

THE SPRING OF OUR DISCONTENT: CATULLUS 46 AND THE CLASSICAL SPRING POEM

Dorin Garofeanu*

Catullus 46¹

IAM ver egelidos refert tepores,
iam caeli furor aequinoctialis
iucundis Zephyri silescit aureis.
linquantur Phrygii, Catulle, campi
Nicaeaeque ager uber aestuosae: 5
ad claras Asiae volemus urbes.
iam mens praetrepidans avet vagari,
iam laeti studio pedes vigescunt.
o dulces comitum valete coetus,

longe quos simul a domo profectos 10
diversae varie viae reportant.

Although a purely biographical approach would inherently lead to a limited view of the poem, the actual circumstances in which 46 was composed are nevertheless worth mentioning, since they help elucidate both the general mood and some particular points of the poem, especially those related to the geographical setting (e.g. the references to the Phrygian fields, 4; Nicaea, 5; the celebrated cities of Asia, 6) or the specific Roman elements (e.g. *comitum coetus*, 9). Thus, the composition of 46, the first known Latin spring poem, is usually associated with Catullus' departure from the province of Bithynia, after a year in the service of Gaius Memmius² as a member of the propraetor's *cohors*. As apparently his stay in Bithynia was not, for various reasons³, a particularly happy one, the exuberance

* Institutul de Istorie și Teorie Literară „G. Călinescu” al Academiei Române.

¹ The Latin text is that of Mynors' Oxford edition (1967).

² Governor of the province between 57 and 56 B.C. (see, for example, Fordyce, 1961, XII).

³ As Small (1983, 71) notes, “the usual motive for going on such an expedition was to get a start in political life and at the same time to amass wealth at the expense of the provincials.” Apparently, as can be deduced from other poems (10, and especially 28), Catullus was not successful in either. Cf. also Burl 161; Wiseman, 100f; Goold 2; Lee, xviiiif.

brought by the arrival of spring, noticeable throughout the poem, can be partially explained as an expression of Catullus' relief at leaving a province he did not enjoy and of returning home to Italy. However, while interesting and informative, these biographical details cannot in fact provide a full account of the poem, and, stressed too much, can even "obstruct" the view of 46 as a spring poem, since, when the references to the coming of spring and to the immediate desire of departing and traveling are too closely related to the particular events of Catullus' life in the spring of 56 B.C., there is the risk of overlooking the generic background⁴ of poem 46, and especially its adherence to the genre of the spring poem. Indeed, although 46 has been occasionally referred to or described as a spring poem⁵, this aspect has been either largely ignored or somewhat superficially treated, in spite of the fact that poem 46, while making significant innovations, presents numerous thematic, structural and stylistic similarities to the chronologically earlier spring poems included in the *Palatine Anthology* (A.P. 10.1⁶ and 2⁷), which reveal that Catullus is deliberately drawing upon the Greek tradition of the genre.

Like the other poems of the genre, 46 is a rather short, but refined piece of writing. At the structural level⁸, 46 follows the traditional schema of a spring poem, containing a description of spring (lines 1–3), and reactions prompted by the season that echo the conventional reactions. However, in his description of the season, in sharp contrast to the previous Greek spring poems, Catullus presents a rather empty vernal landscape, and, although there may be a reference to the fertility of the season⁹, the traditional description of blooming flowers, lush vegetation and singing birds is missing. At the same time, in Catullus' poem, in which the poet himself takes the traditional role of Priapus as speaker, the conventional injunctions addressed to the sailor(s) to undertake navigation and trade, are replaced by a rather passionate self-injunction to depart, travel and visit

⁴ A particular exception is Cairns (1972, 44f.) who approaches the poem primarily from a generic point of view. However, constrained by the rather limited number of genres he acknowledges, Cairns describes the poem only as a *syntaktikon*, a speech of the departing traveler, failing to discuss the generic mixture that characterizes Catullus' poem.

⁵ See Hezel (1932) 44f.; Avallone (1964) 241–7; Schafer (1966) 33ff.; Quinn (1973) 229 n.1.

⁶ A.P. 10.1: Ὁ πλόος ὠραῖος· καὶ γὰρ λαλαγεῦσα χελιδὼν / ἤδη μέμβλωκεν χῶ χάριεις ζέφυρος· / λειμώνες δ' ἀνθεῦσι, σεσίγηκεν δὲ θάλασσα / κύμασι καὶ τρηχεῖ πνεύματι βρασσομένη. / ἀγκύρας ἀνέλοιο καὶ ἐκλύσαιο γύαια, / ναυτίλε, καὶ πλώοις πᾶσαν ἐφεῖς ὀθόνην. / ταῦθ' ὁ Πρίηπος ἐγὼν ἐπιτέλλομαι, ὁ λιμενίτας, / ὄνθρωφ', ὡς πλώοις πᾶσαν ἐπ' ἐμπορίην.

⁷ A.P. 10.2: Ἀκμαῖος ῥοθήη νηὶ δρόμος, οὐδὲ θάλασσα / πορφύρει τρομερῆ φρικτὴ χαρασσομένη / ἤδη δὲ πλάσσει μὲν ὑπώροφα γυρὰ χελιδὼν / οἰκία, λειμώνων δ' ἄβρὰ γελᾶ πέταλα. / τοῦνεκα μηρύσασθε διάβροχα πείσματα, ναῦται, / ἔλκετε δ' ἀγκύρας φωλάδας ἐκ λιμένων· / λαίφεα δ' εὐυφέα προτονίζετε. ταῦθ' ὁ Πρίηπος / ὕμιν ἐνορμίτας παῖς ἐνέπω Βρομίου.

⁸ As Elder (103) observes, "this poem is as artfully constructed as any of the Hellenistic or post-Hellenistic compositions in the Greek Anthology which may have consciously or subconsciously influenced Catullus in this poem."

⁹ Namely *uber* in line 5, although, considering the qualification of Nicaea as *aestuosae*, it is probable that *uber* too refers to the fertility of the land in summer rather than spring.

the celebrated cities of Asia (lines 4–6). This sightseeing aspect of Catullus' desire to travel constitutes a major novelty in the tradition of the genre, highlighted also by the fact that in Catullus' poem the reactions prompted by the season are given more emphasis¹⁰ than in *A.P.* 10.1 and 2. At the same time, although any direct references to ships and seafaring are dropped from poem 46, the mention of the pleasant breezes of the West wind (3) and especially their calming effect on the *furor* of the equinoctial sky (lines 2–3) may well hint cleverly at sailing¹¹, as also, as several critics suggest¹², perhaps, does the use of the verb *volare*, employed elsewhere (4.5) by Catullus to describe a ship.

The poem starts with a direct reference to spring (*iam ver*) and fair weather (*egelidos tepores*), followed by an allusion to the end of winter (*iam caeli furor aequinoctialis... silescit*, 2–3), and includes various other elements that remind the reader of the Greek spring poems, e.g. the Zephyr (3) and the repetition of *iam* (that translates the traditional ἤδη of the Greek epigrams) not only in the first two lines, but also in lines 7–8. However, Catullus' poem contains also new aspects and elements that break with the tradition. Thus, in contrast to the authors of the Greek epigrams, Catullus is more specific in his spring poem, as the geographical setting, including the itinerary of the future journey, is rather clearly delimited – the Phrygian plains (4), the land of Nicaea (5), the famous cities of Asia (6)¹³ – while the addressee, i.e. the poet himself, is also directly named (*Catulle*, 4). As the author of poem 46 is also the speaker who himself will make the vernal journey¹⁴, there is also a greater personal involvement that translates into a more exuberant and excited tone than that of Priapus in *A.P.* 10.1 and 2.

Another element particular to Catullus 46 is the presence of the *comitum coetus* (9) that brings a specific Roman flavour into the Greek generic background. The farewell addressed to his fellow members in the *cohors* (9ff.), emphasizing the journey motif, defines 46 as a *syntaktikon* (see Cairns 1972, 44f.) and accomplishes the admixture of genres characterizing the poem. The farewell, expressing an unexpected regret at the thought of departure, adds also a melancholic note (again, a novelty in the tradition of the genre) to an otherwise exuberant and joyful poem.

Written in the hendecasyllabic meter, poem 46 begins with two monosyllabic words (*iam ver*) that announce, with the solemnity conferred by the spondaic

¹⁰ They occupy lines 4–11 and include also a psychological dimension that is new in the tradition of the genre.

¹¹ See Quinn (1970) 229; Forsyth 263.

¹² Cf. McKay-Shepherd 137; Schievenin 24 n. 7.

¹³ The mention of Nicaea and the cities of Asia brings also an urban aspect not found in the Greek poems.

¹⁴ *Catulle* in line 4 replaces ναυτῖλε from *A.P.* 10.1.6 and ναῦται from *A.P.* 10.2.5. While *Catulle* could be also considered an example of *Selbst-gespräch*, this does not change the fact that the addressee of the poem is the poet himself.

opening, the theme of the poem¹⁵, and sets the mood of immediacy¹⁶ characteristic of the genre. In contrast to *A.P.* 10.1 and 2 in which the visual aspects play a significant part¹⁷, the description of the season in poem 46 presents an empty vernal landscape; in Catullus' poem spring is not seen, but rather felt, as the emphasis is placed on the warmth it brings back (*egelidos refert tepores*). Since the visual aspect is strongly implied in the reaction prompted by the season, namely, to tour the cities of Asia (6), the *lack* of any visual element becomes, paradoxically enough, a significant part of Catullus' description of spring. A possible explanation for this striking absence could be Catullus' deliberate effort to avoid the conventional descriptions of the season found in the Greek epigrams, while remaining faithful to the essence of the genre. Thus, although apparently departing from the Greek tradition by not including any visual elements in the description of the season, Catullus employs in fact the traditional technique of *variatio*, but in his poem the variation consists in totally ignoring the visual aspect of spring. As in the first two words of 46 (*iam ver*) Catullus has announced, alluding to the Greek epigrams, the theme of the poem, the unexpected absence of visual elements becomes an element of the description of spring; the empty landscape can be considered, in fact, a significant part of his description of the season, and it is the first indication that, by subtly denying spring its usual associations (like beauty, vegetation, and fertility), Catullus will invest the season with a psychological dimension unknown to the Greek tradition of the genre.

Another possible, although apparently a more prosaic explanation for the conspicuous absence of the visual aspect could be the fact that Catullus may actually refer in his poem to very early spring¹⁸ when, with the exception of a slight rise in temperature, the winter landscape is still unchanged (and therefore its description would be quite inappropriate in a spring poem). Even so, Catullus' choice of this specific temporal frame, far from being accidental, has significant implications for the depiction of the season since it allows him to suggest the ambiguous nature of spring. An argument in favour of this interpretation is

¹⁵ Recalling the Greek tradition of the spring poem but innovating by directly mentioning the season. Starting from *iam ver*, in a somewhat bold attempt to analyze the effect and the role of a group of sounds in reminding the theme of the poem, Elder (120) considers that "perhaps it is not utterly fanciful to see in the *-er* sound a subconscious association with "spring". Then one observes that this theme-note recurs in *refert*, *ager uber*, and finally in full form in *diversae*, as well as, in reverse form, in *refert* and *reportant* (lines 1 and 11)".

¹⁶ The multiple and symmetrical repetition of *iam* (1–2, 7–8) brings into the poem a sense of urgency and excitement unknown to *A.P.* 10.1 and 2. Cf. Forsyth 262; Garrison 119; Quinn (1962) 32 who notice the effect of this repetition, although without referring to the Greek epigrams.

¹⁷ For example, the chattering swallow (*A.P.* 10.1.1), the flowery meadows (*A.P.* 10.1.3), the image of the sea (*A.P.* 10.1.3–4; *A.P.* 10.2.1–2).

¹⁸ According to the ancient calendars, the Zephyr started to blow in the first week of February. However, the mention of the equinoctial sky (2) suggests the end of March as the time frame of the poem (see Ellis 130).

Catullus' use of a somewhat problematic term to describe the warming vernal temperature, namely *egelidos*, a term that does describe the warming climate of spring but also strongly evokes the chilly winter season. Although the pair *egelidos tepores* has been generally considered just a "case of redundancy for emphasis" (see Garrison 119), and the context makes clear the specific meaning of *egelidos*, the word does contain an ambiguity that allows the associations with winter to creep in, since, through its possible clashing meanings¹⁹, and especially its juxtaposition to *ver* (interestingly, the caesura of the first line brings together, in fact, *ver* with *egelidos*, by separating them from the rest of the line), the word seems to insidiously bring into the vernal season the cold of winter²⁰. Thus, although the pair *egelidos tepores* can be considered just "a common Latin idiom" in which "the idea expressed by the noun is reinforced by an adjective of the same or similar meaning" (Fordyce 209), Catullus' use of an adjective that could have opposite meanings, bringing together the warmth of spring and the cold of winter, may be also an indirect way of defining the season, hinting perhaps at the unpredictable character of the vernal weather, and therefore at the ambiguous nature of spring.

The uncertain nature of Catullus' spring seems to be further alluded to in the next two lines (2f.), which contain the rather disquieting image of the equinoctial sky whose madness (*furor*, 2), although being placated by the pleasant breezes of the traditional Zephyr (introduced, amid the soothing sound of various sibilants, in line 3), still lingers, as the inceptive form of *silescit* suggests. However, the passage does allow a double interpretation, depending on the value given to *silescit*. On the one hand, the use of an inceptive form (emphasizing not the result, but only that the action is still in progress) for a moment of balance so fleeting as the equinox may hint at the fact that the vernal *furor* is not completely silenced and will continue beyond the equinoctial time, characterizing thus spring as an ambiguous and unstable season. On the other hand, as *furor*, referring to the stormy weather that traditionally accompanies the vernal equinox²¹, personifies (together with the inceptive *silescit*) the meteorological phenomena of the season, its mention after the reference to the warming temperature may indicate that winter is almost over, since even its stormy 'echoes' in spring already grow silent, soothed by the breezes of the Zephyr. The presence of *furor* creates a tension built up by postponing almost until the end of the passage the soothing *silescit*. One may say that lines 2f.

¹⁹ "Lukewarm" (Colum. 10. 282; Celsus *Med.* 4.5), but also "chilly" (Verg. *Aen.* 8. 610), as the prefix *e* could be either privative or intensive (see *TLL* s.v.). Cf. also Ellis 130; Quinn (1962) 32, (1970) 229; Syndikus 241.

²⁰ For a different (and plausible) interpretation of this word, see also Schievenin (20), who considers that the private sense of the prefix *e-* suggests, in fact, the gradual character of the vernal increase in temperature.

²¹ See, for example, Ellis (130) who refers to *Plin.* 18. 221; *Cic. Att.* 10.17.3; *Gell.* 2.22. Cf. *Godwin* 166; *Fordyce* 209; *Forsyth* 263; *Garrison* 119; *Schievenin* 21.

mirror, in fact, the movement of the first line in which one term (*egelidos*) echoes winter, while the second (*tepores*) affirms the change of temperature, and therefore, the certain coming of spring; in a similar way, in this passage, the tension created by *furor*, a word that reminds of the stormy winter, is followed by the release brought by *silescit* and the breezes of the Zephyr that point to the arrival of spring and the possibility of travel²², and, thus, the passage may just foreshadow Catullus' eagerness to depart from Bithynia and return home²³.

The beginning of Catullus' poem, while recalling the Greek tradition of the genre, seems thus to contain, through the total absence of any visual aspect in the description of the season, the connotations of *egelidos* and the potentially disquieting presence of the continuing *furor*, a gloomier aspect, or at least an ambiguity in the depiction of the season not found in the clear-cut beginning of the spring poems included in the Palatine Anthology, which constitutes a variation and, at a same time, a subtle statement about the season itself.

The first three lines of the poem, containing an innovative and rather striking description of the season, are also characterized by elaborate diction and great stylistic elegance. Catullus employs in this passage various features of sound, e.g. the soothing assonance of *e* in the first line; of *i* in the second line, whose melodic character is also enhanced by the double presence of the diphthong *ae*; the assonance of *i* in line 3 that is also abundant in numerous sibilants (*z*, and especially *s*) suggesting perhaps the continuous and calming whisper of the pleasant West wind. Easily noticeable is the melodious anaphora of *iam* in the first two lines of the poem, expressing the impatience and the exuberance brought by the arrival of spring and recalling also the Greek tradition of the genre. In order to achieve elevation of style and also to draw the attention of the reader, Catullus employs throughout his poem rare words. In this passage, one may find *egelidos* and also *furor*, a word that, according to Schievenin (21), can be considered a *hapax legomenon*, though a semantic one, since, apparently, is used only here to describe a physical reality. Remarkable in the second line is especially the use of the polysyllabic word *aequinocialis* that not only brings, with its 'effervescent' trochees²⁴, an excitement that counteracts the disquieting presence of *furor* and prefigures the eager self-injunction to travel that follows in 4-8, but, perhaps, is also meant to accomplish elevation of style, as its scientific aura (see Quinn, 1962, 60 n.5.) gives the passage an unmistakable Alexandrian touch. The same effect may

²² Perhaps even to the opening of the navigation season, since, according to some critics (Quinn 1970, 229; Forsyth 263) the mention of the pleasant breezes is an allusion to the traditional resumption of sailing brought by spring. Similarly, *silescit* recalls, as various critics (Syndikus 240 n.5; Braga 206; Hezel 25) have noticed, *σεσίγηκεν* from *A.P.* 10.1.3, and, therefore, the traditional spring of the Greek epigrams.

²³ See Godwin (166) who remarks that "there is a nice irony in that the passion of the sky gives way to the poet's passion to return home."

²⁴ Interestingly, noticing only its polysyllables, but ignoring its trochees, Quinn (1962, 32) considers that *aequinocialis* is a rather "bulky" and "unemotionally precise" word.

be also present in the use of *iucundis* (which comes immediately after *aequinocialis*), a word that, as CJ & BG Simpson (77) argue²⁵, “signals to the contemporary listener and modern reader that Catullus is making a specific reference to the New Poetry”. At the end of line 3 the archaic spelling of *aureis* is also perhaps intended to give a solemn and elevated tone to the passage, possible because precisely in this line, more than anywhere else in the poem, Catullus seems to allude, through the mention of the Zephyr and the use of *silescit*, to the Greek tradition of the (refined) spring poems.

After this short but effective description of spring, Catullus introduces into his poem the theme of travel to express the reactions prompted by the season (lines 4–11). The unmistakable arrival of spring incites in Catullus, confined, even at the textual level, in the Phrygian fields (*Phrygii, Catulle, campi*)²⁶, an immediate desire to depart. As the sightseeing aspect of his urge to go away will be soon alluded to (6), the self-injunction to travel and tour the cities of Asia constitutes a significant variation on the (rather mundane) injunctions to sail and trade from *A.P.* 10.1 and 2. Catullus wants to leave the Phrygian fields and the land of Nicaea behind and his strong resolve is perhaps suggested by the long and heavy syllables of the word *linquantur* that seem to give the passage almost the solemnity of an edict. The intensity of Catullus’ reaction to the coming of spring is also revealed in line 4 by the self-address *Catulle*, although it may be still a matter of debate exactly what emotion this stylistic device indicates in 46. As in Catullus’ poetry it usually denotes a negative or conflicting emotion, some critics²⁷, under the pressure of an unrestrained biographical approach, have made quite an interpretative leap of faith, unsupported by any evidence in the poem, suggesting that, in fact, the Phrygian plains remind Catullus of his brother’s death, and therefore *Catulle* must be an indication of his anguish. However, the self-address of 46 is most likely intended to express the joy and exuberance²⁸ brought by spring and the sudden prospect of returning home after visiting the cities of Asia.

Following the mention of the Phrygian fields, the next line further specifies the place that should be left behind, namely the fertile land of sweltering Nicaea (*Nicaeaeque ager uber aestuosae*)²⁹, thus giving Catullus once again the

²⁵ Following Ross (78), who, considering that the word appears in Catullus in contexts in which the subject is neoteric poetry (14.2 and 50.16) states that “there is every indication... that the word is a neoteric invention: it was not formerly colloquial (not in comedy) nor poetic but must have become a part of neoteric vocabulary through use in the elegant spoken language of Catullus’ circle at Rome”.

²⁶ According to Quinn (1962, 32), we should note “the economy with which the magic of the past is evoked by the single word *Phrygii*, in order to prepare the ground for the right overtones in *Asiae*, out of which we might otherwise here take only the administrator’s name for a Roman province”.

²⁷ See Williams 463; Ferguson 133; C.J. & B.G. Simpson 76.

²⁸ See Ellis (130) for whom the soliloquy indicates here “the joy of the soul at a change to new scenes”.

²⁹ See Goodman (166) who remarks that “the vague term *Phrygii* is sharpened into the specific *Nicaea* and the general term *campi* becomes the more picturesque *ager uber aestuosae*”.

opportunity to display his Alexandrian propensity for geographical precision³⁰ and learning³¹. The emphasis in these two lines is on countryside³² (*campi*, 4; *ager*, 5) and its fertility (*uber*, 5), aspects that do not seem to impress too much the rather urban Catullus³³, but appear only to remind him of the sultry heat of summer³⁴, and the urgent need to depart from a place that will soon become quite uninviting for his taste.

In line 6, Catullus finally reveals the goal (or, at least, the first and most exciting stage) of his anticipated journey, namely the *urbes Asiae*. Characterized as *claras*, a word whose double meaning – “bright” and “famous” – suggesting both their physical appearance and renown, justifies the joy at the idea of a sightseeing tour³⁵, and generally identified as the Greek cities on the coast of Asia Minor³⁶, the cities of Asia bring into the poem an urban element unknown to the Greek epigrams, and stand in sharp contrast to the ordinary and rather unexciting plains of Bithynia³⁷. Catullus’ eagerness to start his journey is indicated in this line by the use of the poetic plural *volemus*, which, suggesting the flight of a bird, could be also taken as an allusion to sailing or may mean simply ‘to hasten’ (see Thomson 320).

Similar to the beginning of the poem, lines 4–6 are also characterized by numerous effects of sound and style. Thus, line 4 contains the assonance of *i* and *a* (that could evoke sighing), the alliteration of *c* (*Catulle, campi*), and also numerous other harsh consonants (*q, r, p, ph, c, n, g, t*) that may suggest (especially through the predominant gutturals *q, g, c*) the idea of struggling to escape the plains of Phrygia, while in line 5 the abundant vowels (*a, e, u*) and the repeated diphthong *ae* may suggest lamentation and grief³⁸. One may also notice the chiasmus

³⁰ See Goodman (192), who remarks that “the accurate meteorology and geography of the first five lines are completely Alexandrian”.

³¹ As several critics (Thomson 319; Fordyce 209) remark, both *uber* and *aestuosa* are confirmed by Strabo’s description (12.4.7) of the region.

³² Interestingly, Catullus uses two words (*campi* and *ager*) with somewhat contrasting associations. According to Quinn “‘Phrygian’ almost = ‘Trojan’, so that *Phrygii... campi* suggests the plains of Troy,” probably with their martial and sorrowful overtones, recalling perhaps the *furor* of the second line, while *ager*, usually “arable land”, suggest rather agricultural pursuits, hence the adjective *uber*.

³³ See Wilhelm (4), who considers that Catullus “wants to run from the fertile cornfields of hot Nicaea, flee to the shiny cities of the Greeks. [...] essentially, he wants to replace nature with society”. Cf. Small 76.

³⁴ The word *aestuosus*, as Goodman (166) remarks, “refers to the summer heat”.

³⁵ See Fordyce 209; Garrison 119; McKay – Shepherd 137. For an opposing view, see Ferguson (133), who is not impressed with the word, considering it “a little too tripperish and guide-book”.

³⁶ Namely Pergamum, Sardis, Ephesus and Smyrna, to which Quinn (1970, 230) is inclined to add also the cities on “the adjacent islands Lesbos, Mytilene, Rhodes”.

³⁷ Interestingly, the only city specifically named in this poem is the city of Nicaea, which, although the capital of Bithynia, is defined only in relation to its land and sweltering climate.

³⁸ Ferguson (134) remarks that it has “an exaggerated assonance usually found in Catullus with a touch of bitterness,” although, according to Elder (109), “the repeated vowel-sounds create ... ‘le charme ‘exotique’”.

(*Nicaeaeque... aestuosae*) and the rhyme (*ager uber*) in line 5, while, according to some critics³⁹, the use of the word *aestuosae* (placed in emphatic position at the end of line 5) seems to allude (again) to the Neoteric poetry.

In the following two lines of the poem (7–8), the repeated *iam*, with its sense of urgency, takes the reader back to the beginning of the poem. The parallelism between these two passages, intended perhaps to associate Catullus' exuberance and dynamism with the arrival of the vernal season, is evident in the personification of mind (*mens*) and feet (*pedes*) that mirrors the personification of spring (or at least of the meteorological phenomena of the season) in the beginning of the poem⁴⁰, and also in the use of the inchoative form *vigescunt* that mirrors the verb *silescit* from line 3 and suggests that there is a direct causal relation (and especially contrast) between the vernal *furor* that grows still and the growing strength of the *pedes*.

In line 7, the exuberance brought by spring and the eagerness of the speaker to start his journey is conveyed by the word *praetrepidans*, apparently a Catullan coinage (see Stoessl 168). Although the majority of commentators⁴¹ consider that *prae* is used here in its temporal meaning of "before" or "in advance," expressing the eager anticipation at the prospect of visiting new and exciting places, the prefix is most likely employed both in its temporal and intensive meaning⁴². In the same line, *avet* expresses the excitement anticipated by *iam* and *praetrepidans*, while *vagari* is most likely intended to convey the urge to be on the move, rather than to mean "rush away" or to suggest undirected traveling (see Forsyth 264), a sense that would contradict the relatively precise destination of the journey, namely the *urbes Asiae*. However, *vagari* could also mean in this context "to roam," that is to move from one place (city) to another, free (at last) from any (official) constraints, a meaning appropriate enough to describe Catullus' sightseeing project.

The eagerness of mind in line 7 is paralleled in line 8 by the zeal (*studio*) of the personified feet. The description of *pedes* does not necessarily imply that Catullus intended to make his journey by land, since the poem seems also to contain allusions to seafaring. The presence of *pedes* is thus meant to suggest not the means of conveyance, but rather the intensity of an excitement apparent even at the corporal level, as the adjective *laeti*, conferring an emotion to a part of the body

³⁹ See Ross (162 n.10), according to whom the entire line 5 is a reference to Parthenius of Nicaea, "the Greek mind behind the discovery of Callimachus and Alexandrian poetry," while the word *aestuosus* "was used only once elsewhere by Catullus, in a reference to Callimachus (7.5–6). Cf. also CJ & BG Simpson (77f.). However, while the word may be linked in 7.5–6 to Callimachus, in the context of poem 46 such an interpretation seems rather exaggerated.

⁴⁰ For a rather extreme (and unlikely) interpretation, see Adler (29), who, noticing the personification implied in this passage, considers that "the self-division in c.46 is not dual but quadruple: beside the speaker and 'Catullus', there are the *mens* and the *pedes* of ll.7–8, to which autonomous desires and actions are attributed."

⁴¹ See Ellis 131; Forsyth 47f.; Quinn (1970) 230.

⁴² See Fordyce (210) who does concede that it may also be intensive in force, and especially Thomson (320), who considers it both intensive and temporal and translates *praetrepidans* as "violently fluttering in anticipation."

and reinforcing the idea of complete joy, seems also to indicate. Corresponding to *mens* from line 7, the presence of *pedes* could have in this line the function of a ‘marker’ of eagerness – an interpretation supported also by the fact that apparently in his poems Catullus, as Putnam (18 n. 11) observes, “constantly associates the foot with some eagerly awaited occasion”.

This passage too is characterized by the same stylistic care as the rest of the poem; in addition to the repetition of *iam* at the beginning of each line, meant to convey the excitement at the prospect of his sightseeing tour, one may notice the word *vigescere*, a *hapax legomenon*, and also the assonance of *a* and *e*.

In the last three lines of the poem (9ff.), containing the touching farewell addressed to his companions, Catullus introduces a specific Roman element, namely *comitum coetus*. At the structural level, the farewell corresponds to the self-address in line 4⁴³, with a movement from a single addressee (himself) to the indefinite number of his *comites*. The formality of *comites* – a term officially used to designate the members of the governor’s *cohors* – is mitigated by the emotional intensity expressed by the interjection *o* and especially by the adjective *dulces*, that metamorphose the meaning of the technical *comitum coetus* into ‘friends’⁴⁴.

The passage contains two significant variations on the Greek spring poems. Thus, while in *A.P.* 10. 1 and 2 the arrival of the vernal season prompts the sailors’ departure from home in their trading enterprise, in poem 46 the coming of spring, ending their official attributions, prompts Catullus and his friends to return home. At the same time, at the structural level, the idea of return expressed by the last word, *reportant*, seems also to confer on Catullus’ poem a ring structure, as it recalls, both through its prefix and meaning, the word *refert* from the first line: the vernal season brings back the warmth; in a similar way, the roads (of spring) carry the travelers back to their homes. The second variation on the Greek spring poems is the fact that, while in the Greek epigrams the coming of spring ‘unites’ the sailors in their travel, in poem 46, spring separates Catullus from his friends. Also, if, traditionally, spring unites people in the joy of celebration or, through its amatory associations, in love, in Catullus’ poem spring separates; the arrival of the season is now equated not with exuberance and dynamism, but with the idea of departure which suddenly, although in the rest of the poem was contemplated with great enthusiasm, appears now tinged with sadness and melancholy. The sense of regret and sorrow, noticed by the majority of critics⁴⁵ in this passage, seems to cast its shadow over the entire poem and its presence at the end of 46 parallels the gloomy aspects discovered at its start, conferring on Catullus’ poem what one may

⁴³ Cf. Schievenin 26. For a discussion on the dialogic element of line 4 that resurfaces in the farewell from lines 9–11, see Newman (142), who considers that “the language of the poem is biased towards an audience, before which the poet appears as an actor, even when actor and audience are in the theatre of his mind”.

⁴⁴ Cf. Ferguson 134. For a possible etymological link between *comitum* and *coetus*, see Cairns (1991) 444.

⁴⁵ See Quinn (1973) 230; Small (1983) 77; Avallone 246; Ferguson 134.

call a ring structure of ambiguity. The slightly melancholic frame to all the joy and exuberance brought by the arrival of the vernal season, unnoticed in the previous criticism of the poem, can be seen as a subtle statement about spring, hinting perhaps at its ambiguous nature.

Characterized by the same stylistic care as the rest of the poem, this passage ends 46 with a flourish, lines 9–11 containing various effects of sound (e.g. the assonance of *o* and *u* in line 9; of *o* and *e* in line 10; of *e* in line 11, suggesting perhaps the sorrow of separation, and also the alliteration of *v* in line 11) and style (e.g. the rhyme *diversae varie viae*).

One could conclude that, using some of the conventional features of the Greek epigrams, Catullus writes a spring poem in which the vernal season loses almost all of its traditional associations (e.g. vegetation, beauty and fertility). The eagerness and joyfulness felt by Catullus are not prompted by the natural aspects of the season, as one might expect in a spring poem, but rather by the sense of freedom that the season seems to bring. While the vernal landscape is totally ignored by Catullus, the psychological effects provoked by the coming of spring (great excitement, intense desire to travel and exuberance, but also a tinge of sadness and melancholy) are described or alluded to throughout the poem.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adler, Eve. *Catullan Self-Revelation*. New York: Arno Press, 1981.
- Avallone, Riccardo. *Catullo e i suoi modelli*. Napoli: Libreria Scientifica Editrice, 1964.
- Braga, Domenico. *Catullo e i poeti Greci*. Messina: G. D'Anna, 1950.
- Burl, Aubrey. *Catullus. A Poet in the Rome of Julius Caesar*. London: Constable, 2004.
- Cairns, Francis. *Generic Composition and Latin Poetry*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1972.
- , “Catullus 46, 9–11 and Ancient ‘Etymologies’”. *Rivista di filologia e di istruzione classica* 119 (1991): 442–445.
- Elder J.P. “Notes on some conscious and unconscious elements in Catullus’ poetry”. *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 60 (1951): 41–78.
- Ellis, R. *A Commentary on Catullus*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1876.
- Ferguson, J. *Catullus*. Lawrence, KA: Coronado Press, 1985.
- Fordyce, C.J. *Catullus: A Commentary*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961.
- Forsyth, Phyllis Young. *The Poems of Catullus: A Teaching Text*. Lanham, MD: UPA, 1986.
- Garrison, Daniel H. *The Student’s Catullus*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989.
- Goodman, Paul. *The Structure of Literature*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968.
- Goold, G.P. *Catullus*. London: Duckworth, 1989.
- Hezel, Oskar. *Catull und das griechische epigram*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1932.
- Lee, G. *The Poems of Catullus*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990.
- McKay A.G. and Shepherd D. M. *Roman lyric poetry: Catullus and Horace*. London: Macmillan, 1969.
- Mynors, R. A. B., *C. Valerii Catulli Carmina*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967.
- Newman, J.K. *Roman Catullus and the Modification of the Alexandrian Sensibility*. Hildesheim: Weidmann, 1990.
- Putnam, M.C.J. “Catullus’ journey (*Carm.* 4)”. *Classical Philology* 57 (1962): 10–19.
- Quinn, Kenneth. *Catullus. The Poems*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1970.
- , *Catullus. An Interpretation*. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1973.
- , *Latin Explorations. Critical studies in Roman literature*. London: Routledge and Paul, 1962.
- Ross, David O. *Style and Tradition in Catullus*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969.

- Schievenin, R. "Il Carmen 46 di Catullo". *Aufidus* 9 (1995): 19–30.
- Simpson C.J. & Simpson Barbara G. "Catullus 46". *Latomus* XLVIII (1989): 75–85.
- Small, Stuart G.P. *Catullus. A Reader's Guide to the Poems*. Lanham, New York: UPA, 1983.
- Stoessl, F. C. *Valerius Catullus. Mensch, Leben, Dichtung*. Meisenheim am Glan: Hain, 1977.
- Syndikus, H.P. *Catull: eine Interpretation*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1984.
- Thompson, D.F.S. *Catullus*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998.
- Wheeler, A. L. *Catullus and the Traditions of Ancient Poetry*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1934.
- Wilhelm, J.J. *The Cruellest Month: Spring, Nature, and Love in Classical and Medieval Lyrics*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965.
- Wiseman, T.P. *Roman Political Life, 90 BC-AD 69*. Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1985.

ABSTRACT

Although Catullus 46 has been occasionally referred to or described as a spring poem, this generic aspect has been either largely ignored or somewhat superficially treated. This article provides a detailed analysis of the poem, revealing the numerous thematic, structural and stylistic similarities to the chronologically earlier spring poems included in the *Palatine Anthology* (A.P. 10.1 and 2) that suggest that Catullus is deliberately drawing upon the Greek tradition of the genre. This close reading of the poem will also show the effort and ingenuity with which Catullus, while preserving the traditional structure and some of the conventional elements, reshaped the genre and invested it with a psychological dimension and complexity unknown to the Greek tradition.

Keywords: Catullus 46, literary genre, generic admixture, spring poem, *Palatine Anthology*.