

Let me begin with a question: interrogative openings in Catullus
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In this paper I examine interrogative openings in Catullus' corpus, that is, the twenty instances¹ in which a question is posed within the first line of the poem. One can of course find questions in other parts of a Catullan poem: series of questions occur, for example, in the middle of c. 63, at the moment of Attis' self-realization, and at the end of c. 8, in a hostile address to Lesbia. But opening questions are special. Their position at the start of a poem immediately creates space for an interlocutor. The question expects a response, and thus the scene becomes dramatic and polyphonic from its very beginning.

Instead of trying to categorize the different features of these opening questions, my aim is to examine them against the background of Roman education, which relied heavily on the question-and-answer method of teaching. Whether analyzing language under the *grammaticus* or composing fictional speeches under the *rhetor*, a student would have been familiar with a teacher posing questions in order to analyze language of a text or to pose an ethical dilemma. So the rhetorical questions in poems such as 12, 29, or 88 prompt the poet to adopt the role of an orator as he exposes and charges individuals for moral failings. Catullus also uses an opening question to present a problem or puzzle. We see this technique in poem 85 (*odi et amo*): how can the opposing feelings of hatred and love occur simultaneously in a single man? And likewise in poem 7, the second kiss poem, how can we measure something like love?

The interaction required by these questions would, I suggest, remind the Roman reader of the classroom. Catullus draws on this analogy to encourage his readers to engage with his poetry using all of their analytical skills. But the result is surely not only a common intellectual experience of the poetry. The structure of the question-and-answer technique also forces a reader to recognize the gap between analysis and life, as well as between an exercise and poetic language. And this divide is what many have called "*the Catullan question*".²

¹ Cc. 1, 7, 9, 12, 14, 28, 29, 30, 33, 37, 40, 52, 79, 80, 81, 85, 88, 89, 104, 106.

² Cf. most recently the opening sentence of M. Lowrie, "Hic and absence," *CP* 101 (2006) 115-32.