

Poem 51: Sappho and Otium

- Written in Sapphic metre
- Based on Sappho 31

Points

- Line 1
 - “deo” → if the one who watches Lesbia is a god, surely she too must be a goddess?
- Line 2
 - “superare divos” → addition to the Sapphic original, extending mastery of ‘ille’
- Line 3
 - “adversus” → suggestion of competition
 - “identidem” → shows Catullus’ obsessive watching and awe at the couple
 - “te” → placed at end of line, echoed again in lines 6, 9 and 11
- Lines 1-3
 - “ille [...] ille [...] qui” → triadic, anaphoric opening with asyndeton
- Line 4
 - “spectat et audit” → Catullus again adding to the original – Sappho only talked of ‘audit’
- Line 5
 - “ridentem misero” → oxymoronic juxtaposition, shows her laughter at the ‘other’s’ jokes filters directly into Catullus’ pain
- Lines 5-6
 - “dulce/eripit” → placement at start of line juxtaposes the pleasure and pain
- Lines 6-7
 - “mihi/nihil” → placed directly opposite across the line, evidence of resolution
- Line 8
 - “lingua sed torpet” → irony as Catullus then continues to speak about his feelings
- Line 9
 - “flamma demanant” → fire as liquid = synaesthetic confusion
 - “sonitu saepe” → plosive syllables mimics sound
- Line 10
 - “tintinant aures” → onomatopoeic
 - “gemina” → transferred to “nocte” (‘twofold night’) instead of “lumina” (‘two eyes’)
- Lines 8-11
 - “lingua [...] nocte” → total asyndeton
- Lines 12-15
 - “otium [...] otio [...] otium” → threefold end matches threefold start, also note anaphora and asyndeton
 - “molestum est [...] nimiumque [...] perdidit urbes” → negative connotations of leisure, Roman masculine outlook capping the Grecian, feminine tone of poem

Poem 72: Jupiter vs. Catullus, father/sons simile, and passion vs. value

- Written in elegiacs
- First half about the past; second half about the present
- Split into four couplets, there is a pattern: 1st is about Lesbia, 2nd about Catullus, 3rd about Lesbia, 4th about Catullus

Critics

- “[family simile] unique in ancient literature” – Fordyce
- “restraint that is one form of contempt” – Quinn on Catullus’ detachment

Points

- Line 1
 - “solum te nosse” → sibilance for anger
- Lines 1-2
 - “Catullus/Lesbia” → ironic closeness of their names, despite Catullus expressing hate
- Line 3
 - “amicam” → carries sense of a fleeting relationship, a loose thing
 - “tūm tē non tantū ut” → bitter plosives
- Line 4
 - “pater ut gnatos diligit et generos” → more plosives, but at odds with unconditional sense of simile
- Line 5
 - “nunc” → indicates abrupt shift to present
 - “nūnc tē/cōgnō/vī quā/rē ēt/si” → spondaic and despondent, marks move to analysis
- Lines 5-6
 - “impensius uror/vilior et levior” → direct correlation between two ideas set up by rhyme
- Line 7
 - “quis potis est, inquis?” → rhetorical question imagining Lesbia’s response
 - “inuria” → strong can be used of infidelity in marriage – amicitia language?
- Line 8
 - “amare magis [...] velle minus” → neat structure juxtaposing opposites
 - “bene velle” → amicitia language

Poem 75: Catullus’ mind is destroying itself as he can’t stop loving Lesbia

- Written in elegiacs
- Split into couplet halves, first detailing past, second detailing future

Points

- Line 1
 - “deducta” → used of marriage, to describe a man taking a woman as a bride
 - “tua [...] culpa” → Lesbia surrounded by her ‘crime’
- Line 2
 - “se [...] ipsa suo” → emphasis on the effect Lesbia has had on Catullus, heightened by juxtaposition of ‘ipsa/suo’
 - “perdidit” → strong verb highlights distress
 - “officio” → ‘amicitia’ language; carries expectation that his devotion would be reciprocated
- Line 3
 - “bene velle” → ‘amicitia’ language
- Line 4
 - “amar(e), omnia” → his love elides into her actions