fallen. Caesar, and by extension the *vir*, has asserted his power by

¹⁴⁷ David Konstan, "Self, Sex, and Empire in Catullus: The Construction of a Decentered Identity," 7.

¹⁴⁸ Mary Beard, *SPQR: A History of Ancient Rome* (New York: Liveright Publishing Company, 2015), 284.

conquering that which was previously unconquerable. Geography itself, for all its mountain ranges, rivers, and oceans, is hardly a match for the rampaging Caesar. Opposed by nothing, he, like Mamurra in c. 115, has managed to touch all corners of the earth.

Yet, as we saw in chapter two, there is a sense that Caesar's behaviour is unsustainable. Instead of ending with a great collection, Catullus concludes the poem with the statement *perdidistis omnia*: you have squandered everything. Even though the *imperator unice* has been able to touch that which no Roman hand has previously touched and in doing so demonstrated his mastery over nature itself, his state of affairs is evanescent. He quite literally has lost everything in the very moment that gains it. Just as masculine desire destroys the very things that guarantee its success, so too do Caesar's conquests subordinate, ravage, and ruin the very things that confirm his victories. Although the Roman world might be his to command, in his success he has rendered that world hollow and silent. All the riches he has accrued have been squandered; the *vir* and his hunger have yet to be appeased. After all, in Catullus' eyes, for all his triumphs, Caesar remains a *cinaede Romule*—passive and subordinate. The *imperator unice* should be taken as nothing more than ironic.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ Phyllis R. Young disagrees with taking the *cinaede Romule* as referring to Caesar: "To be sure, Catullus does apply the term *cinaedus* to Caesar (c. 57), but the same adjective is also applied to Thallus (c. 25) and no one can identify that character with the *imperator*. Moreover, even if Catullus elsewhere *did* equate Caesar with Romulus, the sudden shift in c. 29 from *cinaede Romule* to *imperator unice* is highly unusual for him. Therefore, it is my belief that *cinaede Romule* here refers, not to Julius Caesar, but instead to the average Roman citizen, who looked on in complacency while such thieves as Mamurra flourished" ("Catullus 29," in *The Classical Journal*, Vol. 64, No. 7 [April, 1969]: 327). This argument takes the *imperator unice* too seriously. If my reading is right, and Caesar despite his power is left with an empty victory, then his title can clearly be taken ironically. Just as in c. 112, where Catullus calls Naso *multus homo*, but then goes on to describe him as anything but, here too the poet is capable of using masculine language to show precisely what his invective victim has failed to achieve.

C. 29 is not alone in treating the connection between masculine and military aggression. Indeed, nowhere is this theme more explicit than in the famous and often-treated c. 11. Often understood to mark the conclusion of Catullus' affair with Lesbia, the poem has garnered a great deal of attention from the perspective of his romantic relationship.¹⁵⁰ However, following David Konstan, Marilyn B. Skinner, Ellen Greene, and Michael Putnam, I want to focus on the poem's engagement with masculinity and Caesar's thrust into Western Europe:

*Furi et Aureli, comites Catulli,
Sive in extremos penetrabit Indos
Litus ut longe resonante Eoa
Tunditur unda*

*Sive in Hyrcanos Arabasve molles,
Seu Sacas sagittiferosve Parthos,
Sive quae septemgeminus colorat
Aequora Nilus,*

*Sive trans altas gradietur Alpes
Caesaris visens monimenta magni,
Gallicum Rhenum, horribile aequor, ultimi-
mosque Britannos,*

*Omnia haec, quaecumque feret voluntas
Caelitum, temptare simul parati,
Pauca nuntiate meae puellae
Non bona dicta.*

*Cum suis vivat valeatque moechis
Quos simul complexa tenet trecentos,*

¹⁵⁰ Cf. David Mulroy, "An Interpretation of Catullus 11," in *The Classical World*, Vol. 71, No. 4 (December 1977-January 1978): 237-247; Robinson Ellis, *A Commentary on Catullus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1889), 41; Quinn, *An Interpretation of Catullus* (HarperCollins: 1972); C.J. Fordyce, *Catullus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 124; E.T. Merrill, *Catullus* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 25.

*Nullum amans vere, sed identidem omnium
Ilia rumpens;*

*Nec meum respectet, ut ante, amorem,
Qui illius culpa cecidit velut prati
Ultimi flos, praetereunte postquam
Tactus aratro est.*

Furius and Aurelius, friends of Catullus,
Whether he will penetrate far-off Indian lands,
Where the distant shore is struck by the resounding
Eastern surf,

Or Lydian or soft Arab lands,
Whether Scythia or arrow-bearing Parthia,
Or the water, which colours the
Seven-mouthed Nile,

Or if he should cross the high Alps,
Gazing upon the monuments of great Caesar,
The Gallic Rhine, the terrible sea, and Britain,
So far away,

All these things, whatever the will of heaven
Should bring, ready as you are to attempt together,
Relate to my girl in a few words,
Less than kind.

May she live and flourish with her adulterers,
Whom she holds, having embraced three hundred at once,
Loving none truly, but again and again bursting
The groins of all;

She should not look for my love, as before,
Which by her fault has fallen away just like
The flower in a far off meadow after it has been touched
By the passing plough.

The poem is immediately problematic. One of only two *carmina Catulli* written in the Sapphic metre, it presents an image of love that can hardly be seen as a Lesbian complement. Indeed, Lesbia is more masculine than feminine in this poem and, mirroring Mamurra, claims her own erotic victims, none of whom are given any identity other than simply being a part of her collection. We also have to wonder whether the recasting of Furius and Aurelius, the invective victims of c. 16, as his *comes* is genuine; “Why,” we must ask with David Mulroy, “has Catullus introduced a list of foreign nations ... into a poem dealing with a domestic matter?”¹⁵¹ That is, what do Catullus’ *non bona dicta* have to do with Rome’s conquests?

The answer, I contend, follows from our discussion of Roman masculinity. The first three strophes of c. 11 clearly outline recent Roman military conquests at the hands of Caesar, Gabinius, and Crassus,¹⁵² while at the same time paralleling these imperial achievements with typical masculine behaviour. To this end, Marilyn Skinner writes that the catalogue of these exploits “enhance[s] the mood of anticipation,” which culminates in “the pronounced erotic overtones of certain words—the governing verb *penetrabit*, the supercilious *molles*, even the onomatopoeic *tunditur*—summon up corollary impressions of sexual conquest.”¹⁵³ A clear counterpart to c. 29, c. 11 further bolsters the connection between sexual and military expansionism: Rome is active—*penetrabit*—while its victims are passive—*molles*. Of course, as we saw in c. 29, the victims of the *penetrabit* are devoured and ravaged by the military campaign and as passive are rendered mute in

¹⁵¹ David Mulroy, “An Interpretation of Catullus 11,” in *The Classical World*, Vol. 71, No. 4 (Dec., 1977-Jan., 1978): 238.

¹⁵² Cf. Marilyn B. Skinner, “The Dynamics of Catullan Obscenity: cc. 37, 58 and 11,” *Syllecta Classica*, Vol. 3 (1992): 9.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

the face of Roman power. The accomplishment of Caesar's invasion of Britain also returns in force, too large to be constrained by borders, either geographical or metrical. The *ulti|mos Britannos*, with an elision crossing two lines, serves to demonstrate just how far away Britain lies and how monumental Caesar's victory truly is. Just as the imperator must reach farther than should otherwise be possible, here too, although Britain lies just slightly out of reach, Caesar's greedy hand is able to cross the line break and claim its prey. Evidently, again we come across the Roman and masculine effort to assert their prowess and power by overcoming the natural limitations of their known world.¹⁵⁴

The defeat and destruction of nature is also present in the *monimenta magnis caesaris*. Couched in between the *altas Alpes*, the *gallicum Rhenum*, and *ultimos Britannos*, it is difficult not to take Caesar's monuments as referring directly to these three caesarian accomplishments.¹⁵⁵ As markers of his military, and therefore masculine, victories, these monuments do double duty. First of all, and most obviously, they commemorate his accomplishments.¹⁵⁶ Secondly, however, they point towards the violence and exploitation that occurs for the sake of the empire: "The tone of [the] opening stanzas is very Roman," Michael Putnam writes, "a rich clustering of realms to be explored, named, and conquered by a Caesar..., of energies to be channeled, of tribes and places to be turned into *monimenta*—'warnings' to the memory of an imposing

¹⁵⁴ Although it is possible in Sapphic metre to elide the 3rd and 4th lines of a strophe, it does not occur anywhere else in c. 11, nor even a single time in c. 51, the other poem written in Sapphics. This makes the elision stand out and summons a grammatical English channel between Europe and the far-off island.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Merrill, *Catullus*, 26: "**monimenta**: the places mentioned are themselves the reminders of Caesar's greatness."

¹⁵⁶ And argument Mary Beard leans towards in *SPQR*, 284.

presence.”¹⁵⁷ Putnam’s argument here is both powerful and instructive. Aptly pointing out that *monimenta* can just as equally mean “warning,” he suggests that the original inhabitants and locals are transformed through their conquest and turned into something new—something Roman. What they were before has been lost and replaced with a new name; “geography’s variety is reduced to the status of token of public achievement.”¹⁵⁸ Their new identity is irrevocably tied to Caesar, and thus to violence, but, like Caesar’s world, this is nothing more than subordinate, “vainglorious, [and] impersonal.”¹⁵⁹ Ultimately, as monuments they serve to commemorate nothing more than the hollow realm of Caesar we saw in c. 29. Monuments, yes, but monuments of squander and waste.

But we must be careful. Just because Caesar’s realm has turned out to be monotonous and insufficient, Catullus still presents a great deal of danger in his catalogue of the emperor’s military achievements. In particular it brings to mind our earlier list of heroic achievements in c. 64, which produced less than savoury results. Achilles’ *virtus* renders everything other than itself silent; Caesar’s martial prowess reduces its victims into one homogenous mass. The fact that his masculine desire remains unsatisfied is hardly a victory at all, so long as it continues to suppress everything with which it comes into contact. The danger deepens when we consider the final strophe of c. 11 and its *praetereunte aratro*. David Konstan argues that these lines bear a close resemblance to the account of Achilles in c. 64, and especially the following:

namque velut densas praecerpens messor aristas

¹⁵⁷ Michael C.J. Putnam, “Catullus 11: The Ironies of Integrity,” in *Oxford Readings in Classical Studies: Catullus*, ed. Julia Haig Gaisser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 88.

¹⁵⁸ Putnam, 90: “The poem is ... dominated by might Caesar whose capsulated performance depersonalizes, turning rivers and peoples into *monimenta*, symbols of the dictator’s special feats of boldness.”

¹⁵⁹ Ellen Greene, *Erotics of Domination* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998), 33.

*sole sub ardenti flaventia demetit arva,
Troiuenum infesto prosternet corpora ferro.*

For just as the reaper who prematurely gathering the thick wheat,
Harvests the golden fields under the burning sun,
He will destroy the bodies of the Trojan sons with his dangerous blade.
(c. 64. 353-355)

He writes that “the comparison of Achilles in battle to a reaper harvesting grain makes of the slaughter a mechanical thing, heedless of the value of life,” and goes on to say that “the simile of the reaper serves also to heighten the sense of horror in war by means of the traditional contrast with pastoral life.”¹⁶⁰ We have already seen what happens to the *troiuenum corpora* in the wake of Achilles’ violence, and the similarity that Konstan identifies only heightens the tension of c. 11.¹⁶¹ Even the peace and calm of the *ultimi prati* is interrupted, as what was once serene and secluded is forced to become yet another “impersonal” testament to masculine aggression. Therefore, while the monuments might fall short of commemorating the glory of Caesar’s domination over the world, they nevertheless give us a window into the consequences of Caesar’s activity.

This final strophe can also act as a resource to help us understand how the invective verses against Lesbia fit into c. 11. As we have already acknowledged, c. 11 contains a curious shift in allegiances, featuring Lesbia as Catullus’ enemy and Furius and Aurelius as his friends. The simplest way to understand this shift is, as Frederickmeyer argues, as an indication that “with this reversal of relationships, Catullus

¹⁶⁰ David Konstan, *Catullus’ Indictment of Rome*, 47-48.

¹⁶¹ Cf. Ellen Green: “The earlier epic expanse of places with its indications of imperialistic power is subsumed in the image of the inhuman plow destroying any living thing in its path” (Greene, *The Erotics of Domination*, 34).

has turned around his life.”¹⁶² Yet, this can hardly be the case given our earlier observations regarding the price of Caesar’s *monimenta*. Catullus is clearly repulsed by the effects of Roman expansion and is, at the very least, suspicious of the conquest that Furius and Aurelius embody. It would certainly be difficult to claim that Catullus has, as Fredericksmeyer wants to say, aligned himself with a more “Roman” perspective and adopted what Ellen Greene calls “a life of adventure;”¹⁶³ Furius and Aurelius, as those characters implicated in the Roman expansion across Europe, are hardly Catullus’ *comites*.

Fredericksmeyer’s commentary *is* correct, however, in identifying the poet’s suspicion of his former lover. Catullus’ description of her behaviour is less than complimentary and borders dangerously on masculine behaviour. Although the language is almost tender (*complexa*, for example, calls to mind the intimacy of c. 45, or even the *complexu matris* of c. 61 and 64), each of Lesbia’s lovers is rendered as mute and lifeless as Caesar’s *monimenta* (after all, she *nullum amat vere*). The tenets of masculine domination return here as well in the *omnium ilia rumpens*. Lesbia’s affairs solely benefit her, as her “lovers” are destroyed while she endlessly (*identidem*) tries to satisfy her rapacious desires.¹⁶⁴ This is troubling, especially in contrast to other accounts of Lesbia in Catullus’ corpus, in particular how we saw her presented in c. 7. No longer an ally of

¹⁶² Ernst Fredericksmeyer, “Method and Interpretation: Catullus 11,” *Helios* 20 (1993), 94. Ellen Greene interprets this sentence as follows: “Catullus *now* embraces the masculine world of adventure and action and repudiates his former life of private passion—associated with passive, feminine indulgence” (Greene, *The Erotics of Domination*, 26).

¹⁶³ Cf. note 20.

¹⁶⁴ “One of the effects of the grotesque image of Lesbia embracing three hundred adulterers at one time is to distance her from the human realities of separation and loss” (Greene, *The Erotics of Domination*, 32).

our poet's lyric and erotic project, here she is firmly cast as an ally in Caesar and Mamurra's project of sexual and imperial domination.¹⁶⁵

But what is the purpose of this shift in allegiance? Greene helpfully suggests that the "speaker's attitudes toward a life of conquest and 'manly exertion' (exhibited by Lesbia in the poem no less than Caesar) points up a continuity of desire which governs *both public and private domains*—in Rome's imperial conquests and in Lesbia's erotic conquests."¹⁶⁶ That is, Lesbia's behaviour marks an invasion of masculine aggression into the privacy of Catullus' private, erotic affairs. So long as she is not a consenting partner in Catullus' poetic project, and refuses to participate in his activity of mutual recognition, even his private life, which previously had given him reprieve from masculine aggression, can do nothing to stymie the reach of sexual aggression and expansion. Indeed, Marilyn Skinner says as much when she writes that "the sublimity of his passion and the eloquence of his poetry prove inferior to more worldly advantages—the wealth and rank given top priority in the hierarchical Roman caste system Lesbia, the faithless noblewoman, becomes an avatar of ingrained aristocratic corruption."¹⁶⁷ Privacy and private relationships are not enough in the face of the sheer power and influence at his enemies' disposal, and so long as he is a Roman and stays within Rome he will be unable to compete. In other words, as a Roman, our poet is condemned to confront the violence of Roman masculinity. Therefore, regardless of what we unearthed in chapter two, according to Skinner and Greene there is simply no place for Catullus'

¹⁶⁵ As Greene writes: the opposition between the *virtus* of the speaker's male comrades (including Caesar) and the sordidness of Lesbia is unambiguous" (Greene, *The Erotics of Domination*, 27).

¹⁶⁶ Greene, *The Erotics of Domination*, 27; my emphasis.

¹⁶⁷ Skinner, *Catullan Obscenity*, 10.

“Erotic Self” to exist, since every corner of Rome has been touched with corruption of one sort or another. C. 11, then, is more than one poem among many critiquing the practices of Roman *viri*. It is rather an extraordinarily troublesome poem that seems to question the very possibility of his poetic project in the first place. Catullus will never be able to escape from Roman men and violence hidden away in his villa in the arms of his lover. No matter how secluded he becomes, he will never be able to escape that which he most abhors. Mamurra and Caesar, as he so plainly states in c. 29, have ruined everything.

Scholarship surrounding c. 11 is often marked with this sense of marginalization and despair. Greene suggests “that the speaker locates himself on the margins of culture,”¹⁶⁸ while Skinner argues that “the speaker’s farewell to [Lesbia] in c. 11 is likewise a farewell to the entire political order,”¹⁶⁹ Indeed, even David Mulroy concludes his otherwise suspect interpretation with the worry that the poem leaves Catullus “stranded and unmanned.”¹⁷⁰ Whether he is leaving behind Roman culture voluntarily, as Skinner contends, or has been forced out, as Greene and Mulroy claim, Catullus appears to not longer have a voice within the Roman community and needs to find a new space where he can actualize the poetic project we argued for in chapter two. Unable to hide within Rome any longer, Catullus must find a new place outside of the empire’s clutches.

No commentator makes the necessity of this escape and desire for a new space more explicit than in David Konstan:

¹⁶⁸ Greene, *The Erotics of Domination*, 28.

¹⁶⁹ Skinner, *Catullan Obscenity*, 10.

¹⁷⁰ Mulroy, “An Interpretation of Catullus 11,” 247.

In this center of empire, Catullus represents himself as having no place. The final image, in which Catullus compares Lesbia to a plough and himself to a flower at the edge of the field, expresses his sense of marginality, of pertaining to the periphery rather than the core. He has not arrived at this fringe position in the company of men like Furius and Aurelius, that is, as part of the dominant and decadent Roman nobility who have incited and directed Rome's wars and have marched fiercely to the limits of the world, collapsing the distinction between *urbs* and *orbis*. Rather, he simply exists at the boundary, like the populations defeated by Rome's legions.¹⁷¹

Nowhere in the catalogue of Caesar's conquests does Catullus feel at home, as he is constantly pushed farther and farther out while Rome expands and *vir*i take more and more victims. Catullus' own victimization is captured in Konstan's final line, which places our poet in the same position as the people and places that Caesar has mutated into his hollow *monimenta*. He risks being silenced by this aggression, and thus desperately needs to create a space free of this violence to avoid becoming perpetually irrumated. In response to this, pressed out here, on the edge of existence, in some far-flung corner of the earth, Konstan sees a glimmer of hope for "a space, or rather a non-space ... for something different."¹⁷² That is, according to Konstan, Catullus, whether pushed out by Roman expansionism or having set out on his own, is looking for somewhere free of Roman and sexual imperialism where he can actively practice his lyric lifestyle without persecution.

This argument is especially compelling in light of our earlier discussion of fragmentation. Since Catullus abstains from the insulated and *integer* self that the *vir* seeks so desperately, it would make sense that he actualize his new poetic identity outside of Rome's urban comforts. Marginalized, and therefore forced to contend with everything

¹⁷¹ Konstan, "Self, Sex, and Empire in Catullus: The Construction of a Decentered Identity," 14.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 15.

that stands outside of him, Catullus is in a position actively to discover and explore his own finitude and dependence on others. The constitutive relationships we highlighted in chapter two are brought to the forefront, as he constantly looks for somewhere to call his own. The idea of a “non-space” is also quite in line with Catullus’ solution to the anxiety surrounding fragmentation. Just as this was solved by a change of perspective and the recognition that fragmentation was not some problem to be overcome, but rather a fact of human existence, so too does the idea of “non-space” help to solve Catullus’ spatial alienation. Instead of simply returning to a new concrete “home”—a defined space that he considers his own—perhaps the poet can confirm his geographical alienation as solution, instead of a problem. That is, by allowing himself to be marginalized and by refusing to insulate himself with a “home,” Catullus continues to be in a relationship to everything that he is not, in a way that recognizes the importance of this relationship, rather than obliterating everything that stands against him. In this way he can clearly define himself as opposed to Roman expansionism and move away from an identity obsessed with possession and power toward the fluid self he constantly affirms in his erotic poetry. In other words, perhaps Catullus finds himself at home precisely in the experience of being homeless.

But, again, we need to be careful. Regardless of whether or not this “non-space” is a possibility, Konstan seems too confident that Catullus will be able to escape the might of Rome somewhere on the fringe of the empire. According to Konstan’s argument, he will be able to find somewhere untouched by and protected from Caesar’s conquests. However, this seems unlikely. Konstan himself makes the long reach of Rome’s arm explicit, commenting that there is no longer a clear distinction between *urbs*

and *orbis*—the city and the world—so that wherever he goes, Rome will always already be there as well. Catullus’ poetry also suggests this, with the constant repetition of certain adjectives. Britain, the poet tells us, is *ultimos*—hyperbolically far away—as is the field Catullus finds himself in in the final strophe—*ultimi prati*. Of course, we have already recognized the magnitude of Caesar’s conquest of Britannia, and how it overcomes the known borders of Rome’s world, so the conflation of Catullus’ final stand and the impossibility of Britain’s capture paints a rather unhopeful image. If Britain’s hyperbolic adjective is unable to protect it from Roman expansion, then how are we going to claim that Catullus’ *prati* is any safer? Indeed, we are explicitly told that he is *praetereunte postquam tactus aratro est*. Regardless of how far he manages to run, the plow—the impersonal, ravenous Roman onslaught—will still find him.

Putnam is also skeptical of the idea that Catullus can simply avoid or hide from Rome. “Seclusion,” he tells us, “is no defense against vulgarity,” and the final strophe is nothing more than “a prayer for escape from the inescapable,”¹⁷³ and even Konstan admits that masculine “violence has found and destroyed” Catullus.¹⁷⁴ Roman masculinity, it seems, cannot be avoided. But this does not mean that we should not take arguments against Rome seriously. Greene, for example, is apt to point out that c. 11 “implies a dismissal of the traditional Roman values embodied in the manly exploits of both Caesar and the speaker’s ‘devoted,’ ‘faithful’ companions.”¹⁷⁵ What I mean to say, in other words, is that Catullus’ opposition to Rome does *not* necessitate a departure from Rome. Yes, Catullus finds himself marginalized and disenfranchised, but given Rome’s

¹⁷³ Putnam, *Catullus 11*, 98-99.

¹⁷⁴ Konstan, “Self, Sex, and Empire in Catullus: The Construction of a Decentered Identity,” 14.

¹⁷⁵ Greene, *The Erotics of Domination*, 27.

hyperbolic reach, running will never give him the space he desires to practice his poetic project. Just as fragmentation and anxiety were not to be overcome but rather embraced, so too must he contend against Rome and take its threat both to his own identity and to the known world seriously. That is, Catullus certainly dismisses Roman values, but in doing so looks to correct them and recover Rome from vainglorious and possession-obsessed masculinity. I believe c. 11 tells us that Catullus has no choice but to challenge *viri* and Roman expansion at home. His poetic project, then, is more than a simple validation of his own private erotic lifestyle. It is a sincere poetic attempt at political and social revolution; an earnest effort to recover the voices that been silenced by Caesar and Mamurra's military and social irrumation.

5.2 *urbis* and *orbs*—A Reconsideration of the City¹⁷⁶

But what is this revolution? As we have noted time and time again in Catullus' poetry, *viri* are everywhere and Roman expansion is inescapable, which puts the Roman poet in a tricky situation. Unable to hide from Caesar or take refuge with Lebsia, Catullus has no other choice than to constantly engage with, and try to subvert, the masculine culture of domination in which he finds himself. He must try to revisit sites of meaning within the empire and in doing so try to realign them with his more "lyric" understanding of life in a community. In this way, Catullus can take moments of oppression, such as the *monimenta magnis caesaris*, which previously silenced whole nations, and, more than just highlighting how hollow and wasteful they are, actually recover the voices that have been stolen. As Konstan has observed, Rome collapses the distinction between *urbis* and

¹⁷⁶ Cf. appendix 1 for a detailed discussion of Sappho 44 and how it has influenced the second half of this chapter.

orbis—between the city and the world. But while the city in Konstan’s essay is a negative site of domination and oppression, it is also what brings people together in community and the venue that allows voices to be heard, performances to be received, and fragmentation to be discovered. Perhaps, then, we do not need to take Konstan’s proclamation with quite so much dread. Perhaps the transformation from *orbis* to *urbs*, at the same time as rendering Rome’s victims silent, is exactly what is needed to restore those voices.

Indeed, just as the *vir* in chapter two was ironically engaged in a constitutive and essential relationship with his audience, so too here is Rome, in the very act of conquest, simultaneously laying the groundwork for Catullus’ communal and erotic relationships. By being brought into the *urbs*, the victims of military and sexual aggression are simultaneously being brought into the community. Masculine aggression is transformed from that which silences to which includes, as it introduces new audiences and new performances to the political and public life of the *urbs*. The violent silencing of the *monimenta* can be undone, Mamurra’s sexual victims can be given a name, and Catullus, once marginalized, can once again have a place within his own community. All that is required is a change of perspective.

Such a shift hinges on our earlier discussion regarding Catullus’ relationship to “home” and “homelessness.” The city, from a masculine, caesarian perspective, is centred around exclusion. For example, even in chapter two we noticed that c. 33 explicitly linked sexual violence with exile, so that the public space—the *urbs*—was the venue where those in power silenced and irrumated everyone who displeased or disagreed with them. Accordingly, such communities are toxic, and result in Caesar’s

detestable *monimenta*, as walls are raised and a clear distinction between us and them—the irrumators and the irrumated—is established. This masculine city is clearly in line with the “home” of which we argued Catullus is suspicious. It is something to be possessed and something upon which the *vir* leans heavily in bolstering his own identity. In other words, it is tied up with the thought that *this* is mine, and therefore *not* yours. Caesar can proudly claim that he is a Roman, while his victims most assuredly are not.

I want to argue that this is where a clear shift occurs in Catullus’ poetry. “Home” or the city, instead of being marked by possession and exclusion, is the very site where fragmentation can be affirmed and the “poetic obligation” we identified in chapter two can be fulfilled. The city is the coming together of individuals—the joyous union of masculine and feminine, active and passive—and meeting place of the privileged masculine binaries of chapter two; it is the audience that receives the individual’s performance. In this way, Catullus’ “home” is not defined by the act of exclusion—of denying a place for the very people who affirm his identity—but in the generous giving of himself that we saw in poems such as c. 45 and 50. In the same way that Acme and Septimius are endlessly involved in their circular game and the grammar of c. 7 is eternally unresolvable, so too does Catullus’ city constantly demand that its citizens become “homeless,” insofar as they forsake their claim to possession and insulation. The poetic project requires individuals to find themselves at ease in anxiety; the “lyric city” challenges its residents to feel comfortable leaving behind the security of a “home,” but nevertheless feel “at home” in moments of open celebration with their fellow citizens. In the very moment they lose the stability of their possessions, they gain the affirmation of

their community; “homeless,” according to the until-now-privileged masculine framework, they are now truly at home.

Nothing is better positioned for realizing this shift than poetry itself. We already observed all the way back in chapter two how central a role Roman poetry played in confirming Roman assumptions about the priority and privilege of masculinity.

Reconsider Allison Keith’s observation that exposure to poetry

[shaped] the elite Roman male’s understanding of the world he was socially destined to govern, and it naturalised and legitimated social hierarchies of class, nationality and gender. In this way, the ancient Roman educational system helps to provide the Roman elite with a practical justification of its own privilege.¹⁷⁷

The study of poetry plays an essential role in the education of a young *vir* and internalizes the importance of domination and segregation in the masculine lifestyle. Being active, as we have learned, is the only acceptable comportment, while being passive is simply socially unacceptable. Furthermore, poetry teaches would-be-*viri* of “the ‘natural’ hierarchy of gender,” which explains “that the weakness characteristic of the female sex is innate and essential rather than socially constructed and regulated.”¹⁷⁸ This means poetry is at the core of the assumption that a social miscue does not simply reflect a poor performance, but rather an existential insufficiency in a man, and exposes the performer as unequivocally less than masculine. Only a woman, according to this line of thinking, would be capable of such a lackluster feat, and the potential man is banished to the passive side of the masculine binaries.

¹⁷⁷ Allison Keith, *Engendering Rome: Women in Latin Epic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 35.

¹⁷⁸ Keith, *Engendering Rome*, 33.

Poetry, it would seem, is a nefarious and essential aspect of the Roman masculine game.

Yet, this heightened position in the masculine system makes poetry the perfect site for Catullus' subversive machinations, for it presents a challenge analogous to that of Roman expansion. Just as running from Roman expansion is ultimately a losing battle, so too is poetry too omnipresent to simply be ignored. Instead of developing a new form of literary expression, Catullus writes in and expresses himself in the very form that presents him with such challenges. By exploring and redeveloping such central themes to Roman masculine life, he is able to introduce a new, lyric dimension¹⁷⁹ into the masculine discussion and slowly begin to unravel the perceived strength and wholeness of the *vir*'s insulated and violent lifestyle.¹⁸⁰ Unable to outrun the ever-expanding and ever-devouring maw of masculinity, Catullus makes his stand not on the fringes of society or on some marginalized border, but in the heart of Roman society. Exposing the faults, failures, and foibles of Rome's dominant culture, our poet is in the perfect position to begin realigning these misdirected desires and correcting institutionalized misunderstandings regarding human nature, identity, and community.

This reading of c. 11, of course, is venturing into rather uncharted depths. While many scholars have noted Catullus' desire to escape from masculinity's grip on society, these readings almost universally revolve around the poet's departure from the Roman community. If c. 11 is telling us anything, however, it is precisely the impossibility of this longed-for departure. The Roman legions will always be able to find Catullus, no matter how well he hides and no matter how far he runs. Caesar is as tenacious as Mamurra is

¹⁷⁹ As discussed in chapter four.

¹⁸⁰ As discussed in chapter two.

ravenous, and so long as there remains something to be conquered they will endlessly push and expand the borders of the city. Even the remotest field—the *ultimi prati*—is well within their reach. Left with no other choice than being irrumated, Catullus and his poetry remain at the heart of this dangerous system and actively criticize its inner machinations. His invective poetry clearly mocks the insufficiency of masculine behaviour and the unsustainable nature of the *vir*'s quest to gain total independence and security, while his love poetry opens up an alternative solution to the problems he has been identifying among his fellow men. Through his poetry, he is able reorient our perspectives on even the most violent of Caesar's and Mamurra's crimes, so that voices which were once suppressed can once again enter the conversation by having the act of their irrumation clearly addressed. By focussing on the moments of oppression in masculine behaviour rather than the moments of supposed glory, Catullus can uncover what has been silenced and create space for what has otherwise been marginalized to begin re-entering the human community.

This is Catullus' revolution: not an upheaval from outside the system, or even its destruction, but rather a careful and attentive reorganization from the inside. Not once are *viri* experiencing a false sensation of desire—fragmentation, as have argued, is an essential part of Catullus' lyric experience—but nevertheless they are approaching their anxiety in the wrong way. For, as we have seen, their quests to become *integer* and whole render them more and more dependent on the very things they see themselves as overcoming. Catullus, identifying this problem, offers a solution that does nothing to change the fundamental sensation that our manly men are experiencing, but rather asks them to reorient themselves towards that experience itself. In this way, should his readers

follow Catullus' proposal, then everything remains the same; it is only our perspective that changes.

In an insightful paper, W.R. Johnson argues that Catullus is “invariably concerned with some shift in identity, the place and moment in which a new experience with eros, a new awareness of sexual power, brings with it a new sense of selfhood.”¹⁸¹ Yet, in light of our observations, we must note how this “new selfhood” is not really new at all. Rather, it is the affirmation of what has always been present: fragmentation. Because fragmentation requires the individual to carefully tend to others—their audience—it denies the masculine ambition to dominate and suppress voices, since those very voices play an integral role in the recognition and fulfillment of the self. While a *vir* might assume that to be *integer* is to be completely self-contained and independent, Catullus shows us that nothing is farther from the truth. Only by accepting the importance of the other in ones' own performance—by recognizing the importance of being recognized—can it become possible to reconcile oneself with everything that stands against one. Catullus addresses the Roman *vir*, telling him that only when the voices that confirm his performance are no longer silenced, but able to engage with and respond to what he puts forward can anxiety truly be resolved. Only when Caesar and Mamurra reorient their relation to the world from something to be conquered, to something to be shared, will they ever be able to satisfy their otherwise insatiable hunger.

¹⁸¹ W.R. Johnson, “Neoteric Poetics,” in *A Companion to Catullus*, ed. Marilyn B. Skinner (Malden: Blackwell, 2007), 184.

Chapter 6—Conclusion

Our argument, initially mired and entangled in the *carmina*'s violent culture of *viri*, has moved through numerous positions regarding Catullus' engagement with and confrontation of toxic masculinity. At the point of conclusion, it should be clear that his poetry's use of aggressive virile language does not immediately implicate the poet in perpetuating the tenets of oppression and domination that we have gradually identified in the preceding chapters. On the contrary, this virile language helps the poet in his sincere commitment to explore and critique a system of social cues and norms that produce extraordinarily complex and negative results in the Roman community.

In chapter two, we traced out the “game of Roman masculinity,” along with all of its ramifications. As a result, we found that the desire for independence and self-sufficiency is not only highly unsustainable, but also very harmful and dangerous. Take, for example, our discussion regarding what I termed “hyper-activity.” This practice of complete social domination heavily prioritizes the individual, and at the same time radically excludes others from participating in any form of communal activity. More than simply not listening to, or providing a venue for, those who are not him, the *vir*'s activity is so great that there simply no room left for anyone else to participate. He fills (or, at least, tries to fill) every space he occupies, so that, if he has been successful, there is no opportunity for anyone else to even begin speaking, let alone say anything meaningful. As we saw in our comparison with Plato's *Republic*, the ramifications of this behavior are extreme: the *vir* can only be successful in his efforts to be independent when no relationship whatsoever remains—not his friends, lovers, or even his family; he is completely insulated from outside influence, and entirely independent.

Yet, despite his efforts, we discovered that the isolated “manly man” could not be farther removed from his objective. Indeed, the *vir* needs someone to confirm him as such, and without a capable and responsive audience, his efforts have ultimately been in vain, and his activity has caused a great deal of violence and harm with very little gain. Ironically, his efforts to overcome everyone else for the sake of himself have produced the opposite result: the more he privileges himself and the resources he accrues, the farther and farther away his longed-for stability and independence become. As Catullus cheekily points out in c. 112, this thesis’ titular poem, even though Naso is a *multus homo*—a big man—in the end he is nothing more than a *pathicus*—a bitch. The more the *vir* looks to embody the masculine, penetrative side of the binaries we outlined in chapter two, and the more he sees himself as being and having *multus*, the more dependent, passive, and pathetic he ultimately becomes.

After a Hegelian interlude in chapter three, in which I attempt to theorize the problem of the self-contradictory *vir*, chapter four¹⁸² offers some clues to the answer to the problem of the virile lifestyle as it begins to explore possible avenues for containing and overcoming the threat that such a lifestyle poses to the community. After examining the inadequacy of marriage to subdue the *vir*, we realized that the fundamental relationship between actor and audience, which was the *vir*’s undoing, continues to play an important role in Catullus’ erotic poetry. Now understood as “fragmentation,” this relationship occupies a central position in what I have proposed to be the poet’s solution to his masculine dilemma. Whereas the *vir* saw any dependence or relation of any kind as something to be aggressively rooted out and overcome, Catullus’ poetry presents

¹⁸² Along with the Hegelian discussion in chapter three.

dependency, or “fragmentation,” as a fundamental and universal human experience. The solution to the anxiety this fragmentation so clearly produces for our *vir*, and often for Catullus’ own poetic persona, is not to simply eliminate the problem, but rather, as our brief foray into Sappho and Theocritus helped show, to embrace it. In this way the anxiety that drives Catullus’ poetic figures is not really anxiety at all; the only thing producing such tension their—and by extension the audience’s—limited perspective.

As soon as this correction and reorientation is made, the persona of Catullus and his other erotic characters begin to take on a whole new meaning. Whether Acme and Septimius in c. 45, or Catullus and Lesbia in c. 7, these poems reflect a wholehearted reception and celebration of the other’s importance in the life of the individual. However, dependency—the *vir*’s nightmare—does *not* entail subordination to another, since all parties involved are constantly differing from one another. Dependency is not some passive fetish that finds pleasure in being dominated by Rome’s virile culture. Instead, it marks an equal relationship, in which no party is in a position of power over another, and everyone involved is better able to come terms with and confirm their own identity. The audience can respond to and confirm the performance of an actor, who in turn becomes the audience himself in receiving his former audience’s response. This circular pattern does not indicate some deficiency that anticipates redress, but is itself complete in its incompleteness. In this way, the solution to the *vir*’s ravenous appetite to dominate and subordinate is simple, since the masculine experience of the world was never incorrect, it was simply misunderstood. The *vir* understands his ravenous appetite as a means to collecting and irrumating everything that stands in his way (and thus eventually satisfy

his desire), when, in reality, it is that very appetite that offers him access to his experience as a member of the human community. It is the end in itself.

Chapter five is an effort to locate where this transformation takes place and ask the question: is Catullan poetry actually a correction of virile culture, or is it some kind of escape from that culture altogether? Roman masculinity is directly compared to the empire's military expansion, which appears to be hindered by neither manmade nor natural boundaries. It is ravenous, oppressive, and without concern for those it conquers. Clearly, given what we have already uncovered, Catullus' poetry is uncomfortable with this development and there has been a large movement in his scholarship to distance it as much as possible from these happenings. Whether he has been forced out by his masculine rivals, or has elected to leave willingly, according to the likes of Greene, Skinner, and Konstan, Catullus must find someplace beyond the clutches of Rome to cultivate and practice his poetic project. But this is not a satisfactory conclusion: Rome is too powerful to simply outrun and Caesar's legions are too crafty to hide from. In other words, Catullus cannot simply ignore the culture that he finds so troubling; no matter how hard he tries he will eventually have to confront it.

Such a confrontation marks the true power of Catullus' poetic criticism. He does not seek to outdo or overcome masculinity, but rather reorient it. Hence, his poetry remains committed to engaging with and exploring that which he opposes. By examining the roots and trends of the *vir*'s behaviour and masquerading as such a manly man, Catullus is in a position not only to highlight and expose the insufficiencies of this activity, but also to begin correcting the misunderstandings that led to this condition. This reorientation is what I want to term Catullus' "revolution." It is not a turning away, but a

turning towards; it is a sincere attempt to recover the positive and communal out of something that has so desperately striven to achieve the opposite. Nothing about the masculine experience of the world has ever had its impetus in an unusual or necessarily dangerous origin. Rather, as we have tried to argue again and again, it emerges from a fundamental misunderstanding regarding the relationship between the actor and the audience. Catullus, through a variety of tactics, whether the direct criticism in c. 29, or the exhibition of oppression in c. 11, is constantly trying to reorient the *vir* towards a more fundamental, communal understanding of his human condition. If this correction is successful, then Catullus is not maintaining the masculine paradigm of self-promotion at the expense of others, but, just like Acme and Septimius in chapter two, simultaneously elevating both himself and those whom he is critiquing. Rome, as that which we saw as the negative vehicle of masculine domination, can be turned back to what it truly is: a city. It is the coming together of individuals; it is discourse; it is community.

As I began working on this thesis, I was struck by how the discourse surrounding “proper” masculine behaviour in the 21st century is remarkably similar to the virile culture I have argued Catullus is opposing. Should one have the constitution, the endless archives from the ironically named puerarchy.com¹⁸³ or “manly” discussions on /r/theredpill¹⁸⁴ give countless accounts of a tremendous desire to outdo other men and sexually consume as many partners as possible. Consider the following discussion about walking slowly:

Next time you’re walking in a busy street and you’re dodging people, I want you to follow this tip: Walk slowly and with focus. You’ll begin to notice that all these

¹⁸³ A website that describes itself as “masculinity unplugged.”

¹⁸⁴ An online community with 160 000 active members.

people rushing past will begin to avoid you in order to get past. They're all moving on your terms instead of you moving on their terms. This will make you feel very powerful. I did with a girl on my arm and just felt so freaking badass.¹⁸⁵

The similarity is uncanny. In an almost perfect reflection of “the game of Roman masculinity,” this discussion ultimately subscribes to an extraordinarily stark binary. Either you in control or are yourself controlled; either you are getting bumped in a crowd, or you are doing the bumping. *You* set the terms for the crowd’s behaviour, not the other way around; you are thus independent of their influence. (Although again we can detect an inevitable co-dependency of actor and audience that the virile fail to recognize. Without the other against whom you feel powerful and without whom there would be no one to recognize how “badass” you are, the whole exercise starts to become ridiculous.)

These discussions can also be extremely disturbing. The highest rated post in the subreddits history (which is not a discussion of a news item or a general meta-discussion of their online community) is simply titled: “Getting Ready to Black-knight a High School Girl.” The story, in which a high school teacher takes great pleasure in filing charges against one of his students who was insubordinate in class, concludes with this simple sentence: now the “students (in my class, at least) better understand that I am not to be fucked with.”¹⁸⁶ Again, more than anything, this a discussion about power and the priority of the self, both of which are achieved at the expense of another. The author does not find pleasure in cooperation or discussion, but in domination. Only once *his* voice can

¹⁸⁵ “A Simple Tip: Walk and Talk Slowly, last modified July 11, 2016.

https://www.reddit.com/r/TheRedPill/comments/4s9yf9/a_simple_tip_walk_and_talk_slowly/

¹⁸⁶ “Getting Ready to Black-Knight a Highschool Girl,” last modified April 17, 2014.

https://www.reddit.com/r/TheRedPill/comments/20owa2/getting_ready_to_blackknight_a_high_school_girl/

control the room and decide who can and cannot be heard, will he be satisfied. Only once his mere presence is enough to contestedly control the room will his masculine project be complete.

Of course, these are not necessarily mainstream opinions, but niche views held by a single community. Even still, these “tenets” of masculinity that are held by a few can still have major consequences for the community in general. Take Amanda Marcott’s article on Salon.com, for example, entitled “Overcompensation Nation: It’s Time to Admit that Toxic Masculinity Drives Gun Violence.” As she expresses in her article, ideas that might seem innocuous enough on misogynistic message board have begun to shape the real world and threaten the safety and lives of these men’s fellow citizens, whether it simply be someone walking around with a handgun in a holster, or a mass shooting: in each instance there is an effort on behalf of the man to “shore up” his weaknesses and powerfully impose himself on everyone else he comes across. In some cases this will socially irrumate everyone the man comes across, leaving them uncomfortable and feeling unsafe, but in other, more extreme circumstances, just as the tyrant had to eliminate every obstacle to his independence, so too does this masculine behaviour tragically lead to injury and death.

Yet this abhorant activity is ultimately predicated on the same faulty understanding of the relationship between actor and audience that has continually emerged in our discussion of Catullus’ protagonists in ancient Rome. Indeed, Marcott repeatedly insists that all that “toxic masculinity” truly is, is a *vir*’s dangerous attempt to go about “proving [his] manhood and warding off anything considered feminine or

emasculating.”¹⁸⁷ But this implies that he is dependent on how the public perceives his actions, since otherwise there would be no need for such a violent self-assertion. The comparison between these two masculine moments (the Roman and the Modern) becomes even more compelling considering her description of the impetus to put on a virile performance: “Toxic masculinity,” she writes “aspires to toughness but is, in fact, an ideology of living in fear: The fear of ever seeming soft, tender, weak, or somehow less than manly. This insecurity is perhaps the most stalwart defining feature of toxic masculinity.”¹⁸⁸ The language she uses to describe masculine aversion to feminine characteristics is almost identical to what Craig Williams used in *Roman Homosexuality*. Being soft, tender, passive, or admitting of influence is unacceptable, and the division between these adjectives and their manly alternatives leaves little grey area. According to “toxic” masculine logic, you either are a man, or you are not; there is no middle ground.

But again, notice how Marcott’s language places a lot of emphasis on *appearing* to be a certain way. Whether or not a *vir* actually *existentially* embodies these qualities is not at issue, merely whether or not everybody thinks he does. Of course, this raises the same problem we found in chapter two: the *vir* needs to look towards the audience to be confirmed as a *vir*, but in his very performance of being a *vir* he denies that audience the ability to confirm him. The Roman *vir* achieved this through sexual violence and threats; one species of modern *vir* does so with the aid of his firearm, regardless of whether or not he fires it.

¹⁸⁷ Amanda Marcott, “Overcompensation Nation: It’s Time to Admit that Toxic Masculinity Drives Gun Violence,” last modified June 13, 2016.

http://www.salon.com/2016/06/13/overcompensation_nation_its_time_to_admit_that_toxic_masculinity_drives_gun_violence/

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

Marcott concludes her article by asserting that we “need to get past the politics of tough guy posturing and move toward a more thoughtful, inclusive society. One with more dancing and less waving guns around talking about what a manly man you imagine yourself to be.”¹⁸⁹ This resonates strongly with what I have been arguing over the course of this thesis: the solution to the problems that “toxic masculinity” imposes upon the community is not found in the overthrowing or subordination of *virī*, but the recognition of their desire to be recognized. Only by actively tending to the insecurity that Marcott has so adamantly pinpointed, discovering its root, and proposing an alternative, can any effort to move beyond the danger and violence so implicit in virile culture. This does not demand a shift in relationships, social standing, or location, but rather a sincere and empathetic effort to bring into reality the reciprocal community that lies at the heart of human identity. Only once the *vir* turns his attention from repressing the very system that confirms him can his anxiety be resolved. Nothing has changed, but it is just a little different.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

Appendix 1—A Sapphic Solution

My argument in chapter five has been strongly influenced by Sappho’s largest surviving poem, fragment 44. Although her 44th poem’s authorship has been contested,¹⁹⁰ and it contains “inappropriate” reference to Greek epic,¹⁹¹ it has strong parallels with the Catullan project we have begun to uncover and offers strong insights into how subversive poetry, and how powerful revolution, can be:

Κυπρο [....]ας.
κάρυξ ἦλθε θέ[ων]ελε[...]θεις
Ἰδαος τάδε κα[ῖνα] φ[όρ]ε ις τάχως ἄγγελος·
[]
τάς τ' ἄλλας Ἀσίας τ[ό]δε γᾶν κλέος ἄφθιτον·
Ἔκτωρ καὶ συνέταιρ[ο]ι ἄγοισ' ἐλικώπιδα
Θήβας ἐξ ἰέρας Πλακίας τ' ἀπ' ἀ[ι]ν[ν]άω
ἄβραν Ἀνδρομάχαν ἐνὶ ναῦσιν ἐπ' ἄλμυρον
πόντον· πόλλα δ' [ἐλί]γματα χρύσια κᾶμματα
πορφύρα] καταύτ[με]να, ποίκιλ' ἀθύρματα,
ἀργύρα τ' ἀνάρ[ι]θμα [ποτή]ρ[ια] κἀλέφαις.
ὥς εἶπ'· ὀτραλέως δ' ἀνόρουσε πάτ[η]ρ φίλος·
φάμα δ' ἦλθε κατὰ πτόλιν εὐρύχορον φίλοις.
αὐτικ' Ἰλιάδαι σατῖναι[ς] ὑπ' ἐντρόχοις
ἄγον αιμιόνοις, ἐπ[έ]βαινε δὲ παῖς ὄχλος
γυναικῶν τ' ἄμα παρθενικά[ν] τ' ἀπ[αλ]οσφύρων,
χῶρις δ' αὖ Περάμοιο θυγ[α]τρεις [ἐπή]σαν,
ἵππ[οις] δ' ἄνδρες ὑπαγον ὑπ' ἀρ[ματα] κάμπυλα
π[άντ]ες ἠίθεοι, μεγάλω[σ]τι δ[
δ[ί]φοις]· ἀνίοχοι φ[.....]·[
π[]ξαλο[ν
[probably six or seven lines missing]
ἵ]κελοι θεοί[ς
[] ἄγνον ἀολ[λες
ὄρματα][]νον ἐς Ἴλιο[ν
αὐλος δ' ἀδυ[μ]έλη[ς..]τ' ὄνεμίγνυ[το
καὶ ψ[ό]φο[ς κ]ροτάλ[ων λιγέ]ως δ' ἄρα πάρ[θ]ενοι
ἄειδον μέλος ἄγν[ον ἴκα]νε δ' ἐς αἶθ[ερα
ἄχω θεσπεσία γέλος [

¹⁹⁰ Cf. U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, “Neue lesbische Lyrik (Oxyrhynchos-Papyri X),” *Neue Jahrbücher für das klassische Altertum* 33 (1914): 225-247.

¹⁹¹ Lawrence P. Schrenk, “Sappho Frag. 44 and the ‘Iliad,’” in *Hermes*, 122 (1994), 144.

πάνται δ' ἦς κατ' ὄδοις
κράτηρες φιάλαί τ' ὀ[·]υεδε[·]·εακ[·]·[
μύρρα καὶ κασία λίβανός τ' ὄνεμείχυντο
γυναῖκες δ' ἐλέλυσσον ὅσαι προγενέστερα[ι
πάντες δ' ἄνδρες ἐπ]ήρατον ἴαχον ὄρθιον
Πάον' ὄνκαλέοντες ἐκάβωλον εὐλύραν,
ὔμνην δ' Ἔκτορα κ' Ἀνδρομάχαν θεοεικέλο[ις.

Cypro-...

a herald came...

the swift messenger Idaius

'...

and of the rest of Asia... undying fame.

Hector and his companions are bringing a bright-eyed girl -
graceful Andromache - over the salt sea in their boats,
from holy Thebe and Placia which always flows.

Many are her golden coils,

purple scented halters, and elaborate playthings.

Countless are her cups of silver and ivory.'

So he spoke, and her dear father leapt up deftly. To friends
the rumor circulated through the city's broad streets.

At once, the men of Ilion yoked mules to their sure-wheeled
vans, and the whole mob

of omen and [?]-ankled maidens climbed aboard.

Priam's daughters separately [?]...

and the men yoked their horses to chariots

[all of them?] young bachelors, greatly...

charioteers...

...

[*probably six or seven lines missing*]

alike to the gods....

altogether [?]...holy...

they set out... to Troy...

and a sweet-sounding aulos... and [cithara?] blended,

and the din of castanets, too. And the maidens articulately

sang a holy tune, and up into the ether went

a divine echo...

and everywhere in the streets was...

bowls and saucers...

the aromas of myrrh and frankincense intermingled.

The women cried out - as many of the as were elder,

and all the men loosed a lovely, high-pitched cry of Paean

calling upon the far-shooter with a talent for the lyre,

and they hymned godlike Hector and Andromache.¹⁹²

Immediately obvious, and perhaps most troublesome, are the explicit allusions to Homer that darken an otherwise festive account of a wedding. For example, it has been argued that “the epithets used in invoking Paeon Apollo (ἐκάβωλον and εὐλύραν) make ironic reference to the Homeric Apollo, who deserts Hector prior to his death (X 212f.), and that Sappho’s use of θεοεικέλοις at the end of the poem alludes to Hector’s killer, Achilles.”¹⁹³ Even at their happiest, Schrenk argues, Andromache and Hector’s fate looms over them, and even as they become “godlike” through their union, their future sorrow nevertheless permeates the festivities.

In fact, Schrenk sees the entirety of Sappho 44 as a bizarre inversion of the events in *Iliad* 24, which he believes casts an even darker shadow over the poem. Consider his chart:

<u>Iliad Ω</u>	<u>Frag. 44</u>
Cassandra announces	Idaeus announces
The approach of the wagon (699-706)	The approach of the wagon (2-22)
Priam conveys the body of Hector (709)	Hector conveys Andromache (5-8)
Andromache and then Hecuba receive the corpse (710-712)	Priam receives Andromache (11)
The city receives the corpse (712)	The city receives Andromache (13f.)
Songs and lamentation of the funeral (713f.) (24f.) ¹⁹⁴	Songs and festivities of marriage

These stages mirror each other in their progression, but nevertheless do so in pairs of opposites. While the feminine Cassandra announces the approach of the wagon, we find the masculine Idaeus in Sappho. Priam conveys a dead, male body to the city, whereas

¹⁹² Text and translation taken from C. Michael Sampson, “A Reconstruction of Sappho 44 (P. OXY. X 1232 + P. OXY. XVII 2076),” in *Proceedings of the 27th International Conference of Papyrology* (2013).

¹⁹³ Schrenk, “Sappho Frag. 44,” 144.

¹⁹⁴ Schrenk, “Sappho Frag. 44,” 146.

Hector escorts a living woman. There are songs at the end of each poem, but one celebrates the future while the other mourns the past. Very definitively, then, “the epithet which most joyously celebrates their nuptials also forewarns their tragic demise.”¹⁹⁵ Every step they take towards their shared life is equally a step towards their sad fate and the fall of Troy. Additionally, Andromache’s arrival by boat is darkened by the clear allusion to Helen’s imminent arrival.

Schrenk sees the upshot of these observations as a commentary on marriage in general. “For Sappho,” he writes, “like love, marriage must involve both pleasure and pain” and “even the most auspicious marriage is bound to have darker consequences.”¹⁹⁶ Now, the idea that marriage in lyric poetry is more sinister than it initially appears is nothing new for us, for we have already seen just now nefarious the wedding ceremony can be in chapter two, and Schrenk’s argument appears to show us another example of the motif in Catullus’ Lesbian predecessor. The Homeric allusions add a depth to the poem and, according to him, beg the question of whether or not the wedding actually brings about anything positive. As was the case in c. 61, 62, and 64, we must ask if marriage merely perpetuates negativity, violence, and the suppression of women. Sappho 44, it would seem, takes its meaning from and is overshadowed by, the *Iliad*; marriage it would appear, is powerless in the face of war.

Michael Sampson, however, offers a much more positive reading of the relationship between Homer and Sappho. While he acknowledges that the poem “prefigures the events of the *Iliad*’s conclusion so as to make comparison with Homer

¹⁹⁵ Schrenk, “Sappho Frag. 44,” 149.

¹⁹⁶ Schrenk, “Sappho Frag. 44,” 150.

unavoidable,” Sampson also takes the marriage celebration seriously, insisting that “the treatment is nonetheless recognizably Sappho’s: the *Iliad* knows no scene of comparable jubilation beyond the shield of Achilles.”¹⁹⁷ For a poet who is so demonstrably concerned with love, the argument goes, it would be foolish not to take her accounts of love seriously. Although the backdrop of Troy’s impending doom is undeniable, perhaps Schrenk has given it too much agency in his reading of the poem. In fact, Sampson points out how Homer is no stranger to Sappho, and that she often comments on and recasts his epic characters.¹⁹⁸ Thus, we read, that Sappho 44 invokes “the *Iliad* so as to preempt it: before his death at Achilles’ hands can provide the climax for the *Iliad* and portend the destruction of Troy, Hector must first become both the husband and father on whom that city so relies.”¹⁹⁹ This flips Schrenk’s assumptions around, and insists that the meaning and power of Hector’s death can only arise out of the events in Sappho 44. That is, instead of the marriage only being important against the backdrop of what is to come, the fated violence and death only gain their significance against the backdrop of the love and community we find in Sappho’s poem.

Sampson’s argument gains even more traction considering the early change of emphasis from Hector at line 5 to Andromache, which continues for the next five lines. Just as she has clearly caught Idaeus’ attention, so too does she turn the reader away from the masculine prowess of her husband-to-be, toward the feminine world that is essentially

¹⁹⁷ C. Michael Sampson, “Sappho 44: Tory via Mytilene” (Presentation, Dalhousie Classics Department Seminar, Halifax, NS, March 19, 2015), 3.

¹⁹⁸ Take, for example, Sappho 1 and Sappho 16. The former deals with Aphrodite, and we have already commented on the reclaiming of the word *σύμμαχος*. In the same vein, Sappho 16 retells Helen’s departure from Sparta replaces a love for battle with the love of another. Cf. Ellen Greene, “Philosophical Reflections on Death and Aging,” in *The New Sappho on Old Age*, ed. Ellen Greene and Marilyn B. Skinner (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 147-161.

¹⁹⁹ Sampson, “Sappho 44,” 4-5; my emphasis.

overlooked in the *Iliad*.²⁰⁰ This redirection of our attention, especially in light of all the allusions that constantly seek to turn our thoughts back to Hector, is what Sampson wants to call “a new mythological *incipit*: the inversions of Homer constitute a peculiar form of ring composition—an attempt to reframe and rewrite the *Iliad*’s starting point,” which “calls to mind all the more directly the home, family and community from which he has been separated.”²⁰¹ As a new beginning, Sappho 44 reestablishes what is at stake in Hector’s death, allows us to bear witness to the foundation of the community he holds so dear in the *Iliad*, and infuses book 24 with new meaning and new power. Sampson does not deny Schrenk’s insistence that the poem is always pointing forward toward Hector’s death, but allows these allusions to further ground the importance of the marriage we are witnessing, instead of undermining the city’s joyous reception of Andromache. War, Sappho 44 wants to say, is always secondary. Without love, without community, without the feminine, we only have access to half of the Greek world. In order to understand the full ramifications of violence, we first must come to an understanding regarding love.²⁰²

What makes Sappho 44 such a compelling counterpart to what I have tried to uncover in Catullus’ poetry is the manner in which it approaches and subverts the violence and horror at the end of the *Iliad*. It does not try to find a “new space” or a “non-space” outside of masculinity’s reach to celebrate Andromache’s wedding, but

²⁰⁰ Cf. Schrenk, “Sappho Frag. 44,” 145: “In the Homeric context, the juxtaposition of the death and marriage of Hector emphasizes Andromache’s position as Hector’s wife and *her total subordination to him* introduced in *Iliad Z* Homer uses the scene to stress the dependence of Andromache on her husband (my emphasis).”

²⁰¹ Sampson, “Sappho 44,” 11.

²⁰² This hearkens back to the ekphrasis of Achilles’ shield in *Iliad* 18. The city does not only represent conflict and violence, but also peace and community. Just as the city-at-war and the city-at-peace are equal participants in Homer’s cosmological imagery, so too does Sappho demonstrate the central and equal role of peace and love in her account of the human community.

intentionally locates this joyous occasion right at the heart of the problem with which it seeks to contend. Sappho does not try to hide from Hector's death, but explicitly and repeatedly embraces his demise within her poem, along with all of the sadness that is heightened in its juxtaposition with the excitement at Andromache's arrival. In this way, Sappho is not escaping from the Homeric tradition, but exploring and challenging it on its own territory; she remains in an "old space," but nevertheless looks to use that space to give voices back to those who have been repressed and restore those who have been marginalized to their place within the human community.

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