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CATULLUS AND SPRING, CARMEN 46

by

ELAINE GAY SILZER

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Rosemary M. Nielsen
Supervisor

Robert J. Baker

E. D. Cahen

Date: July 4, 1985

DEDICATION

To my parents and my sister Judy in gratitude for their support through the years and to my dear friend Sandra Clements for her encouragement and belief in my ability to succeed.

ABSTRACT

C. 46 is unique as the only treatment of spring in Catullus' collection, and yet the poem has received little or no attention. The generic approach to the poem deals with the theme of either sailing or farewell. The autobiographical approach sees the journey as literal and undertaken in 56 B.C. when Catullus left Bithynia. Putnam combines poems 4, 31 and 46 into a 'trilogy' concerned with the problem of home and home-coming. The inclusion of an addressee named 'Catullus' is a problematic feature, but it does not require one to read the poem as simply subjective in intention. The ambiguous relation between Catullus' speaker and 'Catullus' establishes a play on the poem's referentiality and invites the reader to consider the problem of *personae* and their dramatic function.

The present study examines Catullus' use of spring as a paradigm of human living both in its pleasures and in its dangers for man. The cycle of the seasons initiated by the advent of spring is never completed in the poem, and this imperfection on the natural level serves as a warning to the alert reader. Spring becomes a model of comparison and difference for man, one that also reveals, metaphorically, the reasons for his reactions to, and limitations within, the season. Catullus' contribution in C. 46 must be set into the tradition of spring in classical poetry. Chapter One studies the topos in some major works of Meleager and Theocritus and in the Roman poet Lucretius. Chapter Two analyzes C. 46 in detail, with attention given to the techniques whereby

spring's impermanence is revealed, thus disclosing also the illusory hope of immortality that man places in it. Chapter Three considers some of the more ironic overtones of the relationship of spring to the human condition.

Paradoxically, *mens* is the sole source of human power within a season that stresses change as the only constant factor. As soon as man, like spring, sets out for new life, he follows an inevitable journey to the *terminus* of death, which in C. 46 is the *domus*, or womb-tomb. Impotent to halt the decline of spring which parallels his own decline, man can order, to some extent, his own view of life. *Mens* should enable him to focus on quality rather than quantity as he lives. Nevertheless, the persistent theme of seasonal agitation that is analogous to the theme of mental agitation in the poem suggests that, for Catullus' speaker, human emotions will always defeat the judgment and self-judgment of man's mind. Even the speaker appears to be a faulty thinker about spring's meaning by separating himself from the *comites* in farewell: he seems unwilling to undergo the same journey.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

C. 46 has, for the most part, been overlooked as a serious poem and, therefore, has received little critical attention. The fact that the poem opens with a reference to spring suggests a connection between C. 46 and spring convention in Greek poetry. And yet little has been done to demonstrate Catullus' possible indebtedness to the tradition of spring poetry and, more importantly, the possible changes he made.[1] In fact, the generic aspect of C. 46 has been all but obscured by critics who prefer to focus their attention on the name 'Catullus' in the poem rather than on the thematic element *ver*.[2] The inclusion of an addressee identified by the same name as that of the poet is, to be sure, one of the most problematic features of C. 46. It is not, however, necessary to assume, as Putnam and others have done, that the insertion of the name 'Catullus' labels the poem as autobiographical.[3] While it may be tempting to connect *Catulle* and *Phrygii campi* to the occasion of Catullus' stay in Bithynia in 56 B.C. under the praetor Memmius and to conclude, therefore, that *domo* refers to the home, Italy or more specifically Sirmio (cf. C. 31), which he is anxious to see, such an approach limits the poem unnecessarily. Unlike Putnam, who unites C. 46 in his discussion with C. 4 and C. 31, creating a 'trilogy,' which deals with the all important concept to Catullus of home and home-coming, I prefer to follow Copley's general principle that a poem is its own world.[4] Within the world of C. 46, then, it is up to the reader to decide upon the meaning of the

significant terms ver, prata and aestas, using the clues provided by the poet within the poem.

My purpose in this study of C. 46 is to examine the poem as offering a philosophical statement on spring. Spring (ver) is at once a time of new beginnings and also the harbinger of dissolution and inactivity (winter), that is to say, spring initiates a progression towards the inevitable decline of the seasons. In effect, then, the cycle of the seasons initiated by the advent of spring in C. 46 symbolizes the boundaries within which man must spend his allotted days. As I shall demonstrate, C. 46 presents spring as a model of comparison and attempts to illustrate man's reaction to the limitations of his existence.

Before I develop my interpretation of Catullus' spring poem, it will be useful to examine in Chapter One the treatment of spring both in the poetry of Catullus' Hellenistic predecessors and in the work of his contemporary, Lucretius. Catullus is clearly drawing upon a Hellenistic tradition in his choice of spring as the central thematic element of a poem.[5] My discussion will focus on two poems from the Greek Anthology: one by Meleager and one by Theocritus. In order to complete the presentation of spring, I shall include a brief discussion of its portrayal by Lucretius, for in choosing to overlook Venus and the sexual implications of spring, Catullus makes a dramatic departure from the conventional presentation of spring's feminine nature. In Chapter Two, C. 46 will be analyzed in detail with special attention paid to the techniques by which Catullus makes the reader aware of spring's impermanent character and, therefore, of the illusory hope that it holds out to man of immortality. Chapter Three attempts to examine in a summary way the more ironic and sophisticated implications of Catullus' development of the relationship of spring to the human condition.

NOTES

1. J. J. Wilhelm, *The Cruelest Month: Spring, Nature and Love in Classical and Medieval Lyrics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), p. 4, discusses the importance of Catullus' spring poem for later English poetry and says "he [Catullus] becomes sentimental about Rome, about friends, about friendship (*amicitia*, not *amor*); essentially, he wants to replace nature with society."

2. Francis Cairns, *Generic Composition in Greek and Roman Poetry* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1972), pp. 44-45, describes C. 46 as a *syntaktikon*, that is, a speech of the departing traveller. Although Cairns locates what is alleged to be the rhetorical formula of the poem, he does not discuss the connection between the theme of C. 46 and earlier examples of the *topos* of spring. His approach to C. 46 is biographical; he believes that the joy relates literally to Catullus' relief at leaving his position as *cohors* under Memmius in Bithynia. For a brief examination of the generic background of C. 46, see also Oskar Hezel, *Catull und das Griechische Epigramm* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1932), pp. 22-26 (hereafter cited as Hezel, "Catull").

3. The major studies in this area are M. C. J. Putnam, "Catullus' Journey (Carmen 4)," *CP* 57 (1962), pp. 10-19 (hereafter cited as Putnam, "C. 4"); T. Birt, "Zu Carmina Minora," *Philologus* 63 (1904), pp. 444-45 (hereafter cited as Birt, "Carmina"); F. Stoessl, *C. Valerius Catullus: Mensch, Leben, Dichtung* (Meisenheim am Glan: Hain, 1977), pp. 168-70 (hereafter cited as Stoessl, *Catullus*); and S. G. P. Small, *Catullus. A Reader's Guide to the Poems* (New York: University Press of America, 1983), pp. 76-77.

4. F. O. Copley, "Catullus c. 4: The World of the Poem," *TAPA* 89 (1958), pp. 9-10: ". . . a poem is itself. It presents its own world to its readers and demands that they accept it as true for the purposes of the poem and not for anything else. The world so created may be factual, but equally it may be completely or partially fictitious. . . . the world of the poem is what it is, and only if we accept it as such will we ever find out what the poet wanted us to know."

5. The only major description of spring before the Hellenistic tradition is found in a poem by Ibycus. Like Catullus in C. 46, Ibycus draws a parallel between the violent storms of the natural season and the storm-like turmoil of human emotions in the season. Cf. *Greek Lyric Poetry. A Selection*, ed. by D. A. Campbell (Glasgow: University Press, 1972), fragment 286.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ROOTS OF C. 46

The Greek Anthology does not treat the theme of spring extensively. It does, however, provide a wealth of information about the stock features of spring. Spring is the season of renewal; it is also a time of release from the fetters that winter imposes on the natural world, the world of animals and the world of man. In the Hellenistic spring convention, as we shall see, spring is generally a creative and liberating season, and it is accompanied, naturally enough, by sounds of celebration. Meleager offers the most comprehensive view of the theme of spring's return and man's jubilation.

Χείματος ἠνεμόεντος ἀπ' αἰθέρος οἰχομένοιο,
πορφυρέη μείδησε φερανθέος εἴαρος ὥρη.
γαῖα δὲ κυανέῃ χλοερὴν ἐστέψατο ποίην,
καὶ φυτὰ θηλήσαντα νέοις ἐκόμησε πετήλοις.
οἳ δ' ἀπαλὴν πίνοντες ἀιξιφύτου δρόσον Ἠοῦς
λειμῶνες γελόωσιν, ἀνοιγομένοιο ῥόδοιο.
χαίρει καὶ σύριγγι νομεὺς ἐν ὄρεσσι λιγαίνων,
καὶ πολιοῖς ἐρίφοις ἐπιτέρπεται αἰπόλος αἰγῶν.
ἤδη δὲ πλώουσιν ἐπ' εὐρέα κύματα ναῦται
πνοιῇ ἀπημάντῳ Ζεφύρου λίνα κολπώσαντος.
ἤδη δ' εὐάζουσι φερεσταφύλῳ Διονύσῳ,
ἄνθεϊ βοτρυόεντος ἐρεφάμενοι τρύχα κισσοῦ.
ἔργα δὲ τεχνήεντα βοηγενέεσσι μελίσσαις
καλὰ μέλει, καὶ σύμβλῳ ἐφήμεναι ἐργάζονται
λευκὰ πολυτρήτοιο νεόρρυτα κάλλεα κηροῦ.
πάντη δ' ὀρνίθων γενεὴ λιγύφωνον ἀείδει,
ἀλκυόνες περὶ κῦμα, χελιδόνες ἀμφὶ μέλαθρα,
κύκνος ἐπ' ὄχθαισιν ποταμοῦ, καὶ ὑπ' ἄλσος ἀηδών.
εἰ δὲ φυτῶν χαίρουσι κόμαι, καὶ γαῖα τέθηλεν,
συρίζει δὲ νομεύς, καὶ τέρπεται εὔκομα μῆλα,
καὶ ναῦται πλώουσι, Διώνυσος δὲ χορεύει,
καὶ μέλπει πετεεινά, καὶ ὠδίνουσι μέλισσαι,
πῶς οὐ χοὴ καὶ ἀοιδὸν ἐν εἴαρι καλὸν ἀεῖσαι;

(Windy winter has left the skies, and the
purple season of flowery spring smiles. The
dark earth garlands herself in green herbage,
and the plants bursting into leaf wave their
newborn tresses. The meadows drinking in the
nourishing dew of dawn laugh as the roses open.
The shepherd on the hill delights to play
shrilly on the pipes, and the goatherd joys in
his white kids. Already the mariners sail over
the broad billows, their sails bellied by the
kindly Zephyr. Already, crowning their heads
with the bloom of the berried ivy, men cry evoe!
to Dionysus the giver of the grape. The bees
that the bull's carcase generates bethink them
of their artful labors, and seated on the hive
they build the fresh white loveliness of their
many-celled comb. The race of birds sing loud
everywhere: the kingfishers by the waves, the
swallows round the house, the swan by the river's
brink, the nightingale in the grove. If the
foliage of plants rejoices, and the earth flour-
ishes, and the shepherd pipes, and the fleecy
flocks disport themselves, and sailors sail,
and Dionysus dances, and the birds sing, and
the bees bring forth, how should a singer too
not sing beautifully in the spring?)[1]

As soon as winter's winds have been dispersed by the Zephyr of spring, it is time to celebrate. For each spring is a reenactment of the original act of creation. Meleager portrays spring in terms of both sights and sounds, thus evoking a visual and an aural impression of spring's return.

In the poem spring is immediately personified. Meleager presents spring as a female who smiles (μειδάω), who adorns herself, who waves her plant-tresses, and whose folds of meadows laugh (γελάω). In short, spring is Mother Earth; she is the eternal feminine, the regenerative principle. The creative aspects of this spring-woman are further emphasized by Meleager's description of her waters: dew (5), broad billows (9), waves (17) and a river's brink (18). The dependency of all life upon moisture for flourishing growth is illustrated, in

particular, by the poet's reference to meadows 'drinking in the nourishing dew of dawn' (5). Spring also has a diverse landscape in the poem: rose-covered meadows, and hills and groves decked in purple and green. These features serve in lieu of human dress to suggest the contours and complexion of spring. In addition, Meleager's spring figure has a variety of attendants, creatures who depend on her coming: kingfishers, swallows, swans, nightingales, bees, fleecy flocks and white kids. The inclusion of animals described as infants and pure or blameless (cf. white kids) reiterates the poet's focus on spring as a time of renewal for all of life, not just for the natural world. There is an unblemished quality attached to all new things, as the poet implies in his description of honey as 'the fresh white loveliness of the many-celled comb' (15). By extension, the idea of purity may also apply to spring as a new creation itself in the poem, a visual delight. Man also has a place in the beauties and pleasure of spring.

Meleager presents man as, first, a protector figure, namely, shepherd and goatherd. Such an image is in keeping with the nurturing aspects of spring that are unfolding. The goatherd and shepherd must remain vigilant especially in the season that brings new animal births. Man is also presented as a sailor, and his voyage brings him back to a close connection with the spring landscape on the waters calmed by the warming Zephyrs; these winds are gentle and make sailing a pleasure.[2] The image of the sailor, therefore, also allows the reader to see spring, in her Zephyrs, as the protectress of those who venture out to welcome the season. On a visual level, then, spring is surrounded with a number of elements, natural, animal and human, that create an impression of spring as a time of sensual pleasures for the reader to behold with his

eye as well as his mind. The poem also contains a variety of words denoting the aural beauties of spring, that is, the sounds of nature in spring.

Meleager offers the reader a verbal display of the sounds associated with spring, and the 'voices' of spring are conveyed by the poet's emphasis on description rather than on sound patterns. The shepherd is portrayed as a musician who takes pleasure in his pipes (7, χαίρει καὶ σύριγγι) and who is described in this role as clear-voiced (7, λιγαίνων) like the birds who appear later in the poem (16, λιγύφωνον). In springtime men also give thanks to Dionysus for providing grapes; their gratitude is expressed vocally, that is, they shout 'evoe' (11, εὐάζουσι) in praise of the god of wine and its pleasures. Even the natural world joins in with the excitement of expressing its joy at spring's arrival as the plants, like man, say Hello! (19, χαίρουσι; cf. 7, χαίρει). And everywhere (16, πάντη) the air is filled with the sounds of birds in song (16, ἀείδει): kingfishers, swallows, the swan and, finally, the nightingale, the songstress (18, ἀηδών; cf. ἀείδω) of spring. The extended sequence of 'if' clauses (19-22) which follow the bird-song passage allows Meleager to do two things: first, he can review the features of spring, both visual and aural; second, and more importantly, he can build up tension as the reader approaches the apodosis of the condition. Meleager further dramatizes the apodosis by casting it as a rhetorical question, as well as the climax of the poem. The question invites the reader to answer the poet, but in a way that is in keeping with Meleager's celebration of spring. The question requires that Meleager's poem be judged in the way that it harmonizes the various aspects of spring. He asks to be viewed as the singer (ἀοιδόν) whose

duty (χρή) it is to sing (ἀείσαι) not only like the bird-songs in spring, but to incorporate in his song every aspect of spring's beauties. The rhetorical question distinguishes Meleager as the most important element of the season because it is through him that spring comes to birth as part of a literary genre.

In spite of Meleager's emphasis upon the beauties of spring, the poem turns in such a way to emphasize his role not only as the encomiast of spring, but also as the singer of some of its underlying reality. There are traces in the poem of the labors that are to be associated with spring's arrival. Meleager mentions three kinds of men who respond to spring by returning immediately (9, ἤδη) to the tasks that have been suspended during the winter.[3] They are the shepherd, the goatherd and the sailor, each of whom is an important and real participant in spring. Furthermore, these are men whose work demands patience, skill and a sense of the meaning of daily routine and orderly patterns of behavior. Meleager's reference to sailing best exemplifies, on the human level, the connection between spring and work. Although the spring breeze is described as harmless (10, ἀπημάντῳ), suggesting that spring sailing brings man no difficulties, travel by sea was generally considered to be an endeavor full of dangers.[4] Meleager's specific reference to the breeze as 'lacking woes' implies that sailing is just as often a trade involving personal risk and some hardship. Meleager might have glossed the breezes as 'kindly' and the fact that he does not provides an opportunity for the alert reader to see in the connection of spring and the resumption of sailing the possibility that man's labors may entail peril and may not necessarily yield productive results. Meleager appears satisfied with merely the hint of such realism, but it is, nevertheless,

a suggestive touch.

The poet also draws a connection between spring and work on the animal level. In lines 13-14 there are several terms specifically referring to work effort. The bees are '*concerned*' (μέλει) over the 'fair *works* which have been *wrought* by their *skill*' (ἔργα τεχνήεντα). In addition, they work (ἐργάζονται) at building the perforations that hold within the flowing whiteness of honey. Furthermore, in the penultimate conditional sentence of the poem, the bees are portrayed as struggling in the *labor* of giving birth (22, ὠδίνουσι) to honey. Unlike the lack of productivity implied in the sailors' work, the bees' honey is the finest sign of their productive role in spring.[5] Meleager's emphasis upon their industriousness makes the bees emblematic, as are ants elsewhere in the Anthology, of the kind of devotion to work and order that underlines Meleager's presentation of renewal in spring.

When we view the concluding lines of the poem with this idea in mind, the theme of work becomes even more prominent. In three of the four pairs of protases of the condition, Meleager establishes either a cause and effect relationship or a reciprocality between animal life and the work they do. For example, in line 19 it is almost because the foliage of the plants rejoices (χαίρουσι) that the earth responds with more blossoms (τέθηλεν). The cause and effect relation may be blurred but the line at least shows the effect of their work function upon one another. This sense is even clearer in the parallel drawn between the song of the birds and the work of the bees in line 22. In this line Meleager is, of course, foreshadowing his own function as both singer and worker in the poem's conclusion. Like the bees, the poet-singer struggles in the act of giving birth in music to a 'fair' (καλόν) song about spring. This

song is like the white purity of honey, for it crowns the season with its glory.

Mixed among these more straightforward descriptions of work in spring is Meleager's unusual association in line 21 between the sea-work of sailors and the dance-work of Dionysus. This parallel between the labor of man and god is perhaps the most complex part of Meleager's spring song. Earlier in the poem (11-12) there is an extended portrayal, right after the sailing passage, of Dionysus as 'the bringer of the grape' (φερεσταφύλῳ) and the god to whom men, perhaps the sailors, crown their hair with ivy wreathed with the blossom of the grape (βοτρυόεντος). Dionysus has a long tradition of powerful and dangerous associations with men who would be his devotees. Although Meleager does not sketch-in some of this history, it would, nevertheless, be implicit in the name and the attributes of the god. In an anonymous poem elsewhere in the Anthology (*AP* 9.524), we can find many of the attributes that Meleager may intend us to understand in his own use of the god. Chief among these attributes are those that connect the grape and wine with the *power* and *freedom from pain* and personal anxiety that Meleager brings up explicitly in his description of the lively breezes that accompany sailors at sea. But, as we have seen, the sailors' work is not completely free from potential dangers and from worries about the risks run on the springtime seas. The collocation at the end of Meleager's poem between the sailors and Dionysus intimates that his wine and the inspiration of his dance are the means by which human anxiety over work is relieved momentarily. It is significant that in the anonymous poem Dionysus is celebrated as the god who 'breaks the mind' (18, ὀξύνοον). The bringer of the grape is a god who epitomizes, and who works at achieving, man's loss of rational self-control.

"Like the uncontrollable winds that pose an external threat to men at sea, the god and his grape bring about a danger but one that attacks insidiously because it is from within.[7] As we shall see in our discussion of Catullus' poem, his spring will also be connected with the very human problem of exercising the mind to control fears related to the full meaning of the season.

In summary, then, Meleager's encomium of spring focuses almost entirely upon spring as a delightful (20, τέρπεται; 19, χαίρουσι) season of flourishing growth (19, τέθηλεν) filled with the songs (20, συρίζει; 22, μέλπει) and bustling activities (21, πλώουσι; 21, χορεύει; 22, ὠδίνουσι) of creatures, god and men. Beneath this idyllic picture lurk traces of spring's 'otherness,' namely, the reality of hard work, personal risk and the ambiguous comfort that Dionysus and his wine bring as soothers of men's fears.

Let us now consider Theocritus' major work on spring. In his verses he limits the diverse springtime landscape presented by Meleager to one small grove. Within this physical setting Theocritus describes a scene in which a speaker is addressing a goatherd.

Τήναν τὰν λαύραν, ὅθι ταὶ δρύες, αἰπόλε, κάμψας,
σύκινον εὑρησεῖς ἀρτιγλυφὲς ξόανον,
τρισκελές, αὐτόφλοιον, ἀνούατον· ἀλλὰ φάλητι
ταιδογόνῳ δυνατὸν Κύπριδος ἔργα τελεῖν.
ἔρκος δ' εὔερον περιδέδρομεν· ἀέναον δὲ
ῥεῖθρον ἀτὸ σπιλάδων πάντοσε τηλεθάει
δάφναις καὶ μύρτοισι καὶ εὐώδει κυπαρίσσῳ,
ἔνθα πέριξ κέχυται ζοτρυόταις ἕλικι
ἄμπελος· εἰαρινοὶ δὲ λύγγυσθόγγοισιν ἀοιδαῖς
κόσσυφοι ἀχεῦσιν ποικιλότραυλα μέλη·
ξουθαὶ δ' ἀδονίδες μυρυρίσμασιν ἀνταχεῦσαι
μέλπουσι στόμασιν τὰν μελίγηρυν ὅπα.
ἕξεο δὴ τηνεῦ, καὶ τῷ χαρίεντι Πριάπῳ
εὔχου ἀποστέρξαι τοὺς Δάφνιδός με τόκους,

καὐδῆς ἀπορρέξαι χύμαρον καλόν. ἢν δ' ἀναμύσῃ,
τοῦδε τυχὼν ἐθέλω τρισσὰ θύη τελέσαι·
δεξῶ γὰρ δαμάλαν, λάσιον τράγον, ἄρνα τὸν ἰσχω
σαπύταν· νεύοι δ' εὐμενέως ὁ θεός.

(Goatherd, on turning the corner of that path
where the oaks are, thou shalt find a newly
carved image made of fig bough, three-forked,
with the bark still on, without ears, but able
with its generative phallus to do the work of
Aphrodite. Round it is a most holy hedge,
and a perennial stream, issuing from the rocks,
feeds on all sides abundance of laurel, myrtle,
and sweet-scented cypress, round which curl the
tendrils of the vine, mother of the grape. In
spring the shrill song of the blackbirds echoes
here with its varied notes, and the brown night-
ingales pour from their throats their honeyed
voice in response. Sit here and pray to kind
Priapus to make me fall out of love with Daphnis,
and sacrifice at once to him a fine kid. But if
he grants the prayer I will kill him a heifer,
a shaggy billygoat, and the stalled lamb I have.
May the god be benevolent and grant it.)[8]

Through the speaker's invitation to the goatherd, Theocritus invites the reader into his springtime landscape as he guides the way along a path shaded by oak trees (1) into a clearing surrounded (5, περιδέδρομεν) by a hedge, with laurel, myrtle and cypress trees on all sides (6, πάντοσε), entwined (8, πέριξ κέχυται) with grave vines. The dominant element in this description is the presentation of spring as a physical enclosure. The inclusion of nightingales who sing alternately with blackbirds (10, ἀχεῦσιν; 11, ἀνταχεῦσαι) suggests that the enclosure is a grove (cf. Meleager 363, 18, ὑπ' ἄλσος ἀηδών). Unlike Meleager, Theocritus describes not only the various songs of birds, but also the different tonal qualities of their songs. The songs of the blackbird are voiced in clear (9, λιγυφθόγγοισιν) and varied (10, [illegible]) tones, while nightingales warble (11, μινυρίσμασιν), stirring from their

throats honey-like (12, μελίγηρυν) sounds. Dionysus too is alluded to briefly in the reference to grape vines which stream forth (8, ἀέχονται) like the wine they produce and like the perpetual stream which abounds (6, τηλεθάει) in vegetation. Theocritus, therefore, presents spring as a nourishing enclosure within which various elements prosper. Unlike Meleager, however, he is not primarily concerned with the portrayal of spring's visual and aural delights. Instead, the flourishing and secluded springtime landscape serves as the background for a figure, a wooden statue (2, σύκινον ξόανον), whose function in spring is not immediately clear.[9]

Almost from the outset the poem builds upon the feeling of initiation into some hidden feature of the grove. In lines 1-4, the goatherd is told that he will behold a statue. A list of epithets describing what soon appears to be a divine figure is given a dramatic tone by the use of asyndaton, a device that piles up and thereby draws attention to each of the god's traits. The figure is 'made of fig,' 'newly carved,' a planed image, 'three-legged,' made of bark 'finely hewn,' and 'earless.'[10] This chain of epithets culminates, through the effective enjambment of lines 3-4, on the speaker's description of the god's phallus as 'that which begets children.' The reference to the phallus allows the reader to identify this grotesque, three-legged figure as the rural god Priapus. But the name itself is withheld until line 13, an effect that heightens the mysterious sanctuary of the grove and the statue that is its central meaning. Priapus is traditionally a god whose haunts are wild-life gardens and the woodland pastures of flocks.[11] The poem's emphasis upon his fertile capabilities makes a suggestive connection between the luxuriant growth in the grove and the phallus that

can create 'children' of all kinds. And yet this phallus produces children that by the end of the poem must be slaughtered, a sacrifice of the young offered to Priapus, not to bring about, as might have been expected, the fertility of the land, but rather to bring about the end of an unhappy love affair. The former ritual would simply reaffirm the positive link between life, death and fertility; the latter exposes the trivializing of life, death and fertility. Priapus' powers of fertility and sexuality have both a creative and a harmful potential as the poem develops.

The phallus is further defined as that which 'brings to accomplishment' the works of Cypris (4, Κύπριδος ἔργα). In mythology, Aphrodite is the mother of Priapus, and so it is fitting that the male god and his grove are complemented by allusions to the source of his sexually creative powers.[12] Aphrodite's description as the Cyprian maiden brings to mind the waters wherein she was born out of the act of castrating Uranus.[13] The expression 'the works of Cypris' refers, of course, to her role as the goddess of beauty, love and the arts and blandishments of love-making.[14] It is important to note that the speaker reduces the powers of Cyprian Aphrodite to a relative unimportance. That is, the pleasures and pain of love and lovers are really brought about by her son Priapus. Her son as a male figure brings about and, therefore, controls the creative and sexual matings more traditionally associated with Aphrodite.

The description of the grove that follows does, however, contain several allusions to Aphrodite and her emblems of love. First, myrtle (7) is sacred to Aphrodite, and it is the blossom that lovers traditionally garland themselves with.[15] Second, the reference to

nightingales as ἀηδόνες (11), a poetic variant of ἄηδον-, echoes the name of Adonis, the beloved of Aphrodite. Finally, laurel trees (7, δάφναι) allude to Apollo's love for Daphne and, more importantly, foreshadow the speaker's mention of Daphnis (14), the object of his own love. By including traditional signs of Aphrodite in the grove, the speaker characterizes it as a kind of garden of love. At the same time, however, each of these mythological allusions has been to an instance of ill-fated, unhappy love. These tragic connotations of love underline the springtime, fertile and masculine character of the grove. Priapus holds sway over female sexual powers that have a dramatically dark and harmful side, as the poem's conclusion demonstrates.

In lines 13-18, the poem's themes of spring, fertility and unhappy love are woven together into a dramatic moment that begins in lines 13-14 with the speaker's command to the goatherd to take a seat (ἧσο) and to offer a prayer (εὔχου) to Priapus. Next, the goatherd, who in Meleager's poem is a nurturing figure, is commanded by Theocritus' speaker to perform a sacrifice of one of his own innocent animal charges. The goatherd is being used as a servant, ordered by the speaker to slaughter an animal victim in order that Priapus might cure the speaker's love desire. Thus, personal sacrifice, the death of an innocent and love are joined together as parts of the spring world and realities of Priapus.[16]

As the poem concludes, the speaker reveals himself as perhaps one of the darkest elements of his description of Priapus. The speaker is fully prepared, he announces, to triple the animal sacrifice if Priapus accomplishes his prayers. This bargaining with divine favor suggests how capriciously both the mortal Daphnis and the animal offspring

of nature are used at the hands of the lover. Theocritus' spring poem emphasizes a reversal of role-playing. Both goatherd and speaker-lover are figuratively stained with blood, and the phallic god of fertility is called upon to overthrow rather than to further the work of Aphrodite. The surprising turns that the poem takes and the emphasis on death in the closing lines asks the reader to question Theocritus' spring.

In the context of death, what is the meaning of spring? Theocritus' collocation of the two concepts transforms spring into something unreliable, something that does not correspond to the reader's more conventional ideas of poetry about spring. Perhaps the poet is alluding to the transient nature of spring, namely, that spring is subject to dissolution. By making the termination of love the turning point of the poem, Theocritus is stressing not only the instability of the emotion of love but, more pertinently, the instability of spring. In fact, the poem offers love as a paradigm of spring by making love and spring the setting of sacrifice and death.

In summary, Theocritus' spring poem emphasizes the masculine and divine figure of Priapus as the center of the season. The poem is framed by a lengthy and detailed description of his statue and by the noun 'god' (ὁ θεός), the last word of the speaker's command to the goatherd. There is a tension in Priapus' grove between the female powers of mating and the male powers of overseeing that mating process, and Priapus is clearly the superior figure. In Theocritus' poem spring is not the conventional time of renewal, but rather the time of sex, transitory desires and actions undertaken to rid oneself of Cyprian Aphrodite.[17] It is significant that, although Aphrodite and her sexual powers are diminished and, in fact, portrayed as the negative features of

Theocritus' spring, they form the most positive aspects of Lucretius' later encomium of spring.

In the Roman poetry of the Late Republican period, the most extensive treatment of spring other than Catullus' C. 46 is to be found in the first part (1-20) of Lucretius' proem to Book One of *De Rerum Natura*. The epic is a treatise on the connection between the atomic theory and the moral code of Epicureanism. He begins the proem with an invocation to Venus, one of the major figures to whom he returns time and again throughout the poem. The invocation itself may be divided into two sets of approximately twenty lines each; lines 1-20 describe Venus and her vital connection to the natural world that is created by the flow of the eternal atoms; and, second, lines 21-44 describe the power of Venus' *voluptas* to draw man (symbolized by Mars) away from those activities that rob him of emotional calm and a desire for intellectual pursuits. In both sections, Venus is represented, at least initially, as having a major role to play in Lucretius' setting forth of his philosophical doctrines.

One of the most interesting features of lines 1-20 is how quickly Lucretius moves from a formal invocation to Venus, his goddess-muse figure, into a detailed catalogue of nature in all her aspects, earth, animal, vegetation and heavens. Lucretius seems unwilling to eulogize Venus without establishing for the reader the greatest source of his own admiration for the goddess, which is her intimate association with springtime nature.

> Aeneadum genetrix, hominum divumque voluptas,
> alma Venus, caeli subter labentia signa
> quae mare navigerum, quae terras frugiferentis
> concelebras, per te quoniam genus omne animantum
> concipitur visitque exortum lumina solis: 5

te, dea, te fugiunt venti, te nubila caeli
adventumque tuum, tibi suavis daedala tellus
summittit flores, tibi rident aequora ponti
placatumque nitet diffuso lumine caelum.
nam simul ac species patefactast verna diei
et reserata viget genitabilis aura favoni,
aeriae primum volucres te, diva, tuumque
significant initum perculsae corda tua vi.
inde ferae pecudes persultant pabula laeta
et rapidos tranant amnis: ita capta lepore
te sequitur cupide quo quamque inducere pergis.
denique per maria ac montis fluviosque rapacis
frondiferasque domos avium camposque virentis
omnibus incutiens blandum per pectora amorem
efficis ut cupide generatim saecla propagent.

(Mother of Aeneas' sons, joy of men and gods,
Venus the life-giver, who beneath the gliding
stars of heaven fillest with thy presence the
sea that carries the ships and the land that
bears the crops; for thanks to thee every tribe
of living things is conceived, and comes forth
to look upon the light of the sun. Thou, goddess,
thou dost turn to flight the winds and the clouds
of heaven, thou at thy coming; for thee earth,
the quaint artificer, puts forth her sweet-scented
flowers; for thee the levels of ocean smile, and
the sky, its anger past, gleams with spreading
light. For when once the face of the spring day
is revealed and the teeming breeze of the west wind
is loosed from prison and blows strong, first the
birds of the air herald thee, goddess, and thine
approach, their hearts thrilled with thy might.
Then wild beasts and cattle bound over the fat
pastures, and swim the racing rivers; so surely
enchained by delight each follows thee in hot
desire whither thou dost hasten to lead him on.
Then, through seas and mountains and tearing
rivers and the leafy haunts of birds and verdant
plains thou dost strike fond love into the
hearts of all, and makest them in hot desire
to renew the stock of their races, each after
his own kind.)[18]

In lines 1-2 Venus is given three epithets. She is, first, the maternal sire of a race of Roman men (*Aeneadum genetrix*). The male-female union in the opening phrase stresses the matriarchal origin of life. Secondly, the epithet *voluptas* portrays Venus as the embodiment of sensual

pleasure irresistible to men and gods alike. *Voluptas* designates her both as the goddess who controls man's desires and as herself the greatest object of desire.[19] Finally, she is given a name and characterized as nourishing and supportive (*alma Venus*). By enjambing the phrase *alma Venus*, that is, by withholding the name of the addressee until the second line, the person and the power of the goddess are heightened. Venus, then, is depicted as a mother who sustains life by supplying physical nourishment (*alma* is a cognate of *alere*) and, insofar as she feeds man, Venus is at the root of all human life. The nurturing presence of Venus fills (4, *concelebras*) every terrain (2, *caeli subter labentia signa*), land, sea and sky; in Lucretius she is one step below Jupiter, which gives to the female more ascendency than we saw earlier in Theocritus' poem.[20]

Venus' powers of regeneration connect her with the earth. For the lands which produce crops (3, *terras frugiferentis*) parallel Venus' role as a provider (*alma*).[21] Lucretius further develops the identification between Venus as mother and earth as mother in the following lines. For example, all creatures, like the flowers sent up from below (8, *summittit*) by the earth, rise up (5, *exortum*) and enter life, the realm of light (5, *lumina solis*) under the guidance of Venus.[22] In addition, the description of the earth as a 'cunning artificer' (7, *laedala tellus*) characterizes earth as the mother figure who weaves, here within the 'house' of nature. Earth is an extension of Venus' role as the sire-ess of the race of man, for earth weaves together the beauties of plants and animals that adorn the landscape and give pleasure to mankind. The adjective *daedala* is comparable to Venus' epithets *voluptas* and *alma*, because all three suggest the power of the female to create things that

sustain and give joy to life.[23] Through the similarity of their actions and their consequent benefactions to man, therefore, Venus becomes symbolically the earth figure of this springtime scene.

Lucretius does not explicitly refer to spring until line 10. Many of the elements, however, of Venus' portrayal are reminiscent of Meleager's description of spring. Like the winds of winter (*AP* 363.1) whose flight signals the return of spring in the Hellenistic poem, winds and clouds flee at the approach of Venus (6-7). Lucretius' landscape springs into flower (7-8) just as the earth in Meleager's poem decked herself in foliage (*AP* 363.3). In the Latin poem the seas laugh (8, *rident*), perhaps an echo of Meleager's laughing meadows (*AP* 363.5f.).[24] Lucretius' emphasis on calm (9, *placatum*), clear (9, *nitet diffuso lumine*) skies and level seas (8, *aequora*) is reminiscent of Meleager's description of springtime sailing. The difference between the Latin and the Hellenistic poems in their description of springtime sailing is that, for Lucretius, the female, namely Venus, takes over the prerogatives of the male, namely, Zephyr's role (3). The signs of Meleager's spring are transformed by Lucretius into ways of celebrating Venus' control over all creation. Finally, there is every indication in the first nine lines of the proem that Lucretius intends us to see spring: the lines describe a time of conception at all levels of nature and this is logically the time of spring.

The introduction of spring into the proem is contained within the remarkable expression 'the spring veneer of day is made manifest' or 'manifests itself' (10). The noun *species* refers particularly to outward appearances or surface beauty, and so limits spring to something external, perhaps even something superficial. The noun is found several times

throughout the epic and is used as a key term to describe the purpose of his work as one involving the revelation of 'the outward form and the inner law of nature.'[25] On rereading, the term in the proem takes on new meaning because it signals that Lucretius may be suggesting an 'inner law' or a more philosophical potential in spring.

The spring passage (10-20) may be divided into two sections. The first section (10-11) reiterates the function of Venus as the *genetrix* of [illegible]thing in the season. Lines 12-20 appear to define in detail the meaning and consequences of Venus' *voluptas*. By connecting Venus so closely with spring in this passage, not only does Lucretius identify the goddess with the season, but he also invites us to look below the surface appearance of them both. In lines 10-11 Venus, in her 'appearance' (*species*) as spring, has four positive qualities. She brings about release (*reserata*), activity/prosperity (*viget*), regeneration (*genitabilis*) and, of course, the 'favoring' west wind (*aura favoni*). These epithets build up to Venus' identification with the west wind. Yet below the 'appearance' of a thriving spring, there is a tug-of-war going on between the male breeze who brings warmth (11) and the goddess who controls the breeze. The description of the breeze as *genitabilis* recalls Venus' opening epithet *genetrix* and her domination over life-giving. The west wind is the instrument through which Venus as spring oversees the return of warming breezes.[26]

In the next section, lines 13-20, Venus' control over the male heavenly breezes is complemented by her control over the animal life on the land. Birds are the first to announce the arrival of springtime Venus (13), but not of their own volition (13, *perculsae corda tua vi*). The participle *perculsae* denotes physical impact of any sort; it is a

word of assault. This image of attack is continued in the phrase *tua vi*.[27] *Vis* is a military word, normally associated with masculine, physical powers and with military groups that personify that power.[28] Within two brief lines (12-13) there is a remarkable transition from the lighthearted tone of springtime birds to the aggressive connotations of Venus' ability to strike and wound their hearts. The theme of Venus' spring as a time of conflict and subjugation continues throughout the rest of the passage.

The best example of the disruptive potential of Venus as spring is to be found in lines 14-16, where domestic animals, driven into the frenzy of the mating instinct (*ferae*), risk crossing raging rivers once they have been captured by Venus' charm. Their blind obedience is the clearest demonstration of what Venus' *voluptas* in spring really entails. Lucretius uses the noun *lepor* (15) and the adverb *cupide* (16, 20) as equivalents to the meaning of *voluptas*. As the passage ends (20) all the generations of birds and animals repeat through their submissive response to Venus' charm the same unthinking obedience that led the flocks to enter the dangerous springtime waters. Under the control of Lucretius' springtime Venus, everything is subjugated to her desire (*capta lepore*). By the end of line 20 the reader recognizes that Venus entices everything into existence and into submission in springtime.

Venus' domination in the proem's presentation of spring is significant, for it is through the revelation of her multi-faceted character that Lucretius demonstrates his own view of the 'inner law' of spring. Elsewhere in Lucretius, spring, and therefore implicitly Venus, represents the beginning of a natural cycle, a cycle which operates through the combinations and motions of atoms (*motus et coetus*) and which

can be named Venus through metonymy.[29] Every event in this cycle involves physical contact between the constantly-moving atoms.[30] Touch, therefore, is the foundation of all existence.[31] The same blows that bestow life by the combinations they produce also bring about death, the dissolution of the combinations.[32] Death, therefore, the final change that every created thing in Lucretius' argument undergoes, is the result of physical blows, like those endured in spring by all living creatures at the hands of Venus. Spring, then, with its emphasis upon blows, contact and unions out of parts of the natural world, sets up the model for the way in which Lucretius' atomic plan operates in general.

In summary, each of the poems or passages discussed above develops, with different emphases, both conventional and unconventional sides of spring. Conventionally, the signs of spring are the natural beauties of the variety of birds and their songs, young animal life, such as kids and lambs, flowers, bees, maritime activity, gentle west winds and groves or woodland enclosures. But the most important contribution made by the three poets is the way in which they transform spring into a more sophisticated and subtle statement. First, Meleager uses the spring motif as a way of demonstrating and heightening his own position of importance as a poet. In other words, just as spring on the natural level is the creator of life, so too is the poet on the aesthetic level the creator of the meaning of that life. Second, Theocritus' poem adds seriousness, on a philosophical level, to spring and its conventions. Through the theme of love and its relation to animal sacrifice as the means of controlling capricious human desires, spring becomes a season of ambiguity. Theocritus' speaker makes the spring enclosure a place of tension between the male and the female, fertility and sexuality.

Theocritus never resolves this tension. Finally, Lucretius clearly uses spring as the first step, or as a model, for a philosophical treatise on the necessary interrelationship of birth and death on all levels of life. For him, spring is the means of focusing upon the hidden meanings and ambiguities of life. In short, his invocation to springtime Venus is the premise on which, that is, the first beginnings of, everything that comes to birth in the epic.[33] As we shall see in Chapter Two, Catullus incorporates elements of each of these approaches into his own poem on spring.

NOTES

1. *The Greek Anthology*, ed. with transl. by W. R. Paton, Vol. 3, 9.363 (London: Heinemann, 1960). All further citations to the *Greek Anthology* will be as *AP*. I prefer to use Paton's translation, but the reader should be aware that on occasion his version of the Greek is not always a literal rendering. For example, Paton translates the adjective βοηγενέεσσι in line 13 not as 'born from the ox,' but rather, 'that the bull's carcase generates.' In my opinion, 'carcase' brings in an element of death that is inappropriate to Meleager's description in this passage of the bees and their productivity.

2. For examples of the resumption of sailing and the influence of the Zephyrs, see *AP* 10.1, 2, 4-6, and 14-17.

3. Meleager's anaphora of the adverb ἤδη in lines 9 and 11 is echoed by Catullus in the anaphora of *iam*, in lines 1, 2, 7, and 8 in C. 46.

4. In other sailing poems of the *Greek Anthology*, we find the sea connected, in an ironic manner, with 'shipwrecks,' violence and destruction, both at sea and on land. Cf. *AP* 9.32, 41, 42, 82, 84, and 85.

5. *AP* 9.564:

> Bee, that revealest the presence of many-colored spring in her delightful bloom; yellow bee, revelling in the prime of the flowers; fly to the sweetly-scented field and busy thyself with thy work, that thy waxen chambers may be filled.

6. Philippus describes ants as 'burrowers,' as 'an army' that eats 'the honeyed joy' of the bee-keeper, in *AP* 9.438.

7. In a lengthy celebration of Dionysus' stock cult titles in *AP* 9.524, the anonymous poet portrays the god as 'the cozener' (8, ἠπεροπῆα). In fact, several of the titles allude to Dionysus' deceptiveness and to his seductive, superficial and, therefore, dangerous character.

8. *AP* 9.437.

9. For a brief discussion of the sexual connotations of the fig tree in ancient literature, see Richard Minadeo, *The Golden Fleece: Classical Symbolism in Horace's Odes* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1982), pp. 4f.

10. There are four major places where I disagree with Paton's translation of the Greek. I prefer to translate τριχηλής (3) as 'three-legged' because 'three-forked' obscures the sexual allusion.

Paton's translation of αὐτόφλοιον (3) as 'with the bark still on' suggests a certain rustic or rough appearance that is not justified by the Greek. According to Liddell & Scott, the adjective describes the removal of the outer cortex of the wood. Paton's translation of παιδογόνῳ (4) as the 'generative' phallus omits the word children and thus reduces, to a degree, the image of Priapus as a god-parent. Finally, Paton's translation of ἀνανεύῃ (15) is incorrect because the verb means to deny rather than to grant a prayer.

11. *RE* 22. VI. 1926 ff.

12. Pausanius, *Graeciæ Descriptio*, 9.31.2, states that Priapus is the son of Dionysus and Aphrodite. There is an alternate version of his genealogy in Strabo, *Geographica*, 13.1.12.

13. Hesiod, *Theogony*, 176-206.

14. For a typical association of the κάλλος Ἀφροδίτης with the beauties of spring, see *AP* 9.626.

15. Cf. Callimachus, *Dian.* 200 f.; Tibullus 1.10.27; Vergil, *Eclogues* 7.62; Horace, *Odes*, 1.25.18; and 2.7.25. See further *RE* 16. I. 1180 f. on the association of myrtle and Venus. Pliny the Elder, *Nat. Hist.* XV. xxxvii, calls one of the three species of myrtle 'the blossom that brings about marriage unions' (*coniugulam*).

16. Cf. Horace, *Odes*, 1.4.9-12:

> nunc decet aut viridi nitidum caput impedire myrto aut
> flore, terrae quem ferunt solutae;
> nunc et in umbrosis Fauno decet immolare lucis, seu
> poscat agna sive malit haedo.

17. The theme of love as an intolerable burden or disease is traditional and forms the basis of the lover's complaint in all ages. Cf. Sappho, *P.P.* Fr. 1; Theocritus, *Idylls* 2, 23, and 30; and Propertius, *Elegies* 1.1.

18. *Titi Lucreti Cari, De Rerum Natura, Libri Sex*, Vol. 1, ed. with trans. by C. Bailey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947). Further citations to the epic will be as *DRN*.

19. Note the repeated pronominal forms that continually draw our attention to other ways in which her divine powers are evidenced by natural phenomena: *per te* (4), *te, dea, te . . . te* (6), *tuum, tibi* (7), *tibi* (8), *te, diva, tuumque* (12) and *te* (16).

20. One of the clearest indications of the stronger position of the goddess in Lucretius is the verb *concelebrat*, which depicts Venus as transforming the earth into an almost hallowed area. Lucretius' tone is solemn. When the land abounds with her fruits, it fully manifests her return to a natural, temple-like atmosphere.

21. Elsewhere in Lucretius the earth is described as *alma* (2.992) and as *genetrix* (2.599). As we shall see in the next chapter, Catullus also develops a hint of a connection between the earth, grain, and the mother-goddess Cybele. In both poets there are suggestions of the East and the mother-figure as the origin of life (*DRN* 2.610-613).

22. For Lucretius, earth, like Venus, brings a diversity of things 'into the threshold of light.' Cf. *DRN* 2.654.

23. Lucretius makes Venus equivalent to the earth in *DRN* 1.225-229, and in 5.233-234 earth is represented as the artisan-woman (*fabrica*) of nature.

24. I prefer to translate the Latin verb *rident* as 'laugh' rather than 'smile' (Bailey's translation) in order to stress sound as well as appearance.

25. It is worth noting that *species* is a prominent term in Lucretius' repeated formula *naturae species ratioque*, an expression that summarizes the fundamental purpose of Lucretius' didactic poem. See *DRN* 1.143; 2.61; 3.93; and 6.41.

26. Perhaps Lucretius avoids using the more common neuter noun *ver* in order to use the expression *species verna diei* as yet another in a series of feminine epithets describing the interconnection of Venus, earth, and the season of spring. Similarly, instead of the noun *Favonius*, Lucretius uses the feminine description *genitabilis aura Favoni*, an expression that reduces the masculine gender to the function of an oblique case.

27. Notice the continuation of vocabulary stressing the potentially violent or aggressive possibilities of spring: *ferae* (14), *rapidae* (15), *capta* (15), *rapaces* (17), and *incutiens* (19).

28. *DRN*, 1-5, p. 2074.

29. For a description of the seasons as involving an orderly progression of prescribed natural events, see *DRN* 5.737-747.

30. First of all, the union of atoms is personified elsewhere in the epic as a 'fellowship' of life-giving particles, cf. *DRN* 1.1026 and 5.428. Secondly, Lucretius personifies these atoms as 'travelling companions' that literally 'roam' (*vagari*) through the void in *DRN* 2.83, 105 and 109. The words *coetus* and *vagari* are key terms in C. 46, and Catullus' use of the terms seems to parallel fairly closely that of Lucretius.

31. ". . . quorum nil fieri sine tactu posse videmus" (*DRN* 3.165).

32. *DRN* 2.1002-1003: "nec sic interimit mors res ut materiai/ corpora conficiat, sed coetum dissipat ollis."

33. In John Milton's *Elegia Quinta*, one finds a recreation of much of Lucretius' encomium of spring. See also *Parradisus Amissa*.

SPRING

Frost-locked all the winter,
Seeds, and roots, and stones of fruits,
What shall make their sap ascend
That they may put forth shoots?
Tips of tender green,
Leaf, or blade, or sheath;
Telling of the hidden life
That breaks forth underneath,
Life nursed in its grave by Death.
. . . . . .
There is no time like Spring,
Like spring that passes by;
There is no life like Spring--life born to die,--
Piercing the sod,
Clothing the uncouth clod,
Hatched in the nest,
Fledged on the windy bough,
Strong on the wing:
There is no time like Spring that passes by,
Now newly born, and now
Hastening to die.

The Complete Poems of Christina Rossetti,
ed. by R. W. Crump

CHAPTER THREE

CATULLUS' SPRING POEM

Iam ver egelidos refert tepores,
iam caeli furor aequinoctialis
iocundis Zephyri silescit aureis.
linquantur Phrygii, Catulle, campi
Nicaeaeque ager uber aestuosae:
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
diversae varie viae reportant.

(Now spring brings back the chilly warmth,
now the madness of the equinoctial sky
grows calm through the Zephyr's playful breezes.
The Phrygian plains must be abandoned, Catullus,
and the fertile soil of sweltering Nicaea:
Let us fly to the celebrated cities of Asia!
Now the mind in trepidation yearns to wander freely,
now feet rich in eagerness are beginning to flourish.
O sweet unions of fellow travellers, farewell,
who set out together from home for afar and whom
different paths in various ways are bringing back again.)[1]

Carmen 46 occupies a special position in the Catullan collection as the only work on spring. The poem follows the tradition of the spring poem discussed in Chapter One because Catullus uses the season as a way of exploring change and man's imperfect understanding of changes around and within himself. Not long in length, C. 46 with its abbreviated and rapidly changing images imitates the brevity of spring and all experience. The poem contains four panels or dramatic movements that gradually transform spring into a complicated philosophical statement about man's

place in, and response to, the season. These panels are as follows: lines 1-3 describe the return of spring; lines 4-6 describe preparations undertaken to travel in spring; lines 7-8 describe the human feeling of anticipation of travel; and, finally, lines 9-11 describe the scene of farewell as comrades gather to travel.[2] The theme of human travel parallels the poem's travel through spring and is used by Catullus' speaker to examine both the positive and the negative aspects of man's conventional use of spring as an analogy for human living.

The meter of C. 46 is the hendecasyllable, which is found most frequently in Catullus' polymetric poetry. The meter creates a line that divides near the center and that combines two quite different sound or rhythmic effects. In C. 46 the first half of each line almost always contains a spondee followed by a dactyl (-- -- ⏑ ⏑); this gives a heavy or more formal epic-like rhythm. The second half of each line consists of three trochees (- ⏑ - ⏑ - ⏑); this gives a light, skipping motion and reverses the heavier effect of the first half of the line. The meter of C. 46 plays a subtle role in conveying Catullus' message about spring. Like the season, the meter returns line after line, creating the illusion of constancy. Nevertheless, the natural caesura in every line severs the two halves of the line and disrupts the impression of constancy in rhythm. Like the length of the poem, therefore, the meter reinforces the idea of spring that develops: it is an unstable and ambiguous season.

In the introductory verses of C. 46 (1-3) the speaker is clearly calling upon traditional elements of spring. The phrase [illegible] opens the poem on an emphatic note; the spondaic foot comprised of two strongly accented monosyllabic words presents spring as immediate and stresses its presence: it is spring--now! In addition, the v-sound in

ver creates the impression of spring as a sighing sound. The speaker's assertion seems supported by the presence of the west wind's mild breezes (3, *Zephyri aurea*) and their apparently calming effect on the sky (2-3, *quali furor . . . silescit*). The present tense of the verb *silescit* suggests that the breezes are already taking away any of the more intemperate qualities of the spring landscape.

Within this framework we can observe the different way in which the speaker approaches spring. He passes over in silence its physical beauty and instead pauses on the temperature of the spring climate in a remarkable double oxymoron (1, *egelidos tepores*). Both terms are ambiguous and present spring's arrival as incomplete. The adjective *egelidos* has two possible translations: first, the prefix 'e' may be taken as privative, meaning 'not' or 'away from' and render the adjective 'not at all cold'; second, 'e' may be taken as an intensifier, literally, 'very cold.'[3] Therefore, *egelidos* carries resonances of the winter just past and, more importantly, connects spring with cold. Spring consists of contrary parts: it brings with it hot and cold. Although *egelidos* technically modifies *tepores*, thereby suppressing the qualitative difference between the two terms, the juxtaposition of *ver* and *egelidos* right before the caesura (which effectively severs the attribute from its noun) unites *ver* and *egelidos* conceptually: the cold lingers on and colors the reader's impression of spring. The accentuation of the word *egelidos* conflicts with the quantitative stress of the word, thereby emphasizing the cold (*ēgĕlĭdŏs*). In addition, spring is metrically tied to the chilly connotations of the adjective *egelidos*; three longs (*ver o ēgelidos*) at the beginning of line one reiterate the possible identification between spring and coldness.

The noun *tepores* is an equally vague term; its meaning suggests not real warmth and yet not real cold. Hence, the meaning of *tepor* depends almost entirely upon the context in which it is placed. For example, Lewis & Short define *tepor* as "a gentle warmth' or 'lukewarmness.'[4] As they interpret it, *tepor* can mean both the opposite of cold and the opposite of warmth. In this sense, the noun fits well the speaker's picture by the end of line one of a hesitant, perhaps early, springtime landscape and warmth. The noun *tepor* is also listed by Lewis & Short as a synonym for *fervor*, a term that denotes boiling or raging heat.[5] In this sense, then, *tepores* in C. 46 may be seen as anticipating the speaker's surprising association in line two of spring with 'the madness' of the springtime climate.

The relationship between *egelidos* and *tepores*, therefore, while it may appear redundant on the surface, is actually referring not to any fixed or lasting representation of warmth but, rather, to the continual process in C. 46 of changing temperatures and changing views of the season. The movement in line one begins with a tentative warmth in *egelidos* and ends with a somewhat sharper indication of heat in *tepores*. The sense of a gradually warming spring increases as the poem continues; the seasonal cycle will become more complete by the time of the summer-like heat in *aestuosae* (5).

Spring not only initiates the warmth, but it also 'brings back' the cycle (*refert*). The idea of renewal is stressed in two ways: first, the prefix '*re*' reminds the reader of spring's power to bring 'back' or bring 'again,' an ability that is also echoed by the metrical stress given to '*fert*'; second, spring is personified by the speaker in its action of not only bringing itself back, but also implicitly the other

seasons that will follow. The verb *refert* picks up the 'er' sound of *ver* and adds to the dominant 'e' and 'r' sounds of line one. The same sound pattern is found in *tepores*, but in reversed order. This repetition of similar sounds links verbally the speaker's association in line one between spring and change.

In line two the speaker reverses the reader's expectations of a light-hearted spring by introducing *furor* and combining it with *caeli*. Certainly, the sky plays an important role in the activities of spring, for it is the domain in which the breezes perform their regenerative tasks. Yet in the midst of the initial spring panel, which describes warming west winds, there enters an image of madness or frenzy (*furor*). As an attribute of the sky, *furor* has ominous overtones of things beyond human control, things which are themselves out of control. Paradoxically, then, the speaker's springtime in line two consists in maddened heavens. The anaphora of *iam* heightens the paradox by stressing the presence of something mad or furious in spring; the season is not merely a tepid climate. The three successive longs (*īam cāelī*), which echo the same pattern of line one, give a solemn tone to the heavens. This heavy beat disappears after the caesura in *furor* and suddenly the light, skipping sounds of trochees enter in the polysyllabic adjective *aequĭnoctĭālis*. The play in the line on words of one syllable, two syllable, and multisyllables, as well as on contrasting heavy and abbreviated sound patterns, creates tension in the spring heavens of line two: spring, the speaker suggests, is a time of contrast and opposition. If, finally, the reader had any impression that *caeli furor* might refer to the possibility of winter storms (and indeed the resonances are there), *aequinoctialis* dispels that misconception by placing the storms well after spring's

onset. The equinoctial storms, therefore, are as much a part of spring as the breezes that mitigate them.[6]

In line three the introduction of the west wind which was anticipated by *tepores* (1) is accompanied by a series of sibilant sounds that echo the gentler sound of the soft spring breezes in line one. The calmness of the spring climate in line three, an idea that is also conveyed by the soothing effect of the 's' sounds, comes as a shock after the angry skies of the preceding line and makes the reader wonder how secure the springtime of C. 46 really is.[7]

The placement of the adjective *iocundis* in first position is important. Not only does the idea of pleasure introduce line three, but it also summarizes the overall effect of spring in this line, too. Critics have generally associated the pleasantness of the breezes with the resumption of sailing.[8] But *iocundis* requires closer examination since it is etymologically related to *iocus* (jokes or anything causing laughter). The noun *iocus* can be used for a wide range of activities extending from lighthearted play or amusement (as opposed to serious affairs--*seria*) to pleasures or games involving deceit.[9] In the context of deceit, the pleasure of a joke is always enjoyed by the agent, and not by the recipient of the joke. Are, then, the speaker's springtime breezes to be understood as the 'agents' of a joke, as spring's way of deceiving man? They bring warmth but also the equinoctial storms. The importance of the breezes is emphasized by the positioning of the words *iocundis* and *aurea* in such a way that springtime winds frame line three.

The positive characteristics of spring are also undermined if we analyze the grammar of line three. The line is awkward both in construction and meaning. The noun *furor* is the subject and its powers

of madness are supposedly diminishing, that is, 'growing silent.' But the power that is controlling the celestial *furor*, the springtime breezes, is not given grammatical prominence. The phrase *iocundis aurais* is either a causal or instrumental ablative.[10] The oblique case suggests a kind of tug-of-war between the breezes and *furor*. The notion of 'growing silent' contained in *silescit* becomes, therefore, less active in connotation; the silencing of the seasonal sky depends upon the emphasis that the reader gives to the struggle for control going on between *furor* and *aurais*.

The inceptive form of *silescit* is also an important feature of the line. It emphasizes not the result (calm or quiet), but rather an ongoing process of change: the silence/stillness of the sky is never fully achieved in this panel. Madness is only 'becoming' silent, it is never completely silenced. Therefore, in spite of the soothing 's' sounds of line three, the springtime of the first panel contains resonances of violence, change, and lack of seasonal control. The speaker makes the reader apprehensive about spring.

In the first panel (1-3), the speaker creates a problem with spring. The excitement of the season opens with the joyful phrase *ver novum* and continues with the pleasant associations of warmer temperatures (*tepores*) and playful breezes (*iocundis aurais*). The lighthearted quality of spring is also echoed by the tripping rhythm of the hendecasyllabic meter which moves each line from a heavier to a more staccato beat, thus emphasizing the important spring words such as *tepores* and *zephyri*. Nevertheless, the speaker's picture of the advent of spring suggests something impending or threatening about the season. Terms such as *furor* hint at the breaking up of the static winter landscape as seasonal storms rush in bringing their life-giving waters. Nothing, not even the dead

season of winter, can withstand the cyclical movement of nature. Thus, spring in C. 46 heralds the inevitability of change and the inevitability of the decline of even the life-bringing season. For whatever has a beginning will also have an end. This feeling of spring's transient character is reinforced by several important features. There is no real heat; there is no light; there is no springtime landscape; there is nothing tangible, neither animal nor plant nor human. Even the madness of the heavens and the breezes of the Zephyr are invisible: we do not see their effect upon man, animal or the land. The lack of reality to spring, particularly the absence of man in the first panel, makes the reader aware of a metaphorical level of meaning in the speaker's spring theme. In the second panel, the speaker challenges a man, 'Catullus,' to respond to such a springtime.

The second panel (4-6) introduces a new, but related, theme of travel. Spring signifies the dissolution of winter's bonds; it is time to expend the energy pent up during the long months of enclosure.[11] Travel is the motif chosen in C. 46 to express this release, a release that, as we have seen in Meleager's spring poem, is associated with excitement as sailors go back to the sea.

The verb *linquantur*, however, initiates a mood of uncertainty, and perhaps of reluctance. Literally, *linquantur* means 'Let them (*carē*) be left' or 'abandoned.' The reader experiences a shift of perspective right at the beginning of the second panel. First, he moves from real time to no time; second, there is a shift from active to passive voice, that is, the reader notes the difference between the subject doing the action and the subject being acted upon; and finally, he sees the difference between the spring of the first panel, which was returning,

and the spring of the second panel, which is left behind. Each syllable in *linquantur* is long either by length or position, and the heavy beat causes the reader to pause on each syllable. The invitation to 'leaving' contained in the verb seems, therefore, also an invitation to reflect upon the meaning of leave-taking. Travel, like spring, entails change; greeting new experiences involves abandoning what is familiar. The speaker's initial reluctance to encounter the unknown is seen in his use of the polite command rather than the imperative.

The words *Phrygii campi* turn the reader's thoughts toward the East with its connections to the earth mother, to light, and to the origins of life itself. The proper noun *Catulle* is visually enfolded by words that tie him to the East and earth (*Phrygii Catulle campi*).[12] But the caesura before *Catulle campi* and the alliteration of the guttural sounds of 'q' and 'c' makes the line reverberate with the addressee's connection to the land, but the name *Catulle* interrupts the union between the land and its natural attribute, *Phrygii*. The changing perspectives caused by word order, the caesura break, and by the relationship of *Catulle* to the speaker and the poet require that the second panel be examined not line-by-line, but rather in three stages of discussion: first, the apparent dichotomy in nature between its male and female aspects; second, the possibility of an ambiguity in the use of the name 'Catullus'; and third, the tension within the panel between the themes of leaving (4-5) and arrival (6).

Land is the predominant feature in the second panel: *Phrygii*, *campi*, *Nicaeae*, *ager* and *Asiae*. But the land itself is divided into contrasting aspects. The term *campus* has, for the Roman reader, strong associations with the plain of war (Campus Martius); it is the man's

world where he drills, exercises and assembles for public meetings.[13] The term *ager*, on the other hand, is arable land; its soil produces the goods which sustain man's life (*ager publicus*). In this sense, then, *ager* may be connected to the feminine aspects of nature. Like *Alma Venus* in *De Rerum Natura* (1.2), the *ager* of C. 46 nourishes man like a mother.

The same opposition between the male and female aspects of the land is underlined by the adjectives that modify *campi* and *ager*. For example, the adjective *Phrygii* may recall for the reader the blood-stained plains of Troy with its associations of warlike experiences and the personal loss of companions.[14] In contrast, the adjective *uber* describes land (*ager*) as fertile. Its etymological connection to the noun *uber* presents land as a kind of mother figure whose breasts pour nourishment into the ground. The repetition of the 'er' sound in *ager uber* calls attention to the collocation of two two-syllable words in which the second word not only adds dimension to, but also becomes virtually synonymous with, the first. Within two lines, then, the contrary parts of spring are repeated in the contrary parts of land. It is, first, a place associated with masculine, and largely negative, experiences. Second, land is described like a mother suckling a child, in this case, the fields.

The tension outlined above between the male and female aspects of the speaker's spring in this panel is further stressed by the effect of the hendecasyllabic meter. Both adjectives, *Phrygii* and *uber*, are separated from their nouns by the caesura. The metrical pause in both lines is a dramatic one and shows the transitory or imperfect ties that exist between man (*Attulle*), his social experiences as a male, and his origins or 'roots' in the land that nourishes his species. There is even

a further element of turmoil in the description of land in line five by the linking of its richness to a 'seething' or 'boiling' temperature (*aestuosae*). The problem is a complicated one and will be discussed more fully later.

The second problem in this panel is, as noted above, the name 'Catullus.' The inclusion of an addressee this late in a poem is not in itself unusual in Catullus, but its particular use in C. 46 is.[15] 'Catullus' is not being called upon by the speaker to participate actively in the action of leaving the springtime landscape, but rather the passive voice of the verb places him in the involuntary role of submitting to change. In addition to this remarkable expression, there is also the problem of the function of the proper name itself.[16] Because the name is the same as that of the poet, the reader must decide what exactly is the relationship between poet, speaker, and 'Catullus.' Up to this point the speaker has remained an anonymous figure, serving as both prophet and analyst of spring. His impersonal role has allowed the reader to concentrate fully upon the development of spring. The unexpected reference to an addressee requires the reader to speculate upon, first, the possibility of a direct relationship between the speaker and 'Catullus'; they are one and the same person, a meaning that would turn the spring poem into a personal meditation, an attempt by the speaker to teach himself something about the season. Second, the reader may assume that there is no necessary connection between the speaker and the addressee; the speaker and 'Catullus' are two separate personae, with the former inviting the latter to meditate upon the problem of spring. If this is true, then the reader is a second kind of implied recipient of the speaker's message; the speaker addresses both 'Catullus' and the

implied reader, thus giving the poem a wider audience and heightening thereby the drama of his views on spring. There is no way to resolve the meaning of 'Catullus' in the poem, and its ambiguity becomes one of many problems of relationships in the speaker's picture of spring. The resolution of the problem of the name is less important than the fact that the reader recognize that only one or two human beings are the players in this springtime landscape. The diminution of man in the spring of the second panel is further suggested by the possibly diminutive form of the name 'Catullus' too (perhaps derived from Cato or *catus*). The notion of man's smallness foreshadows the speaker's concentration in the third panel on the only human trait that gives man any vestige of power over his smallness in spring: *mens* (5). This single-syllable word sets man apart from everything else in the springtime landscape.

Just as the reader is left with a sense of the transitory state of human affairs in the spring of the second panel, so, too, is he left, in the reference to *aestuosae*, with a sense of the transitory state of spring itself. It is no longer a climate 'just barely warm' but it is 'excessively hot' (*aestuosae*). The reader is challenged to decide what has happened to spring. Does it no longer literally exist, having flown by so quickly, or does it, too, have some more figurative meaning, suggested by the rapid movement from *egelidos tepores* (1) to *aestuosae* (5)?

The adjective *aestuosae* refers specifically to the climate of Nicaea, the capital of Phrygia. Although Strabo's description of the area confirms that Nicaea is literally rich (*dives*) and hot (*aestuosae*), it is also possible that *aestuosae* is being used in a metaphorical sense.[17] The suffix '*-osus*' means 'full of' and adds an hyperbolic quality to the adjective. Nicaea is not simply 'full of heat,' the temperature

of its climate is seething. But heat is itself an extended meaning of *aestus*. Etymologically, *aestus* refers to any commotion, such as in the undulating motion of waves, and, in the sense of 'heat,' it originally denoted the flaring up of fire "while *fervor*, by contrast, referred to a glowing heat, *ardor*, a burning one, and *calor*, a warming heat."[18] The term *aestus* expresses not so much the idea of heat as the commotion or agitation that lies behind the kinds of heat produced. Used figuratively, therefore, it can symbolize the mental turmoil involved in passion, or an irresolute state of mind, such as that shown in C. 46 by the speaker in his description of spring. In this sense, *aestuosae* echoes *aestifer* (2), which suggests the agitation or ferment of the springtime heavens. The adjective prepares for the speaker's concentration on *mens* in the third panel as the only means of understanding and, therefore, of controlling one's personal anxieties when considering the disturbing commotion in nature.

Aestuosae is a word denoting violent motion or movement, and it underlines the continuing cycle of change in C. 46. Its placement in the emphatic final position of line five suggests its importance. First, by associating spring with the heat of the next season, summer, the adjective strengthens the ambiguity of the season. Second, by its etymological connection to agitation of various sorts, the adjective makes the reader aware of the possible emotional or mental commotion that can arise if he refuses to accept spring's impermanence. Like the madness of the spring heavens, man's mental climate, the speaker suggests, is always in a state of change and commotion. This is one way in which man and nature are alike in C. 46.

The final problem in the second panel is that of the sudden

emphasis given in line six to the theme of travel to distant cities, in this case, to Asia.[19] There is a shift from the emotions of reluctance and, perhaps, even of sorrow at leaving Phrygia (4-5), as discussed earlier, to the emotions of excitement and anticipation at seeing new places (6). The verb *volemus* (Let us fly!) stresses man's joy at moving. Literally, the subject 'we' is projected as leaving the ground and taking a course through the springtime air. The 'v' sound of *volemus* and the image of travel through air currents recalls for the reader the breezes of Zephyr (3) and the 'v' sound of *ver* in line one. The generalized pronoun 'we' unites the reader and all of mankind. For a brief moment travel in spring appears to be a pleasurable and voluntary act of change.[20]

The literal goal of the journey is *ad clarae Asiae urbes*, but, as the theme unfolds, the readiness of the mind to travel, that is, to expand philosophically, also becomes a component of the journey. In its literal meaning, the adjective *clarus* denotes, first, the brightness of light and, second, clear or piercing sounds like those made by the human voice. Metaphorically, as it is used here, *clarus*, through its etymological root in *clarare* (to shout or proclaim), refers to places which are illustrious or renowned because they have been celebrated (*clarare*) by writers. In line six, therefore, the speaker is like a poet, describing both for 'Catullus' and the reader some new aspect of their relationship to these famous, oft described, places. In fact, the speaker is telling all men through *clarus* that they are about to travel a well-trodden path: others have preceded them and the implication is that others will surely follow them. There is hope given, then, of the renewal of the human species in this twist of the journey motif. The reference to 'bright' cities holds out to 'Catullus' and the reader the prospect of visiting

places that are worthy of being seen, a visit that will also bring 'us' (*nos*) out of the 'darkness' of spring's equinoctial storms.

In summary, then, the second panel (4-6) makes spring more tangible. There is a specific geographical area, cities, and man, namely 'Catullus.' We have also seen, however, a tension developed between the pleasures of anticipated travel and the sorrow of having to leave the familiar behind. The overall effect of this panel is to arouse in the reader conflicting emotions about change, especially the kind of change involved in travel. The reader even hears this conflict in the 'a' sound pattern contained in lines four and six particularly. The long 'a' of *linquantur* may play on the sound of the preposition '*a*' or '*ab*' (away from) and possibly even the 'ah' of lamentation, whereas the 'a' sound of *ad limina dulcia* lets the eager sound of 'to' or 'towards' reverberate through the line. The heavier stress of the panel is upon sorrow since two of the three lines dwell upon what is being left behind. The speaker's reference both to 'Catullus' and to the 'we' who are joined to him as auditors indicates that man is not stable; he consists of one noun and one pronoun in the panel; man is like spring and travel in that season; all three are impermanent; none of them can last for more than the moment. The verb *volemus* seems, at first, to promise the opposite; if man can fly like birds through the spring breezes, this would seem to suggest a more unlimited freedom for his kind, a hope that conventional treatments of spring often hold out to him. But the second panel, in its insistence upon the reluctance of man to suffer change, that is, to say goodbye to everything he knows best, shows the limitations of the dream of spring. The opposition between man's fantasy of no boundaries and the reality of his situation in lines 4-5 accounts for the complexity of the second panel

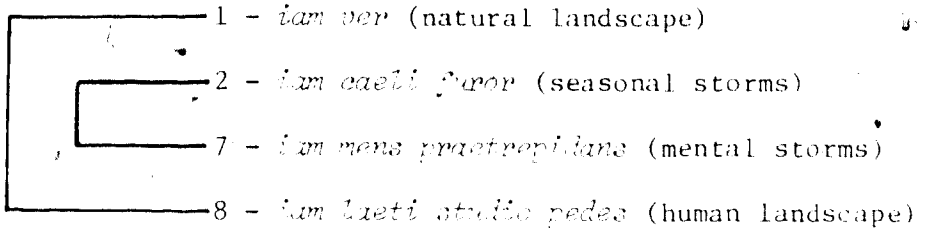
and, indeed, of the whole poem. The next panel focuses upon the special problems that man faces in his response to spring.

In the third panel (7-8), the speaker intensifies the analogy that is being drawn between man and spring by making man, like the earth he travels upon, equally ambiguous in character as the season. Man has two sides to his nature; the speaker defines these as mind (*mens*) and body (*pedes*). This division within the general description of man parallels the division that the speaker created earlier between himself, the poet and 'Catullus.' In both instances, whether man in particular or man in general, the speaker dwells more upon the fragments that make up a complete, individual identity than upon the notion of man as a fully integrated being.

The nouns *mens* and *pedes* do not appear to belong to any specific person in the third panel. Just as 'Catullus' quickly became absorbed by the pronoun 'we' in *volemus*, so, too, the speaker does not give any particular referent to the 'mind' and 'body' that compose the basic nature of man. The ambiguity about the 'owner' of *mens* and *pedes* is deliberate: the statements refer neither to 'Catullus' nor to the speaker nor, for that matter, to any specific individual, but rather to everyone who reads the poem. The human characters belonging to the second and third panels weave through one another in such an intricate way that they become one, man himself.

There are two striking features about lines seven and eight. First, line seven with its emphasis upon motion and turbulence parallels line two where *caeli furor* is a powerful element disturbing the spring setting. As I shall argue later, *mens* can exercise the same influence over man. Line eight with its description of man's physical nature

parallels line one where the springtime climate is portrayed. Both of these aspects of man will be more fully treated below, and the chiastic interrelationship of these two sets of lines may be schematized as follows:



The second striking feature of the third panel is the repeated anaphora of *iam . . . iam*, which takes the reader back to the opening of the poem. It seems a deliberate strategy to emphasize the sudden shift from the subjunctive mood of the second panel to the indicative mood in the third. The verbs *uvet* (7) and *vigescunt* (8) denote activities, whether mental or physical, that are already happening (*iam*).

The noun *mens*, through its associations with the verb *meminī* (to remember), refers to the part of man which engages in reflection; it denotes his intellect, his rationality.[21] The juxtaposition of *mens* and *praetrepidans* creates a disturbing impression because the mind is currently (*iam*) seen as under the control of great stress; it is not entirely rational. Most commentators associate this anxiety with 'excited anticipation,' presumably at the prospect of visiting new places. In this sense, they prefer to translate '*prae*' in its temporal meaning of 'before' or 'in advance of,' although Fordyce does concede that it may also be intensive in force.[22] If taken as an intensifier, '*prae*' and the natural accent of the word *praetrépidans* emphasize the main idea of anxiety. Like *furor* and *aestuosae*, *praetrepidans* is a word denoting movement and turmoil, and so stresses the condition of constant agitation or confusion in the *mens* of this spring panel (7-8). The phrase *mens*

praetrepidans parallels *caeli furor* as the controlling power that is out of control. It is interesting that, in every case in the poem except this one, the nouns are separated from their attributes by the caesura. The uninterrupted unit *iam mens praetrepidans* binds anxiety to the mind and stresses it as a predispositon; it seems to be a function of man's reaction to spring. Nevertheless, *iam*, as an echo of lines 1-2, appeals to the mind to consider once again the picture developed in the first panel of spring's ambiguous character. Is, then, the mind 'agitated' because of its ability to recall, that is, to consider in retrospect the cycle of spring to which man belongs? Man is differentiated from everything in nature because of *mens*. But as *praetrepidans* suggests, the mind can either engulf man in a storm of conflicting emotions (cf. [illegible] *furor*) or it can be the stabilizing force which, like the spring Zephyrs, can silence mental and emotional anxiety. In C. 46 the reason why the mind is laboring under anxiety and confusion would appear to be because of man's desire to be free from the restrictions and turmoil he sees in spring: his desire (*avet*) is to roam, to be free from night and death.

The verb *avet* characterizes the human mind, in C. 46, as always in a state of wanting something further, a desire which is bound to cause mental agitation. The verb is etymologically related to the Sanskrit verb '*av*' which means 'to love,' 'to satisfy oneself' or, most importantly, 'to be content.'[23] The caesura in line seven dramatizes the pull in the *mens* between turmoil and contentment (*praetrepidans/avet*), a pull in opposite directions. The verb *vagari* increases this tension because it can mean both 'to roam' or 'wander freely' and also 'to be unsettled' or 'waver in mind.' The latter meaning is an extended connotation of the verb, which picks up *praetrepidans* and suggests to the reader what happens

when man fails to recognize the pitfalls of his springtime dream.

Clearly, however, *vagari* is being used in line seven in its primary meaning. Ideally, no human being wants to think of his mind as one that wavers. Man wants the kind of freedom of movement that Catullus' contemporary Lucretius ascribes only to the movement of the atoms; in Lucretius' view, the atoms alone are immortal.[24] As the object of desire, then, *vagari* in C. 46 focuses upon unbounded movement, like that of the atoms, on freedom from the cycle of life and death. Man's fondest wish, violating as it does the natural order of change in C. 46, is doomed to failure. Throughout the poem change has been connected with loss and eventual dissolution of things; the sounds of change are heard in the repeated 'v' sounds of *avet*, *vagari* and *vigescunt*. The 'v' sounds recall the breath of spring (*ver*) and the variety of changes that its gradually warming temperatures bring to everything.

While the mind indulges in impossible dreams, man's place within the physical world of spring is emphasized by *pedes*. Feet suggest his contiguity to the earth; they represent his metaphorical 'roots.'[25] There exists on this level a special relationship between *laeti* and *pedes*. Although most commentators have translated the phrase as 'happy' or 'joyous feet,' thereby conveying the delight of the moment, there is another sense in which *laeti* may be understood. The adjective also refers to fertility and reminds us, therefore, of the fertile associations of the earth in the phrase *ager uber*. There are other ideas of abundance in line eight. The delight which the feet are experiencing is directly related to the fact that they are 'rich in zeal' (*laeti studio*). The basic idea expressed in *studium* is bustling activity, recalling *praetrepidans* in the preceding line and the general furious motion in the

poem; the feet are propelled by a desire to fly (the kind of movement indicated by the earlier verb *volemus*). In addition, *studio* in C. 46 anticipates the vigorous action in *vigescunt*. As I have already argued with *silescit*, the inceptive form of the verb emphasizes the notion of change going on right *now* (*iam*), an idea which is reinforced by the coincidence of the natural word accent and the quantitative stress on the inceptive root (*vĭgēscūnt*); the feet eagerly *become* lively or active, eagerly *begin* to flourish. Putnam notes that "Catullus constantly associates the foot with some eagerly awaited occasion."[26] In C. 46 the excitement suggested by *pedes vigescunt* pertains to three things: first, the possibility of a good change of scenery from Phrygia *ad claras Asiae urbes* (6); second, the joy, therefore, that comes from new beginnings; and third, the possible prosperity that is stressed by the 'becoming' root of the inceptive form. The excitement is such that, as Elder has observed in a demonstration of the etymological link between *vigesco* and *viresco*, "even their feet grow green with spring."[27] The fulness of the natural description that one expects to find in a spring poem has been transferred from the natural landscape (1) to a description of man's physical nature in *pedes* (8). Line eight, then, touches upon some of the more conventional elements of spring: the regeneration of life (*vigescunt*), fertility (*laeti*), the impression of greenness already foreshadowed by *ver*, and the devotion (*studio*) which stimulates lively action, not commotion or turmoil, in man's feet.[28]

The development in the third panel of an opposition in man (*mens/pedes*) is analogous to the opposition in spring (*ver/[illegible]*). These parallels confirm man's place in a cycle of change. The contradiction between free roaming movement and a season that brings with it inevitable

change and decline, not only for nature but for man too, is what causes agitation to the human mind in the third panel. Without the ability to make sense (*mens*) of his sensory experiences, man, like the rest of creation, would be just like spring; he would flow with the changes of the natural season, merely a part of the cosmic order. The *mens* gives him the power to understand what his emotions are reluctant to acknowledge. The human *pedes* may be about to travel to distant places, but in the context of the speaker's description in lines seven and eight, the *pedes* will always meet boundaries, that is, limitations imposed by the order of the season. Man is part of the natural order but his *mens* should guide him to an understanding that, although he may resemble the season, he must not be satisfied with merely the superficialities of spring.

The fourth panel (9-11) culminates the poem's movement from spring, to travel, and finally, to man's ability to coordinate the two ideas. The final panel represents the speaker's formal 'farewell' (*valete*), and it develops more fully the notions of reluctance and sadness on the part of the speaker as he faces the consequences of spring and travel. The imperative mood of the verb marks the third dramatic shift of perspective in the poem. The reader has moved from the present indicative mood in lines 1-3, to the atemporal mood of the subjunctive in lines 4-6, back to the indicative mood in lines 7-8, and now, finally, to something future, that is, contingent, in the imperative mood of *valete*. Time is temporarily halted by the speaker as he pauses to say goodbye to the company of comrades (*comitum coetus*) of which Catullus and all of us as fellow addressees have become members. All of us are the men being addressed as the 'fellow travellers' of the speaker. The notion of 'travelling together' is emphasized by the common root of *comitum* and

coetus in the verb *coeo* (*cum* plus *eo*, to go with/together). This theme of joint travel is not new to C. 46, but it is new to Latin poetry.

In Roman poetry and society one test of a person's friendship was his willingness to accompany another on journeys that might involve danger.[29] In C. 11 Catullus exploits the themes of travel and sharing risks when he addresses Furius and Aurelius, calling upon them as *comites Catulli* and projecting for them an elaborate travelogue that proposes to take them with him to far distant and strange lands (1-12). Similarly, Propertius, in a farewell address to his patron (1.6), first expresses his willingness to attend Tullus in his travels abroad, and then offers an abrupt explanation of why he is unable to go: love has made him a slave to his mistress' whims. Both of these examples develop a strong connection between travel, male friendship and mutual obligations, but treat the theme with an ironic twist: the speaker of neither Catullus' nor Propertius' poem allows the projected journey to exist without paradox or limitations to what can be achieved.[30] In C. 46 there are two levels of irony in the speaker's farewell to comrades: the play on, first, number and pronoun in lines nine and ten, and, second, on the permanence of the masculine *coetus*. The second irony, in particular, brings the speaker's concern over how one should respond to spring to a deeper sophistication in tone and level, a movement which is appropriate to this, the concluding panel of the poem.

The emphasis given to *mens* in the third panel might lead the reader to expect the portrayal of human beings in the final lines on an individual level or, at least, as identifiable members within a social group. The fact that this does not happen is the first irony of the panel. The speaker subtly highlights the tenuous position of man in the

springtime farewell even as he summons in line nine a plural group of men to attend his goodbye. With the exception of the apostrophe ', every word in line nine denotes plural auditors but, by this time in the poem, plurality has become, paradoxically, a means of diminishing the status of the individual. As we have seen, the single addressee 'Catullus' never had a completely separate identity and quickly became simply one among the generalizing plural 'we' of the verb *volemus* (6). Yet the 'we' was no more stable than 'Catullus' as the fragmentation of man into *mens* and *pedes* in lines seven and eight demonstrated. And now in line nine these divided aspects of man as an individual and, in addition, the depersonalizing 'we' in *volemus* have been blended into the nondescript *coetus*, a noun that also further reduces man's power to be seen as representative of, a leader over, or an exceptional member of, the group. The members of the speaker's *coetus* are, thus, literally without name, rank and reputation; their sole identity is as the speaker's companions (*comitum*). In fact, there is a sense in which these men, although they are described as *comites*, are because of the vocative address (you) at a still greater remove from the speaker; the intimacy of male fellowship that was earlier indicated in the first person pronoun 'we' (6, *volemus*) has been exchanged in the final panel for the more peremptory direct command: it is not 'Let us bid each other farewell,' but, rather, 'Farewell (to you)!' This movement from personal addressee, to the unifying 'we,' to the removed, more impersonal plural 'you' concludes in a third person reference included in the relative pronoun *quos* (whom); the members of the *coetus* are now men being talked *about* rather than talked *to*. The *coetus* disappears and is made subordinate within a relative pronoun clause (10-11). Finally, the change of case from the

vocative of *coetus* to the oblique accusative case (*proc*) marks the most obvious diminution, which is denoted ironically by the plural, of the men who are about to travel in spring.

Attachments like those being described in line nine (*comites coetus*) combine the two aspects of the travel motif. First, the speaker addresses 'sweet unions' (*dulces coetus*) of male travellers. The phrase *dulces comitum coetus* underlines the value to the speaker of male bonding, an idea which is stressed by the idea of 'coming together,' that is, of forming a fellowship. The *coetus comitum* has been formed specifically for the purpose of travel. Second, however, the interposition of *valete* between the words denoting masculine fellowship creates an ironic, if not pathetic, tone. The placement of a word of farewell between words denoting male fellowship suggests the tension that exists in the fourth panel because men are assembling merely to depart. The bond of fellowship is thus implicitly connected to the poem's overall themes of spring, change, agitation and inevitable dissolution. By the end of line nine, the 'happy' or 'sweet' aspects of male bonding have been shown to be always dependent upon one's intellectual realization that all union is illusory. The emphasis placed on *mens* in the third panel ought to be a warning to the reader that the only constant in life is change.

The second level of irony in the fourth panel adds greater dimension to the nature of the masculine *coetus* and its struggle to resist the changes imposed on it by spring. Even the language, word order, and sound play of lines ten and eleven reflect the more complicated approach that the speaker takes in explaining the implications of the journey. There are three particular words in line ten that give rise to problems of interpretation: *longe*, *simul* and *domo*. I shall provide two

possible translations of lines 9-11, and then discuss the variations of meaning that come from word-plays:

A) O sweet comings-together of men who have come together, farewell--(men) whom, long ago, once and for all having set forth from home, roads variously in diverse ways (now) carry back.

B) O sweet assemblies of fellow travellers, farewell--(travellers) whom, having set out from home together for afar, different paths in various ways (now) carry back.

The term *longe* expresses extent of separation between things, places, or locations and also extent of separation between points of time; it is both a spatial and temporal adverb. It may also refer to the beginning of a journey or to its final destination, that is, it can look either to the past or to the future. In this sense, then, *longe* anticipates *profectos* at the end of the line, a masculine participle whose meaning is difficult to comprehend exactly. Combined with *longe*, it can suggest men who 'set forth' long ago, from afar, or for afar. Line ten is framed, therefore, by words whose syntactical union has been interrupted in order to suggest subtly the complications that any kind of journey can entail for man.

A comparable ambiguity exists in the term *simul*, which can convey the idea of accompaniment (together), simultaneity (at the same time), immediacy (at once), or finality (once and for all). First, the reader may suppose that the companions are a group formed long ago (*longe*) who set out 'together' at that time. If this is so, then *simul* reminds the reader of *coetus* and its emphasis upon male union. The juxtaposition of the adverb and the relative pronoun (*simul quos*) before the diaresis suggests an aural impression of unity; the companions are united in the relative pronoun *quos*. Second, perhaps the travellers set out 'at the

same time' but not necessarily together. This interpretation would foreshadow the diversity of their return trips (11, *diversa [illegible]*), that is, their final disunion; their ephemeral togetherness is sundered by their separate return routes. Third, the adverb may be translated as meaning 'at once,' an idea that echoes the anaphora of the adverb *iam* (already now) earlier in the poem. This translation creates the impression of immediacy in the human journey just as *iam* created the impression of spring's arrival and effective control of man's landscape. Fourth, *simul* may mean 'once and for all,' and it suggests that man should understand that travel is but one part of, a link in, the cycle of his life. In this sense, then, returning is always implicit in leaving. In the collocation of *simul a domo profectos* the speaker adds new meaning to the travel motif of the second panel. Not only do men travel from one geographical place to another, sometimes frequently during their lifetime, but also the cycle of their life is a metaphorical kind of journey. As soon as man has set out, like spring, on the course of his days, he is following an inevitable trip back to the same *termino* in death.

The feminine noun *domus* is that *termino*, and the speaker gives it both a literal and a figurative connotation in line ten.[31] The travellers are summoned to take part in what appears to be a literal journey back to a real home. The home from which they set forth (*a domo profectos*) is presumably the destination of their journey back (important), but the reader is never completely sure. It is this ambiguity that gives *domus* its metaphorical possibility. The noun is so important to an understanding of the fourth panel that it is useful to consider briefly its meaning in Catullus' extended use of it in C. 31.

There are four lines in the poem that provide an excellent

summary of the function of *domus*, for Catullus.

> O quid solutis est beatius curis,
> cum mens onus reponit ac peregrino
> labore fessi venimus larem ad nostrum
> desideratoque acquiescimus lecto?
> (31.7-10)

> (Oh what is more blessed than dissolved cares,
> when the mind lays aside its burden and
> wearied from wandering toil we come to our hearth
> and we take up our rest in a long-desired bed?)

On the surface this passage characterizes *domus* as a female, nurturing, protective and desirable place for man to return to. In fact, the speaker of the poem calls *domus* "o venusta Sirmio" (12). This epithet combines the maternal associations which *domus* naturally evokes with the sensuality of a lover's delight in his beloved. The speaker is connecting his *domus* with Venus, the goddess of love and procreation. At a deeper level, however, the speaker associates *domus* with the laying aside and the total removal from the normal activities of the social and political Roman male. The verb *acquiescimus* with its resonances of the final rest of death and the noun *lecto* with its resonances of the bier for a corpse connect *domus* with the tomb that provides man with peace and quiet (*quies*).[32] The *domus* is the place of escape for man from the hardships and hard realities of the journey of life. Both of these contrary qualities, that is, the womb and tomb of *domus* must be considered in C. 46.

Because of the overall ambiguity of line ten with its play on adverbs of time and space and the distorting effect of these adverbs on the meaning of *desideratoque lecto*, the reader must ask, What does *domus* imply? Is it the original home of the speaker and his *amici*, or might it be understood as the womb-home of their mother? Could the noun refer to the home that the companions formed by their union in Phrygia? Or,

finally, does *domo* represent the earth-home from which all life ultimately springs and must inevitably be carried back to? The relationship that the speaker established in the second panel between the soil, fertility, and a mother's breast (*quae alma*) provides a link between the spring and travel motifs described earlier and the character of *domo* in the final panel. But, at the same time, the reader cannot forget that the femininity of *domo* is equivocal: it is, first, the literal and metaphorical source of man's origin and, second, the literal and metaphorical source of his comfort, but a comfort, it must be remembered, that can be given to man only at the price of his death. Therefore, *domo* is like spring and travel: it initiates life, change and dissolution.

The final two lines of the poem not only reveal man's mortality, that is, his inability to elude death, but also, through the repeated 'o' sounds (*longa quae, domo profectos*, and *reportent*), they echo his sounds of lamentation at the prospect of journeying 'home.' These 'o' sounds contrast dramatically with the joyous apostrophe ` which begins the farewell command of line nine. This reversal of feeling from something sweet (*dulcis*) to something sad is a necessary part, in the speaker's view, of what change can bring. In addition, it is important to note that the speaker returns in lines ten and eleven to a description of man as a passive recipient of action. His fellow travellers may have actively set out from home but it is the diverse paths (*diversa varia viae*), and not the travellers themselves, who are literally carrying them back on their journey. Perhaps in an unintentional pun, the speaker redefines the meaning of spring. The adjective *diversa* that qualifies the several kinds of paths any man might follow contains within it the noun *ver*. Spring is being redefined as that which 'turns' men 'apart' (*di-*) from one

another, a meaning that bears out the implicit irony, already discussed, of a [illegible] that will disband almost as soon as it has been united for travel. The [illegible] like the plural [illegible], may suggest superficially the plentiful number, but [illegible] implies that each man, one by one and alone, must take his own separate route. The fragile union preserved in the plural relative pronoun [illegible] crumbles before the almighty and numerous powers of disunion ([illegible]).

The fourth panel is the most intense level of the poem because the speaker is attempting to articulate a philosophy of spring and man's place in that natural season. In this reading of the poem, the speaker's portrayal of spring offers to man a paradigm, as well as a warning, of his own nature and its limitations. The more significant implications of the speaker's use of spring will be discussed in Chapter Three. It is worth noting at this point, however, that there exists an even more subtle irony in the speaker's structuring of his spring message: in the poem's concluding panel he seems to disassociate himself from the [illegible] bond of fellow travellers whom he summons. He is at once the same [illegible] they, a man on his journey through spring and life, yet also a man who holds himself apart, that is, different from those whom he bids farewell. It is a strange and disturbing idea, especially from someone who has projected himself as the prophet and analyst of what spring really means. I have said earlier that the speaker may be 'Catullus' and that, therefore, the poem is self-reflective in content and purpose. Even if we do not accept this relationship as essential, the speaker certainly includes himself among the 'we' of the verb [illegible]. Why, then, does he seem to differentiate himself from the second person plural group denoted by [illegible]? A possible answer might be that, although he urges his fellow

men to use the power of [illegible] to understand their momentary and fragile position in nature and in life, nevertheless, by disassociating himself from them, he becomes emblematic of man's continual struggle against and refusal to accept the terms of his mortality. If this is so, then the poem on one level of interpretation does not allow for a resolution. Perhaps it is more important for man to see himself in the speaker, always fighting to be someone different from his own kind.

NOTES

1. The Latin text is that of V. Pöschl, *Catull. Gedichte* (Heidelberg: F. H. Kerle, 1960). Pöschl's reading of *locundis* in line three preserves the possibility of a pun on the noun *locus*. Unless otherwise cited, the translations of the Latin are my own and aim to be literal.

2. For a slightly different organization of the poem's structure, see J. P. Elder, "Some conscious and subconscious elements in Catullus' poetry," *HSCP* 60 (1951), pp. 103-104 (hereafter cited as Elder, "Catullus"). In his view, the poem contains two large sections, "1-6 and 7-11, each with its own mood, with the first two verses of each part beginning with *iam*." Elder believes that the mood of farewell in the second section is a 'positive reaction' to the mood of longing that spring, in the first section, arouses in man.

3. *Eyelidos* is the first of nine *hapax legomena* in the poem, and these are studied by Stoessl, *Catullus*, pp. 168-69. The other coined words include *aequinoctialis* (2), *silescere* (3), *uber* (5), *vigil* (7), *mox* (7), *vigescere* (8), *diversae* (11) and *reportare* (11).

4. On *tepor*, L & S, I, p. 1857.

5. On *fervor*, ibid., p. 742.

6. See Appendix for a full discussion of some of the implications of the adjective *aequinoctialis*.

7. Elder, "Catullus," p. 120, says that "perhaps it is not utterly fanciful to see in the *-er* sound a subconscious association with 'spring.'" Although he does not make a systematic study of the effect on the meaning of the poem of the 'er' sound, in my opinion it is one of the many subtle ways in which the speaker suggests that spring always necessitates some change or loss. For example, the 're' in *aureis* (3) reverses the 'er' sound pattern of words connected with *ver* in line one. Through synezesis the sound 'e' drops out of *aureis*, even though it remains a visual effect in the line. In this way, Catullus gives the impression of a sound at the same moment that the sound must be glided over in pronunciation.

8. In fact, the major convention that critics identify in C. 46 is that of sailing. For them, spring is merely the setting, not the subject, of the poem. Hezel, *Catull*, pp. 22-24, bases his discussion of C. 46 on the theme of sailing developed in *AP* 10.1, although neither sailing nor, for that matter, water are mentioned in Catullus' poem.

9. On *locus*, *TLL* 7. A. 287 f. *Locus* and its cognates appear frequently

in Catullus' polymetric series (cf. 8.6, 12.2, 36.10, 42.3 and 50.6) and are found in situations that stress the seductive, naughty, joking 'give-and-take' of the participants in the game.

10. K. Quinn briefly discusses the syntax of lines 2-3 in *Catullus. The Poems*[2] (London: MacMillan Education Ltd., 1973), *ad loc.*

11. The themes of release, movement and joy in spring are more fully developed by Horace in Odes I.4, 1-4:

> "*solvitur* acris hiems *grata* vice veris et Favoni
> *trahuntque* siccas machinae carinas,
> ac neque iam stabulis *gaudet* pecus aut arator igni,
> nec prata canis albicant pruinas."

12. Gordon Williams, *Tradition and Originality in Roman Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 463, states that the vocative in Catullus generally indicates an intensification of pathos. Williams identifies the speaker of C. 46 with the historical poet Catullus and, although he finds a happy mood in general, says that "the vocative, set with the phrase *linquantur Phrygii Catulle campi*, . . . responds emotionally to the place of his brother's death."

13. On *campus*, *TLL* I. A. 3-4. 214 f.; I. B. 216 f.; III. 221.

14. One of the earliest, though brief, references to spring is found in Homer's *Iliad* 6.145-148, where Glaukos, ironically, justifies the slaughter of men on the Trojan plains by comparing men to leaves. Like the leaves that return in spring, the generation of men will go on, he says. There is pathos, however, in his naïve outlook on war because the individual and unique self is no more renewable than is the individual leaf in spring.

15. Other examples might include poems 76, 100, 102, 107 and 116.

16. Eve Adler's recent book *Catullan Self-Revelation* (New York: Arno Press, 1981) is the first attempt to examine not the problem of the name 'Catullus' in the work, but, rather, the related problem of 'Catullus' speaking to himself in the first, second and third person pronouns in order to designate, as she believes, some split or difference in what the public knows about 'Catullus' versus what 'Catullus' wishes to correct or reveal about his private self. See particularly the first three chapters of Adler's book. See also Birt, "Carmina," who identifies the name 'Catullus' with the uncovering of a 'real duplicity of person': "Es ist eine wirkliche Zweiheit der Personen vorgestellt; der Genius will, da der Frühling naht, mit dem Menschen, dem er zugehört, auf's Wandern, und er hat die Initiative, er treibt ihn dazu an; genius actus regit . . ." (p. 445). The modern literary theory known as narratology, although most commonly applied to the novel, might also be applied to the problem of a poet who signs the text as often as Catullus does with a name that establishes some kind of relationship between the historical and the ahistorical context of a poem. See, for example, the work of Gerard

Genette, *Narrative Discourse. An Essay in Method* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1980), transl. by J. E. Lewin, Chapter 5, pp. 212-62.

17. Strabo, *Geographica*, 12.4.7.

18. On *aestus*, L & S, I. A, p. 62. Catullus' only other use of the adjective *aestuosus* (C. 7.5, *Iovis aestuosi*) is generally thought to describe the location of Jove's temple in the North African desert (cf. Fordyce and Quinn, *ad loc.*). However, in the context of a '*lasia*' poem, *aestuosi* is certainly appropriate as a reference to the lustful side of Jove, the passionate lover and, by extension, as a reflection of the heat of Catullus' own passion (cf. J. F. Woollam, "Catullus and the gods: A study in treatment and symbolism," *Pegasus* 14 (1972), pp. 12-13). In fact, Catullus calls himself mad (7.10, *vesanus*).

19. The traditional referent of *urbes Asiae* has been the Greek cities on the coast of Asia Minor, a southern and coastal route that Catullus would have followed on his itinerary home. In my discussion, since the noun *Asiae* is left without specific geographical qualification, I prefer to see its connection with the East as the place of the origins of life. This possibility picks up Phrygia as the classical home of the figure of Earth Mother.

20. There may possibly be a pun in *volemus* on the verb *volumus*, which would link the ability to fly with the desire that precedes such an unusual act.

21. Cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 3,5,11; *N.D.* 1,2,4.

22. Fordyce, *ad loc.*

23. On *aveo*, L & S, p. 213.

24. In Lucretius (*DRN* 1.1061; 2.43, 85, 105, 109) the verb *vagari* denotes the movement of the atoms through the void. In Catullus (64.271 and 65.17) the movement of winds and the sun is described through the adjective *vagus* as a controlled movement, much like that of Lucretius' atomic streams. In both poets, *vagus* denotes a freedom of movement but within certain given bounds.

25. There are later usages of the noun *pes* as the stalk or the stem, that is, the vital root of a plant (e.g., Plin. 15, 1, 25 and Col. 12,7).

26. Putnam, "C. 4," p. 18, n. 11.

27. Elder, "Catullus," p. 121.

28. Cf. *DRN* 1.674: "de niloque renata *vigescat* copia rerum."

29. Note J. C. Yardley's article, "Catullus 11: The end of a friendship," *Symbolae Osloenses* 56 (1981), pp. 63-69, which analyzes many of the *topoi* associated with travel, friendship and farewells.

30. Notice that in C. 11 the actual 'heroic' journey that Furius and Aurelius are to take is only to deliver some 'bad news' to the speaker's girl, hardly risky business.

31. For Putnam and many other Catullan commentators, *domus* is a central image of the work. Cf. Putnam, "C. 4," p. 11.

32. On *quies*, L & S, I. 4, p. 1512. For *acquiesco*, see Catullus, C. 31, where the bed (*lectus*) and rest therein become both the final moment of union with the home and the sole means of ridding the traveller of the burden of life in a foreign country. On the use of *acquiesco* as a common euphemism for death, see L & S, I, p. 23.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE IRONY OF MAN'S EXISTENCE IN SPRING

As I have argued in the previous chapter, C. 46 represents a carefully designed incorporation of spring convention. The key phrases that bind the poem to the convention are *iam ver* (1) and *iocundis Zephyri aureis* (3). But perhaps it is more important to consider, not the similarities, but, rather, the differences between C. 46 and the spring convention from which it stems. In contrast to the colorful, animated landscape of convention, C. 46 is virtually an empty landscape. There are no flowers and no colors, there is neither light nor water, there are no birds to sing their songs, no frisky young animals to herald the birth of a new generation. In fact, there are none of the activities traditionally associated in poetry with either man or beast in spring, in particular, the activities of mating and giving birth. In other words, there is, paradoxically, no place for Venus, the symbol of all the regenerative forces at work in spring, in the springtime landscape of C. 46. As we have noted in the discussion of Lucretius' treatment of spring convention, the season and the coming of Venus go hand in hand: *it Ver et Venus.*[1] For him, the goddess of sexual desire and regeneration cannot be divorced from the creative forces at work in springtime. But in C. 46 Venus, *voluptas* and sexual matings at all levels are missing, and this seems to be a deliberate choice on the part of the speaker.

The regular features of the spring convention appear to have been excluded from C. 46 so that nothing might distract the reader from

the speaker's focus on man and his relationship to spring, that is, what spring really means for human living. Although *ver* in C. 46 clearly refers to the natural season, it may also possess a metaphorical meaning. For example, in C. 68 Catullus expands the literal meaning of spring to include the springtime of man's life, that is, his youth when passions soar (in C. 46 the nouns *tepores* and *furor* seem suggestive of the same kind of passionate response).[2] As C. 46 unfolds, a relationship is developed between the natural season and man: both contain images of turmoil and conflict. For spring, there is an opposition between the calming breezes of Zephyr and the intemperate seasonal storms; for man, there is the opposition between his anxious rational faculty and his lively feet. In addition, the two-fold mention of earth in the second panel (4, *campi*; 5, *ager*) in the context of leaving (4, *linquantur*) suggests man's reluctance to abandon his roots in order to pursue his journey through life. The possibility of a duality in nature, that is, of a tension between the male and female aspects in nature (*campi*, *ager*) helps to explain man's role in the natural season, as well as his reluctance to accept that role. Earth in the second panel was not presented by the speaker as entirely a mothering or nurturing power; the fertility of *ager* was contrasted to the masculine and exclusive area denoted by *Phrygii campi*, a territory carrying resonances of warfare, bloodshed and sorrow. While earth may be represented as the earth mother or the nurturing environment in which life began (cf. *domus*), the more positive, motherly aspect of earth is counterbalanced by an image of destruction and death; fertility in the second panel is connected with death. In the final panel, the speaker develops this tension between the male and female genders to lead to a more subtle understanding of man's

place in and relationship to nature. The farewell to comrades (9, *comitum valete coetus*) underlines the importance, to the speaker, of recognizing the frailty of all human bonds. The *comites* become the fellowship of mankind, united, ironically, in their subservience (*quae*) to one ultimate destiny but delivered to that *terminus* in various ways (11, *diversae variae viae*). The *terminus* towards which men are inevitably drawn back is the *domus*, that is, the womb-tomb of all life. In the context of a springtime landscape which connects irrevocably life with death, man's natural reluctance to accept the conditions of his 'springtime,' that is, change, the impermanence of human bonds and his own eventual death, is understandable. In C. 46, then, the speaker is testing the reader's ability to see in *ver* and in all of the seasonal imagery of the poem a correspondence between the limitations of spring and the limitations of human life. The subtlety of his spring poem depends upon our appreciation of such an interrelationship.

The duality of spring's role in the poem as both season and metaphor, as well as its role as the harbinger of change, is also evoked by the changing sound patterns connected with *ver* throughout the poem. The sighing sound produced by the consonantal 'v' sound serves as one element tying the poem together and, perhaps, invites the reader to hear the breezes of spring blowing in every panel. But springtime breezes, as we have seen, also bring change. The sound of 'v' reverberates in the poem: *ver* (1), *volemus* (6), *avet vagari* (7), *vigescunt* (8), *valete* (9) and *diversae variae viae* (11). Spring is continually being redefined in terms of movement, change, growth, farewell and, finally, separation. At the same time, the 'v' sound pattern reinforces the speaker's reminder that spring is only one link in the chain of seasonal growth. As the

final line of the poem begins, bringing with it the final stage in the cycle of man's life, the reader should recognize that the adjective *diversae* contains, buried within it, the seeds of a new spring (di*ver*sae), a probable pun contained within a chain of rhymes (*diversae varie vise*) that suggest 'spring' (-ver-) is putting life into motion again. This impression of spring returning at the end of the poem is further reinforced by the idea of renewal in the verbs which commence and conclude the poem (1, *refert*; 11, *reportant*) with their suggestion of 'coming back' contained in the prefix '*re*.'

As the cycle begins anew, the speaker, with his emphasis on man's involvement in the season, makes man the seed (*quos*) of the new spring. Paradoxically, then, the speaker elevates man to a position of significance in his springtime message at the same moment, ironically, that he demonstrates his smallness within the cycle of the natural seasons. In fact, the smallness of man has been reiterated throughout the poem. Although the inclusion of a solitary figure, the addressee 'Catullus,' suggests the importance to the speaker of man as an individual, there is the possibility of diminution even in the proper noun *Catulle*. In addition, 'Catullus' has, within two lines, lost his status as an individual and been absorbed into the pronoun 'we' in *volemus* (6). The instability of the union in *volemus* is demonstrated in the third panel (7-8) where man as an individual is divided into *mens* and *pedes*. And, finally, the transition from this view of man as basically unintegrated to his union with comrades in the second person plural address (*vivite*) leads directly to the speaker's final reference to man in the more removed third person plural relative pronoun (*quos*), a union which will be implicitly sundered by the diverse paths (*diversae varie viae*).

Throughout the poem, the speaker is stressing the diminution of man in many ways and, in particular, his impermanent and ephemeral nature. Even the momentary pleasure of male friendship is spoiled by an awareness that the *comites* come together only to say goodbye to one another. The limitations of human intercourse (*comitum coetus*) are further sustained throughout the poem by the emphasis laid upon man's inability to control the birth and death that mark out his season of life. And even his journeys in life seem to give him little control. For example, his departure from Phrygia in the second panel (4-6) is undertaken reluctantly; it *must* be done (*linquantur!*) but 'Catullus' seems disinclined to do so. Furthermore, man's passive involvement (*quos viae reportant*) in his journey back to the *domus*, that is, the source of renewal, underlines his impotence, his inability to alter the cycle of birth and death of which he is a part. And yet, as small and powerless as he is, man provides the substance for the speaker's new spring. According to Lucretius in his refutation of an earlier theory of the cosmic process, life cannot arise from nothing; without the dissolution of matter there would be nothing from which new life could emerge.[3] C. 46 seems to parallel this idea by making man's death the raw material for the regeneration of human life.

The speaker's connection between man and the creative impulse of spring in C. 46 implies that man's most distinguishing feature is his own ability to be creative. As we have seen, man may live within the season but he possesses something that makes him unique in his natural environment: *mens*. The human intellect gives man the power to think in new and unconventional ways about the eternal truths of spring. The speaker has made spring emblematic of one primary truth--the necessary interconnection of birth and death, the renewal and dissolution of all

natural and human matter. The human mind is like spring in that it is capable of both productive and destructive activity. *Mens* can either enable man to create order and meaning in his perception of life, or it can create a climate which is conducive to personal anxiety and which may result, therefore, in despair over the order and meaning of life. In C. 46 the choice rests with the individual, with 'Catullus.' The speaker sets up a challenge in *mens*, a challenge for the addressee/reader to be mentally alert. For the speaker, man must acknowledge two facts before he can take control of his own life: first, that change is the essence of all living and, second, that change means dissolution. In short, man must accept his own mortality. The fragmentation of man into *mens* and *pedes* suggests the difficulty that he has in accepting these facts about himself; the split reveals the tension within man between his dream of free, unlimited movement (7, *avet vagari*) and his limitations within the 'spring' of life. In fact, this may be why the speaker limits himself to only one season as a paradigm of human living. The *mens* must not see a possibility of expansion into summer and fall, for adding to the seasons would have undercut the addressee/reader's perception of the termini of spring.

The speaker offers the possibility of resolving the tension man feels about living and dying. It lies in recognizing his responsibility to live intelligently within spring. By intelligently (*mens*) the speaker refers to man's decision to respond actively, rather than to submit passively, to change. Man's creative response to spring resides in his willingness to organize his place within the changes that spring necessarily entails. It is precisely by organizing his view of, and position within, spring that will gain man what little control he can have over the season.

Although he is impotent to halt the decline of spring, which parallels his own decline, he does have the power to create order within his life, namely, by focusing on the quality rather than on the quantity of his days. The extent to which man uses his mind to achieve this end will determine the measure of his personal success.

'Catullus' and the reader are urged by the speaker to be alert to man's creative power (*mens*). And yet, there is the suggestion that the speaker has himself failed the very challenge that he sets for others. The fact that C. 46's reassessment of spring comes from the speaker, who also includes himself in the generalizing plural 'we' of *volemus* in line five, creates an impression on first reading that the speaker has learned the lesson that he is seeking to inculcate in others. But this suggestion that the speaker has achieved a correct distance from the turmoil that spring may bring disappears in the final three lines of the poem. Here he separates himself from the 'sweet fellowship of men' (*dulce [omnium] coetus*) by means of the second person plural address *valete* (Farewell [to you]!). By dividing himself from the group, he implies that he is different from them, and that somehow the saying of farewell and the breaking up of friendships do not affect him in the same way that he projects they will affect the others; he does not include himself among the men who are going 'home' by their own unique courses (*diversa [ad] viae*). Is the speaker's self-removal from the group meant to parallel "Catullus'" earlier reluctance at leaving the springtime landscape of Phrygia in line four? If this is so, then the speaker and 'Catullus' are unified in the similarity of the problem they have in facing the consequences of spring. It also means, then, that the reader, who is part of the extended fellowship of the poem and who has equally been

summoned in line nine to heed the farewell (*valete* contains the word 'you'), shares the speaker's problems. Although he may be regarded as the spokesman of spring's more subtle meaning for man, the speaker, through his refusal to join the rest of his fellow travellers in their journey 'home,' becomes emblematic of man's struggle against acceptance of his own individual mortality.

The cause of man's difficulty in accepting the reality of human life would seem to be indicated by the phrase *mens praetrepidans* in line seven. Although the speaker has chosen to dwell at greater length upon the effects of human anxiety, its source in a mind that is always in turmoil must not be overlooked. As I have mentioned in Chapter Two, the expression *mens praetrepidans* is the only example in the poem of a noun and adjective unit that is not broken apart either by word order or metrical stress. By collocating and binding together the phrase, the speaker is stressing not the potential of the mind to be agitated, but, rather, its current condition as thoroughly disturbed, an effect that characterizes the mind as always upset by spring and, therefore, as always victimized by the season's implications for man's life. In emphasizing the anxiety of the human mind, the speaker makes man aware, however, of something else that, like the mind, distinguishes him from spring. Man can feel; spring cannot. Man is not mechanical; he is both a rational and an emotional creature. The difficulty lies in balancing these two human and potentially creative responses.

Earlier, in describing aspects of the Phrygian spring landscape, the speaker referred to the furious equinoctial storms (2) and to the seething climate of Nicaea, the principle city of the territory. As we have observed, the words *furor* and *aestuosae* carry strong connotations of

the restless, agitated and harmful propensities of spring. These terms are closely related to *praetrepidans* and other language in lines seven and eight that denote the lively, agitated and desire-full movement of either the human mind or body as it prepares to move in the spring climate. The analogy that is developed between the season's agitation and human agitation, whether it be mental or physical, is not, however, a complete one--nor can it be. Agitation is a normal part of seasonal growth, the storms and winds are part of the mechanical and cosmic process of the season. By choosing to emphasize predominantly verbs and adjectives, in lines 7-8, that dramatize man's irresolute and almost entirely emotional response to spring, the speaker implies that the human mind is unable, and may always be unable even in the best of springs, to control man's feelings. The speaker is not holding out the promise of equanimity in spring. Human emotions in C. 46 are too powerful and, as the phrase *mens praetrepidans* underlines, they distort, not only man's judgment of his surroundings but, more importantly, his own self-awareness. Perhaps this is the reason why the speaker neglects to see clearly his own role in the farewell scene that concludes the poem. The greeting *valete* is a subtle indictment, then, of the speaker's failure to be human, namely, to be one of the fellows going home. The most revelatory message of C. 46, therefore, is its suggestion that human emotions will always be victorious in defeating the judgment and self-judgment of man's mind. Whether man be the speaker or 'Catullus' or any reader of 46, he seems doomed to struggle endlessly against total identification with the rest of humankind because of his emotional refusal to accept the fate that makes them all fellows in spring.

NOTES

1. *DRN* 5.737.

2. Catullus, 68.16: "iocundum cum aetas florida ver ageret."

3. Lucretius directly attacks the foolishness of those Pre-Socratic thinkers who would propose that any created thing could arise when there is no substratum of eternal, permanent matter (*DRN* 1.672-674).

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APPENDIX

The adjective *aequinoctialis* is perhaps one of the most crucial tests of the reader's knowledge of spring, as well as of his willingness to play with the ambiguities of the season as presented in this poem. Its components, *aequus* and *nox*, indicate a period of equal nights. One is tempted to ask, "Nights equal to what?" Of course, it is clear that the adjective refers to a time when day and night are of equal length. It seems reasonable, then, to suppose that the equinox might also be described as '*aequidiurnalis*' (*aequus* and *dies*).[1] In fact, the noun *aequidiale* does occur as an antiquated form for the noun *aequinoctiale* "because the ancients thought that night ought to be included with day rather than day with night."[2] This evolution of emphasis within the term (one that suppresses the light of day) may reveal a change that has gone on behind the scenes in man's perspective on spring. Was he becoming more aware of its dangers? Does the transition from *dies* to *nox* in the adjective reflect, historically, a psychological transition within man, from optimism to pessimism about the season, namely, to an awareness of his own mortality even in the time of renewal?

The reference to spring storms invites the reader to consider spring as a problematic season. Spring storms do bring water that nourishes the fields and contributes to the fertility of the land. This service sometimes leads, however, to the disarrangement of the natural landscape and to other forms of natural damage.[3] Spring storms cause floods. The fertilizing effect of these spring storms is paralleled on

the land by the fertilizing of animals. Like the violence of the storms, animal mating is often a violent encounter. In fact, the storms remind the reader that all birth involves pain, risk and struggle. Blades of grass must break through the soil, new shoots must burst through their casings and young birds must peck their way into the world of light. Spring is not a time of painless renewal, and the equinoctial storms are the poem's example of the turbulence that renewal can bring. In the second place, the storms bring darkness. For example, the enveloping darkness of a storm is described by Lucretius as so sudden that "it were as if all darkness had left Acheron."[4] The sky, the land and everything that inhabits them are obscured in a 'foul night of clouds' (*taetra nimborum nocte*). In this passage Lucretius develops a connection between storms, night, darkness and the world of the dead. Storms, therefore, in addition to their regenerative capability, are also associated with, destruction and the darkness of death.

The emphasis on 'night' in the adjective *aequinoctialis* suggests the possibility of a metaphorical level of meaning in C. 46. Elsewhere, Catullus uses *nox* as a euphemism for death.[5] In the context of a spring poem, *nox* makes the reader recognize an ironic connection between spring and death. Spring follows winter; it arises from that dark, frigid season, thus illustrating the intimate relationship that exists between birth and death. The birth of spring, then, is brought about by the death of winter.

The term *aequus* means not only 'equal' or 'level' in a strictly physical sense, but also 'impartial.' In *aequinoctialis*, the adjective *aequus* suggests a levelling of everything under a cloak of darkness: night is to spring days as death is to man, the ultimate leveller. For

man, the sky of C. 46 seems to reflect his own mortality. There is an interesting parallel to this idea in Lucretius, but there the epic poet uses the sky to describe the perfect peace of the gods.[6] The sky that looks down upon the immortal bliss of the gods is cloudless (*innubilus aether*) and offers nothing but peace and harmony; neither winds nor rainstorms nor snow nor cold nor clouds invade their secluded world. By contrast, C. 46's focus upon the equalizing or levelling aspects of night, together with the prominent position of the polysyllabic adjective itself in the second half of the line, adds to the unpleasant associations of spring in *furor* and completes an image that stands in direct contrast to the pleasant and peaceful scene that surrounds it, as *iocundis . . . auris* resumes the picture of spring begun in the first line.

NOTES

1. The form *aequidiurnalis* is my own coinage.

2. L & S, p. 57: "aequidiale apud antiquos dictum est, quod nunc dicimus aequinoctiale, quia nox diei potius quam dies nocti annumerari debet." The notation adds that "the Greeks agree with this" (cf. ἰσημερία). See further *TGL* V, p. 661.

3. Cf. Horace, *Odes* 4.7, where the violence of the flooding rivers during the spring thaw causes the waters to overflow their banks: "Mutat terra vices et decrescentia ripas flumina praetereunt" (3-4)

4. *DRN* 4.168-173. Although Lucretius is not explicitly referring to spring storms, nevertheless the dark potential of the storm remains, regardless of the season in which it may occur.

5. Catullus, 5.5-6: "Nobis cum semel occidit brevis lux,/ nox est perpetua una dormienda."

6. [redacted] 3.18-22.