

On the Unity of Catullus 51

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Carmen 51, based on Sappho's poem *Φαίνεται μοι κῆνος ἕσος θέοισιν*,¹ has probably been discussed more frequently than any other of Catullus' poems. The problem has been to explain the function of the fourth stanza, which has no equivalent in Sappho's poem. Most nineteenth century scholars, characteristically, either condemned it as spurious, or posited a lacuna of one or two stanzas between it and the preceding stanzas, or else assumed that it belonged originally to another poem by Catullus and became somehow attached to poem 51 by mistake.² But the manuscript tradition, which gives us the quatrain as fourth and concluding stanza of the poem, is unexceptionable. For this reason most twentieth century critics have endeavored to interpret the poem as a four-stanza unit. They have generally been of the opinion, however, that the last stanza introduces a break into the poem, an abrupt departure from, or reaction against, what precedes, and this view has frequently amounted to a criticism, either implied or expressly stated, of the artistic quality of the poem as a whole. E. A. Havelock and W. Kroll may serve as examples. Havelock said: "Catullus' mood is one of adoration. . . . In the extravagance of his worship he puts Lesbia above the gods of Rome," but "a quick revulsion of feeling comes over him in the conclusion."³ Kroll regarded the poem as Catullus' "first homage to Lesbia," but added: "Poetically, Catullus surely damaged the poem by his change of mood."⁴

¹ E. Lobel and D. L. Page, *Poetarum Lesbiorum Fragmenta* (Oxford 1955) frg. 31.

² See R. Ellis, *A Commentary on Catullus* (Oxford 1889) 175-76, and A. Baehrens, *Catulli Veronensis Liber* (Leipzig 1893) 259, with references.

³ *The Lyric Genius of Catullus* (Oxford 1939) 143 and 12.

⁴ C. Valerius Catullus (Stuttgart 1922) *ad c.* 51. Cf. A. Riese, *Die Gedichte des Catullus* (Leipzig 1884) *ad c.* 51 ("die Strophe bedeutet: 'ja, du bist gefesselt, aber zerreisse deine Fesseln in männlicher Tätigkeit!'"); Baehrens (above, note 2) 259-60 (the stanza was added by Catullus as apology for the boldness of courting, in the preceding lines, a matron "quam ut puram et pudicam venerabatur"); A. Goldbacher, "Das 51.

The greatest divergence of interpretation was reached, ironically, in two of the most recent studies of the poem, by C. J. Fordyce and by G. Jachmann. Fordyce resorts to the nineteenth century solution by maintaining that the fourth stanza cannot have been part of poem 51, because it "brings a sudden and violent change of thought. It is an abrupt moralizing soliloquy, corresponding to nothing in Sappho's poem and completely different in tone from what precedes it. Attempts to relate it to the rest of the poem are unplausible special pleading. . . . It is hardly conceivable that to his version of so famous a poem, in which he had made Sappho's words his own, he should have appended a self-admonitory quatrain which threw cold water on his passion with the virtuous opening 'Your trouble, Catullus, is not having anything to do.'"⁵

Gedicht des Catullus," *WS* 29 (1907) 111-12 (back, Catullus—so we are meant to understand—your imagination has just caused you to follow Sappho and identify yourself with her psychological state; this is dangerous and can ruin you, seeing that this same imagination has overthrown kings and cities); G. Friedrich, *Catulli Veronensis Liber* (Leipzig and Berlin 1908) 237 (the last stanza "fällt über das Gedicht wie ein Eimer eiskalten Wassers"; it was added by Catullus later, when his affair with Lesbia had taken an unhappy turn); W. Kranz, "Catullus Sapphoübertragung," *Hermes* 65 (1930) 237 (what originally was meant as a homage to Lesbia turned into a poem to himself); F. Tietze, "Catullus 51. Gedicht," *RhM* 88 (1939) 346-67 (the poem reflects a moral conflict in the poet; in the fourth stanza he attempts to master his passion and *sucht sich zurückzurufen*, 362); cf. I. Borzsák, "Otium Catullianum," *Acta Antiqua* 4 (1956) 212-19; E. Bickel, "Catullus Werbegegedicht an Clodia," *RhM* 89 (1940) 194-215 (Catullus courts Lesbia, but stanza four does not fit in); L. Ferrero, *Interpretazione di Catullo* (Turin 1955) 167 (love poem to Lesbia, but stanza four is a condemnation of *otium* and a realization of the necessity for a change); De Gubernatis, *Il Libro di Catullo* (Turin 1953) 92; W. M. A. Grimaldi, "The Lesbia Love Lyrics," *CP* 60 (1965) 91-92 (in the last stanza Catullus passes judgment upon his love for Lesbia "as idle, meaningless reverie on his part, daydreaming which enervates and destroys," and "foolish daydreaming").

Against the interpretations of Baehrens, Friedrich, Goldbacher, and Kranz, see O. Immisch, "Catullus Sappho," *Sitzungsb. Heidelb. Ak.* 24 (1933-34) Abh. 2, pp. 8-13. Immisch himself, following E. Kalinka (*Wiener Eranos: Festschrift f. d. Grazer Philologenversammlung* [1909] 157 ff. [not accessible to me]), thought the poem a duet, the fourth stanza being spoken by Lesbia. Against this, see W. Kroll, *C. Valerius Catullus* (Stuttgart 1922) *ad loc.*, and Bickel, 208. Th. Birt ("Zu Catullus Carmina Minora," *Philol.* 63 [1904] 445-46; cf. "Der Monolog und die Selbstanrede," *RhM* 80 [1931] 245) thought that Catullus here, as in all cases of self-address, is addressed by his *genius*. G. Lafaye (*Catulle*, ed. [Paris 1949] 7, n. 2) believes "très justifiée cette hypothèse ingénieuse." Against Birt, see Kroll, *ad c.* 51, and Immisch, 10.

For additional references to studies of the poem, see, e.g., Steele Commager, "Notes on Some Poems of Catullus," *HSCP* 70 (1965) 107.

⁵ *Catullus: A Commentary* (Oxford 1961) 219. R. Avallone, "Catullo poeta triste," *Antiquitas* 6-7 (1951-52) 49, and L. P. Wilkinson, *Fondation Hardt, Entretiens* 2 (Geneva 1956) 47, also reject the stanza.

But Fordyce's assertions are merely his opinion. I do not think that the stanza brings a "violent change of thought," nor that it is "completely different in tone from what precedes it," nor that it "throws cold water on his passion"; the label "abrupt moralizing soliloquy" is over-simplifying the import of the stanza, and an appeal to Sappho for a rejection of the stanza is not valid. The point of departure for it may well have been the *τεθνάκην δ' ὀλίγω 'πιδεύης φαίνομαι* of Sappho's fourth stanza,⁶ while, on the other hand, even before the fourth stanza Catullus departs from his model. The second verse of the first stanza has nothing equivalent in Sappho's poem, the fourth stanza of her poem is dropped entire, and there are, furthermore, sufficient minor differences to show that Catullus meant his poem to be modeled on that of Sappho, but also to stand as his own creation, an autonomous structure, the expression of his own concern and his own experience.⁷ And it is the last stanza which fully achieves this. R. Stark has rightly observed: "It is this stanza which really raises the poem out of the literary tradition and protects it from being taken as fiction and misunderstood by Lesbia herself. It is through this stanza that the poem really becomes *Catullus'* declaration of love."⁸ But in any case, in the face of the manuscript evidence the denial of the quatrain as fourth and final stanza of poem 51 is, at best, a counsel of despair.

Jachmann, on the other hand, along with most other recent critics, accepts the genuineness of the stanza as part of the poem.⁹ But he holds that the poem is not a love poem to Lesbia, but a poem of resignation, in monologue form,¹⁰ and that it shows an

⁶ See R. Stark, "Sapphoremiszenzen," *Hermes* 85 (1957) 332.

⁷ See, e.g., F. Tietze (above, note 4) 347: "Das Interesse für die letzte Strophe hat ebenso wie die Tatsache des Vorbildes Sapphos meistens den Blick von der Komposition des Gedichts abgezogen, und wenn man sie betrachtete, eher zu allgemeinen Vergleichen mit der lesbischen Dichterin angeregt. Wie wenig aber die ersten Strophen 'Übersetzung' und wie sehr sie Catulls eigene Schöpfung sind, zeigt eine nähere Betrachtung." Cf. also Immisch (above, note 4) 9; R. Pfeiffer, "*BEPENIKHΣ ΠΑΟΚΑΜΟΣ*," *Philol.* 87 (1931-32) 215-16; M. Schuster, *RE* VII A, 2374, s.v. "Valerius (Catullus)"; W. Schadewaldt, *Sappho* (Potsdam 1950) 110.

⁸ Stark (above, note 6) 333; the italics are mine. Cf. Wilamowitz, *Reden und Vorträge*³, (Berlin 1913) 226, note 2: "Dieses Gedicht ist an Lesbia gerichtet und redet von Catullus: es war also gar nicht als Übersetzung gemeint, und Catullus durfte die Sappho so umdeuten, wie er es getan hat."

⁹ "Sappho und Catull," *RhM* 107 (1964) 17-25.

¹⁰ "Diese Form ist die dominierende. Dass dem die vorausgehende Anrede an Lesbia keinen Abbruch tut, dafür genügt ein Hinweis etwa auf das 8. Gedicht mit 6 + T.P. 96

organic and consistent development toward the fourth stanza, which expresses the poet's recall of himself from the tumult of a frivolous world and, implicitly, his decision to return to the sphere of serious activity. This contention, however, is based not on an exegesis of the poem itself, but on an imaginative reconstruction of the personal situation that lay behind its composition and gave rise to it, as follows: "Catullus takes part in a social function of Caecilius Metellus Celer; there he comes to see Clodia, the wife of the host, and he feels himself *primo aspectu* swept away by her seductive charm. Unfortunately he has to see her, at the same time, flirting with another man, and so all hope disappears of winning her favors. . . . Thus he believes he must turn away from a way of life which brings with it the danger of involvement in unhappy passions."¹¹

This approach may be questioned on methodological grounds, but the reconstruction is, in any case, not convincing. It is difficult to believe, for instance, that this man on first meeting Lesbia and falling under her spell should yet at the same time have abandoned all hope of winning her favors simply because he saw her flirting with some man at a party given by her husband. On the contrary, such a scene would more likely have encouraged him, inasmuch as it indicated—and this would be the crucial consideration—that she did not confine her attentions to her husband. In short, Jachmann's interpretation is not quite satisfactory.¹² While it is recognized that no one interpretation

seinem sogar mehrmaligen Wechsel zwischen der Selbstanrede und der Anrede an die puella" (p. 23, note 55). I disagree. While the beginning of 8 clearly shows that poem to be a monologue, 51 is shown to be an address to Lesbia, before the self-address of the last stanza.

¹¹ *Op. cit.* (above, note 9) 18–19.

¹² Jachmann's interpretation moves him to additional speculations (*op. cit.* [above, note 9] 23–24): "Soll das nun etwa besagen, dass der Clodia dieses im Grunde doch von ihr inspirierte Gedicht überhaupt nicht zur Kenntnis gelangt sei? O nein—die Dinge sollten ja einen ganz anderen Verlauf nehmen, als Catull gedacht und gewollt hatte. Und dies wodurch? Durch sein eigenes Versagen. Er hat den Entschluss zu einer soliden Lebensführung nicht durchzuhalten vermocht, sondern ist, vermutlich sehr bald, in jene lockere zurückgefallen, wozu eben der Charme jener *βοῶπις* (wie Cicero sie gern nannte . . .), der ihn nun einmal für immer unlöslich in seinen Bann geschlagen hatte, den entscheidenden Impuls gegeben haben dürfte. So ist er denn der Clodia wieder begegnet, ja er hat sich dieser vornehmen Dame, die er bislang nur von fern angebetet hatte, allmählich nähern können. . . . Da wird er ihr dann gewiss auch jenes wehmütige Gedicht mitgeteilt haben, und sie mag triumphiert haben ob ihres Sieges über den tugendeifrigen Catull der letzten Strophe, den sie in das ausgelassene Leben zurückgelockt hatte."

of so difficult a poem as this will ever prove conclusive, it is hoped that the following discussion provides a preferable, or at least acceptable, alternative to Jachmann's view that the poem is a closely integrated expression of the poet's resignation. Let us turn to the text.¹³

Ille mi par esse deo videtur, "He seems to me to be equal to a god." The specific sense or respect in which *ille* seems godlike is not indicated; the reader will therefore think of the most proverbial applicable characteristics of divinity, happiness and power. In the second verse, the poet does not immediately explain the assertion of the first verse; instead, he reasserts and even goes beyond it: *ille, si fas est, superare divos*, "he, if it be permitted to say this, to be superior to the gods." The change from the prosaic singular *deo*, a god, any god, to the more solemn and poetic *divos*, the gods collectively, all the divine beings, parallels the progression from *par esse* to *superare* and lends it additional weight.¹⁴ Verse two, then, introduced by the anaphora of *ille*, judiciously qualified by *si fas est*, constitutes an emphatic reassertion of the poet's appraisal of the state of *ille* as sublime and gives this assertion, moreover, the aspect of being carefully considered by him.

qui sedens adversus identidem te | spectat et audit || dulce ridentem, "who sitting opposite you constantly (i.e., habitually, often, always) gazes at and hears you sweetly laughing."¹⁵ The information why, or in what way, *ille* seems to be godlike to the poet is delayed, beyond verse two, till the introduction of the predicates of the *qui*-clause, *spectat et audit*, and it is fully completed only with the enjambement *dulce ridentem* in the second stanza; through this retardation the statement is rendered emphatic and acquires the force almost of a revelation: he is equal and even superior to the blessed gods because he enjoys, habitually and in perfect leisure, the charming, intimate company of Lesbia. Lesbia bestows divine felicity and perfection upon her lover and thus she herself is revealed, indirectly, as *diva*, goddess par excellence.

misero quod omnis | eripit sensus mihi: nam simul te, | Lesbia, aspexi, nihil est super mi | <vocis in ore,> || lingua sed torpet, tenuis sub artus |

¹³ The poem has often been studied by *synkrisis* with the Sappho fragment. The concern here will be with the poem not as an imitation or version of Sappho's poem, but as an autonomous structure.

¹⁴ Cf. Ellis (above, note 2) 176, and G. Lieberg, *Puella Divina* (Amsterdam 1962) 121.

¹⁵ On the force of *identidem*, see Lieberg (above, note 14) 114.

flamma demanat, sonitu suo pte / tintinant aures, gemina teguntur / lumina nocte. "Wretched me, this snatches away all my senses from me: for once I looked at you, Lesbia, no voice remains within my mouth, but my tongue is numb, a subtle flame glides down through my limbs, my ears ring with their own sound, my eyes are covered with a double night." As is suggested by its position, *misero* is not primarily proleptic; that is to say, the poet's "wretchedness" is not primarily the result of his being struck dumb. The word characterizes rather the general state or condition of the poet at the present time. In this case, certainly, it does not, as has been claimed, mark the happy lover. Generally *miser* characterizes the human condition as "wretched" in contrast with the blessedness of the gods, and the word has some of this force here, for by position it directly faces the preceding statement whose main emphasis is on the divine felicity of Lesbia's lover and, by implication, on the divinity of Lesbia herself.¹⁶ *Ille* is godlike through his intimate closeness and familiarity, his love, with Lesbia,¹⁷ and it follows as a necessary implication, which is borne out by the succeeding words (*nam simul te*, etc.), that the poet by contrast is "wretched" because he himself enjoys no such relationship with her.

It is not at once clear whether *quod* refers to the whole preceding picture of the togetherness of the two lovers, or only to the directly preceding image of the sweetly laughing Lesbia (*dulce ridentem*); but the following clause explains (*nam*): it is above all the sight of Lesbia herself that so unnerves the poet. The *omnis eripit sensus mihi* is now taken up and particularized by *nihil est super mi*, etc., and the experience is attributed expressly to the vision of Lesbia alone (*nam simul te, Lesbia, aspexi*). There is, then, no sign of personal jealousy of "that man"; in fact there is no personal reaction at all to him as a man or as an individual. If, therefore, the scene reflects an actual experience of the poet, he is clearly uninterested in the person of Lesbia's lover; or else, more likely, the scene is the figment of his imagination and *ille* does not refer to any real, specific person at all, but he is anyone who enjoys what is here praised. The very anonymity and vagueness of *ille*

¹⁶ Cf. Lieberg (above, note 14) 129-34.

¹⁷ Cf. Lieberg (above, note 14) 124, note 41: *ille* is the man "der des höchsten Liebesglücks teilhaftig ist." (It is to be regretted that L. does not discuss the fourth stanza.) See also Tietze (above, note 4) 350-51.

shows that it is not his identity but rather his state, his condition, that concerns the poet. *Ille* is the poet's vision of that man, any man, who enjoys the supreme bliss of being Lesbia's accepted lover and friend, and this includes potentially the poet himself.

Aspexi is best seen not as a present tense iterative ("every time I look at you"), as has been held, but as referring to that one moment when the poet first saw Lesbia and lost his heart to her. The succeeding verbs then function as historical presents; the impact made on Catullus on that fateful occasion was so great that he recalls it as if it were happening now.¹⁸ And in a sense it is: the verbs describe both what happened to him at the moment when he first saw Lesbia and also what is happening to him now at the vision of her expressed in the first stanza (*quod omnis eripit sensus mihi*).

This description of the physical impact made on the poet by the sight of Lesbia constitutes an exquisite homage to the power of her charm and beauty. Yet while the poet is affected in this way, he is not Lesbia's lover and consequently his present state is altogether that of misery. He is miserable by express contrast with Lesbia's lover, his ideal, who is equal and even superior to the gods. The contrast is subtly but unmistakably sustained in the description of the effect on the poet of Lesbia's appearance. While the lover of Lesbia gazes at her habitually, constantly (*identidem te spectat*), Catullus apparently has seen her only once (*simul te aspexi*); while her lover listens to her sweet laughter again and again (*identidem audit dulce ridentem*), the poet only hears a feverish ringing in his own ears (*sonitu suopte tintinant aures*); while her lover gazes at Lesbia (*te spectat*), the poet's eyes are covered with the darkest night (*gemina teguntur lumina nocte*).

Thus, by contrast with the man who is Lesbia's lover, her mere appearance produces in the poet a violent physical effect which culminates in a physical blackout. In the structure of the poem, this last image (*gemina teguntur lumina nocte*) serves a parallel function to that of the last line of the first stanza. The words *spectat* and *audit*, denoting as they do sense activity, provide an effective transition from the primarily contemplative and reflective level of stanza one (*videtur esse, si fas est, superare*) to the physical-emotional level of stanzas two and three; the image of

¹⁸ Cf. Lieberg (above, note 14) 114–15.

the blackout at the end of stanza three, signifying the exhaustion and breakdown of sense activity, provides a similar effective transition to the state of the fourth stanza in which the poet becomes again reflective: after recovering, as it were, from his blackout, he turns to himself to diagnose his situation. *otium*, Catulle, *tibi molestum est*; | *otio exultas nimiumque gestis*; | *otium et reges prius et beatas* | *perdidit urbes*. "Otium, Catullus, to you is painful; in your *otium* you riot and transport yourself with passion and desire too much; *otium* before now has ruined kings and flourishing cities."

This emphatic fastening upon *otium* as the cause of his predicament comes, at first, as a surprise after the preceding stanzas. *Otium* traditionally meant inactivity, unoccupied time, free from the demands of work, business, and official duties; and it was often thought of as the breeding ground for trouble, in particular of unhappiness and misfortune in love.¹⁹ The poet applies the moral to himself. The suggestion is clear: A busy, active life would surely have prevented him from getting into this situation. And further, since first meeting Lesbia he has, doubtless, ignored and neglected all else in his infatuation for her. He has already shown that he is made miserable by this infatuation, because even though he loves and adores and desires Lesbia, his love is, at least as yet, unfulfilled. And thus his *otium* is a source to him of suffering and pain (*molestum*).

In your *otium*, he continues, *exultas nimiumque gestis*. Both of these verbs, whether used singly or together, as here, nearly always denote an excessive state of passion and excitement,²⁰ while *gestire*, in addition, contains the notion of violent desire. This verse, then, re-emphasizes *otium* as the background of the poet's trouble, it further explicates the *molestum* of the preceding verse, and it marks, generally, the underlying emotional state, or behavior, behind the specific physical experience described in the central stanzas. Catullus' state is characterized by an excessive turmoil, excitement and desire, excessive inasmuch as it is frus-

¹⁹ Cf. Bickel (above, note 4) 210-11; Schuster (above, note 7) 2374; E. Fraenkel, *Horace* (Oxford 1957) 212, with references. On the force of *molestum*, see Tietze (above, note 4) 356: "Prüft man das Vorkommen von *molestum* bis in die Zeit Catulls, so ergibt sich durchgehend—auch für die anderen Stellen bei Catull—die Bedeutung: quälend, lästig, peinigend."

²⁰ See Tietze (above, note 4) 356-57: "ein übermässiges Aussersichsein in der Leidenschaft."

trated and abortive and he is powerless to effect its satisfaction. And, what is more, this state is dangerous and can destroy him. There is a self-reproach implicit in these words, aggravated by the magnitude of the concluding *exemplum*: even kings and flourishing cities have been destroyed by *otium*.

Catullus, then, is unhappy in his *otium*, but it is important to observe that he in no way attempts, or admonishes himself, to terminate this condition and turn instead toward *negotium*. R. Stark has accurately observed: "There takes place no exhortation to put down this *otium* or to confine it to a limit which would not lead to self-destruction, . . . an element of will (*Willensmoment*) to resist his passion . . . does not become audible. . . . Rather, Catullus lets himself go, without a will of his own."²¹ Inasmuch, therefore, as these words testify to the totality of the poet's infatuation with Lesbia, even at the risk of his own destruction, they effectively enhance his adoration of her. But yet Catullus' *otium* is not, as Stark has it,²² identical with his love, and hence the introduction of this motif in a poem that is an expression of his love for Lesbia is still not entirely clear.

A further look, however, reveals the remarkable disingenuousness of the stanza. For if the self-address is considered in close conjunction with the other three stanzas, as an integral part of the dramatic situation and theme of the whole poem, it can be seen as having a rhetorical function in being directed at Lesbia, and as maintaining the dramatic distinction between Catullus and *ille*, between the would-be lover and his ideal, the actual lover. Viewed in this perspective, then, Catullus plays the role of *dramatis persona*, so to speak, vis-à-vis *ille*, and he addresses himself in terms which are pointedly inapplicable to the divine estate of *ille*. For by a most artful Catullan suggestion (*sedens . . . identidem*) the condition of *ille* is pictured as precisely that of *otium*, and to him is applicable the Epicurean dictum: "quod beatum et immortale est, id nec habet nec exhibet cuiquam negotium" (Cic. *N.D.* 1.30.85). Therefore, while Catullus has already called himself "wretched," to mark the contrast with the divine bliss of *ille*, when he now says, "Idleness, Catullus, to you is painful," the

²¹ Stark (above, note 6) 332; cf. B. Snell, "Sapphos Gedicht ΦΑΙΝΕΤΑΙ ΜΟΙ ΚΗΝΟΣ," *Hermes* 66 (1931) 84.

²² Stark (above, note 6) 332: "Sein *otium* ist . . . die Liebe."

implication is "to *you*, Catullus," in your present situation, and in contrast with *ille*.

This, it appears, is the main function of the *otium*-motif in the dramatic context of the whole poem, to contrast the *otium* of the poet with that of *ille* as suggested by the picture of stanza one.²³ For Catullus *otium* is painful because it has resulted in and, in a sense, consists of unfulfilled and frustrated passion and desire. But for *ille*, *otium* patently is not *molestum*, but rather, in his divine estate, thoroughly congenial and, as it were, his natural state. The import of the whole stanza, as it relates to *ille*, can therefore be expressed somewhat as follows: *Otium*, Catullus, to you is painful, while for the lover of Lesbia it consists of divine bliss; in your *otium* you transport yourself with passion and desire too much, while Lesbia's lover enjoys divine satisfaction and calm; *otium* before now has destroyed kings and flourishing cities and it can surely destroy you in your present state, but the man who is Lesbia's lover is secure: through her he is made divine.

It is evident that Catullus longs to be delivered from his *otium*. But the reason why he does not, as we have observed, exhort himself to turn to *negotium* is that he aspires instead to the *otium* of Lesbia's lover.²⁴ The address of the poem to Lesbia, the extravagant homage to her as, in effect, a goddess who can bestow virtual divinity upon her lover, the emphatic *makarismos* of this lover, can mean but one thing: *ille* is not merely a foil to the poet in his present state, but also the personification of his own aspiration and hope. Catullus desires to be freed from his present condition and saved from its danger, not by turning away from Lesbia, but by being accepted by her as lover and friend, by becoming *ille*; and thus he hopes to rise beyond the sphere of wretchedness, frustration, and anxiety to the level of the blessed gods. He himself is unable to achieve this, however; only

²³ The *identidem* effects an essential difference from Sappho's poem. She pictures a single, particular scene; Catullus marks a situation, and thus brings stanzas one and four into juxtaposition. This alone suffices to demonstrate that the fourth stanza forms a unity with the rest of the poem. W. Ferrari, *Ann. Scuola Norm. Sup. di Pisa* 2, 7 (1938) 70, has pointed out several additional correspondences between the first and last stanzas.

²⁴ This supports the observation of U. Knoche, "Erlebnis und dichterischer Ausdruck in der lateinischen Poesie," *Gymnasium* 65 (1958) 152-53: "Galt in Rom die *vita activa* als der eigentlich wertvolle Inhalt des Lebens, so verkündeten jetzt die jungromischen Dichter den grösseren Wert der *vita otiosa*. . . . Catull jedenfalls machte sich zum Verkünder der nichtconventionellen Werte der *vita otiosa*."

Lesbia can bring this about, and the poem is Catullus' appeal for her love, it is his *Werbege-dicht*.²⁵

This is the most satisfactory conception of the unity of the poem, and it finds support in the poem's structure, in the arrangement of its parts. The two central stanzas describe the impact on the poet of Lesbia's appearance, and this can be seen as representative of his present state (note the present tense of the verbs), of total but unfulfilled love and infatuation. In this state the poet is *miser*. The first and last stanzas, which frame the center, suggest the possible results for the poet of the present situation. Either Lesbia will make him her lover and friend and thus raise him level with the gods (stanza one), or his present *otium*, fraught with unhappiness and frustration, may prove his ruin (stanza four).

We conclude, therefore: Poem 51 is a love poem to Lesbia. It is an expression of the poet's profound infatuation with her and of his adoration; it pays homage to the power of her charm and beauty, and it courts her love. It constitutes, in effect, a plea to her as to a goddess who holds the poet's fate in her hands: Grant me your love and thus bestow on me divine perfection and bliss, or else I may perish. And it also intimates: Grant me your love; I cannot wait forever, I ought not and can not go on like this much longer.

²⁵ Cf. J. Kroymann, "Zu Catull c. 51," *Festschrift für Fritz Sommer* (Berlin 1956) 21: "es bedarf keiner Versicherung, dass er sich die Erfüllung seiner Liebe wünscht" (but Kroymann does not explain the function of the *otium*-motif); Immisch (above, note 4) 12: "werben um seine Lesbia will er doch. . . . Sie ist doch vor allem, die das Blatt mit diesen Versen lesen soll" (but Immisch assigns stanza four to Lesbia); Bickel (above, note 4) writes of Catullus' *Werbege-dicht*, but does not consider stanza four compatible.