

A Possible Catullan Intertext in *DBG* Book 4

In the past twenty years, increasing attention has been paid to Julius Caesar's writings as rhetorical and literary creations (*Julius Caesar as Artful Reporter: The War Commentaries as Political Instruments*, K. Welch (ed) 2009 and *The Cambridge Companion to the Writings of Julius Caesar*, L. Grillo, C. Krebs (ed) 2017). Individual studies have highlighted Caesar's engagement with Greek and Latin literary traditions and drawn our attention to specific moments of intertextuality and allusion in both the *DBG* and the *Bellum Civile*. Following along in this vein, this paper suggests that there is a specific allusion to Catullus 101 in Book 4 of the *De Bello Gallico*, as part of Caesar's account of his first invasion of Britain in 55 BCE.

Towards the end of Caesar's account of his first invasion of Britain, he tells how the Romans have been pushed back and dismayed by the British resistance. While storms keep the Romans in camp, the Britons rally their troops. Caesar reports their arguments and actions:

Interim barbari nuntios in omnes partes dimiserunt paucitatemque nostrorum militum suis praedicaverunt et quanta praedae faciendae atque in perpetuum sui liberandi facultas daretur, si Romanos castris expulissent, demonstraverunt. His rebus celeriter magna multitudo peditatus equitatusque coacta ad castra venerunt (4.34.5).

Meanwhile the barbarians sent messengers in every direction, reported to their own people the small number of our soldiers, and pointed out what great ease was granted for taking spoils and freeing themselves in perpetuity if they should kick the Romans out of their camp. Through these meetings a great crowd of infantry and cavalry were brought together quickly and they went to the camp.

While the British attack was unsuccessful, Caesar soon left Britain with little to show for his first campaign and heavy losses. Our focus is the argument that Caesar reports the Britons use to rally: *quanta praedae faciendae atque in perpetuum sui liberandi facultas daretur*, and especially the phrase “*atque in perpetuum*.” Caesar’s prose is, as usual, tightly structured, and this clause resembles the “golden line” structure used in Latin hexameters. We find an ABBA structure, with the subject and its adjective (*quanta ... facultas*) surround a pair of objective genitive gerundive phrases (*praedae faciendae ... sui liberandi*). The two halves of the ABBA structure surround the phrase *atque in perpetuum*. While syntactically, the *atque* joins the two genitive phrases and *in perpetuum* complements *sui liberandi*, the three-word phrase *atque in perpetuum* is emphatic in its position, separate from its various syntactical functions.

A reader of Catullus might have their ears pricked by the phrase *atque in perpetuum* from its presence in Catullus 101:

Accipe fraterno multum manantia fletu

Atque in perpetuum, frater, ave atque vale. (101: 9-10)

There the components of the phrase function separately but its position at the beginning of the line and its separation from *ave atque vale* by the vocative *frater* grants the phrase emphasis. The phrase *in perpetuum* is unique in the Catullan corpus, though not uncommon in Latin texts or inscriptions, where it first appears in the Late Republic. The three-word phrase, however, appears in our textual evidence in only three places: the two noted above and in the 3rd century CE author Quintus Serenus Sammonicus (*Liber Medicinalis* 34.667). Given the phrases rarity in Latin literature, I propose that, in using the phrase, Caesar is alluding the Catullus’ lament for his brother.

A shared phrase, however unique, does not mean much unless we consider why Caesar might be alluding to Catullus here. The last part of the paper will propose an interpretation of the allusion. Catullus' poem, a lament for a brother dead and buried far away from family and friends, emphasizes grief, distance, and separation (see, recently, Seider 2016). The Britons wish the Romans dead or gone or both, but lament does not fit in their wish. Caesar, however, may feel grief for his unsuccessful campaign and grief for the men he lost in the campaign, but the demands of his narrative propaganda do not offer him much space to express it. A subtle allusion to Catullus' lament enables him to signal that sorrow in the midst of his overly positive account of a hasty retreat from Britain. The poem's emphasis on distance from Rome and the center of things may also contribute to Caesar's characterization of the Britons.

Bibliography

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