

DRY PUMICE AND THE PROGRAMMATIC LANGUAGE OF CATULLUS 1

WILLIAM W. BATSTONE

THE PURPOSE OF THIS PAPER is to place the term *arida*¹ in Catullus 1 in the context of Catullus' stylistic and programmatic language. This is partly a matter of establishing the semantic range and stylistic associations of the term, but, since this term (unlike *doctus*, for instance) never became a standard stylistic term among the next generation of poets, it is also a matter of considering the origins and experimental nature of Catullus' programmatic language.

In the dedication poem for Catullus' *libellus*, Catullus 1, a description of the external appearance of the papyrus role performs a programmatic function;² that is, by metaphor and metonymy it locates the qualities of Catullus' poetry within the aesthetic ideals of Callimachean poetry: *lepidum*, *novum*, *libellum*, *expoliturum*, and *nugas* refer to the polish and charm, innovation and refinement which the Neoterics prized. Similarly, the dedicatee, Cornelius Nepos, is associated, albeit with some irony,³ with another set of terms, which repeat or complement the values that are revealed in and by

1. The reading *arida*, preferred by most editors including R. A. B. Mynor's Oxford Classical Text, has been challenged most recently by G. P. Goold in "Two Notes on Catullus 1," *LCM* 6.9 (1981): 233–35 (see also his text, *Catullus*, ed. by G. P. Goold [London, 1989]) because the gender of the Latin *pumex* is masculine, because the MSS **O** **G** and **R** all read *arido*, and because all citations that we have of line 2 from the first through the third century B.C.E. treat *pumex* as masculine. Servius, however, on *Aen.* 12.587 says that, unlike Virgil, Catullus considered *pumex* feminine. While the gender itself makes no difference whatsoever to the argument I am making, I have preferred the feminine because I do not see how else to explain Servius, because *Cui dono lepidum novum libellum / arido modo pumice expoliturum* seems pointlessly excessive in its repetition of *do*, and because the use of the Greek gender here suits the translingual programme as it repeats at the syntactic level the translingual lexical play of using *lepidum* to recall Callimachean λεπτός. I find Goold's argument that a feminine *pumex*, rather than displaying knowledge of Greek, would be taken as evidence of Catullus' ignorance of Latin, particularly hard to accept: Latin was Catullus' language, not Goold's, and gender bending was one of his games.

2. The basic bibliography goes back to Copley 1951. His insights have been repeated and developed by others, including: Elder 1966, Cairns 1969, Levine 1969, Latta 1972, Singleton 1972, Wiseman 1979, 167–74, Santini 1983–84, and Schmidt 1985 passim (see "Register" 137). There is today general agreement about the poem's programmatic function.

3. Nothing is so controversial as irony; for, if it could be proved, it would cease to be irony. Hence, the bibliography is divided. A summary can be found in Wiseman 1979, 170–71. See also below the discussion of Nepos and n. 37. See W. Booth (*A Rhetoric of Irony* [Chicago, 1974]) for a discussion of how irony appeals to a community's unstated values and depends upon these values for its effects. It is, of course, true that if Booth is right, then the use of irony not only appeals to a prior community of shared values but may play a role in creating, or creating the appearance of, such a community. This is especially true if one grants that irony may work its effects in the small compass of dialogue as it creates a sheltered community of two.

the *libellus*: *ausus, unus, omne aevum tribus . . . cartis, doctis, and laboriosis*. Catullus' implicit claim is that his new, attractive, polished, and diminutive poetry shares the aesthetic values of Nepos' learned, labored, and daring reduction of Italian history,⁴ and that these values are the basis upon which Catullus may pray for a modest immortality: *plus uno maneat perenne saeclo*.

Explication of the descriptive language of Catullus 1 has shown all the terms to be programmatic⁵—all, that is, except *arida*. The associations of this term make it an unlikely stylistic metonymy for Catullus' salacious, playful, vehement, and erotic verse. The definition in the *OLD* suggests the problem: "(of style, orators, etc.) Lacking embellishment, austere, dry"; and a citation from *Rhet. Her.* elaborates (4.11.16): "qui non possunt in illa facetissima verborum adtenuatione commode versari veniunt ad aridum et exangue genus orationis, quod non alienum est exile nominari." The author goes on to say, "frivulus hic quidem iam et inliberalis est sermo; non enim est adeptus id quod habet adtenuata figura, puris et electis verbis conpositam orationem." This sounds more like what Catullus opposes than what he espouses.⁶ And, yet, it seems unlikely that, occurring where it does in the emphatic first position of line 2, it would be the only term that does not define the poet's understanding of his poetic project.

Most critics have stressed the *pumex*, no doubt because of the negative associations of *arida*, and connected it with Catullus' laborious learning and the description of Nepos' papyrus: *doctis, Iupiter, et laboriosis*.⁷ Only Quinn has claimed a metaphorical reference for *aridus*: "*aridus* as a description of style ('dull', 'lifeless') suggests the paradox 'dull grind produces bright verse'."⁸ There is, however, a sleight of hand in this. "Dull grind" is not "a description of style," but of process, of *labor*. This shift of reference is necessary because the claim that "dull, lifeless *style* makes bright verse" would be nonsensical. Unfortunately, the result of Quinn's effort is that *arida* offers little more than Syndikus 1984 found in *pumex*: "die unermüdliche Arbeit."

4. Cairns 1969, 154; Levine 1969, 212; Arkins 1983, 19.

5. "Programmatic" should be a fairly uncontroversial term. It refers here to the formal statements a poet makes, usually in specific generic contexts (e.g., the introduction to a collection, the *sphragis*, and transition poems within a collection), about the general poetic project or collection. These statements are often polemical statements, and they locate the values of the poetry within larger cultural debates. "Programmatic" is a generic subcategory of "self-referential" and it is as an important feature of "programmatic" statements, as I understand them, that we are talking about the poet's self-conscious, general statements about his or her poetic project.

6. Cp. *tener*, a programmatic term in poem 35 (*Poetae tenero, meo sodali*), cited in *TLL* s.v. *aridus* under the heading *opposita* (569.34ff).

7. Such is the implication, but not the explicit claim, of Levine 1969, 212, "And the Callimachean quality and artistic refinement that Catullus attributes to his slender volume (cf. v. 2: *arida . . . pumice expoliturum*) might well have been expressed by the very adjectives which he used to characterize the historian's publication (cf. v. 7: *doctis . . . laboriosis*)." The statement remains for our purpose vague because Levine does not indicate which of the three terms describing Catullus' work suggests which of the two terms describing Nepos' work. Singleton 1972, 194, makes the connection between *pumex* and learning explicit but does not comment on *arida*. Syndikus 1984; 1:74, seems to agree in general, but avoids comment on *aridus*: "Und das Glätten mit Bimsstein weist wohl auch auf die Feile und die unermüdliche Arbeit, die nach der Auffassung dieser Poetik wahre Kunst zu ihrer Vollendung braucht." The recent and detailed discussion by Newman of Catullus' Roman aspects focuses attention on the meaning of *nugae*, *lepidum*, and *doctus*, but does not treat the question of what *aridus* means.

8. Quinn, *ad* 1.2 (89).

Other critics, like Cairns, have said explicitly that the epithet is insignificant. He contrasts Catullus' *arida* with the clearly programmatic *tenui* of Propertius 3.1.8 (*exactus tenui pumice versus eat*), and, while granting the programmatic significance of other terms in Catullus 1, he dismisses any stylistic reference for the adjective *aridus*: it is an *epitheton ornans*.⁹ Clearly, *tenui* solves all the interpretive problems raised by *aridus*: it suits the literal meaning of the noun, it participates in the general metonymy of the passage (outside discloses inside, means disclose result), it designates in appropriate terminology the poetic ideals of the Callimachean program, and it suggests the poet's erotic interests. But the appropriateness of Propertius' *tenui* is not proof that *arida* has no stylistic function, and we are encouraged to look for a programmatic reference not only by the fact that otherwise *arida* would be the only *epitheton ornans* in the poem, but also by the fact that as an ornament *arida* is otiose: *pumex* is the proverbial quintessence of dryness.¹⁰

External evidence also suggests that *arida* is not merely ornamental.

haec tibi Arateis multum invigilata lucernis
carmina, quis ignes novimus aetherios,
levis in aridulo malvae descripta libello
Prusiaca vexi munera navicula.

This epigram by Catullus' fellow Neoteric Cinna¹¹ offers its recipient an *aridulus libellus* as a presentation copy of a translation of Aratus. The poem is a typical neoteric performance. Cinna's language recalls Callimachus' own praise of Aratus' work (*Ep.* 27.3–4): χαίρετε λεπταί / ῥήσιες, Ἀρήτου σύντονος ἀγρυπνίη; *multum invigilata* translates σύντονος ἀγρυπνίη¹² and *levis* translates λεπταί. Both terms reflect the same qualities as Catullus' polish.¹³ Furthermore, *novimus* is a variation on the learning typically prized in the epithet, *doctus*, as Cinna here casts the reader ("we") in the role of student to Aratus' poetic and didactic activity. The three diminutives, *libello*, *navicula*, and *aridula*, recall the Catullan *libellus* and Catullus' fondness for diminutives as well as the Callimachean values of concision and smallness. Even *Prusiaca*, referring to a second-century king of Bithynia, is the kind of rare and allusive epithet favored by the Neoterics. Its use here joins Cinna's learned allusion with the learning of Aratus' poetry, while

9. Cairns 1969, p. 155, n. 8. Copley 1951, 200 says only that the two adjectives *lepidus* and *novus* are "augmented by specific detail—*arido modo pumice expolitur*."

10. *Pumex* is singularly characterized by dryness: as the Roman proverb puts it, one is foolish to *aquam a pumice postulare*, Plaut. *Pers.* 42; see also *pumex non aequae est aridus atque hic est senex*, Plaut. *Aul.* 297.

11. There can be no doubt that Catullus knew Cinna. They shared aesthetic ideals and poetic aspirations. Cinna is mentioned twice by Catullus (10.30 and 95.1). In fact, poem 1 carries in it what may be an echo of Cinna's aspiration for Cato's *Dictynna*: *maneant perenne saeculo* (1. 11) echoes and reverses the first words of Cinna frag. 14 Morell (= 4 Traglia): *saecula per maneant nostri Dictynna Catonis*. On Cinna, see Wiseman 1974, 44–58; on the "neoteric group" see Crowther, 1970.

12. *Epigr.* 29.4 = *Ars.* P. 9.507. The reading σύντομος ἀγρυπνίη is disputed and sometimes emended to σύμβολον ἀγρυπνίης. See Cameron 1972, 169. σύντομος corresponds well to *multum*; but in any event, the underlying idea is that of Catullus 1.7: *laboriosis*. See Thomas 1979, 199–201.

13. Cp. *expolitur* Catullus 1.2; the smoothness of the mallow leaves is a result of their being polished, cp. *pumice levis* Juv. 9.95.

referring to the province from where Cinna in late 66 took Parthenius,¹⁴ the Greek who introduced the Romans to Callimachean techniques.

We next find the term in a stylistic or programmatic context in the epigrams of Martial (*Ep.* 8.72.1–3):

Nondum murice cultus asperoque
morsu pumicis aridi politus
Arcanum porperas sequi, libelle . . .

Here Martial refers to a presentation copy of his *libellus* that will accompany Arcanus on his way to assume office in Narbo. The poem recalls both Catullus 1 and Cinna's presentation poem, while participating in Martial's typical modesty. Elsewhere, in 4.10, we find *siccus*, a synonym for *aridus*, together with the typical programmatic language of epigrammatic *nugae* (*libellus*, *leve*, *nugas*), and, again, in the context of Martial's apology for publishing more than he ought. This time he refers to his *libellus* as "not well dried":

Dum novus est nec adhuc rasa mihi fronte libellus,
pagina dum tangi non bene sicca timet,
i puer et caro perfer leve munus amico,
qui meruit nugas primus habere meas.
curre, sed instructus: comitetur Punica librum
spongia: muneribus convenit illa meis.
non possunt nostros multae, Faustine, liturae
emendare iocos: una litura potest.

Here, the poor jokes, the sponge, the apologetic content and the still damp page form a coherent metaphorical context: Martial suggests that erasure and emendation would improve (*emendare* = make dry) a *libellus* not yet trimmed (*nec adhuc rasa*).¹⁵

The coincidence of *aridulo libello* in Cinna, *libellum arida . . . pumice expoliturum* in Catullus, and (*libellus*) *pumicis aridi politus* in Martial creates a strong presumption for stylistic reference that is confirmed by the rhetorical literature. Here, *aridus* and its synonym *siccus*¹⁶ refer to stylistic characteristics. They are associated with the plain style that the young Cicero in *Inv. Rhet.* 2.51 distinguishes as the style appropriate to precise and subtle argument, *ut id quod dicitur verum esse videatur*.¹⁷ Its hallmark is restraint,

14. On "how much Cinna owed to Parthenius," see Wiseman 1974, 48–50; on Parthenius and Roman poetry, see Clausen 1964. The epithet *Prusiaca* is found elsewhere only at Sil. Ital. 13.888 (according to Ibycus search of CD Rom "PHI Latin Texts #5.3").

15. See *Ep.* 1.118 and 4.29 for Martial's sense elsewhere that his poetry is long and repetitious.

16. Synonymy, already suggested by the comparison of the two Martial epigrams above, can be established both for the literal sense of the terms by Catullus: *atqui corpora sicciora cornu / aut siquid magis aridumst habetis*, c. 23.12–13, and by Cicero in a discussion of locales *in aliis exsiccatos atque aridos*, *Fat.* 7.7, and for their metaphorical extensions: by Suetonius in a discussion of scholars: *sicci omnino atque aridi pueri*, *Suet. Gram.* 4. At *Brutus* 284 Cicero joins with *siccitas* the stylistic qualities of *exilitas*, and in *De Or.* he joins the adjective *exile* with *aridum* (2.159): "genus sermonis adfert non liquidum, non fustum ac profluens, sed exile, aridum, concisum ac minutum, quod si qui probabit, ita probabit, ut oratori tamen aptum non esse fateatur."

17. This is in contrast to the style which is appropriate to the common topics and seeks (in addition to *verum*) *amplitudo* (*Inv. Rhet.* 2.51): "sed illae tenuius et subtilius et acutius tractantur, hi autem gravius et ornatus et cum verbis tum etiam sententiis excellentibus."

later identified with the so-called Attic style, and its essential characteristic is designated as a flight from error and excess (*Opt. Gen.* 8):

haec [vitia] vitaverunt fere omnes qui aut Attici numerantur aut dicunt Attice. Sed qui eatenus valuerunt, sani et sicci dumtaxat habeantur, sed ita ut palaestritae; spatari in xysto ut liceat, non ab Olympiis coronam petant. Qui cum careant omni vitio, non sunt contenti quasi bona valetudine, sed viris lacertos sanguinem quaerunt, quandam etiam suavitatem coloris. Eos imitemur, si possumus; si minus, illos potius qui incorrupta sanitate sunt, quod est proprium Atticorum, quam eos quorum vitiosa abundantia est, qualis Asia multos tulit.

Stylistic metaphors, however, are notoriously imprecise. We will get a better sense of what is at stake in the *aridum genus orationis* by considering the sets of characteristics with which it is associated or from which it is distinguished. In fact, it appears that the stylistic terms we are considering are never used by themselves, but always with other defining adjectives. Thus, in the passage quoted above from *De Or.* 2.159, Cicero contrasts the *non liquidum, non fusum ac profluens* style with its opposite, *sed exile, aridum, concisum ac minutum*.¹⁸ Complexes like this help us both to see the inexact nature of these metaphorical qualities and to flesh out the general associations of the whole *aridum / siccum genus orationis*.

Beginning, then, with the metaphorical center of *aridus / siccus* we find that stylistic "dryness" is most often associated with *subtilis / exilis*, and frequently with other members of a set of similar synonymous, secondary associations. The following table summarizes the terms as they appear in the discussions of various authors. The full text of the Cicero passages appears in the notes.

This set of family characteristics could be further expanded by pursuing the associations of a term like *subtilis*, with which *siccus* is three times paired (including *Nat. D.* 2.1.1: "neque enim flumine conturbor inanum verborum nec subtilitate sententiarum si orationis est siccitas"). Thus, Cicero's reference to *minuta subtilitas*, which is praised at *Brutus* 291, recalls the *concisum ac minutum genus orationis* of *De Or.* 2.159 with which we began, and this can lead us to the virtues of Terence's concision as described by Cicero, "concisum est ita ut non brevitati servitum sit, sed magis venustati" (*De Or.* 2.327), or the Stoic's thorny style of exposition (*Fin.* 3.2).¹⁹ If we take the emphasis in *subtilis* to refer to polish, we find it associated with Demosthenes at *Brutus* 35 and the terms *elegans, pressus, enucleatus*, and *limatus*. Similarly, a common synonym for *subtilis* and a familiar name for the plain style, *tenuis*, expands the associations of *tenuis, subtilis, brevis* at *Opt. Gen.* 2 to include *acutus* (*Inv. Rhet.* 2.51), *elegans* (*Orat.* 81), *limatus* (*Luc.* 66. 14), and both the virtues of Lysias, *gracilitas, valetudo* (*Brut.* 64), and the vices of the Stoic disputations, *tenuis . . . exsanguisque sermo* (*De Or.* 1.56).

18. Here, Cicero is discussing the Stoics. Since the same terms will be used to describe the Atticists, it seems wise to assume that in all cases we are at some level dealing with the traditional opposition between the grand and the plain style and not only the relatively ephemeral Atticist controversy. Nevertheless, one should note that even at the height of the Atticist controversy, he felt this style to be not so much reprehensible in itself as unsuitable for an orator ("quod si qui probabit, ita probabit, ut oratori tamen aptum non esse fateatur").

19. See Wilkins *ad De Or.* 1.17, p. 91.

TABLE 1: ASSOCIATIONS WITH STYLISTIC “DRYNESS”

Source	Dryness	Fineness	Polish	Intelligence	Health
Cicero <i>De Or.</i> 2.159 ²⁰	<i>aridus</i>	<i>exilis concisus ac minutus</i>			
<i>Brut.</i> 284–85 ²¹	<i>siccitas</i>	<i>subtilis ieiunitas inopis</i>	<i>politus</i>	<i>urbanus elegans</i>	<i>sanitas integritas</i>
<i>Opt.Gen.</i> 12 ²²	<i>siccus</i>	<i>subtilis</i>	<i>politus</i>	<i>intelligentia in audiendi fastidio</i>	<i>integer</i>
<i>Opt.Gen.</i> 8 ²³	<i>siccus</i>		<i>incorrupta</i>		<i>sanus bona valetudo</i>
<i>Brut.</i> 202 ²⁴	<i>siccus</i>		<i>pure et solute</i>	<i>acutus</i>	<i>sanus sincerus</i>
<i>Brut.</i> 291 ²⁵	<i>siccus</i>			<i>acutus</i>	<i>sincerus</i>
Martial <i>Ep.</i> 4.10	<i>bene sicca pagina</i>	<i>nugas libellus</i>	<i>adhuc rasa</i>	<i>emendare iocos</i>	
<i>Ep.</i> 8.72	<i>aridi</i>	<i>libellus</i>	<i>pumex politus</i>	<i>cultus</i>	
Catullus	<i>arida</i>	<i>libellus nugas</i>	<i>pumex expolitus laboriosus</i>	<i>doctus novum lepidum</i>	

20. “genus sermonis adfert non liquidum, non fustum ac profluens, sed exile, aridum, concisum ac minutum, quod si qui probabit, ita probabit, ut oratori tamen aptum non esse fateamur.”

21. “Tum Brutus: Atticum se, inquit, Calvus noster dici oratorem volebat: inde erat ista exilitas quam ille de industria consequabatur. Dicebat, inquam, ita; sed et ipse errabat et alios etiam errare cogebat. nam si quis eos, qui nec inepte dicunt nec odiose nec putide, Attice putat dicere, is recte nisi Atticum probat neminem. insulsiatatem enim et insolentiam tamquam insaniam quandam orationis odit, sanitatem autem et integritatem quasi religionem et verecundiam oratoris probat. haec omnium debet oratorum [285] eadem esse sententia. sin autem ieiunitatem et siccitatem et inopiam, dummodo sit polita, dum urbana, dum elegans, in Attico genere ponit, hoc recte dumtaxat.”

22. “sin autem intelligentiam ponunt in audiendi fastidio neque eos quicquam excelsum magnificumque delectat, dicant se quiddam subtile et politum velle, grande ornatumque continere; id vero desinant dicere, qui subtiliter dicant, eos solos Attice dicere, id est quasi sicce et integre.”

23. “Haec vitaverunt fere omnes qui aut Attici numerantur aut dicunt Attice. Sed qui eatenus valuerunt, sani et sicci dumtaxat habeantur, sed ita ut palaestritae; spatari in xysto ut liceat, non ab Olympiis coronam petant. Qui, cum careant omni vitio, non sunt contenti quasi bona valetudine, sed viris, lacertos, sanguinem quaerunt, quandam etiam suavitatem coloris, eos imitemur si possumus; si minus, illos potius qui incorrupta sanitate sunt, quod est proprium Atticorum, quam eos quorum vitiosa abundantia est, qualis Asia multos tulit.”

24. “sed cavenda est presso illi oratori inopia et ieiunitas, amplo autem inflatum et corruptum orationis genus. inveniebat igitur acute Cotta, dicebat pure ac solute; et ut ad infirmitatem laterum persciter contentionem omnem remiserat, sic ad virium imbecillitatem dicendi accommodabat genus. nihil erat in eius oratione nisi sincerum, nihil nisi siccum atque sanum; illudque maxumum quod, cum contentione orationis flectere animos iudicum vix posset nec omnino eo genere diceret, tractando tamen impellebat, ut idem facerent a se commoti quod a Sulpicio concitati.”

25. “sin autem acutum, prudens et idem sincerum et solidum et exsiccatum genus orationis probant nec illo graviore ornatu oratorio utuntur et hoc proprium esse Atticorum volunt, recte laudant.”

We may return now to our initial term, *aridus*, by noting that Quintilian describes the Atticists themselves as *aridi et exsangues* (12.10.14; cf. 8.17) and that the elder Seneca praises his teacher Marcellus, whose oratory is *exilis*: “*aridus, paucissima belle, sed non vulgato genere dicens*”²⁶ (*Controv.* I *praef.* 22; cf. *Controv.* II 1.24 and II *praef.* 1). This survey reveals two facts: first, that *aridus* as a stylistic term may refer to recognized virtues, not just a dull lifeless “style,” and second, that its range of associations includes qualities that in the right circumstances may appeal and please just as in other circumstances they may offend and bore.

Those positive qualities, furthermore, have a surprising affinity for the values and even the language of Catullus: *aridus* (and *siccus*), *politus* (*limatus, enucleatus*), *elegans, paucissima belle*, and critical distance (*intelligentia in audiendi fastidio*). This picture is, not surprisingly, confirmed by the terms to which the *aridum, exile genus dicendi*, as outlined above, are opposed. In the oratorical discussion they are, of course, the terms which describe the grand style, the *os profundum*, and, as such, they are almost always set in a meliorative light by Cicero.²⁷ They are the qualities of an oratory that flows (*liquidum, fusum, profluens*: *De Or.* 2.159), has manly blood and strength (*viris, lacertos, sanguis*: *Opt. Gen.* 8), is lofty, large, and heavy (*excelsum, magnificus, grandis, amplius, copiosus, gravis, magnus*: *Opt. Gen.* 12, *Brut.* 35, 203, 291), adorned (*suavitas coloris, ornatus, suavis, splendida*: *Opt. Gen.* 8, 12; *Brut.* 35, 203, 291), and tragic (*tragicus*: *Brut.* 203).

Two passages, however, are particularly striking for the way in which they cast the opposition between these styles. The first opposes the values of the dry style as exercised by the philosophers to the grander aspirations of Cicero’s forensic oratory: “*haec enim nostra oratio multitudinis est auribus accommodanda . . . quae non aurificis statera sed populari quadam trutina examinantur*” (*De Or.* 2.159). The concerns, if not the language, could come from Catullus or any neo-Callimachean; for the popular standard that Cicero here praises is but a step away from what Catullus and the Callimacheans condemn: *at populus tumido gaudeat Antimacho* (Catullus 95.10; cp. Call. frag. 398 Pf. on Antimachus). Furthermore, at the beginning of the second book of *De Natura Deorum* in a passage cited above, Cicero has Velleius describe two extremes of the philosophical style (*Nat. D.* 2.1.1): “*neque enim flumine conturbor inanium verborum nec subtilitate sententiarum si orationis est siccitas*.” Again the terms, developing the metaphors of *siccitas* and *profluens*, recall not just the Callimachean antipathy for the grand and swollen, but the language (the *turba* and the swollen river of excessive verbiage) of that antipathy.

The same concern with exclusive and excessive polish and its failure before the bar of popular taste is addressed as a forensic issue in *Brutus*

26. Here the *sed non* points to the pejorative expectation that the *aridum genus dicendi* entails vulgar speech, the *inliberalis sermo* of *Rhet. Her.* 4.11.16 quoted above, p. 126.

27. The contrast between the grand and the plain style lies behind the Atticist controversy (see *Brut.* 35 and 202) but that contrast appears before the Atticists intensify hostilities (compare *Inv. Rhet.* 2.51 and *Part. Or.* 4). One may note that the Atticists were *isti novi Attici* at *Orat.* 89 (46 BCE) and were all but quiet by the time of *Tusc.* 2.3: *Qui iam conticuerunt paene ab ipso foro irrisi* (late 45 or early 44 BCE).

283–85. As the discussants recount the Atticist controversy, Brutus comes to the oratory of Calvus, whose name, it should be remembered, is most often associated with Catullus.²⁸ He is *litteris eruditior quam Curio*; his style is *accuratius quoddam dicendi et exquisitius . . . genus*; and his success is summarized: “doctis et attente audientibus erat inlustris, a multitudine autem et a foro . . . devorabatur.” He is characterized by *exilitas, sanitas, integritas, ieiunitas et siccitas et inopia*; he is opposed to (*odit*)²⁹ *insulsitas*³⁰ and *insolentia tamquam insania*, but Crassus/Cicero allows him success in *Attico genere*³¹ provided that he adds to these qualities some strikingly Catullan virtues: “dum modo sit polita, dum urbana, dum elegans.”

The substantive argument for the stylistic reference of *aridus* is complete: Catullus’ dry pumice refers to the virtues and the associations of the *aridum genus dicendi*, to the avoidance of unnecessary ornament or any other excess or error, and to the restraint that appeared most often in a poetic preference for the diminutive and learned and an aversion for the grand and popular. The style was opposed to *insania* and to *insulsitas*, and, while its strengths showed best outside of the forum, it could succeed even in forensic competition when it combined with its own refined and intelligent purity of expression the qualities of polish, urbanity, and *elegantia*. This is almost exactly what Catullus refers to in the programmatic complex of modifiers that begins with *novum lepidum libellum / arida modo pumice expolitur* and continues throughout the *libellus* to include other qualities of Cicero’s discussion, like *sal. Arida*, then, must be taken, like *expolitur*, as a term referring to both objective, external aspects of preparing the literal papyrus and, by metonymy, to the metaphorical, programmatic, and internal qualities of the poetry. It should no longer be considered the only empty ornament in the complex of stylistic references that opens poem 1; instead, it precisely and subtly refers to the precise, careful, pure avoidance of error and excess—exactly what you need to polish a neo-Callimachean *libellus*.

There is, however, a supplement to this conclusion that entails a secondary observation regarding the field of stylistic reference and the stylistic terms present in Catullus 1. It is striking not only that *aridus* and the other terms of this poem are the common elements of a single stylistic complex in which any one element leads us back to the others: *siccus, subtilis, politus, urbanus, elegans* and so on, but that they can be found within the debates and discussions of forensic rhetoric, especially in Cicero. Given the oft-asserted antipathy of Catullus and his neo-Callimachean program for the forum and the values of forensic oratory, this similarity demands some explanation. It is impossible that Cicero has adopted the language of the neoteric poetic program or has been affected by parochial poetic disputes;

28. See Prop. 2.25.4, 34.87–90; Ovid *Am.* 3.9.62, *Tr.* 2.427–31; Suet. *Iul.* 73, Nonius 291L, Martial 24.195–96; Hor. *Sat.* 1.10.19 and the discussion of Wiseman 1974, 51–52, who has collected the above references.

29. Cp. Hor. *Carm.* 3.1.1 and Callim. *Epigr.* 30.1.

30. Cp. *Orat.* 90: *quidquid est salsum aut salubre in oratione id proprium Atticorum est.*

31. Cp. Quint. 10.1.115: *inveni qui Calvum praeferrent omnibus.*

the language of *Inv. Rhet.* (see 2.51.7) proves that these stylistic terms precede the neoteric use of them. Furthermore, Cicero's discussion is too intensely and defensively about rhetorical virtue. The pattern of oppositions and associations that emerges, then, and its affinity for the language of neoteric debate suggest that the terms belong to fairly traditional, if loose, descriptions of opposed kinds of oratorical style going back to the *De Inventione* and the *ad Herrenium*. This means that the "Catullan program" took shape in and was explored in the language of contemporary stylistic theory. If this is the case, scholars would be justified in seeing Catullus' poetic program as part of a larger cultural contest. It was not merely the imposition of something foreign and Hellenistic. Polish, learning, exclusiveness, elegance, intelligence—these were already understood and discussed as important characteristics, even as virtues, in the contest between men and styles that continued regardless of the neo-Callimachean program as well as in that program's polemic.³² It should not be forgotten, then, when the emphasis falls upon what was revolutionary in the Catullan project, that this Callimachean revolution and its opposition to the forum and to the popular standard, its elegant, subtle, learned, and dry style, was conceived first of all in the intellectual terms of a larger Roman debate.³³ Calvus' roles, then, as neoteric poet and Atticist orator were intimately related and both related him to Catullus.

This situation, however, changed. Later poets, working in the tradition the Neoterics introduced and shaped, explored and developed their stylistic concerns in a different language, and this, in part, helped to separate their concerns from merely forensic debates. Of the semantic changes that occurred, the most important are the abandonment of *lepidus* and *aridus*, the adoption of *deductus*, and the emphasis placed on *tenuis*. A brief summary of the fate of Catullus' terms will suggest the changes. *Lepidus* is never used by Virgil, Horace, Tibullus, Propertius, or Ovid to translate λεπτός. In fact, it is only found in Horace, once to describe comedy (*Ars P.* 273) and once in its negative form (*illepidus*) as a characteristic of style that the popular mind should blame (*Epist.* 2.77). *Expolitus* is not used by Horace (the other poets are irrelevant since it will not scan in elegiacs), and *polire* appears only twice in the late Ovid;³⁴ Ovid and Horace prefer to use *limatus* and *lima*.³⁵ Virgil reserves *pumex* for describing caves,³⁶ and the

32. In a sense this is not surprising. Style in its broadest sense was important in Rome; it was one place where public men competed for recognition. Consequently, even a term like *elegans* was a term of abuse long before it was a Ciceronian and Caesarian virtue. See Aulus Gellius NA 11.4.

33. For a similar use of and familiarity with Republican stylistic theory in Horace's *Sermones*, see now Freudenberg 1993, 109–84, esp. 126–28 and 150–62; see also Freudenberg, 1990. See also the discussion by Newman 1990 of "terms of art."

34. *cur ego sollicita poliam mea carmina cura*, *Pont.* 1.5.61, is another clear metonymy of means disclosing result; *nec fragili geminae poliantur pumice frontes*, *Tr.* 1.1.11, may also suggest the concerns of the poetry.

35. The difference is important: "polish" is an aesthetic improvement of the surface while the act of "filing" is a more general category, one that may include polish, but which emphasizes removal and rejection (see Hor. *Serm.* 1.10.64–70, Cic. *Luc.* 66.14, and Quintilian 10.4.4). This means that *limatus* is a specific reference to the virtue of the "dry style" as defined above in the quote from Cicero *Opt. Gen.* 8: *qui cum careant omni vitio* . . .

36. Lygdamus uses *pumex* for polish, Tib. 3.1.8; see also Prop. 3.1.8.

word is not found in Tibullus; but it retains programmatic force in Ovid at *Tristia* 1.1.11 and 3.1.13 (*pumice levi*), in Propertius (in the clearly programmatic line quoted above, 3.1.8) and in Horace (in a line of likely programmatic implication, *scilicet ut prostes Sosiorum pumice mundus*, *Epod.* 1.20.2). *Aridus* and *siccus*, however, are negative qualities in these poets, and, in a curious reversal of the Ciceronian opposition between the *aridum genus* and the *flumen inanum verborum*, they are often opposed to the very *fontes* that serve as Callimachean credentials. Thus, of the programmatic terms in the first two lines of Catullus 1 *aridus* and *lepidus* stand out not just as terms neglected by later poets, but as terms whose negative associations will later come to the forefront.

A similar fate fell upon other aspects of the programmatic language of this poem. *Laboriosus* is avoided by Horace and will not scan in hexameters or pentameters.³⁷ *Nugae* is not used by Virgil, Tibullus, Propertius, or Ovid, and is used by Horace in a range of meanings from “trifles” to (perhaps) “mime-like activity.”³⁸ Furthermore, some terms that later poets preferred are not in evidence in Catullus. Neither is *limatus* found nor is the preferred stylistic term, *deductus*, used in a stylistic sense.³⁹ This picture changes slightly by the time Martial reinvents Catullus as an epigrammatist and revives the language of *nugae* and “dryness.” If we had the whole Roman epigrammatic tradition, we might be able to make a case for some precise epigrammatic propriety to the terms that are common to Catullus and Martial: *libellus*, *nugae*, *sal*, *aridus*. The aesthetic values as well as the language reappear.⁴⁰ But for the generation of poets that followed Catullus, Cinna, and Calvus, “dryness” modulated into the “slender stream” and the *deductum carmen*. Catullus’ generation was between two worlds, introducing and shaping a tradition in the stylistic language that was available. His stylistic terminology, therefore, often reflects more closely the language of oratory and rhetorical theory than the language that the second generation of neoteric poets would use when working within the tradition Catullus helped to introduce.

Ohio State University

LITERATURE CITED

- Arkins, B. 1983. Further thoughts on Catullus 1. *LCM* 8:19.
 Cameron, A. 1972. Callimachus on Aratus’ Sleepless Nights. *CR* 22:169–70.
 Cairns, F. 1969. Catullus 1. *Mn.* 22:153–58.
 Clausen, W. 1964. Callimachus and Latin Poetry. *GRBS* 5:181–96.

37. Relatively few adjectives in *-osus* appear in the later poets; see Ross 1969, 59–60 and the more detailed and precise summary by Knox 1986.

38. See the discussion of Newman 1990, 15–18 and 30–32.

39. Found only at 64.312, 68.143, and 75.1; the term is not a stylistic term in Cicero, though it appears later in Quintilian *Inst.* 4.1.60.

40. Perhaps Martial distinguishes his verse from Catullus’ when *lascivus* (with its oblique nostalgia for freedom) replaces *lepidus*, and *versiculi* becomes a term of denigration. But in *Epigram* 8.70 these values and the Catullan/forensic metaphor of “dryness” apply to latter-day elegy: the moderate thirst of Nerva restrains his power (*cohibet vires*), shortens his voyage (*famae nec dare vela suae*), and makes him the Tibullus of the age of Domitian (*hunc nostri scit temporis esse Tibullum*).

- Copley, F. D. 1951. Catullus, c I. *TAPA* 82:200–206.
- Crowther, N. B. 1970. OI NEOTEROI, Poetae Novi and Cantores Euphorionis. *CQ* 20:322–27.
- Elder, J. P. 1966. Catullus I, His Poetic Creed, and Nepos. *HSCP* 71:143–49.
- Freudenberg, K. 1990. Horace's Satiric Program and the Language of Contemporary Theory in *Satires* 2.1. *AJP* 111:187–203.
- _____. 1993. *The Walking Muse: Horace on the Theory of Satire*. Princeton.
- Goold, G. P. 1981. Two Notes on Catullus 1. *LCM* 6.9:233–38.
- _____. 1989. ed. *Catullus*².
- Knox, P. E. 1986. Adjectives in -osus and Latin Poetic Diction. *Glotta* 64:90–101.
- Latta, B. 1972. Zu Catulls Carmen 1. *MH* 29:201–13.
- Levine, P. 1969. Catullus c. 1: A Prayerful Dedication. *CSCA* 2:209–16.
- Newman, J. K. 1990. *Roman Catullus and the Modification of the Alexandrian Sensibility*. Hildesheim.
- Quinn, K. 1970. *Catullus: The Poems*. London.
- Ross, D. O., Jr. 1969. *Style and Tradition in Catullus*. Cambridge, MA.
- Santini, P. 1983–84. Spunti per una interpretazione stilistico-formale dei testi poetici latini (Catull. 1). *Anazetesis* VIII–IX:1–10.
- Schmidt, E. A. 1985. *Catul*. Heidelberg.
- Singleton, D. 1972. A Note on Catullus' First Poem. *CP* 67:192–96.
- Syndikus, H. P. 1984. *Catull: Eine Interpretation*. Darmstadt.
- Thomas, R. F. 1979. Comedy, Callimachus, and Roman Poetry. *HSCP* 83:179–206.
- Wiseman, T. P. 1974. *Cinna the Poet and other Roman Essays*. Leicester.
- _____. 1979. *Clio's Cosmetics*. Leicester.
- Wilkins, A. S. 1879. *Cicero. "De Oratore."* Oxford.