

CLCS4010: Republican abuse: Cicero and Catullus

▪ “invective came easily to the Romans” (Nisbet). Abuse common: private life: e.g. hurling rude insults in wedding songs; e.g. Pompeii graffiti about sex such as the House of the Citharist (below a drawing of a man with a large nose)

1) “Amplicatus, I know that Icarus is buggering you. Salvius wrote this”

▪ Abuse commonplace in Roman public speech: see political abuse in lampoons and graffiti (see Richlin and Ruffell); *libertas* = “freedom” and “freedom of speech”

A) Gaius Valerius Catullus (b. Verona to equestrian-class family c. 85- d. c.54 BC); poems in various metres (e.g. lyric, elegiac, hexameter) on various themes (e.g. love; politics; invective). Many poems to “Lesbia” (often linked with Clodia Metelli, lady of Cicero’s *Pro Caelio*)

■ Rise of power in individuals. Events of the late Republic:
60 first triumvirate: Crassus; Julius Caesar; Pompey
49 civil war: Julius Caesar crosses Rubicon; Pompey goes East
48 Pharsalus (Julius Caesar defeats Pompey > becomes sole leader)
44 Julius Caesar murdered; Antony, as consul, controls Rome

■ Catullus’ political poems: attacking e.g. Pompey and Julius Caesar (poem 93: indifferent to Caesar)

2) “I have no very great desire to make myself agreeable to you, Caesar, nor to know whether your complexion is light or dark.” (Cat. 93; tr. Goold)

■ Context: tradition of political abuse; individuals not yet emperors; high social standing of Catullus

3) “Valerius Catullus had also libelled him in his verse about Mamurra, yet Caesar, while admitting that these were a permanent blot on his name, accepted Catullus’s apology and invited him to dinner that same afternoon, and never interrupted his friendship with Catullus’s father.” (Suetonius, *Jul.* 73; tr. Graves)

▪ Poems 57 and 29: faults at the top of the power chain. NB adult male who was passive homosexual partner (*pathicus*)= object of contempt. Mamurra = *pathicus* (but word next to Caesar)

4) “Well agreed are the abominable profligates, Mamurra the effeminate, and Caesar” (Cat. 57.1-2; tr. Goold) (“Pulcre conuenit improbis cinaedis, / Mamurrae *pathicoque* Caesarique.”)

5) “one from the city and one from Formiae” (Cat. 57.4; tr. Goold)

▪ blurring as poem 57 continues. Comment on system of power? Caesar should be apart from subordinates

6) “Like stains are deeply impressed on each, and will never be washed out. Diseased alike, very twins, both on one sofa, dilettante writers both, one as greedy in adultery as the other, rivals and partners in love.” (Cat. 57.3-9; tr. Goold)

7) “the ferocious slanders of 57 constitute a relatively objective criticism of a serious defect in the patronage system. Caesar, the commanding officer who would normally be expected to police his own functionaries, is tarred with the same brush as his henchman. Naturally he will use his considerable influence to protect his partner in crime.” (Skinner, 1979: 144)

▪ poem 29: Mamurra as parasite, profiting from service abroad. “Pansy Romulus” (Pompey) and “you one and only general” (Caesar) allowed it

8) “Who can look upon this, who can suffer this, except he be lost to all shame and voracious and a gambler, that Mamurra should have what Gallia Comata and farthest Britain had once?” (Cat. 29.1-4; tr. Goold)

9) “Pansy Romulus, can you see and endure this? You are shameless and voracious and a gambler. Was it this then, you one and only general, that took you to the farthest island of the West? Was it so that that debauched tool of yours should devour twenty or thirty millions? What else, then, is perverted liberality if this be not” (Cat. 29.9-15; tr. Goold)

▪ Mamurra spending wealth from the conquest of Mithridates (63 BC) and Caesar’s victories in Spain

10) “His ancestral property was first torn to shreds; then came his prize-money from Pontus, then in the third place that from Spain” (Cat. 29.17-18; tr. Goold)

- Worth upsetting Republic?

11) “Was it for this, most honourable men of Rome, that you, father-in-law and son-in law, have ruined everything?” (Cat. 29.23-4; tr. Goold)

12) “For Catullus, what is most infuriating is the stupid futility of it all. It is insane for the dynasts to cherish a favourite who can do nothing but consume, who can make no return for benefactions, not even to his very own masters. The sheer pointlessness of the ongoing political and social convulsions- the ferocious power struggle in Rome itself, the endless bloody combats abroad- is exemplified in the figure of the worthless parasite for whose sake Caesar and Pompey have scrapped the constitution and depleted the energies of the state.” (Skinner 1979: 146-7)

- Poems 28 and 47: faults lower down the power chain. Veranius and Fabullus abroad in entourage of Piso (L. Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus?)

13) “You subalterns of Piso, a needy train [*cohors*], with baggage handy and easily carried, my excellent Veranius and you, my Fabullus, how are you? have you borne cold and hunger with that wind-bag long enough?” (Cat. 28.1-5; tr. Goold)

- service under governors in the provinces part of normal career: expectation of profit BUT only governor Piso benefits. Cf. Poem 28 on Catullus' service in Bithynia under Memmius

14) “Why, after following in my praetor’s train I count my losses as profit” (Cat. 28.7-8; tr. Goold)

15) “Yes, Memmius, well and truly did you get me on my back and calmly *stuff* [*irrumasti*] me with the whole length of your beam! Yet, as far as I can see, you two are in like case: for you have been filled with no less a poker [*uerpa*].” (Cat. 28.9-13; tr. Goold)

- Friends (whose hunger noted previously) = “force-fed”...

16) “So much for running after noble friends!” (Cat. 29.13; tr. Goold)

- Poem 47: Veranius and Fabullus out of favour, replaced by Socraton (nickname for Philodemus?) and Piso

17) “Porcius and Socraton, Piso’s two left hands, you plague and mere famine, has that *obscene* [*uerpus*] Priapus preferred you to my dear Veranius and Fabullus?” (Cat. 47.1-4; tr. Goold)

18) “Are you spending money and holding splendid rich banquets at vast expense in broad daylight, whilst my old friends must walk about the streets to hunt for an invitation?” (Cat. 47. 5-7; tr. Goold)

- unfairness of existing patronage system; demeaning Veranius and Fabullus

B) Abuse in oratory

- Roman tradition of abuse in oratory, including against Cicero himself (see e.g. pseudo-Sallustian *Invectiva in Ciceronem*; Fufius Calpurnius’s speech in Dio xlv.1-28)

- Clodius v Cicero in senate

19) “Our pretty little boy [Clodius] stands up and accuses me of having been at Baiae- a lie, but anyhow. ‘What?’ I reply, ‘Is this the same as saying that I intruded on the Mysteries?’ He says, ‘What business has a man from Arpinum with the hot springs?’ ‘Tell that to your counsel’, I say. ‘He has longed for springs that belonged to an Arpinum man’...Overwhelmed by the roars of applause, he collapsed and fell silent” (Cicero, *Letter to Atticus* 1.16.10)

20) “[Julius Caesar boasting says to Senate]: ... he would make them, to their shame, submissive to his pleasure. One of the senators observing, sarcastically: “That will not be very easy for a woman to do,” he jocosely replied, “Semiramis formerly reigned in Assyria, and the Amazons possessed great part of Asia.” (Suet *Div. Iul.* 22.2)

- Examples of Cicero's abuse: e.g. v Antony (*Philippics*): called vile, debauched, effeminate, a drunkard, servile, barbaric, ignorant, raging, cruel, mad; (to be feared> sense that state is under attack)

- Topics of invective (Corbeill 2002): servile heritage; barbarian (non-Roman background); having a non-elite occupation; thievery; non-standard sexual behaviour; estrangement from family and community; melancholy disposition; unusual appearance, clothing, or demeanour; cowardice; bankruptcy.

- the *Second Philippic* (purports to be a speech in the senate, 44 BC, but never delivered).

21) “[*Second Philippic*] ... is invective with a clear deliberative purpose. Using against Antony fully fifteen of seventeen standard invective *loci* ..., and rendering him a laughing stock ..., Cicero makes the strongest possible argument that Antony is not only a bad man, but a bad Caesarian. He is a public figure that no one of any persuasion will want to support.” (Craig 2006: 283)

- Topoi e.g. sexual misconduct: e.g. passive homosexual behaviour of Antony

22) “In the second *Philippic*, for example, Cicero uses Marcus Antonius’s alleged sexual involvement with Curio to connect him with an entire nexus of politically reprehensible activity; in a public context, sexual submission to another man corresponds with the inability to function as an independent and moral political agent” (Corbeill 2008: 242)

- point of invective?

i) aiding agenda in speech: general (entertains the jury; diminishes and isolates one’s target, especially when humorous: see Corbeill 2008), specific (manipulation of emotions e.g. arousing fear in *Philippics*; furthering of strategies); ok in judicial context

23) “Invective has a force that lies in the mere fact that someone will make such claims publicly. A target’s *auctoritas* exists only to the extent that the community grants its holder respect. Invective does not merely aim at the indirect reduction of *auctoritas* by calling its target into question (though an orator might well hope for that as well), but is itself a direct reduction because it withholds that respect” (Riggsby 1997: 247)

24) “... it is acceptable to condemn a ‘bad’ man by showing his danger to society- again, regardless of particular guilt. Invective supplies proof- by identifying a person as unfit for the community the speaker of necessity wins over the jury. Invective works as a series of examples of what a Roman is not. The importance placed on invective allows the speaker to include charges that seem to us contrary to the notion of ‘legal’ accusation” (Corbeill 2002: 199)

ii) bolstering oneself; status game

25) “This hypothesis would explain why the entire exchange recorded in the letter [Cic. *Att.* 1.16.10] is composed of charges on both sides, not refutation: status is a relative game, so one recovers one’s own by knocking one’s opponent down” (Riggsby 1997: 247)

26) “it is the performative value itself of such comebacks which is most at stake rather than their ideological or material content.... Whether the politician let himself be outmanoeuvred (let alone hurt) in a performance context is a better indication of power and powerlessness than the actual insult offered” (Ruffell 2003: 48)

27) “It is notable that the orator employs his most angry invective at those key points in his career at which he needs to shape new aspects of his public identity: as a righteous young prosecutor (*Against Verres*), ... and as an elder statesman exercising that authority for the last time (*Philippics*).” (Corbeill 2002: 198)

28) “Public invective, as an exercise in ‘freedom’/‘free speech,’ ranks among the most important of these status-generating/status-demonstrating rituals: ... it identifies the speaker as someone with the requisite *auctoritas* to criticize and degrade another free, noble citizen...” (Freudenburg 1997)

iii) confirmation of values/regulation of behaviour (use of blame)

29) “.... I proposed stern measures against Antony and against Lepidus too, not so much for vengeance’s sake as to deter the criminals among us by terror from attacking our country in the present and to leave an object lesson for the future, so that none shall be minded to imitate such madness.” (Cic. *ad Brut.* 23.10 = 1.15.10)

30) “within each instance of abuse reside values and preconceptions that are essential to the way a Roman of the late Republic defined himself in relation to his community” (Corbeill 1996: 5)

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