

THOSE SNEEZES: CATULLUS 45.8–9, 17–18

hoc ut dixit, Amor sinistra ut ante
dextra sternuit approbationem

I

“Locus nondum expeditus” (Mynors app. crit. ad loc.).¹ “The omens which form the refrain are odd: is *sinistra* well-omened with Roman use or ill-omened with Greek use, when she bears a Greek name, he a Roman? How many omens are there? Is the sneeze right and left doubly favourable, or ambiguous?”²

There can be no just doubt that the sneezes are simply “good news”: 19 *bono auspicio profecti* rules out ambiguity on that point. The prior problem here is not the potentially conflicting connotations of “left” and “right” in Greek and Roman augury (well set forth by Fordyce in his note on 8 f.),³ but the meaning of *ut ante*.

This difficulty is fudged by commentators. The usual assumption is that the phrase is temporal, “as before,” which is perfectly in order at 17–18, relative or absolute. But it will scarcely do at 8–9. “As before” at that place, however punctuated, must trip the fresh reader; “as before” *what*? Fordyce says that “the most plausible explanation is that of the early editors, that *sinistra ut ante* is equivalent to *primum dextra, deinde sinistra*” in both places.

This, however, is special pleading. For the usage of Plautus and Terence shows that *antea* not *ante* is wanted to render *dextra* unambiguously relative to *sinistra* rather than absolute, cf. *ubi iste post phaselus antea fuit comata silva* (4.10). This is as we should expect in an author who, in his quotidian style, still spoke “their language” without modification, as in e.g., poem 10 *Varus me meus*. . . .

But in any case, the expression “on the left as previously [to that] on the right” is a curiously stilted way of saying “first . . . then . . .,” lacking in point, and alien to the style of the poem as a whole, which, while very much depending on the sort of comic exaggerations that characterize Plautus or P. G. Wodehouse, is essentially simple and direct in its way of expressing those extravagances.

Besides, the elision *sinistr(ā) ūt ante* is strange. Catullus does not in the least mind eliding -*ē* before a final bacchiac in his hendecasyllables (eleven cases);⁴ but there are no instances of -*ā* elided. Nor does he mind the elision of long open monosyllables,⁵ but he is otherwise very sparing with long final vowels: 7.3 *Libyssae harenae*, 24.6 *ab illo amari*, 57.6 *gemelli utrique*, none in -*am*, -*em*,

1. R. A. B. Mynors, ed., *Catulli carmina* (Oxford, 1958).

2. J. Ferguson, *Catullus, Greece and Rome New Surveys in the Classics*, no. 20 (Oxford, 1988), p. 29; cf. K. Quinn, *Catullus: The Poems*² (London, 1973), p. 226.

3. C. J. Fordyce, *Catullus. A Commentary* (Oxford, 1961); sneeze-lore: Hom. *Od.* 17.541, Xen. *An.* 3.2.9, Arist. *HA* 1.11, [*Pr.*] 33, Theoc. *Id.* 7.96, 18.16, Cic. *Div.* 2.40.84, Prop. 2.3.23, Ovid *Her.* 18 (19). 151–52, Petron. *Sat.* 98, Pliny *HN* 28.23, Plut. *De gen.* 11.

4. 5.1 *atque amemus*, 9.6 *audiamque Hiberum*, 13.1 *mi Fabulle, apud me*, 14.21 *valet abite*, 33.5 *malasque in oras*, 35.12 *impotente amore*, 36.5 *vibrare iambos*, 36.12 *Uriosque apertos*, 36.18 *venite in ignem*, 50.10 *quiete ocellos*, 50.13 *simulque ut essem*.

5. 10.7 *quo modo se haberet*, 10.28 *dixeram me habere*, 12.4 *fugit te, inepte*.

-um.⁶ In a corpus of nearly 250 hendecasyllables, this is many fewer than we should expect if elisions of long against short at this place were just a matter of indifference determined by chance. For the phonology of Latin ordains that, *ceteris paribus*, among the four possible varieties of the encounter of final and initial vowel, namely short meets short, short meets long, long meets long, and long meets short, it is the last species which ought to be the more frequent, and Catullus does not so positively avoid it in the formation of the fifth-last place. Evidently his ear told him that in this meter the shortness of the third-last place ought in general to be crisply clear, to the extent that real exceptions catch the reader's ear and invite special explanations, e.g., perhaps the suggestion of expansiveness in 7.4, the jarring nastiness of what is being said at 24.6 and 57.6. We do not wish to labor the point—it would take us too far afield—but the statistics are telling us that *sinistr(ā) ūt ante* is an unusual cadence for which it is difficult to see a reason arising from the context, the more so as it occurs in a refrain which, as such, ought to be notably euphonious rather than the opposite.

Taken separately, none of these objections is fatal, but together they raise one's suspicions; and if a solution can be found which assigns a different sense to *ante* and incidentally disposes of the other difficulties, it will be welcome. And indeed the proper and natural force of *ante* was appreciated long ago by Scaliger and again in the last century by Baehrens in his commentary ad loc. (1885). *Ante* in company with "left" and "right" ought to be *spatial*, meaning "in front," "ahead," cf. Cicero *Academicæ Quaestiones* 2.125 "innumerabiles supra infra, dextra sinistra, ante post . . . mundos esse," Vitruvius 10.14.1 "uti ante et post et ad dextrum seu sinistrum latus sive oblique . . . progredi possint," Silius Italicus 4.30–31 "ante agitur coniux, dextra laeque trahuntur parvi," Quintilian *Institutio oratoria* 11.3.105 "reliqui (sc. gestus) ante nos et dextra laeque et sursum et deorsum aliquid ostendunt" (*TLL* 2.128.21–61).

In both places, the poem itself declares that Catullus should simply be saying that Love sneezed (as we might say, though a shade too chattily) "left, right, and center," cf. Petronius 98 *ter continuo sternutavit*. The directions are, for the purposes of this poem, insignificant; the triplication is what matters.

But to secure that sense, one must do something with *ut*. Scaliger's *inante* is clearly unacceptable because formations like that (cf. *ab ante*) belong to a much later stage in the development of Latin (cf. Italian *innanzi*, French *avant*, etc.). Baehrens' own proposal *sinistra et ante, dextra* is out of the question; for *sinistra ante dextra* (asyndeton) or *sinistra et ante et dextra* (polysyndeton) were possible ways of putting it, but *et* + asyndeton ruins the balance and point, that Cupid sneezes thrice indiscriminately.

A simple transposition secures the desiderated sense, and disposes of the objections raised above:

hoc ut dixit, ut ante Amor, sinistra,
dextra sternuit approbationem!

6. We do not count Bergk's conjecture at 1.9 *patroni ut ergo*, holding the rarity of this kind of elision as an objection in itself to be added to others syntactic and stylistic to which it is subject anyway.

"The second (s)he said this, Love sneezed blessing ahead, to the left, to the right!" or, as an exclamation, "as (s)he said this, how Love sneezed . . . !" or, perhaps, both senses at once.

II

Which is meant? To answer this, it is necessary to refer to some well-known instances of an equivalent idiom in Hellenistic and earlier Greek poetry. The transposition proposed will of course immediately remind the reader of a strikingly beautiful line of the youngish Virgil, "ut vidi, ut perii, ut me malus abstulit error" (*E.* 8.41; cf. [V.] *Ciris* 430). Catullus' poem was written when Virgil himself was barely in his teens if even that old. If we be right, then the Catullan instance of *ut . . . ut . . .* must antedate the Virgilian by about twenty years and make it instead the earliest known Latin instance of an idiom most recently discussed in detail by S. Timpanaro in a full and lucid paper.⁷

His main thesis is that since *ὥς . . . ὥς . . .* in Greek⁸ and *ut . . . ut . . .* in Latin poetry in some cases *must* be taken as correlatives indicating simultaneity ("the second that X happened Y happened too"), and since (so he claims) all the instances *can* be so taken, the alternative explanation of the second *ὥς . . .* or *ut . . .* as exclamatory and indicative of degree ("as . . . , how . . . !"), though it is an explanation which we already find in the antique commentators on particular examples in both languages, is in fact redundant and mistaken.

As far as the earliest Greek examples are concerned, Timpanaro is certainly right:

... Θέτις δ' ὥς ἦψατο γουνῶν
ὥς εχετ' ἐμπεφυῖα καὶ εἵρετο δεύτερον αὐθις (Il. 1.512-13)

... ἴδε δὲ νεφεληγερέτα Ζεὺς,
ὥς δ' ἴδεν, ὥς μιν ἔρωσ πυκινὰς φρένας ἀμφεκάλυπεν (Il. 14.293-94)

... αὐτὰρ Ἀχιλλεὺς
ὥς εἶδ', ὥς μιν μάλλον ἔδου χόλος... (Il. 19.15-16)

... αὐτὰρ Ἀχιλλεὺς
ὥς εἶδ', ὥς ἀνέπαλτο... (Il. 20.423-24)

ὥς γὰρ ἔς σ' ἴδω βρόχε', ὥς με φώναι-
σ' οὐδ' ἔν ἔτ' εἵκει (Sapph. 31.7-8 L.-P.)

Exclamatory *ὥς* is confined in Homer to speeches, and we should scarcely expect otherwise, given the objectivity of the Homeric narrator; the interpretation "as . . . , how . . . !" is ruled out in *Iliad* 1.512-13, 20.423-24; in Sappho, *ὥς . . . ὥς . . .* is likewise expressing (virtual) simultaneity; cf. Catullus' rendition 51.6-7 *nam simul* te, Lesbia, aspexi, nihil est super mi. . . .

7. "Ut uidi, ut perii," in his *Contributi di filologia e di storia della lingua latina* (Rome, 1978), 219-87, with references to earlier discussions, in particular J. Wackernagel, *Glotta* 14 (1925): 64-66 (= *Kleine Schriften* 2:872-74) and Gow's note on Theoc. *Id.* 2.82.

8. By modern convention, a semantic distinction is drawn between *ὥς* (no accent) "as" and *ὥς . . .* "so . . ." (equally unaccented version of a merely theoretical "*ὥς*" in quotation marks; when genuinely final, irrelevant in the present context, *ὥς*). But phonetically there is no difference: both are unaccented proclitics which only acquire an accent by enclisis (*ὥς μιν . . .* etc.). Here for convenience and simplicity, and to present the material as the ancients had to interpret it without editorial prejudice, we dispense with the spelling *ὥς* altogether, but do not mean to challenge the convention generally.

But things are less clear-cut in Hellenistic poetry, where emotional comment is readily admissible in narrative as well as in speeches, so that one cannot simply assume Homeric objectivity in the well-known Hellenistic elaborations, here listed in rough chronological order, and including two relevant cases (*) overlooked in modern discussion:

χώς ἶδον, ὡς ἐμάνην, ὥς μοι πυρὶ θυμὸς ἰάφθη (Theoc. *Id.* 2.82)

... ἂ δ' Ἀταλάντα

ὡς ἶδεν, ὡς ἐμάνη, ὡς ἐς βαθὺν ἄλατ' ἔρωτα (Theoc. *Id.* 3.42–43)

ὡς ἶδον, ὡς [ζ] ἅμα πάντες ὑπ[έ]τρεσ[α]ν ἢ δ[ὲ] φόβη[θ]εν (Callim. *Hec.* frag. 260.2)

ὡς δ' ἶδες, [ὡς] ἔσσης ... (Callim. *Hymnus* 4.200)

τίς δ' ἦν ἡ ξείνη τὴν εἴσιδον ὑπνώουσα;

ὥς μ' ἔλαβε κραδίην κείνης πόθος, ὥς με καὶ αὐτὴ
ἀσπασίως ὑπέδεκτο καὶ ὡς σφετέρην ἶδε παῖδα! (Mosch. 2.24–26*)

ἦ γὰρ δὴ Κρονίδης ὥς μιν φράσαθ', ὡς ἐόλητο
θυμὸν ἀνωίστοισιν ὑποδηθεὶς βελέεσσι ... (Mosch. 2.74–75)

ὡς ἶδεν, ὡς ἐνόησεν Ἀδωνίδος ἄσχετον ἔλκος,
ὡς ἶδε φοῖνιον αἶμα μαραινόμεναι περὶ μηρῶι,
πάχεας ἀμπετάσασα κινύρετο 'μείνον Ἄδωνι ...' (Bion 1.40–42*)

The old scholia interpret Theocritus *Id.* 2.82 with *λίαν ἐμάνην*, i.e., as exclamatory;⁹ but the Byzantine scholia gloss 3.42–43 with *εὐθέως ἐμάνη*, i.e., as expressing simultaneity,¹⁰ and that accords better both with the early Greek models, and with Theocritus' particular innovation—the deployment of ὡς not in pairs but in triads. For in principle ὡς ... ὡς ... may as readily be opposed in sense as be parallel, but in a triad, there is the definite implication that ὡς ... ὡς ... ὡς ... are the same as each other not only phonetically but also in meaning.

But if the ancient commentator on 2.82 were simply wrong, as Timpanaro would have it, then so was Moschus at 2.24–26, where sense clearly requires “how ... how ... how ...,” cf. such randy triads as Aristophanes *Aves* 667–68 ὦ Ζεῦ πολυτίμηθ', ὡς καλὸν τοῦρνίθιον, ὡς δ' ἀπαλόν, ὡς δὲ λευκόν ... *Lysistrata* 79–80 οἶον τὸ κάλλος, γλυκυτάτη, σου φαίνεται, ὡς δ' εὐχρoεῖς, ὡς δὲ σφριγᾷ τὸ σῶμά σου, and that certainly invites, though it does not oblige the reader so to take ὡς ἐόλητο ... at 74–75, which in turn implies that Moschus was of the same opinion as the scholiast on Theocritus *Idylls* 2.82, or, possibly, that he wanted to have it both ways in both passages. In Callimachus *Hecale* fragment 260.2 ἅμα might be thought positively to invite the exclamatory interpretation too, for otherwise it is redundant. But one could argue the other way too; and the exclamatory interpretation is clearly ruled out in *Hymnus* 4.200 by the meaning of ἔσσης (where Pfeiffer's supplement seems certain). As for Bion, he is seen at 1.40–42 to make ὡς ... ὡς ... ὡς ... parallel and subordinate, “when ... when ... when ...,” which goes clean against Moschus at 2.24–26, and is in implicit agreement with the Byzantine scholiast on Theocritus *Idylls* 3.42–43.

One smells ink and learned controversy behind all this, as if the later Hellenistic poets and commentators were reacting to a ζήτημα accidentally or deliberately posed by Theocritus.

9. Timpanaro, “*Ut uidi*,” p. 241, n. 33.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 239, n. 28.

The major premise of equivalent twentieth century consideration of the question, that none of the Hellenistic examples demands the exclamatory interpretation, and therefore the Homeric must always be the one intended, is evidently unsatisfactory, because it fails to take account of Moschus 2.24–26 and Bion 1.40–42.

But it is a further mistake to use Occam's razor here anyway. Since $\omega\varsigma \dots \omega\varsigma \dots$ is polyvalent, it is not decisive that the early Greek examples are exclusively correlative; since in Hellenistic Greek $\omega\varsigma \dots \omega\varsigma \dots$ could only mean "how . . . how . . ." or "as . . . how . . .," it seems more reasonable to allow that for the Hellenistic public the meaning will have depended on context, and that in some contexts the poets were being ambiguous, by accident or by design: since temporal $\omega\varsigma \dots$ and exclamatory $\omega\varsigma \dots$ were each separately perfectly natural expressions, one can only positively *exclude* the exclamatory interpretation where the context refuses to tolerate it ($[\omega\varsigma] \text{ ἔσθῃς}$); this does not apply to examples like $\omega\varsigma \text{ ἐμάνην}$, nor would it if we had examples of $*\omega\varsigma \text{ ἴδον} \dots \omega\varsigma \text{ ἀπόλωλα} \dots$ which would exactly match Virgil's well-known imitation of both passages in Theocritus *ut vidi, ut perii, ut me malus abstulit error* already cited. For in Greek $\omega\varsigma \text{ ἀπόλωλα}$ was a straightforward colloquial ejaculation (cf. e.g., Aristophanes *Acharnenses* 473, *Equites* 127, 752, *Vespae* 1449, *Pax* 243, *Thesmophoriazusae* 1212, *Ranae* 683–84, *Plutus* 850, et al.; but the equivalent in Latin was always *perii!*, never *ut perii!*

The safest and best interpretation is therefore that Theocritus was being intentionally ambiguous: $\omega\varsigma \dots \omega\varsigma \text{ ἐμάνη(v)} \dots \omega\varsigma \dots$ expressed *both* simultaneity and intensity. Callimachus perhaps allows himself both senses, but singly in different contexts; while Moschus and after him Bion seem to have wished to clarify the issue further, but go in opposite un-Homeric directions in doing so.

Turning to Latin, since one finds that temporal *ut* . . . "as . . ." and exclamatory *ut* "how . . . !" were each (like $\omega\varsigma$ in Greek) separately perfectly natural constructions, each well attested from Plautus on,¹¹ one can never rule out as simply un-Latin their occurring together to express "as . . . how . . ."; and that was the natural and standard ancient explanation of Virgil's line. Servius ad loc. states that "unum 'ut' est temporis, aliud quantitatis; nam hoc dicit: mox vidi, quemadmodum perii!"; Servius Danielis adds the same in different words: ". . . vel primum 'ut' postquam, duo sequentia pro admirandi significatione posita sunt"; the Philargyrian scholia offer: "'ut vidi' id est 'statim.' 'ut perii,' id est 'valde.' 'ut me malus' . . . , id est 'quemadmodum.' vel 'ut perii, statim ut vidi,' id est 'postquam.'" The attempt here to find three different meanings for each *ut* in the triad is threadbare pedantry, for *valde* as an expression of degree merely disguises the exclamatory interpretation of *ut perii*.

In none of these various glosses does it occur to anyone to suggest that *ut* . . . *ut* . . . *ut* indicates simultaneity even in a secondary way—presumably because *ut* in pairs or in triads simply did not mean that in ordinary Latin usage. This reflects their ignorance of Greek literature.

Virgil too must have realized that the "exoteric" and perfectly sufficient interpretation of his line was going to be "as . . . how . . . how. . . ." At the same time, it is clear that he himself and the *cognoscenti* who recognized the allusions to Theocritus sub-intended the other meaning as well—simultaneity. This, as suggested

11. G. Lodge, *Lexicon plautinum*, t. 2 (Leipzig, 1926), p. 926 (temporal) and pp. 920–22 (exclamatory); P. McGlynn, *Lexicon terentianum*, t. 2 (Glasgow, 1967), pp. 302–3.

above, is parallel to what Theocritus himself had been doing: by his time, ὥς . . . ὥς . . . indicating simultaneity was definitely archaic and reminiscent of specific lines of the Ancients, Sappho and before her Homer, and it was his use of the triad rather than dyad that would make the reader ask himself whether the idiomatically more obvious way of interpreting was sufficient or indeed right; at Rome, *ut . . . ut . . .* indicating simultaneity had no such native *auctoritas*, only that which it was deriving and declaring for the “esoteric” reader from Theocritus and, far beyond him, from Homer. In that limited and sophisticated sense, we have a syntactic Grecism, and certainly not just some mistake on Virgil’s part, as carping critics of his complex style were probably already making out in Ovid’s time.

For Ovid liked the conceit but evidently not the “acquired” ambiguity of *ut . . . ut . . .* as appears from the various ingenious ways in which he too exploits the idea but avoids the expression:

et vidi et perii nec notis ignibus arsi	(Her. 12.33 [35])
ut vidi, obstupui . . .	(Her. 16.135)
paene simul visa est dilectaque raptaque Diti	(Met. 5.395)
hanc pariter vidit pariter Calydonius heros	
optavit . . . flammisque latentes	
hausit . . .	(Met. 8.324–26)
videre hanc pariter, pariter traxere calorem	(Met. 11.305)

This perhaps suggests that the Greek commentary in Ovid’s library was of the same persuasion as in Bion’s, not Moschus’, and that Virgil’s *ut . . . ut* was one of the various canards at which those early critics of Virgilian usage had been sniping.

To return at last to Catullus, it is reasonable to suppose that he will have been familiar with all of the instances cited above and quite probably others which do not survive; after all, the ones cited come from poems which any *doctus poeta* of Catullus’ circle must have known well, along with some of the attendant Greek commentaries and the ζητήματα which they had generated. Then there is the problem of *dum . . . dum . . .* at 62.45 and 56; Quintilian found this distinctly odd as Latin, glossing it for us *quoad . . . usque eo* (Inst. 9.3.16). It must remain a doubtful question whether this had any direct root in older Latin idiom (Plaut. *Truc.* 232 *dum habeat, dum* [Lambinus: *tum* MSS] *amet*; uncertain), or is analogical (cf. *simul . . . simul . . . , tum . . . tum . . .*), and in either case, whether it is meant to evoke such paratactic expressions as Callimachus *Hymnus* 4.39–40 τόφρα μὲν . . . τόφρα δὲ . . .; there is no sign of an equivalent Greek ἕως . . . ἕως . . . as far as I know.

As for the refrain of poem 45, from Homer to Ovid, the main theme on which poets were playing their variations on ὥς . . . ὥς . . . , *ut . . . ut . . .* (or in Ovid various ingenious ways of *avoiding* that expression) are the ones meaning “the second he saw her, he fell in love” (and, from Theocritus to Virgil, with the concomitant implication [and how!]); the verb in the first clause is one of seeing, and so also in some of the non-erotic instances (Callim. *Hymnus* 4.20). But, to go back to Homer, this had never been a *necessary* condition for the idiom (*Il.* 1.512); and, as pointed out above, *ut . . . ut . . .* “as . . . how . . .” is perfectly good Latin anyway.

So there is nothing against our having Catullus rendering in this ironically un-Epic context some imaginary *ὥς ἔφαθ’, ὥς πᾶρ’ *Ἐρως καλὰ ᾧδε καὶ ᾧδε καὶ ᾧδε of his own in the playful way that we here suggest he does in tongue-in-cheek

reaction to the somewhat formulaic sentimentality that the locution had come to evince in Moschus and Bion: the sneezes are both intense *and* (if we know our standard Hellenistic poetry) instantaneous.

Well aware of learned Greek controversy regarding simultaneity and/or degree in the verb following the second ὥς in the Hellenistic instances, the Latin poet chose a way of expressing himself over which the likes of Septimius and Acme or their average readers would not be expected or invited to scratch their heads and look up various discordant Greek commentators, but which, for being ambiguous in the same way as in Theocritus, would the more amuse such *cognoscenti* as Calvus, Cinna, or Valerius Cato; and, it would seem, Virgil too in the event.

As to the mechanics of the error so diagnosed, we may suppose that at some not necessarily very remote stage in the transmission *ut ante* was accidentally omitted in one or other place and added in the margin (cf. 63.49 *est ita voce miseritus maestas* / *V* for *maestast ita voce miseriter* /, 84.2 *insidias he* / for *hinsidias* /; cf. further e.g., 1.8, 66.85, 69.5). Since the result makes sense of a sort, the other place was accordingly “corrected.” That the corruption happens to scan at all, though awkwardly, is an accident which the “corrector” probably did not even appreciate.

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COPA 5–6 ONCE MORE

quid iuvat aestivo defessum pulvere abesse
quam potius bibulo decubuisse toro?

5 abesse] abisse Ilgen 6 bibulo] vivo Schenkl

R. F. Thomas joins those scholars troubled by these lines.¹ The perceived problems are *quam potius* and *bibulo toro*.

1. *quam potius*: opinions are divided: does this phrase mean *potius quam* or is it exclamatory? The latter, I suggest, cf. Tibullus 1.10.39:

quam potius laudandus hic est, quem prole parata
occupat in parva pigra senecta casa!

Here, *quam potius* has been rescued from the apparatus in the editions of Lenz and now in Luck's Teubner.²

2. *bibulo toro*: scholars have found the transference difficult, and Thomas, citing Horace *Epistulae* 1.14.34 “quem bibulum liquidi media de luce Falerni” proposes the emendation *bibulum*. A *bibulus* person should mean one who drinks freely, and, *pace* Thomas, does it not mean this, not simply *bibentem*, in the *Epistulae*? The proposed reading, then, conveys a certain negative sense just as it does

1. “A Bibulous Couch ([Verg.] *Copa* 5–6)?” *CP* 86 (1991): 41–43, to which the reader is directed for the bibliography and other references.

2. Guy Lee, *Tibullus: Elegies* (Cairns, 1982) retains *quin potius* saying that *quam potius* at *Copa* 6 means “than rather.” He continues (p. 136), “moreover at *Panegyricus Messallae* 129 original *quin* has been corrupted to *quam* by several mss.” But the mss which have preserved *quin* there are the same ones which preserved *quam* at Tib. 1.10.39 (Z+ in Luck's edition).