

CATULLUS 116^I

Saepe tibi studioso animo venante requirens
carmina uti possem mittere Battiadae,
qui te lenirem nobis, neu conarere
tela infesta <meum> mittere in usque caput,
hunc video mihi nunc frustra sumptum esse laborem,
Gelli, nec nostras hinc² valuisse preces.
contra nos tela ista tua evitamus amictu:³
at fixus nostris tu dabis supplicium.

IF Catullus' poems as we have them faithfully reproduce their order in the original roll or rolls, and if that order reflects a design of the poet's, then the last piece in our manuscripts naturally merits close attention. But even one who has vigorously upheld these hypotheses writes: 'it is tempting to suppose that the poem is a spurious addition, attached after the publication of the collection; Catullus may indeed have written it, but not wanted to include so *illegitimus* a piece of versification in his published works' (Wiseman, *Catullan Questions* [Leicester, 1969], 27). Nor has the poem attracted much interest in its own right; it seems to be generally considered just another slice of biography, and as such hardly susceptible of a poetic meaning. The remarks which follow try to show that it has one, and perhaps also a significant position.

Its opening words have been variously understood. Kroll supposes that Catullus has been looking for books by Callimachus; Fordyce, like Riese and Ellis, that he has been trying to translate him. The latter seems nearer the truth. As Fordyce observes, *carmina uti possem mittere* suggests the dedication of something the writer has composed himself; and the whole phrase *studioso animo venante requirens* is most apt of mental activity. The 'searching', then, is of the sort that leads to εὑρεσις or inventio, to literary creation; the image recurs in Plautus (*Pseud.* 401 f.):

sed quasi poeta, tabulas cum cepit sibi,
quaerit quod nusquamst gentium, reperit tamen . . .

and in Propertius (1. 7. 5 f.):

nos, ut consuemus, nostros agitamur amores
atque aliquid duram quaerimus in dominam.⁴

What is more, the vocabulary of lines 1–3 is designed to characterize Catullus

¹ I am much indebted to Mr. Francis Cairns and Professor R. G. M. Nisbet for their comments on an earlier draft of this article; it is not to be assumed that they agree with all of its conclusions.

² The manuscripts' *hinc* should never have been questioned. It is equivalent to *ex hoc labore*, and the sense is: 'all this effort was in vain and did not help make my prayers effective' (cf. Friedrich, ad loc.).

³ I have accepted, without complete

certainly, this old conjecture for the manuscripts' *evitabimus* † *amitha*. I take *contra* as adverbial; the antithesis it implies is: 'I was not able to deter you from insulting me, but I can avoid the shafts of your invective.'

⁴ Enk correctly paraphrases: 'aliquid excogitamus quo dominae duritiem leniamus'; but the context strongly suggests that this implies writing love-poetry. Compare also Lucr. 1. 143 cited below.

as a follower of Callimachus and his circle. *Laborem* refers to the effort he, like them, has spent in lending erudition and polish to his work;¹ *studioso* suggests that he is a true φιλόλογος² and the image of hunting in *venante* is often associated with the quest for choice or abstruse expression. For this last feature Ellis assembles a number of parallels;³ particularly relevant is Philip, *A.P.* 11. 321. 5 (συνδέσμων λυγρῶν θηρήτορες), because that epigram is directed against the 'troopers of Callimachus'. What Catullus is supposed to have been trying to write is not made completely clear. *Carmina . . . Battiadae* might mean simply 'poems by Callimachus', in other words a translation (cf. 65. 16); but equally it could be used of poems in the manner of Callimachus, just as *cantores Euphorionis* (Cic. *Tusc.* 3. 45) are 'Euphorionists', writers who work in his style. In either case Catullus has been trying to produce Callimachean poems; and that tells the reader something about what kind of poet he is.

Beside this type of writing Catullus sets the poetry of insult or imprecation, which is indicated, as often, by the metaphor of weapons and battle.⁴ The juxtaposition of Callimachean and vituperative writing is not a casual one; rather the two are deliberately contrasted alternatives. On the one hand there is the elegant and cultivated 'Alexandrian' author; on the other, the purveyor of blunt, even coarse, invective. Propertius makes much the same contrast in addressing his mistress's door (1. 16. 37 ff.):

te non ulla meae laesit petulantia linguae
quae solet irato dicere †tota loco,
ut me tam longa raucum patiari querela
sollicitas trivio pervigilare moras.
at tibi saepe novo deduxi carmina versu
osculaque impressis nixa dedi gradibus.

Here Propertius contrasts an angry and diffamatory *komos*⁵ (song at the beloved's door) with one which is described in the language of Callimachus' aesthetics. For *novus*⁶ puts in a nutshell the essence of Call. *Aet.* 1. 25-8:

“πρὸς δέ σε] καὶ τόδ’ ἄνωγα, τὰ μὴ πατέουσιν ἄμαξι
τὰ στείβειν, ἑτέρων ἔχνη μὴ καθ’ ὁμά
δίφρον ἐλ]ῶν μῆδ’ οἶμον ἀνὰ πλατύν, ἀλλὰ κελεύθους
ἀτρίπτο]υς, εἰ καὶ στεῖλνοτέρην ἐλάσεις.”

while *deduxi*⁷ recalls Virgil's *deductum . . . carmen* (*Ecl.* 6. 5) in a context which

¹ Cf. Kroll, *Studien zum Verständnis der römischen Litteratur* (Stuttgart, 1924), 38 ff.; Puelma Piwonka, *Lucilius und Kallimachos* (Frankfurt am Main, 1949), 116-37; Cairns, *Mnemosyne* xxii (1969), 154; Cameron, *C.R.* n.s. xxii (1972), 169.

² Cf. esp. Enn. *Ann.* 216 Vahlen: nec dicti studiosus quisquam erat ante hunc.

³ Cf. also Liban. *Or.* 18. 17: ἐπηύξησε μὲν τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν ἣν εἶχε περὶ τοὺς λόγους, ἐπηύξησε δὲ τοὺς πόνοους οἷς ἐχρήτο περὶ τὴν τούτων θήραν. The words ἐπιθυμίαν and πόνοους here are also analogous to *studiosus animo* and *laborem* in Catullus.

⁴ Cf. Ov. *Ibis* 2, 10, 54, 644 and La Penna ad loc. *Mittere in usque caput* is a phrase

which also belongs in such a context (cf. *Ibis* 50).

⁵ On this form, sometimes called *paraklausithyron*, see Copley, *Exclusus Amator* (Madison, Wis., 1956), esp. 40-2; Cairns, *Generic Composition in Greek and Roman Poetry* (Edinburgh, 1972), Index s.v. *komos*.

⁶ Cf. further Hor. *Od.* 1. 26. 10 and Nisbet-Hubbard ad loc.

⁷ *Deducere*, a metaphor from spinning, can be used of poetic composition in general (cf. *T.L.L.* v [1] 282. 55 ff.); but in some other contexts too it is associated with 'fine-spun' writing like the Neoterics' (cf. Cornificius frg. 1 Morel; Hor. *Ep.* 2. 1. 225).

virtually translates the *Aetia* prologue (cf. esp. 1. 23 f.). Further, as Rothstein observes, *osculaque impressis nixa dedi gradibus* echoes an epigram by Callimachus (42. 5 f.). Again, Horace in *Sat.* 1. 10. 16–19 sharply distinguishes satire and comedy, genres also rich in invective, from imitations of Calvus and Catullus, whom he is conceiving simply as ‘neoteric’ poets. Now we are accustomed to thinking of Catullus as a follower of Callimachus: but this poem implies that his work is not a mere descendant of his Hellenistic predecessor’s. His inspiration is fed not only on *belles-lettres*, but on hate; and so too in 68. 9–40 he indicates how his poetry depends at the same time on the Muses (books) and on Venus (love). Likewise Propertius in 3. 1–3 contrasts his love-poetry and his ‘Alexandrian’ ambitions (cf. esp. 2. 1 f.);¹ but he overcomes the distinction by having, like Callimachus in *Aetia* 2, a dream, where the Muse Calliope both tells him to write of love and sprinkles his mouth with ‘Philetean water’ (3. 3. 37–52).² Or again in 4. 1 Propertius sets his own ambition to compose aetiological elegies like Callimachus’ against Horus’ injunction to keep to love-poetry; the book which follows in effect unites both kinds of writing.

Now just as Propertius in these contexts takes no account of Callimachus as a love-poet (*Epig.* 28–32, 41–6, 52),³ so Catullus chooses to ignore his famous hate-poem, the *Ibis*. This might seem surprising, but it is natural enough in a Latin elegist. For the figure of Callimachus in the work of his Roman followers represents above all a poetic programme; and the qualities of learning and refinement he championed are easy to contrast with forms of writing which are more impassioned or closer to common life and speech. In poem 116 Catullus, like Propertius in 1. 16, goes on to connect these qualities of the poet with peaceable and civilized behaviour in the man. And there is some further encouragement to thinking of Callimachus as a ‘man of peace’ in his first *Iambus*. There he is working in a genre associated with violent invective; but the whole poem is designed to settle the quarrels of φιλόλογοι, and he begins, even as he acknowledges his debt to Hipponax, by clearly distinguishing his own treatment of the iambus:

Ἀκούσαθ' Ἰππώνακτος· [ο]ὐ γὰρ ἄλλ' ἤκω . . .
 φέρων ἱμβρον οὐ μάχην [ἀεὶδ]οντα
 τήν Βοῦμπ[αλ]εινον

So too even the more satirical pieces among the *Iambi* (2–5) all score their hits in a devious and urbane manner.⁴ The *Ibis* was also notorious for its learned obscurity (Ov. *Ibis* 59). But Catullus’ invective, for all its wit and subtlety, is not as a whole characterized either by restraint or by a show of erudition: the difference between the two authors could be illustrated by contrasting Cat. 16 with Call. *Iamb.* 13 (or *Aetia* 1), poems where they reply to critics of their own work.⁵ So if Catullus is here distinguishing two styles of his own, the vituperation

¹ Love is seen as positively inimical to learned poetry in Cat. 35; *A.P.* 12. 98 (Posidippus), 99 (Anon.).

² *Philitea* in 3. 52 echoes 3. 1. 1 and is equivalent to *Callimachea atque Philitea*; for where a pair of words needs repeating, one may do duty for both: cf. Hes. *Op.* 182; Hdt. 1. 32. 6; Eur. *H.F.* 1374–81; Soph. *O.C.* 1335;

Ar. *Av.* 78 f.; Hor. *Od.* 4. 4. 29; Juv. 14. 70 f.

³ Perhaps also *Iamb.* 3, 4, 5, 9 and fr. 226: see Puelma, op. cit. 248–84.

⁴ See further Puelma, op. cit. 206–17, 236–41.

⁵ For the contrast between Catullus and Callimachus, see further Puelma, op. cit. 263, 277.

tive and the Callimachean, that is both understandable and substantially accurate.

If this contrast is a significant one in Catullus 116, that may help to understand the two curious metrical features of this poem: the wholly spondaic line 3 and the elided *s* in line 8. The former has parallels in Homer (*Od.* 15. 334) and Ennius (*Ann.* 33, 623 f. Vahlen), but none elsewhere; nor can it be described, like the *σπονδειαίζων*, as 'an Alexandrian device' (D. A. West, *C.Q.* n.s. vii [1957], 101), for Callimachus has several *σπονδειαίζοντες* but no *holospondiacus*, and the two phenomena are anyway clearly distinct. Of the latter we know that it was offensive to *novi poetae* at the time of Cicero's *Orator* and that Cicero himself would have found it *subrusticum* in a contemporary writer (*Or.* 161). It occurs still in the archaizing Lucretius, but not thereafter, and only here in Catullus. So both features are decidedly curious.¹ But if the poet is deliberately opposing his present purpose and his Callimachean background, it is fitting that he should express himself in as un-Callimachean way as possible and that he should even border on the uncouth. The metrical oddities would then be rather like his use of multiple elision, a harshness designed to convey strong feeling.² It may rather be, however, that Catullus is purposely expressing himself in his enemy's manner;³ for his own Callimachean writing is also carefully contrasted with Gellius' insults. He stresses this contrast by using *mittere* in two different senses, a peaceable one ('dedicate') and a hostile one ('shoot'); and *conarere* echoes *requirere* in order to indicate how Gellius' 'trying' is a sign of incompetence, Catullus' of seriousness. It is also a feature of literary polemic to mimic sarcastically the other man's style: thus Loukillios in *A.P.* 11. 134 (cf. *ibid.* 138, 148):

Ἀρχόμεθ', Ἡλιόδωρε; ποιήματα παίζομεν οὕτω
ταῦτα πρὸς ἀλλήλους; Ἡλιόδωρε, θέλεις;
"Ἄσσον ἴθ' ὧς κεν θᾶσσον ὀλέθρον . . ." καὶ γὰρ ἔμ' ὄψει
μακροφλυαρήτην Ἡλιοδωρότερον.

In that case the metrical curiosities of the poem suggest malice and mockery rather than the heat of anger, and the abandonment of the Callimachean manner is more of a pose than anything else. At all events, Catullus does somewhat tone down the contrast of his two personae, the aesthete and the mud-slinger; for he presents himself, as vituperative writers sometimes do, as provoked by his adversary into adopting this genre.⁴ So Ovid at the opening of the *Ibis* protests that he has never embarked on such a poem before, that he is writing it

oblitus moris iudiciiue mei (60)

¹ *Uti* and *qui* seem also to be archaic (cf. Heusch, *Das Archaische in der Sprache Catulls* [Bonn, 1954], 98 f., 133-5); the same may be true of *dabis supplicium*. Heinze (*Arch. f. lat. Lex.* xv, 99 = *Vom Geist des Römertums*³ [Stuttgart, 1960], 36 f.) argued plausibly that this phrase must have here its ancient sense, 'beg for mercy with expiatory offerings', because Gellius would then be presented as doing what Catullus was doing in lines 1-3; the poet thus deftly turns the tables on his opponent.

² Cf. West, art. cit. 102.

³ B. Schmidt (*Prolegom.*, p. lxvi) suggested that Catullus in the last line is actually quoting a phrase of Gellius.

⁴ Cf. further Archil. fr. 223 West; Cat. 40; Hor. *Epod.* 6, though here the writers are avowedly specialists in insult. Closer again to our passage is Hor. *Epod.* 5. 83-6: there it is another speaker who finally breaks into curses; but he thereby does duty for the epode-poet, who deals in *ἀπαί*. In oratory, cf. e.g. Antiphon, *Tetral.* 2. γ 1 f.; Dem. 44. 1, 53. 1; Cic. *Phil.* 2. 1.

and that his unnamed victim

cogit inadsuetas sumere tela manus (10)

Catullus, moreover, has made positive efforts towards a reconciliation. By saying these things the insulter gives himself a more attractive character in the reader's eyes; and Catullus also contrives to insinuate that he is still a Callimachean poet, even when his tongue is sharpest and his style ugliest.

But perhaps the most difficult thing about Cat. 116 is its position; for since it seems to explain why Catullus has taken up the pen against Gellius, it has all the air of being a prelude to the other poems directed at him (74, 80, 88-91), and yet it follows them at some distance. Now the poem is of a type that could well begin a whole collection; for it is an inverted dedication. Catullus, like other dedicators, speaks of the thought and effort he has expended for his addressee's benefit;¹ but here it has all been wasted. Dedicators often profess that their work has been written to honour² or to acquire³ a friendship; but Catullus' was meant first to pacify an enemy and now delivers a threat. Set in this context *studioso animo* takes on a further implication; for it sarcastically echoes phrases such as Lucretius' *mea dona tibi studio disposita fidei* (1. 52);⁴ and the whole piece turns upside down a dedication like that of the *De rerum natura* (1. 140 ff.):

sed tua me virtus tamen et sperata voluptas
dulcis amicitiae quemvis efferre laborem
suadet et inducit noctes vigilare serenas
quaerentem dictis quibus et quo carmine demum
clara tuae possim praepandere lumina menti,
res quibus occultas penitus convisere possis.

Consequently its position is also reversed: instead of opening a book it concludes one.⁵

Further, the train of thought in the whole poem corresponds, *in malam partem*, to a kind of *recusatio* common in dedications: 'I would have liked to send you such-and-such a kind of poem, but now I can only send you a different one';⁶ and we have seen that this form of expression, here as elsewhere, tells us something about the writer's poetic aims and character. The poem thus has, like Cat. 1, a programmatic quality.⁷ But precisely in virtue of that it is suitable to end a volume, as it would be to begin one; for Callimachus (*Iamb.* 13), Horace (*Sat.* 1. 10), and Propertius (2. 34b) all end books with poems that discuss and defend their own poetry. So although it is to be imagined as earlier

¹ Cf. Cic. *De inv.* 1. 1: *saepe et multum hoc mecum cogitavi* . . .; *De or.* 1. 1: *cogitanti mihi saepenumero* . . .; Lucr. 1. 140 ff.; [Virg.] *Ciris* 46.

² Cat. 1; Cic. *Or.* 1; Stat. *Silv.* 2 *praef.*; Quintil. 1 *praef.* 6.

³ Lucr. 1. 140 ff.; Stat. *Silv.* 5 *praef.*

⁴ Cf. Ov. *F.* 2. 15, Auson. *Technop.* 5. 2. This may also be how *studium* is meant (i.e. 'zeal' for a person) in Lucil. 612 Marx: *veterem historiam studio inductus scribis ad amores tuos*. Here too there is presumably an allusion to a dedication.

⁵ In general on the technique of 'inversion' see Cairns, op. cit. 127-37.

⁶ Cf. Cat. 65, 68. 1-40 (where line 41 begins the 'substitute' poem); Virg. *G.* 3. 1-48; *Ciris* 1-53. More loosely comparable are Prop. 2. 1. 17 ff., 3. 9. 47 ff.

⁷ Cf. Copley, *T.A.P.A.* lxxxii (1951), 200-6; Elder, *H.S.C.P.* lxxi (1966), 143-8; Cairns, art. cit. As emerges from Cairns's discussion, here too there is a contrast and a balance between two aspects of the poet, as a writer of *nugae* and as one who appreciates the value of *doctrina* and *labor*.

in time than the other Gellius poems, it is in substance an apt conclusion. More specifically, it might further be compared with Virgil's tenth *Eclogue* or Horace's seventeenth *Epode*. Virgil presents a poet, Gallus, who starts with ambitions of imitating Euphorion (50); then, as love takes a hold on him, he descends to the lower genre of Theocritean pastoral (50-9), until at last he yields altogether to his passion (60-9). Horace appears as the victim of a love-philtre, so that the poet of insult and imitator of Archilochus is seen addressing a tame appeal for mercy to the whore (20) and witch, Canidia. In both cases the book ends with a 'comedown' imposed by the irresistible power of love. In a similar way Catullus shows himself as a Callimachean poet driven into vulgar invective by the anger and frustration Gellius has caused in him. He takes up the challenge with some relish; and of course many of his pieces up to this point have been poems of vituperation. So too there are love-poems earlier on in Horace's (*Epod.* 12, 14)¹ and Virgil's (esp. *Ecl.* 2, 8) volumes, just as love plays an important part in their models, Theocritus and Archilochus or Hipponax.² But such an ending serves to present dramatically the contrast between the poet's different ambitions or sources of inspiration and to finish the book on a note of farewell, whether serious or feigned, pathetic or ironical.

Christ Church, Oxford

C. W. MACLEOD

¹ Already in these poems we see the epode-poet struggling helplessly against love.

Horaz (Munich, 1966), 1-12; Hipponax fr. 14, 16, 17, 84 Masson, West.

² See Grassmann, *Die erotischen Epoden des*