

Catullus 8.6-19

Catullus' *Miser* can be seen as presenting a narrative of the interaction between a written version of himself and a woman who had relations with him previously and the poem describes the affect the end of this had on the individuals involved, whether the Catullus referenced in the poem is actually Catullus as the poet or as a stand in for ease of writing.

If Catullus is writing about himself it allows for the flow of the poem to become more organic as it is likely he would have had an emotional connection involved in the styling and writing of the poem. The poem itself is written in a form of iambic, a term commonly attributed to the beat of the heart and it allows for a smooth flow, this usually manifests in the form of the Pentameter amongst early modern Poets, predominantly the Romantics.

Catullus uses a broken form of this and it helps to accentuate rhythm in certain sections whilst simultaneously weighting more dramatic parts with either an increase in beat or decrease dependant on what is being conveyed. This Broken iambic is predominant from lines nine to eighteen and the tempo could be said to be as set to the emotions of the subject the poet is mentioning.

*6 "Ibi illa multa cum iocosa fiebant,
quae tu volebas nec puella nolebat,
fulsere vere candidi tibi soles.*

*Nunc iam illa non vult: tu quoque impotens noli,
10 nec quae fugit sectare, nec miser vive,
sed obstinata mente perfer, obdura.
Vale puella, iam Catullus obdurat,
nec te requiret nec rogabit invitam.
At tu dolebis, cum rogaberis nulla.*

*15 Scelestas, vae te, quae tibi manet vita?
Quis nunc te adibit? cui videberis bella?
Quem nunc amabis? Cuius esse diceris?
Quem basiabis? Cui labella mordebis?
At tu, Catulle, destinatus obdura."*

(Cat. *Miser*. 8.6-19)

Starting with the sixth line Catullus' uses a vague description on an environment any person with a history in the matter of the heart would immediately understand, and that is "Where there, those many jokes used to happen" this place would be different for each listener or reader but would still convey the desired effect amongst the audience, rapt attention. As the location would be the main focal point for the audience's memories and allows each member to relate to the poet.

The seventh line addresses the perceived advances made by Catullus and is spoken in the second person as opposed to the third person the rest of the poem follows, "which you wanted she did not deny" it is fairly obvious to state that she did not deny his advances however it does not state whether she advocated this either.

The ninth line is where the broken iambic is first noticed significantly as the pace of the reading slows down dramatically as the poet takes the first position, that of a sad nature, "Now she does not want"; you also, powerless do not want" the slowing down of the tempo draws attention to the powerlessness of Catullus' in this section.

The tempo begins to return to its normal state although remains slow until further onto the poem, line ten begins to address the emotional state in relation to the individual. Beginning with Catullus "Neither follow she who flees, nor live miserably" this could indicate a few different outcomes, the one that is objectively more interesting to follow is that the woman wanted to elope and wanted to flee with Catullus' who refused, he did not follow but also as a result did not regret this choice and did not *live miserably*. This theme follows on till the end of line twelve.

At line thirteen the perspective shifts to the woman and again slows down "he will neither miss you, nor will he ask for you, unwilling" perhaps this highlights her mistake for fleeing or maybe she overestimated his emotions for her and now she is paying the price and is saddened by the fact that he did not follow as he was unwilling. The pace slowing down here is indicative of the slowing of a broken heart, perhaps that is why Catullus' uses the Broken iambic.

Line fifteen supports this train of thought "Wicked one, woe to you! What life remains for you?" As she has perhaps fled her previous life she has betrayed her family and whoever supported her and now she has no future to look forward to, it is worth noting that the poem also speeds up at this point taking an almost vengeful tone.

This continues into line sixteen where it addresses the futility of the earthly charms "To whom will you seem beautiful?" and line seventeen "who will you love now? Whose will you be said to be?" this is in accordance with the previous statements, now that she has fled and has nothing is there any sensible advantage to being with such a woman who has disgraced herself.

The broken iambic slows back down to normal in line eighteen to deliver a final blow to the woman in question this alternating speed from fast to slow creates a larger emphasis and thus a larger impact on the lines drawing attention to the scorn and or pity the audience may feel towards the woman.

Line nineteen returns to Catullus, who refused to leave "Obstinate, Endure" displaying the loyalty and integrity he might want to convey about himself, whilst he is hurt and saddened by the development he endures and has the strength to continue.

The poem seems to be covering an adolescent romantic drama that many citizens and people may relate to, perhaps not to the extent of the dramatization of the poem but enough that their emotions would be stirred by the words within the poem, as without the

emotional connection poems tend to not have as great an effect on the audience in question be they readers or listeners.

Bibliography

Catullus, Tibullus. *Catullus*. Translated by F. W. Cornish, J. P. Postgate, J. W. Mackail. Revised by G. P. Goold. Loeb Classical Library 6. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1913.

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