

Passages: corruption, patronage and reciprocity, the provinces

“No one, no one, I say, gentlemen, will be bold enough to assert that he gave Marcus Fonteius a penny during his quaestorship, or that Fonteius appropriated a penny from the money paid to him on the public account; in no one’s books will there be found the slightest hint of such embezzlement, nor among all the items the slightest trace of such misappropriation or deficit.”

(Cicero *On Behalf of Marcus Fonteius* (who had been governor of Gaul) II (delivered 69 BC))

“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? Pansy [using “cinaedus”] Romulus [=Pompey], can you see and endure this? And shall he now, proud and full to overflowing, prance around everyone’s marriage-bed, like a white cock-pigeon or an Adonis? 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 [*diffututa mentula* = “worn-out cock”] of yours should devour twenty or thirty millions? What else, then, is perverted liberality if this be not? Has he not spent enough on lust and gluttony? His ancestral property was first torn to shreds; then came his prize-money from Pontus, then in the third place that from Spain, of which the gold-bearing river Tagus can tell. Is this the man who has the pickings of Gaul and Britain? Why do you both support this scoundrel? And what is he good for except devouring rich patrimonies? Was it for this, most honourable men of Rome, that you, father-in-law and son-in law [Caesar and Pompey], have ruined everything?” (Catullus 29; tr. Cornish, J. P. Postgate, J. W. Mackail/Goold) (55? BC, after Caesar’s invasion of Britain)

“You subalterns of Piso, a needy train, 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? do your account books show any gain, however small, entered on the wrong side, as mine do? Why, after following in my praetor’s train I count my losses as profit. Yes, Memmius, well and truly did you get me on my back and calmly stuff me [*irrumasti*] with the whole length of your beam [i.e. penis]! Yet, as far as I can see, you two are in like case: for you have been filled with no less a poker [*uerpa*, technically = a circumcised penis]. So much for running after noble friends! But may the gods and goddesses bring many curses upon you, you blots on the names of Romulus and Remus.” (Catullus 28, tr. Cornish, J. P. Postgate, J. W. Mackail/Goold: of friends who haven’t gained profit from serving under governor Piso. Catullus served under Memmius in Bithynia; verb *irrumo* used of placing a penis in mouth)

“Your select companions (comites) were your hands; prefects, secretaries, orderlies, doctors, haruspices and heralds were your hands; as much as each man was linked to you by blood, marriage or some friendship, so much he was considered your hand. That whole cohort, which brought more evil to Sicily than if it had been 100 cohorts of fugitive slaves, was without question your hand, whatever was appropriated by any of these people, must be adjudged not only something given to you but also something counted by your own hand.” (Cicero *Verr.* 2.2.27)

“As to those whom you wanted to be with you..., who are usually called, as it were, the “cohort” of the praetor, we must take responsibility not only for their every deed, but also for

their every utterance. But you have with you men whom you might easily hold dear when they act rightly, and whom you might very easily check when they show insufficient concern for your reputation — men among whom, when you were inexperienced, your generosity may have been open to abuse...Now let your third year display the same integrity as your previous years, if not an integrity more cautious and more diligent. May your ears have the reputation of hearing what they do hear, not false, imagined whispers prompted by gain. May your signet-ring not be some bauble, but an embodiment of you-yourself, not a servant of another's will but the witness of your own". (Cicero, ad Quint.fr. 1.1.12-13: 60 BC, Cicero advising his brother Quintus, whose governorship in Asia had been prolonged for a third year:)

Questions:

What is Catullus complaining about? How might we regard such poems when put together with his poems charting his love affair with Lesbia and its failure due to her infidelity?

What might governors and the staff do negatively in the provinces?

What might the Roman people have wanted to believe about Roman rule in the provinces?

How harshly might provincial corruption have been judged? How frequent was it? How might this affect Cicero's case against Verres?