

Catullus (8.6-19)

*“There and then were given us those joys, so many, so merry,
which you desired nor did my lady not desire. Bright for you, truly,
shone the days. Now she desires no more—no more should you
desire, poor madman, nor follow her who flees, nor live in misery,
but with resolved mind endure, be firm. Farewell, my mistress; now
Catullus is firm; he will not seek you nor ask you against your will.
But you will be sorry, when nobody in favor asked for. Ah, poor
wretch! What life is left for you? Who now will visit you? to whom
will you seem fair?”*

Gaius Valerius Catullus was born in 85 BCE in Verona to an equestrian-class family and died in 54 BCE in Rome. Catullus was a Roman poet whose works of love and hatred are considered to be one of the finest lyric poetry of Ancient Rome. (Catullus, 2020) Despite sharing conceptions of romantic poetry, Catullus' poetry can be associated with the origination of poetic scholarship. Other poets' work that he is aligned with is Gerard Manley Hopkins, T.S. Eliot, and Ezra Pound rather than works of the Romantics. **(Catullus - The poetry, 2020)**

This poem is written in Choliambic verse, this is a common style used in both Greek and Latin poetry in the classical period. The theme of this poem is heartbreak and how Catullus has been dumped by Lesbia, this poem is a Lesbia poem and is part of a collection of Lesbia poems. **(List of poems by Catullus, 2020)** Lesbia was the literary pseudonym used by the Roman poet Gaius Valerius Catullus to refer to his lover. Lesbia is the subject of 25 of Catullus' 116 surviving poems, and these display a wide range of emotions, ranging from tender love as seen in Catullus 5, and Catullus 7, to sadness and disappointment, shown in Catullus 72, and to bitter sarcasm seen in Catullus 8 following the often unsteady course of Catullus' relationship. **(Lesbia, 2020)**

In this passage, it is evident that Catullus has based it upon himself. As shown through the use of, us and my., 'There and then were given us those joys, so many, so merry, which you desired nor did my lady not desire.' In addition to this, when 'be firm' is used it acts as an exhortation and is an example of the imperatives style in this poem.

Catullus starts by discussing his situation and how everything is lost. In the third line of the poem, Catullus expounded on how the suns used to sparkle brilliantly on him, particularly when he was with his love, Lesbia. In the fifth line of the poem, he repeats a line he utilizes habitually when discussing his love, Lesbia: he cherished her like nobody else ever would. In the first section, Catullus informs the audience of what he's missing, we learn about his past joy, the happy times he's had with Lesbia, and the return of his love. In lines 4 and 7, the close similarity of lines 3 and 8 shows a weaker but not unnoticeable echo: related tones are put in similar positions in both of the lines. **(KHAN, 2020)** An essence of dramatisation can also be seen during the first section, the syntax does not dictate any strong pauses within the single verse. The reminiscence of the happy past is mirrored in the peaceful and unruffled flow of Catullus dialogue. **(KHAN, 2020)**

However, in the sixth line, he states how there were many significant delights and moments that Catulus had shared with Lesbia, 'There and then were given us those joys, so many, so merry, which you desired nor did my lady not desire'. Also, in the seventh line, he states that Lesbia did not want for the things that he wanted, 'Now she desires no more—no more should you desire, poor madman, nor follow her who flees, nor live in misery, but with resolved mind endure, be firm.' Lesbia lit up his days, yet the inclination was not shared between the two. As in the ninth line of the poem, Catullus makes it apparent that Lesbia did not want him anymore, 'Now she desires no more.'

Catullus says to himself that he can be strong and will no longer follow Lesbia, particularly because she wouldn't like to be with him anymore, 'Farewell, my mistress; now Catullus is firm; he will not seek you nor ask

you against your will.' He states what life is left for him now and again reminds himself that she no longer needs him. He ponders whom he will love and who will adore him consequently. He needs to know whom he will kiss. He reminds himself to be solid and firm, presently that he no longer has anybody to kiss or any lips to nibble.

He is clearly disheartened about the status of his relationship with Lesbia since their relationship no longer exists due to the situation that he has been dumped by Lesbia. Catullus cherished Lesbia in a way such as he could be the only one who ever loved and adored her. However, in lines 12 to lines 13, Catullus wished her goodbye and revealed that he will no longer look for her. He also thinks about what Lesbia will do when nobody requests her as their partner in the future, 'Ah, poor wretch! What life is left for you? Who now will visit you? to whom will you seem fair? Furthermore, Catullus insists he will not go after Lesbia, nor will he ask any favors of her, and he is sure that she will grieve when she finds herself alone. He goes onto elaborate the theme of heartbreak in the section with the questions and sketches a bleak, miserable picture of what the future holds for Lesbia if their separation proceeds to last a long time. **(KHAN, 2020)** In addition to this it can also be seen that Catullus's deep feelings show that he sees more to his relationship with Lesbia, it has not been appreciated that here too Catullus persists in seeing the affair as a sort of marriage: to break it off he has adopted the Roman legal form of "divortium per nuntium".

There is a clear structure in this passage that allows coherence and development of argument, this is evident through the following quote "In declaring that his obsession with Lesbia is over, he demonstrates that it is not, and the questions in 15-18 which are meant to be sarcastic and bitter come as curious and longing. The false closure of 11-12 casts its shadow even over the real concluding line, and makes us unsure of its finality; if Catullus could not stop before, how seriously do we take him now?" **(Fowler, D. P. 1989 'First Thoughts on Closure: Problems and Prospects' *Materiali e Discussioni* 22: 99: on Catullus 8)** Also, the

orderly and neat encased verses seem to reflect the poet's controlled emotion throughout this poem.

Referencing:

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