

ALLIUS AND ALLIA

Among the puzzles associated with Catullus 68, two have always loomed above the rest: first, whether all 160 verses are a single poem, or at least an artistic unity, and second the name of the person (or persons) to whom Catullus is writing. These problems are closely related, of course. If the name in 1-40 is not the same as in 41-160, then the case for unity is seriously challenged. But it can work the other way as well: if a cogent case for unity is presented, then the problem of the addressee will stand in a new light.

I have argued elsewhere the matter of unity, and believe c. 68 is a single poem addressed to Allius¹). There is no need to cover the question of unity again here, but there is a curious detail which may help to clarify the matter of the name²).

Catullus' friend is apparently named six times in the poem (vv. 11, 30, 41, 50, 66, 150). Manlius or Mallius is implied by Mali (V) at 11 and 30, and (in GR) at 66. But Allius emerges from 50 and 150, and at 66 in O. Most important, v. 50 requires a word beginning with a vowel. V had *aliis* at 150, which is possible but weak. Pennisi suggested *illis*, which yields an awkward line. But at both these places (41-50 and 149-52), Catullus emphasizes that he wants the *name* of his friend to be remembered. The poet invokes the Muses (41 ff.) to sing the name, which stands at both ends of this 10 line unit (41, 50). He does this so that his friend may gain fame even after death,

nec tenuem texens sublimis aranea telam

in deserto Alli *nomine* opus faciat (49-50).

Again in the final portion of the poem, Catullus claims he has written the work

ne vestrum scabra tangat rubigine *nomen*

haec atque illa dies atque alia atque alia (151-2).

1) "Confectum carmine munus: Catullus 68", *Illinois Classical Studies* 1 (1976) 86-112, where see further bibliography. Of particular note are H. W. Prescott, "The Unity of Cat. LXVIII" *TAPA* 71 (1940) 473-500; and F. Solmsen, "Catullus' Artistry in c. 68. A pre-Augustan 'subjective' love-elegy" in *Monumentum Chiloniense. Fest. E. Burck* (Kiel 1975) 260-76.

2) On the name, see especially the summary by G. Pennisi, "Il carme 68 di Catullo", *Emerita* 27 (1959) 89-109, 213-238. Pennisi accepts Mallius. Cf. also R. Godel, "Catulle, poème 68", *MH* 22 (1965) 53-65.

In both passages, the emphasis not only on the kindness of his friend but also on the threat of oblivion or neglect to his *name* is striking.

I believe that Catullus is pointing rather obliquely to the tradition associated with the name Allia³). At that river, Brennus and his Gauls had inflicted a humiliating defeat on the Romans in 390 B. C. (Livy V. 37ff.). The day of that calamity, July 18, was always regarded as an ill-omened day. Thus Cicero (*ad Att.* IX. 5. 2, written Mart. 10, 49 B.C.) says: *ut maiores nostri funestiore diem esse voluerunt Alliensis pugnae quam urbis captae, quod hoc malum ex illo (itaque alter religiosus etiam nunc dies, alter in vulgus ignotus)...*; and Tacitus tells with derision how the insensitive Vitellius de caeremoniis publicis XV kal. Augustas edixisset, antiquitus infausto die Cremensi Alliensique cladibus (*Hist.* II. 91)⁴).

As the day was accursed, so even the *nomen* was shunned. Vergil speaks of infaustum Allia nomen (*Aen.* VII. 717), and the phrase recurs in Minucius Felix (*Oct.* VII. 4), sic Allia nomen infaustum. Livy describes the alarm of the Romans in 380, a decade after the disaster, when they learned that the Praenestini had taken a position at the Allia: *etenim si diem contactum religione insignemque nomine eius loci timeant Romani, quanto magis Alliensi die Alliam ipsam, monumentum tantae cladis, reformidaturos?* (VI. 28. 6).

Thus Allia was a shameful name to a Roman, to be shunned if not forgotten. Of course, Allius was not a rare name (although it could not be regarded as common), and there was obviously no deep-seated aversion to the personal name. Catullus is not suggesting that anyone would actually find offense in the mention of the name Allius. He is rather playing a word-game with the name: this is a device found in other Catullan poems (most obviously in 79. 1, *Lesbius est pulcher*, with the play on Clodius

3) The name is sometimes spelled Alia (particularly in Greek: Plut. *Cam.* 18 'Αλλία; but *Quaest. Rom.* 25 'Αλλία), but the dominant and correct spelling is with double *l*. Cf. Hülsen, *RE* I (1894) col. 1585; *TLL* I. 1675–6 s. v. Allia: "duabus l scriptura unice recta". Servius comments (*ad Aen.* VII. 717) sane Allia additum unum l propter metrum, ut reliquias. Lucanus bene posuit 'quas Aliae clades'; but Lucan's line (VII. 633) reads *aliae*.

4) References to the disaster and the ill-omened day named for it continue throughout antiquity: e. g. Varro *LL* VI. 32; Ovid *Ibis* 219; Lucan VII. 407–9; Plut. *Cam.* 19, 24, 25; Orosius II. 19. Livy VI. 1. 111 comments on how business stood still for the day: *diem a clade Alliensem appellarunt insignemque rei nullius publice privatimque agendaefecerunt.*

Pulcher; and of course Lesbia herself). The poet begins with the natural desire to record the favor of his friend, and finds a congenial vehicle for the compliment in denying the traditional aversion to the *infaustum nomen Allia*. We may note that the play is extended in the second passage (152) with

haec atque illa dies atque *alia* atque *alia*.

Thus Catullus, in emphasizing that Allius' *nomen* must not go neglected or unsung, is saying, through an elaborate play on words, 'Here is an Allian name not deserving the traditional associations. Here is one to be remembered.' No such point can lie behind the emphasis on *nomen* if we adopt *aliis* or *illis*. Catullus' friend had the *nomen* Allius, and this reading may confidently be accepted for vv. 41, 50 and 150, and thus for the rest of the poem as well.

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