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Catullus and his World: A Reappraisal

T. P. Wiseman

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This book is an attempt to read the poems of Gaius Valerius Catullus in his own context; to look at the poet and his works against the cultural realities of the first century BC as recent advances in historical research allow us to understand them. Catullus' own social background, the circumstances of the literary life of his time, the true extent of his works and the variety of audiences he addressed - these and other questions are explored by Professor Wiseman with new and startling results. Contemporary high society and politics are illustrated through Clodia and Caelius Rufus, considered not as mere adjuncts to Catullus' story but as significant historical personalities in their own right. A final chapter on nineteenth- and twentieth-century interpretations of Catullus' world shows how anachronistic preconceptions have prevented a proper understanding of it, and made this radical reappraisal necessary. Anyone with a serious interest in Latin literature or Roman history will want to read this book. Students in the upper levels of school or at university will find it essential background reading to their work on Catullus and Cicero's Pro Caelio.

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