

with which the poem closes.¹⁷ The transition would have been far more difficult had Catullus employed the style of more traditional invective.

Current scholarly belief holds that the eleventh poem shows its readers a clear-headed and purposeful Catullus reviewing the claims on himself of a love affair and poetry alike, with the opening excursus and closing lyric components elegantly illustrating his distance and detachment from Lesbia, after the harm she has done him, and the curative power of his art.¹⁸ It is hoped that the foregoing discussion of the *puella*-stanza which they frame may bolster that belief.¹⁹

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17. The continuity of language has fostered the impression that the flower simile of the last stanza is almost Homeric. See Richardson's discussion, "Furi et Aureli," p. 106, and note that the cut flower appears in *Aen.* 9, 435–37 along with drooping flowers, a close imitation of *Il.* 8, 306. For an apposite image from Sappho, the trampled hyacinth, see 105 c LP with Quinn, *Catullus*, p. 129, and Putnam, "Catullus 11," p. 78. For interpretations of the Catullan figure, see Mulroy, "An Interpretation," p. 243.

18. Discussions cited in n. 1. Only Kinsey, "Catullus 11," p. 544, regards 11 as nothing more than "a rebuff to Lesbia." But this ignores both the concluding stanza and the fact that 11 and 51 must be taken together. On the question of placement of the two poems, see now Wiseman, *Catullan Questions*, pp. 33–35. If one does not expect Catullus to have ordered his Lesbia poems in strict accord with a presumed chronological account of the love affair, there is no apparent difficulty about the position of 11 and 51 in the collection.

19. I am grateful to the anonymous referee of *CP* for bibliographical and other advice.

CATULLUS 51 AND 68. 51–56: AN OBSERVATION

The question whether the fourth stanza of poem 51 was in fact composed by Catullus as part of the poem and, if so, what function it has in the context of the whole poses one of the more intriguing problems in Catullan criticism. In 1965 I published an interpretation of the poem as a four-stanza unit which, at least in its main conclusions, has been accepted by some scholars and rejected by others.¹ I now wish to draw attention to a passage in Catullus 68. 51–56 which supports my interpretation. For this purpose I shall first summarize this interpretation, while for substantiation and details the reader must be referred to the article itself.

In his first poem to Lesbia Catullus contrasts the divine bliss of another man with his own unhappiness (5 *misero*). The other man habitually (3 *identidem*) enjoys the charming company of Lesbia, which implies that he is her accepted lover and friend, and thereby he is rendered divinely happy. Catullus in contrast has seen Lesbia perhaps only once (6–7 *simul te . . . aspexi*), and her very appearance causes or has caused him to swoon (6–12). He is not now and perhaps cannot realistically aspire ever to be the recipient of her love. In short, he is desperately, unhappily in love. Meanwhile, since first meeting Lesbia and losing his heart to her, in his obsession with her, he has ignored and neglected all other activities and responsibilities. In a word, he has "dropped out." This condition

1. E. A. Fredricksmeyer, "On the Unity of Catullus 51," *TAPA* 96 (1965): 153–63. The interpretation has been accepted by, e.g., F. Frank, "*Otium* versus *Virtus*," *TAPA* 99 (1968): 233; V. Lejnieks, "*Otium Catullanum* Reconsidered," *CJ* 63 (1968): 262; F. Copley, "The Structure of Catullus C. 51 and the Problem of the *Otium*-Strophe," *GB* 2 (1974): 25, rejects it.

was part of a notorious set of circumstances, for which the classic term was *otium*. Most basically, it meant either leisure or idleness, and in the latter sense, the prevailing one, it was the proverbial source of trouble, particularly of misfortune and unhappiness in love. As such, along with romantic passion, it was condemned by the traditional moral code, the *mores et virtutes maiorum*.

We can understand therefore that, when Catullus recovers, as it were, from his blackout (12), he takes stock of his situation. "*Otium*, Catullus, to you is painful (*molestum*)" (13).² *Otium* here is both the whole condition of Catullus' life at the present time and in particular also marks his infatuation with Lesbia. The *molestum* enforces and adds to *misero* as an indication of Catullus' unhappiness. "In your *otium* you excite and upset yourself too much with passion and desire" (14).³ In this way Catullus reinforces and generalizes the expression, in the center of the poem, of the excessive intensity of his passion. "*Otium* before now has destroyed (*perdidit*) even kings and flourishing cities" (15–16). By the magnitude of the concluding exemplum Catullus impresses upon himself the severity of the crisis which he experiences. His present way of life and specifically his passion for Lesbia (*otium*) can ruin him just as similar conditions and obsessions have ruined even kings and flourishing cities.

There is here no suggestion, however, that Catullus means to act on his admonition by disavowing his passion and returning to a life of serious activity. Rather, he appears to let himself go, as if deprived of his will. Thus the poem gives voice to Catullus' passion for Lesbia and to his unhappiness in his present condition, and it suggests that he is now undergoing a personal crisis, which was exacerbated, perhaps, by the fact that his *inamorata* was the wife of one of the most powerful men in the state.

All this no doubt was sincere, but also designed to make an impression on Lesbia. The poem is in effect an appeal to her as to a goddess who holds the poet's fate in her hands: Grant me your love, or else I may perish. And it also intimates: Grant me your love, I cannot and should not go on like this much longer.

We know the outcome. Lesbia did make Catullus her lover. In poem 68 Catullus begins the epistolary inset, which he sends to his friend Allius, with the statement that Allius once conferred on him a great favor, and in return he will now immortalize him through this poem (68. 41–50). A little later, Catullus identifies Allius' good deed. He lent him the use of his house for his first assignation with Lesbia (67–72).⁴ In lines 51–56, addressing the Muses, Catullus describes his condition *before* this occasion:

Nam, mihi quam dederit duplex Amathusia curam
Scitis, et in quo me corruerit genere,

2. Cf. F. Tietze, "Catullus 51. Gedicht," *RhM* 88 (1939): 356: "Prüft man das Vorkommen von *molestum* bis in die Zeit Catulls, so ergibt sich durchgehend—auch für die anderen Stellen bei Catull—die Bedeutung: quälend, lästig, peinigend."

3. *Otio exsultas nimiumque gestis*. *Exsultare* and *gestire*, whether used singly or together, as here, almost always denote an excessive state of passion and excitement, while *gestire*, in addition, contains the notion of violent desire; F. Tietze, "Catullus 51. Gedicht," pp. 356–57.

4. Lesbia is not actually named, but there is no doubt of her identity: *domina* (68), *mea candida diva* (70), *lux mea* (132), *era* (136).

Cum tantum arderem quantum Trinacria rupes,
 Lymphaque in Oetaeis Malia Thermopylis,
 Maesta neque assiduo tabescere lumina fletu
 Cessarent tristique imbre madere genae.⁵

Let us consider first what Catullus says. Amathusia (Venus) is called *duplex* no doubt because she is unreliable and treacherous. When Catullus first met and fell in love with Lesbia, he could not foresee the unhappiness which in fact did befall him.⁶ Specifically, what love (*Amathusia*) brought him was anxiety and torment (*curam*), and well-nigh ruination (*corruerit*) (51–52). This happened to Catullus at the time when (*cum*) he was burning with passion for Lesbia (53–54), and suffered constant (*neque cessarent*) misery (55–56). The time to which the statement refers was after Catullus first met and fell in love with Lesbia, and before, or until, their first congress at the house of Allius. Catullus says that the Muses (41 *deae*; cf. 10 *Musarum*) know (*scitis*) of the experience, and this must mean that he gave expression to it in poetry, or a poem. In the whole of Catullus' oeuvre there is only one poem to which the reference can apply, poem 51.

First, it fits the chronology. There is almost complete agreement that poem 51 is the earliest of the Lesbia poems. It is written in the Sapphic meter, which among the 116 preserved poems of Catullus was used only one other time, in poem 11. In poem 11 Catullus bitterly renounces Lesbia and proclaims a final end to the affair. The poem clearly was written, with bitter irony, in conscious and intentional reference to poem 51 as Catullus' first declaration of love and homage to Lesbia. In no other poem does Catullus address her with such formal distance and such reverential awe. It appears certain, therefore, that it was written during the time period to which Catullus refers, that is, after he first met her but before he became her lover at Allius' house.

Second, poem 51 alone fits the content. Catullus refers to an all-consuming experience in his life, his passion for Lesbia, *Amathusia* (68. 51). Poem 51 is an expression of this experience. It was an overpowering infatuation which brought on a cessation of all other serious pursuits and activities (*otium*). His love caused him torment and anxiety, *curam* (68. 51). Poem 51 conveys a vivid sense of Catullus' *cura*. In particular, we note the thematic words *misero* (5), *molestum* (13), *nimumque* (14), and the angst indicated by the warning at the end (15–16). His love overwhelmed him, brought him crashing down, *corruerit* (68. 52). The central two stanzas of poem 51 show vividly the overpowering effect which his

5. This statement is conspicuous as a unit in the structure of the poem, that is, the epistolary inset (41–148), by being one of several corresponding sections of precisely equal lengths arranged around the central section of lines 135–40. See, e.g., O. Weinreich, *Catull: Liebesgedichte* (Hamburg, 1960), pp. 98–99.

I maintain the MSS (V) reading *corruerit* in preference to Turnebus' *torruerit* on stylistic grounds. The first distich of the sentence (51–52) presents the main statement of Catullus' experience, while the following four lines present in two temporal clauses of two lines each the two main aspects of this experience. That is, Catullus' love for Lesbia at that time caused him torture (51) and overwhelmed him (52), when (or while) he was consumed with passion for her (53–54) and wretchedly unhappy (55–56). This syntactic balance would be vitiated by the reading *torruerit* since it would be merely pleonastic with *arderem*.

6. The notion that Venus is *duplex* because she gives both happiness and sorrow ("the sweet and the bitter") is not applicable in this context since there is no suggestion here of happiness. Cf. W. Kroll, *C. Valerius Catullus*⁵ (Stuttgart, 1968), ad loc.

passion had on Catullus. The last stanza, moreover, indicates that the experience of meeting and falling in love with Lesbia brought on him a personal crisis, a traumatic break with his earlier life, and we note in particular the idea of ruination which is conveyed by the word *perdidit* (16). During this time, Catullus was consumed by the ardor of his love, *cum tantum arderem* . . . (68. 53–54). Poem 51 documents this ardor. In particular, we note again in the central two stanzas the effect on Catullus of the vision of the adored woman, which caused him virtually to lose consciousness. This experience is then generalized and reinforced by the words *otio exsultas nimiumque gestis*, an acknowledgment of an excess of passion. And, finally, at this time Catullus was wretchedly unhappy, *maesta neque assiduo tabescere lumina fletu / cessarent tristisque* . . . (68. 55–56). In poem 51 a sense of this unhappiness is conveyed by the thematic word *misero* (5) and enlarged by the final stanza.

In sum, the statement of poem 68. 51–56 alludes to an earlier poem, or poetry, of Catullus. It presents a characterization of this poetry, or poem, which in the corpus of Catullus' work fits only poem 51. It fits poem 51 as a four-stanza unit and supports my particular interpretation of it.⁷

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7. I wish to anticipate a possible objection, namely, that there are in 68. 51–56 no close verbal echoes of poem 51. This is true, but the primary function of the passage is not to make reference to poem 51 but to serve as an integral part of poem 68. One of its purposes here, it appears, is to provide a foil to its corresponding section of lines 135–40, pointing up the incipience of Lesbia's infidelity. Cf. O. Weinreich, *Liebesgedichte*, pp. 98–99.

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facere in Lyciscam, Paule, me iubes versus
quibus illa lectis rubeat et sit irata.
o Paule, malus es; irrumare vis solus.

This simple little poem has been curiously misunderstood. Housman's interpretation was based on his well-known thesis that *irrumare* was often used in the weakened sense "insult."¹ According to Housman, Paulus was insulting Martial, because to try to make a shameless woman like Lycisca blush was a waste of time. Shackleton Bailey rightly objects to this as "forced and implausible": "How was the reader to know that Lycisca was incapable of shame or anger?"²

But Shackleton Bailey agreed with Housman in rejecting the usual explanation that Paulus simply wanted to get rid of a rival. Arguing that "the poet would hardly present himself literally as *irrumator*" and assuming the same weakened sense as Housman, he proposes the admittedly neat and easy emendation: *irrumaberis*. "Paulus craftily hopes to escape exposure by urging the poet to attack his partner, but no; *he* will be lampooned, Lycisca will go free."

1. "Praefanda," *Hermes* 66 (1931): 407–10 = *Collected Papers*, vol. 3 (London, 1972), pp. 1179–81.
2. "Corrections and Explanations of Martial," *CP* 73 (1978): 277.