CATULLUS 55

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I WILL EXAMINE one sentence only of this involved and stiff poem," says Munro, when in his *Criticisms and Elucidations of Catullus* (Cambridge 1878) he reaches poem 55. Ellis, who in his critical edition of the poet expends such labour on the combination and restoration of 55 and 58b, makes one wonder why he did so, when in his *Commentary* (Oxford 1889) he discusses the metrical variations and says, "The effect is certainly unpleasing." This prejudice is reflected in Merrill's notes (in his edition of 1893), where we read, "The poem (55) appears to be an unfinished experiment in a not very pleasant modification of the Phalaecean verse," If you should ask what Ellis did see in 55, he will tell you: "The interest of the poem lies chiefly in the topographical notices which it contains of the fashionable localities of Rome"—all the more interesting since Catullus was generally thought to have died two years before the dedication of Pompey's theatre. The preoccupation with such archaeology as an end of literary criticism, and the generally benighted obtuseness of these Victorian scholars, was doubtless what Yeats had in mind when he wrote the lines:

> *All shuffle there, all cough in ink;*
> *All wear the carpet with their shoes;*
> *All think what other people think;*
> *All know the man their neighbour knows.*
> *Lord, what would they say*
> *Did their Catullus walk that way?*

For if there was one thing Catullus could not be, it was *infacetus*, *illepidus*, or *inuenustus*.

What I propose therefore to do is to look at the poem, to restore it to my ephemeral satisfaction—there are indeed a number of textual problems that every editor must settle—and finally to explicate its excellence, moving up in tactical support such heavier artillery as I can muster, from the Renaissance to the present time, against the *stupide 19e siècle*, our nourishing mother. If I should dedicate my discourse to any kindred soul, it would be to that of the editor of the Aldine text,[1] who in the case of Catullus, as of Lucretius, so often provides more illumination than all the intervening generations of textual critics. *Manibus ergo Avanti dono quidquid hoc papyri, qualecumque.*

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[1] A text I have not held in hand, but known through more recent critical editions.

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The following tentative text combines 55 and fragment 58b, with a selective apparatus criticus listing some of the MS readings and principal editorial emendations:[2]

[55]
x *Oramus, si forte non molestum est,*
xi *demonstres ubi sint tuae tenebrae.*
x *te in Campo quaesiuimus minore,*
x *te in Circo, te in omnibus libellis,*
x *te in templo summi Iouis sacrato.*
xi *in Magni simul ambulatione*
x *femellas omnes, amice, prendi,*
x *quas uultu uidi tamen serenas.*
xi *'auelli sinite' ipse flagitabam*
xi *'Camerium mihi, pessimae puellae.'*
x *quaedam inquit, nudum sinum reducens,*
xi *'en hic in roseis latet papillis.'*
x *sed te iam ferre Herculi labos est:*
x *tanto te in fastu negas, amice.*

[58b]
x *non custos si fingar ille Cretum,*
xi *non si Pegaseo ferar uolatu,*
xi *non Ladas ego pinnipesue Perseus,*
xi *non Rhesi niueae citaeque bigae:*
xi *adde huc plumipedes uolatilesque,*
xi *uentorumque simul require cursum,*
xi *quos uinctos, Cameri, mihi dicares:*
xi *defessus tamen omnibus medullis*
x *et multis languoribus peresus*
xi *essem te mihi, amice, quaeritando.*
xi *dic nobis ubi sis futurus, ede*
x *audacter, committe, crede luci.*
xi *nunc te lacteolae tenent puellae?*
x *si linguam clauso tenes in ore,*
xi *fructus proicies amoris omnes.*
x *uerbosa gaudet Venus loquella.*
xi *uel si uis, licet obseres palatum,*
xi *dum uestri sim ego particeps amoris.*

2 *latebrae* Palladius 3 *te campo quaesiuimus in minore* V; *in* del. Scaliger; *te quaesiuimus in minore campo* Muretus; *te in campo quaesiuimus minore* Sillig 5 *tabernis* Muretus; "*libellis* vix sanum" Mynors, qui *ligellis* Guarini citat, nescio quo sensu 8 *uideo* Parthenius; *serena* V, *serenas*, *sereno* recc., edd. 9 *a uelte sic* V, *auelli sinite* Avantius, *sic auellitis* Palladius, *auellent* Ellis; *usque* Munro 11 *nudum reduc V*, *sinum reducens* Avantius, *recludens* Riese, *reducta pectus* Ellis 12 *em* V, *en* recc. 14 *te in* V, *ten* Muretus 15 decem versus 15–24 (58b) hic posuit Froehlich, post v. 13 alii, alii post v. 12, ad finem etiam alii 17 *primipes* V, *pinnipes* recc. 21 *uinctos* V, *iunctos* recc., *cunctos* edd. 26 *lucet* V, *luci* recc. 27 *nunc* V, *num* recc.; *papillae* Perreius 32 *uestri sis* V, *nostri sis* recc., *uestri sim ego* Avantius, *ueri sis* Rossberg

[2]The marginal notations x and xi indicate for reference the sequence of decasyllabic and hendecasyllabic lines—as emended. I use the term decasyllabic as one of descriptive convenience; Fordyce speaks of decasyllables in his notes (*Catullus: A Commentary* [Oxford 1965] 225).

Let me now comment briefly on textual problems and preferences. Line 3 in the MSS does not scan: Scaliger's simple correction gives a permissible decasyllabic line; Muretus restores the preposition and an also permissible hendecasyllabic, but Sillig's reading restores again the decasyllabic, and with the preposition reinforces the anaphora of *te in*. In line 9 some editors try to preserve the MS tradition by separating the incomprehensible *uelte* into two words, and reading a decasyllabic line that begins (awkwardly to say the least) with four monosyllables: either *a uel te sic*, or *a te uel sic* (which Munro prefers). Either way, I find the line unacceptable, and award the palm to the far-fetched, but brilliant, emendation of Avantius, upon which further editorial suggestions have been based. In the same line, Munro questions Ellis' interpretation of *ipse*, "with my own lips." "But how else could he ask?" says Munro, who suggests *usque* as suiting the imperfect (and frequentative) *flagitabam* well (cf. Lesbia's sparrow: *ad solam dominam usque pipiabat*). But though I appreciate Munro's suggestion, I do not think the pronoun is otiose in the antithesis of the context. In line 11 the MSS leave us a legless trunk: again Avantius restores the line's anatomy. One may prefer Riese's *recludens*, but *reducens* is closer to what the MSS preserve; Ellis' emendation also gives the line a plausible ending.[3] Muretus' correction in line 14 would be colloquial and Catullan Latin, except that it muffles the echo of *te in* repeated in lines 3–5 above. For me, as for most contemporary translators,[4] fr. 58b is obviously a child that has become separated from its mother: the evidence that cries aloud lies in Camerius' name, the repetition of *amice*, the echoes to be heard in *quaeritando*, and the mixture of decasyllabic and hendecasyllabic lines, unique—at least in the *littérature latine qui nous est connue*—to this poem and this fragment.[5] It also seems evident that the poem is not only enlarged by the fragment, but improved; and I suspect that if many editors (from Merrill to Fordyce, but not including Lafaye) continue to print the fragment separately, it is from conservatism and respect for the MS tradition, even when it is corrupt. The only question that remains is the exact positioning of the additional lines, which many insert between 13 and 14, if not between 12 and 13. I feel that 13 and 14 belong together (and that 14 is a statement,

[3]But not to Fordyce (228).

[4]For example, Frances Fletcher (quoted in Lind's anthology), Horace Gregory, Peter Whigham, and C. H. Sisson, who follows Cornish's presentation of the poem in the Loeb edition. Frank Copley, on the other hand, makes an entertaining, but impertinent, burlesque of the traditional poem 55, and essays a rendering of 58b in an entirely different style; but he is careful to omit Camerius' name, since his alleged pun will not, any more than the flimsy *soutien-gorge* that he adduces, hold water.

[5]From the *littérature latine inconnue* Ellis cites another interesting example, in an eight-line inscription (*A Commentary on Catullus*[2] [Oxford 1889] 188).

rather than a question); my principal reason for placing them both before the fragment is that they constitute a transition, and better suit the structure of the poem there than elsewhere. Above all, I see in the repetition of the word *amice* an underlining of the poem's theme; the spacing of the repeated word in lines 7, 14, and 24 thus contributes most to the desired effect. Within the fragment, I should perhaps have cited the transposition and emendation of Muretus, who puts 16 after 17, and in 18 reads (continuing the same construction) *non Rhesi niueis citisque bigis*, a most acute attempt at restoration; but why Mynors (in the Oxford Classical Text) adopts the inverted order of the lines, then fails to read 18 as emended, is an inconsistency that is hard to follow.[6] In line 21, I choose the older reading *uinctos*, rather than the newer *iunctos*, which many editors (thinking of the horses of Rhesus) prefer, as if the winds could be teamed. But Merrill is surely right: the winds unleashed are a pandemonium; for presentation they can only be tied up, as Aeolus tied them for Odysseus, in a bag. As for the final line, one might almost say: *quot editores, tot sententiae.* If none to my knowledge reads *dum uestri sis particeps amoris* with the older MSS, many read *nostri sis* ("all I care for is to be able to find you and tell you my own secrets" says Ellis, and Lafaye translates "ou bien, si tu veux, verrouille-toi le palais, pourvu que tu t'intéresses à mes amours"); some, including Merrill, read *ueri sis* (provided that you share "a sincerely requited love"). Yet I feel that the whole point of Catullus' quest in this poem is to find out not only *where* Camerius is hiding, but *what* he is hiding. It is a complaint of the *exclusus amicus*, like poem 6. Therefore, like others, I follow Avantius' lead with *uestri sim;* but, unlike others, I follow him all the way with *uestri sim ego.* This little touch, the pronominal antithesis, not only adds variety to the line, but shows Avantius to have had a homing instinct for the *lectio venustior.*

Although a preference of reading may depend upon one's feeling for the structure of the poem, I think an editor should first tackle the text, then look at what he has; he should not as a rule allow any preconceived notion of form to impose decisions on the reading. Some scholars, for instance, noting the alternation here of decasyllabic and hendecasyllabic lines, have sought to impose a strophic or stanzaic pattern on the poem: the most egregious expenditure of such critical spirit is that of Ellis, who is fonder of patterns than Amy Lowell. Looking at what I have, I see of course an alternation, but no particular pattern. Nor do I wish to define these lines in Ellis' metrical terms, and say that in the decasyllabics the second foot

[6]Indeed on second thoughts I would adopt Muretus' transposition and emendation, as a further and distinct improvement; which only underlines the tentative nature of the editorial enterprise.

of the phalaecian is a spondee; or speak of *contracti phalaecii* and *phalaecii dactylici, integri* or *soluti*.[7] I do not believe that such lines should be divided into feet, whether one finds two short syllables as the fourth and fifth of an eleven-syllable line, or a long as the fourth in a line of ten syllables. The point is that the variation upon the familiar line is, in terms of metrical length, its equivalent; that the same number of metrical stresses (five) occur at the same intervals; and that similar coincidences and variances between metrical and natural stresses (usually four, but often five, and sometimes three) are achieved. The determining factor in the poet's choice is what he wants to say, and how he wants to say it. Function determines form. Having said which, we may note the pleasing form that function has prescribed. Catullus starts out with a decasyllabic, which establishes the variation; then continues with a hendecasyllabic, to give us our Aristotelian pleasure of recognition. There follow three decasyllabics, cumulative if you will, marked by the emphatic anaphora of *te in* (two syllables, I would say, articulated as one[8]). Line 6 is hendecasyllabic, lines 7 and 8 decasyllabic, for variety. Lines 9 and 10, both hendecasyllabic, introduce the dramatic device of quoted words, as does line 12; while the intervening 11, which resumes the narrative, has ten syllables (or eleven, if one articulates the syllable elided). Lines 13–15, each decasyllabic, express the poet's frustrated feelings, and lead to the flight of mythological fancy in which he sublimates his frustration. If the first line of this flight continues with ten syllables, the seven lines from 16 through 22 sustain the hendecasyllabics. Even Ellis, in a flash of understanding, notes the "increased rapidity" of these lines, "in which Catullus has sought to express the idea of swiftness." The change to the long syllables of 23 is a *rallentando* descriptive of his exhaustion. The last line of the development, and the first of his return to charge his friend, are hendecasyllabic; then follow alternating lines of ten and eleven syllables until the end, where a second hendecasyllabic is varied by an elision and a variance of stresses in the first half of the line. The effect is certainly *not* unpleasing.

But I will not belabour the bemused who read Catullus with tin ears, and think they are Beethovens. As a matter of fact, the poem as restored, in spite of its metrical variation, is a very regular poem, one in which the poet does little, if any, violence to the metre, as he does—but always with

[7]Fordyce too speaks of substituting a spondee for the dactyl; Quinn, more precisely, of a contraction of the nucleus – ˘ ˘ – to – – –, giving an opening sequence of five long syllables (*Catullus: The Poems* [London 1970] 251). Marking the metrical stresses would clarify the equivalence.

[8]See below. I find it hard to believe that the articulation would not be consistent. Fordyce (227) suggests that *te* be treated as an unaccented long monosyllable shortened in hiatus; this would only fit one instance out of five, in the second part of line 4.

functional intent—elsewhere. Elisions are relatively few, only twelve in thirty-two lines: of these, one is of *est*, treated as an enclitic, and five are of *te* before *in*, with the probable articulation of a diphthong, leaving only six that involve an extra syllable: *sinite* (9), *quaedam* (11), *ferre* (12), *adde* (19), *mihi* (24), and *sim* (32). Note that of these, three occur before a mark of punctuation or a break in the line (*sinite, ferre, mihi*), and one is of a final short vowel that could be clipped colloquially (*adde*). That leaves only two unstressed syllables (lacking natural stress, that is) in *quaedam* and *sim*.[9] Finally, in line 10, *Camerium* should be read, as Merrill points out, with a consonantal *i*, which lengthens the preceding syllable (Ellis, with characteristic perversity, speaks of a resolution of the first "foot").

These metrical considerations are important, for they lead to the oral interpretation of the poem, which some might advisedly claim to be the end of literary criticism. But there are other ends that I wish to consider too, such as the poem's component parts, and the devices, particularly of repetition and anaphora, whereby the poet gives coherence to his poem. When Ellis gets through with his division of the poem into so-called strophes, he notes that it falls into three parts, of fourteen, ten, and eight verses respectively. In the paragraphing, he would attach lines 13 and 14 to what precedes, rather than what follows. I do the opposite, and arrive at what may be a happier result, a division into paragraphs of twelve, twelve, and eight lines, with an exact mathematical correspondence between the first two paragraphs. Other shorter poems of Catullus confirm his occasional adoption of a mathematical structure: an obvious example is poem 45 (nine, nine, eight). Here the first paragraph, starting with a request by the poet that his friend reveal where he is hiding, is largely narrative; it describes Catullus' quest in search of his friend, and the description is enlivened by the scraps of conversation. The second paragraph expresses first Catullus' reaction, then launches into an accumulation of references, all arising from the initial reference to the labours of Hercules—another indication that poem and fragment go together—and arising each in turn from the other, by association: the brazen giant, the plumed steed, the fleet runner, the winged sandals, the fabled horses, all

[9]In this paragraph I may have opened a can of worms. The question is simply, how one reads Latin poetry. There are no recordings of Catullus' living speech, and the hearing of a modern reader is consciously and unconsciously hardened by the centuries of linguistic sclerosis arising from mispronunciation in the different national vernaculars. My feelings about elision in Catullus are that syllables elided in metre may be clipped when idiomatic speech, and thus the listener's understanding, permit; that elided syllables should be articulated, however, where such articulation is necessary for the understanding; that some vowel-sounds in hiatus may be fused without confusion; and that articulation is normally preferable before a pause. But this question requires a book to itself; indeed, not just a book, but tapes to accompany the text.

feather-footed and flying creatures, the rushing winds. None of these miraculous beings or powers could save Catullus from exhaustion in searching for his friend. The cumulative effect of this development is at once so natural that the basic syntax, in which a condition becomes mixed as a result of a digression, almost ends in anacoluthon. But not quite: the noble rider maintains control over paragraph and poem.[10] The final paragraph returns to urgent personal entreaty: if they are friends, what friends possess must be held in common—κοινὰ τὰ τῶν φίλων.

But at the same time as each paragraph performs its primary and complementary function, as the whole becomes complete with beginning, middle, and end, with the satisfaction of a cyclical return at the end to the beginning, the poet by his choice of words, by their repetition and their variation, skilfully binds together the component parts and the entire composition. I have already drawn attention to the repetition of *amice*, and its conscious positioning in lines 7, 14, and 24. But there are many other words that contribute to the poem's coherence and perfection. Take *tenebrae*, for instance, in line 2, with its connotation of some dark lurking-place. Note the editorial correction of Palladius, *latebrae*. But this is not necessary: apart from niceties of alliteration, *tenebrae*'s connotative force is subtly echoed in the *latet* of line 12. More importantly, if *tenebrae* is corrected, one loses the striking effect of the poet's return to his charge in the *crescendo* of lines 25 and 26: *dic nobis ubi sis futurus, ede/audacter, committe, crede luci*, in which the *ubi sint* of line 2 is picked up by *ubi sis*, and *tenebrae* is echoed by its antonym. In line 3, *quaesiuimus* is squarely set as the main verb, while its object *te* is several times repeated. The verb is thus echoed in its frequentative form, and with its familiar object, in the *te quaeritando* of line 24. More subtly, the frequentative here also picks up the frequentative *flagitabam* of line 9. *Puellae* at the end of line 10 recurs at the end of line 27 (there is really no need for Perreius' correction to *papillae*): Catullus' repeated supposition is that Camerius has fallen into a tender trap. The process of association whereby lines 15–21 are developed has already been mentioned, but we may also note the sequences of *uolatu . . . uolatilesque*, and *pinnipes . . . plumipedes*, which reinforce the process. The rhetorical figure of *non . . . si, non si, non*, and *non* emphatically repeated, not only sustains the development, but corresponds in the balance of the first two paragraphs to the

[10]Here I may seem to be dismissing difficulties too cavalierly: according to strict syntax, the *non si* protases are left dangling. The stumbling-block of the anacoluthon is perhaps best discussed by Fordyce (232). This does not, however, impugn the unity of 55 and 58b, which this paper defends, although it is possible that the syntactical incoherence of the sentence underlies the separation of poem and fragment in the MS tradition. Arguments against unity are based primarily on incongruity of style (see again Fordyce 226); but wit has been defined as the conjunction of the incongruous.

repeated *te in* above. And the *Cameri, mihi* of line 21 picks up the *Camerium mihi* of line 10. In the final paragraph, we may note the further repetitions of *tenent, tenes* in lines 28 and 29, and of *amoris* in lines 29 and 32, as well as the varying expression of the same image in the phrases *clauso tenere in ore* (28) and *obserare palatum* (31). These examples should suffice to show that this poem is no less carefully crafted than others that have received more universal critical acclaim. While one may at first feel put off by the fragmentary or corrupt condition of the text, it is no longer possible, after restoration, to characterize it as an "unfinished experiment."

On the contrary, the restored poem emerges as a major piece, and first of all in simple length. It is one of eight hendecasyllabic poems (the others are 10, 14, 23, 36, 42, 45, and 50) that amount to twenty lines or more, one of only two (the other is 10) that number more than thirty lines. It could be dismissed as a mere *Gelegenheitsgedicht*, but the care the poet has obviously expended on it shows any casual or throw-away effect to be deceiving. It is a studied effort, in which art conceals the art. The mathemathical structure, and the patterns of anaphora and repetition, have been noted. Also notable are some neat but not gaudy effects of assonance and alliteration. The poem belongs to the very important cycle that describes the poet's friendships, and points up the focus of his life upon them. Friendship is a religion with Catullus: it occupies a higher plane than love, since love can never be so profound as when it is sanctified in friendship (the *aeternum sanctae foedus amicitiae*). Underlying the frivolous preoccupations and sensual indulgences of *otium*, and a compulsion to shock the *senes seueriores* of this world, is a pervading sense of *pietas*. Underlying, I say, since 55 is not one of the poems in which it surfaces. But the paradox of Catullus' seriousness, even when he seems to be most trivial, is there. The poem is perhaps most reminiscent of 6 (*Flaui, delicias tuo Catullo*), in which another friend has been hiding, but in vain, his affection's object from Catullus; he too is urged to speak out (*dic nobis*) and confess. It is also reminiscent of 10 (*Varus me meus ad suos amores*), the other hendecasyllabic poem of more than thirty lines, which is also enlarged by the dramatic device of incorporated conversation. The three together typify what Quinn calls the "Catullan experience." Indeed Quinn singles out the final paragraph of 55, as well as all of 6 and part of 10, for quotation. But 55 reminds us at times of other poems too. The mythological flight in the second paragraph may be compared with similar developments in 4 (the accumulation of geographical allusions), in 11 (all the ends of the earth to which the *comites Catulli* might accompany him), and in 36 (the many far-flung places in which Venus is worshipped). Lines 22 and 23 (*defessus tamen omnibus medullis/et multis languoribus peresus/essem*) come perilously close to the

language that informs 50, describing poetry metaphorically as an act of love. There is thus much in the fabric of this poem that constitutes the fabric of all Catullus' work, not just the idea of a search throughout the city—borrowed from Terence, who borrowed it from Plautus, who borrowed it from himself after borrowing it allegedly from some Greek comic source (to quote the school of criticism that will not allow Plautus a single grain of native salt). I like to think that the words *defessus quaeritando* show Catullus to have had Amphitruo's search for Naucrates in mind (when the frustrated braggart soldier cries out in exasperation, *sum defessus quaeritando—nusquam inuenio Naucratem*). For Catullus has a Plautine comic sense that makes us savour the scene he recreates, as well as a Plautine way with the language. But this would only be an incidental literary reminiscence, if it is not a coincidence.[11]

In the meantime, our poem should be viewed in its totality ("the total poem is the communication"). Because of its apparently incomplete state, it has in the past been largely ignored by the literary historians and contributors to periodicals.[12] It has exercized the ingenuity of textual critics, and I hope that Avantius (to whom this essay is dedicated) exercized his ingenuity upon it, because he appreciated it for what it is. Obviously, the Victorians did not. In the 20th century Quinn was among the first to pay it heed.[13] But before him Jean Bayet, in his magisterial *exposé* of 1953 ("Catulle, la Grèce et Rome," *Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique* 2 [Bern 1956] 3–55), betrays his affection for it when, describing the poet's elaborate simplicity, he says: "Une fantaisie comme la quête de son ami Camerius, dont à travers toute la ville il mendie des nouvelles jusqu'auprès des *pessimae puellae*, est de la plus délicate complexité en son tendre humour" (29). He cites the poem again, in the same section on Catullus' Atticism—perhaps an inappropriate word—when he states (30): "The simplicity peculiar to Catullus . . . arises from the spontaneity of his affections. Catullus seems susceptible to every momentary impression . . . He reacts with striking immediacy and liveliness. This is as true of friendship as it is of love; and there is no better proof of the fact that his very temperament contains this gift for passion and poetry. Some have expressed astonishment at his excessive joy when he expects to see Veranius again; but his urgency is no less impatient when he is in quest of Camerius . . . ."

[11]One gets the impression that it is almost as hard to find reminiscences of earlier Latin poetry in Catullus as it is easy to find reminiscences of Catullus in the poets who follow him.

[12]The three articles cited by Quinn (262) deal with other aspects, and at least two are by *chorizontes*: Copley (*AJP* 73 [1952] 295–297) is not " for integration," as is evident also from his translation.

[13]*The Catullan Revolution*[2] (Cambridge 1969). In his *Catullus: The Poems* (London 1970) he too emerges as a separatist.

And so I leave my readers with one more attempted restoration of the text, inviting them to reread it at their leisure (*otiosi*), to toy if they wish with the textual problems (*scilicet ludere in tabellis*), but above all to taste the immediacy, the complexity, the unity, and the excellence of all that Catullus has here put together.

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