RE-FIGURING THE FEMININE VOICE: CATULLUS TRANSLATING SAPPHO[1]

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Sappho, writing at the origin of lyric poetry, occupies a central place in the development of subjectivity in the West. In her poetry, many have seen the birth of a lyric self, a singular "I" that also speaks as a generalized lyric subject.[2] Page duBois describes Sappho's crucial role in establishing individual lyric identity: "We see in the work of Sappho the very beginnings of this process, the construction of selfhood, of the fiction of subjectivity at its origins" (1995.6). In Sappho's most celebrated and most imitated poem, fragment 31, the lyric "I" seems to coincide with the moment of its own death. Fragment 31 is the only extant poem of Sappho that explicitly dramatizes desire for the beloved through a loss of voice that is associated with a kind of death. No poem of Sappho demonstrates more dramatically than fragment 31 the paradoxical relationship between the magical effects of song and the debilitating effects of erotic experience.[3] It is this paradox that seems to make Sappho's poetry, particularly fragment 31, perpetually translatable.[4]

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1 I wish to thank Eve Bannet for inviting me to deliver a paper in her session "Translating Cultures and The Cultures of Translation" at the conference of the International Society for the Study of European Ideas in Utrecht, The Netherlands, 1996.

2 In this context, see Gans 1981.33–43.

3 For discussions of Sappho 31, see: Snell 1931.71–90, Del Grande 1959.181–88, Koniaris 1968.173–86, Privitera 1969.37–80, Rydbeck 1969.161–66, West 1970.307–30, Devereux 1970.17–31, Marcovich 1972.19–32, McEvilley 1978.1–18, Robbins 1980.255–61, Race 1983.92–101, Burnett 1983.229–43, Rissman 1983.72–90, Carson 1986.12–17, Winkler 1990.178–80, Snyder 1991.10–14, Lidov 1993.503–35, duBois 1995.64–76, Williamson 1995.154–60.

4 See Prins 1996. Prins' study traces various English translations of fragment 31 from the seventeenth century to the present in order to focus on the historical and theoretical

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While numerous translations and imitations of fragment 31 have been attempted through the past 26 centuries, Catullus' poem 51 is often thought to come closest to the original. Although Sappho 31 and its translation, Catullus 51, may appear on a surface reading to "say" the same thing, Catullus' particular choice of words and word order in his translation transforms the meaning of the poem in significant ways. Although a number of important studies have compared the two poems, these studies have focussed either on the apparent incoherence between the first three stanzas and the famous *otium* stanza in the Catullus poem or on the ways the two poems reflect differently various aspects of oral and literate culture.[5] My own analysis will consider how Catullus' "translation" of Sappho's poem is shaped not only by his cultural distance from Sappho but also by his gender, in particular, by conceptions of masculinity prevalent in Roman culture. Although I will examine the significance of the last stanza, my discussion will be part of a larger argument about how Catullus' "reading" of Sappho's poem reflects a tradition of Roman moralizing discourses. I will also focus on the ways in which Catullus turns the Sapphic triangle of desire into a heteroerotic triangle and re-constructs Sappho's poem as an expression of male (poetic) desire.

As I have already mentioned, numerous poets through the ages, both male and female, have translated and imitated Sappho's fragment 31. One reason for discussing Catullus' particular contribution to this body of translation is that Catullus 51 is generally considered to come closest to Sappho's poem. For that reason, it demonstrates rather starkly the degree to which translation necessarily occurs as a consequence of particular cultural and discursive conditions. Both poems, as Paul Allen Miller has pointed out (1994.102), can only be understood as part of the "dialogical situation which constitutes their (particular) context of enunciation."

We may approach the different dialogical situations of the two poems by first noting that the narrative contexts of these poems differ in a crucial way. While both poems, at the outset, describe an erotic triangle, in Catullus' poem, the speaker is a male, named "Catullus," who appears to

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problems of translating Sappho. In analyzing a number of translations spanning four centuries, Prins examines the representations of Sappho's broken tongue and the various ways translators have tried to "recuperate voice from that break."

5 There have been a number of important studies comparing Sappho 31 and Catullus 51. See especially: Wormell 1966.187–201, Wills 1967.167–97, Lipking 1988.63–67, Warren 1989.206–10, O'Higgins 1990.156–67, Miller 1994.101–19, Janan 1994.71–6.

rival another male for the attentions and affections of a woman, named in the poem as "Lesbia." In Sappho's poem, however, the speaker and desiring subject is an unnamed woman who, at least on the surface, rivals a man for the affections of another unnamed woman. As he does in a number of his amatory poems, Catullus gives the name "Lesbia" to the speaker's object of desire. Most scholars agree that Lesbia refers to a woman named Clodia, generally thought to be either Clodia Metelli, a consul's wife, or one of her sisters. Since the name Clodia is metrically equivalent to the name "Lesbia," it could easily have been substituted for "Lesbia" if the manuscript circulated privately, as often was the case.[6] But a more important reason for the use of this particular pseudonym is that Lesbia is the Latin adjective denoting a woman from Lesbos, and, in the context of erotic poetry, this most certainly would refer to Sappho. While the figure of woman in Sappho's poem is both subject and object of desire, in Catullus' version of the poem, the woman named with an adjective that refers to Sappho is only in the position of object.[7] This inversion of subject positions in Catullus' poem raises questions about how subjectivity itself is figured in the two poems and, particularly, how a gendered subjectivity emerges in the process of reclaiming a poetic voice threatened by "erotic takeover."[8]

Although, in both poems, the impact of the beloved's presence puts the subjectivity of the speaker at risk, there are important differences in the way poetic voice is constituted in the two poems. In each poem, the speaker begins as an outside observer. As Eva Stehle points out, the role of the speaker as a mere *observer* corresponds with a lack of erotic effect: "the poem sharply distinguishes the narrator's unmoved gaze at the man in the opening two lines from the disruptive gaze at the woman."[9] The remoteness suggested by the speaker's position as an observer is reinforced by the image of "that man" as a god. The speaker elevates the man to god-like status because he can claim the beloved's attentions, but, more importantly, because he appears to remain miraculously unmoved in the presence of the desired woman.

In both poems, the man is unnamed and rapidly fades out of sight.

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6 Miller points out; "Lesbia is the metrical equivalent of Clodia, so that if Catullus chose to circulate a private manuscript, the actual name could easily have been substituted" (1994.102).

7 cf. Miller 1994.102.

8 Janan 1994.72.

9 See Eva Stehle's insightful article on Sappho's use of the erotic gaze: 1990.88–125.

In Catullus' translation, however, the figure of "that man" (*ille*) dominates the first stanza of the poem, whereas in Sappho's original, the man serves primarily to point up the contrast between the impassivity *he* exhibits and the speaker's highly charged emotional responses to the woman. Indeed, the opening phrase in Sappho's poem, φαίνεταί μοι ("it seems to me . . . "), focusses attention on the perceiver rather than the perceived and suggests that, from the beginning, the Sapphic speaker is primarily engaged with her own perceptions and imagination rather than with the presence of potential or actual rivals.

By contrast, Catullus begins his poem with the repetition of the third person pronoun *ille* in the emphatic position in the first and second lines. This not only changes the emphasis from the perceiver to the object of the speaker's looking, but, more importantly, suggests that the speaker's main focus of attention is not the object of desire, the woman, but the presence of another man. Indeed, Catullus' second line, *ille, si fas est, superare divos* ("that man, if it is right, [seems] to surpass the gods"), which has no analogue in Sappho's poem, reinforces the impression that the speaker is not so much preoccupied with his own erotic responses as he is concerned about the clashing modes of public and private discourses and experiences of the self. Like the Sapphic lover, Catullus' speaker compares the unnamed man to a god, but, in the second line, he extends the comparison by saying that the man is not only equal to a god, but, in fact, surpasses the gods. The elaboration of the equation into an inverted hierarchy in which "that man" is superior to the gods reinforces a mood of rivalry and competition between the man who can gaze at Lesbia without any disruptive effects and the wretched (*misero*) lover who cannot. Moreover, the phrase in the second line, *si fas est*, invokes a social and political context that is almost entirely absent from Sappho's poem. Although the Catullan speaker links himself, through his translation, to the Sapphic tradition of presenting *eros* as both disabling and disintegrating to the lover, he nonetheless situates the voice of the lover in relation to male public culture. The phrase, *si fas est*, not only diverts attention from the dramatic situation of erotic encounter, but also evokes the moral hierarchies and responsibilities associated with the socio-political order, an order from which Roman women were largely excluded.

Further, by giving so much prominence to the presence of "that man" and to the power *he* seems to have in contrast with the speaker, Catullus adds an important dimension to the situation of erotic triangulation envisioned in Sappho's original. In his book, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*,

René Girard outlines a system of power structured around the rivalry between two active members of an erotic triangle. Girard argues that the bond between two rivals in an erotic triangle is, most often, stronger than that between the lover and the beloved. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick observes in her discussion of male homosocial desire (1985.21–27), the triangles Girard traces are usually those that involve two males competing for a female. While Girard does not explicitly consider gender asymmetries in his analysis, his insights into the structures of power in the erotic triangle can nonetheless help to illuminate the ways in which "rivalry" between males "over" a woman may be understood in the context of male-dominated societies, societies in which, as Sedgwick points out, the distribution of power cannot be symmetrical.[10] Thus, if we apply Girard's formulation to the differentials of power between men and women, erotic triangles involving two males and a woman place men in primary relation to one another while the woman is merely the conduit for that relationship.

In Sappho's poem, the man and the exterior world in general are subordinated to the "sweet sound" and "lovely laughter" of the desired woman. The poem quickly turns away from the opening scene of heterosexual courtship to the speaker's intense engagement with her own emotional responses. In Catullus' poem, however, the world of *negotium*, that is, the masculine world of business and power politics, serves as a backdrop against which the speaker places his private passions. In other words, the primary relationship in the poem is not between the speaker and his beloved but between the speaker and "that man" (*ille*)—the figure that embodies not only the contingencies of the exterior world for the lover (as in Sappho's poem) but the pressures of *negotium* in general. The man who rivals the speaker for Lesbia's attentions is apparently able to withstand the temptations of *amor*. In the context of Roman culture, the fact that the man can gaze at Lesbia without any disruptive effects means that he is free to attend to his *officia*, his duties to the community. Thus his imperviousness

10 Thus Sedgwick writes: "Heidi Hartmann's definition of patriarchy in terms of relationships between men, in making the power relationships between men and women appear to be dependent on the power relationships between men and men, suggests that large-scale social structures are congruent with the male-male-female erotic triangles described most forcefully by Girard and articulated most thoughtfully by others. We can go further than that, to say that in any male-dominated society, there is a special relationship between male homosocial (*including* homosexual) desire and the structures for maintaining and transmitting patriarchal power" (1985.25).

to Lesbia's charms attests to his "manliness," his "scorn of death and pain," to put it in Ciceronian terms.[11] The contrast between "that man" and the miserable lover, then, represents a way for Catullus to explore not merely different responses to amatory experience, but, more importantly, the uncertainties of and anxieties about pursuing the erotic life in the context of a culture that values duty over private pleasure.

Indeed, the voice of the speaker in Catullus' poem vacillates between an awareness of public life and a total retreat into poetic images that seemingly express the emotional debilitation and disorder characteristic of the Sapphic lover. On the surface, the descriptions of the loss of voice and identity brought on by the sight of the beloved appear to be quite similar in the two poems. The Sapphic and Catullan lovers are both robbed of their faculties, both seem to experience a sense of dissolution and bodily fragmentation. In line 5 of both poems, the relative pronoun introduces a relative clause that effects a transition from the scene between the beloved and "that man" to the speaker's own emotional reactions. The *quod* in Catullus' poem appears to correspond to the τό in Sappho's poem. Indeed, the antecedent of the relative pronoun in both poems has been the focus of much debate among scholars. Does the word *which* refer back only to its immediate antecedent, the woman's laughter, or to an antecedent that includes also the man sitting opposite the woman, listening to the sound of her voice?

In comparing Catullus' translation to Sappho's original, the ambiguity of referentiality in the use of the relative pronoun has important implications concerning the prominence of "that man" in the two poems. In Sappho's poem, reading the laughter of the woman as the only antecedent of the relative pronoun creates an abrupt transition from sound to sight in line 7. In Catullus' poem, the problem of transition is obviated by the fact that the man (*ille*) not only listens to the woman but gazes at her as well. In line 4, the word *spectat* ("he gazes") is introduced in place of Sappho's second verb ἰσδάνει ("he sits"). Like "that man," the speaker in Catullus' poem also gazes at the woman. Thus we are made aware of a more direct contrast between the power of the other man to gaze and the weakness that overwhelms the speaker at a mere glance. In Sappho's poem, the connection between the relative clause and what precedes it remains ambiguous. As Prins remarks, "What τό means is less significant than how it functions

11 *Tusc*. 2.18.43: *munera duo sunt maxima mortis dolorisque contemptio.*

in the poem: it marks a decisive break that reduces 'he' and 'you' in stanza 1 to mere pretext . . ."[12] Likewise, Anne Burnett refers to the man (κῆνος) in the poem as "a faceless hypothesis" (1983.229–43).

Moreover, in Sappho's poem, the man loses definition in the indefinite relative pronoun ὅττις ("that man, whoever he is who . . ."), whereas, in Catullus' poem, the image of the man's distinct identity is sustained by the use of *qui* in line 3, which is in the same emphatic position as *ille* in the first two lines. The presence of the man, *qua* rival, persists in the contrast implicitly maintained throughout the poem between the man who can resist Lesbia's charms—and is thus a man in the Roman sense of not indulging in excessive emotion—and the speaker who cannot help giving into his unruly emotions, thereby becoming feminized.[13] In a number of the poems about Lesbia, the Catullan speaker admonishes himself for his overindulgence in pleasure and his attendant lack of moral resolve.[14] In those poems, he tells himself to stop behaving like a woman, that is to say, like a person incapable of resisting being victimized by feelings of love. And that is precisely what appears to happen to the speaker in poem 51—he, like the speaker in the Sappho poem, is robbed of his senses, as he tells us in lines 5–6.

In Sappho's poem, the speaker describes her collapse by cataloguing the dismemberment of her own body. While the Catullan speaker says that his wretched condition leads to *all* his senses being stolen from him, Sappho's speaker refers only to her separate body parts. "Is it not wonderful," Longinus says in his commentary on the poem, "how she summons at the same time soul, body, hearing, tongue, sight, colour, all as though they had wandered off apart from herself?" (*On the Sublime* 10.3). The Sapphic speaker describes herself as an agglomeration of fragmented, disparate parts that have "wandered off from herself." In narrating her loss

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12 Prins 1996. Like Prins, O'Higgins regards Sappho's use of τό as ambiguous: "Whether or not the ambiguity of the relative pronoun in l.5 is deliberate, it cannot be argued back into clarity; *to* glances cursorily back at all that precedes it—the entire series of images, impressions, and opinions" (1990.157 n. 4). See also Robbins 1980.255–61, for a discussion and bibliography on the antecedent of τό in Sappho 31.

13 In poem 8, the speaker's identification of "Catullus" as *impotens* reinforces an association between the lover "Catullus" and feminine powerlessness and emotionality. The voice of the speaker in poem 8 is presented as an antipode to the feminized voice of the abandoned lover. As Lawrence Lipking remarks, "when a man is abandoned, in fact, he feels like a woman" (1988.xix).

14 See in particular poems 8, 72, and 76.

of voice and sight, the humming in her ears, the sweat that holds her, and the shaking that grips her, the speaker uses impersonal syntactical constructions that suggest a lack of personal agency:[15] ὤς με φώναι- / σ᾽ οὐδ᾽ ἒν ἔτ᾽ εἴκει ("it is no longer possible for me to speak"), ὀππάτεσσι δ᾽ οὐδ᾽ ἒν ὄρημμ᾽ ("there is no sight in my eyes"), κὰδ᾽ δὲ μ᾽ ἴδρως ψῦχρος ἔχει ("cold sweat holds me"), τρόμος δὲ / παῖσαν ἄγρει ("trembling seizes me all over"). Further, when the speaker describes in line 6 the commotion in her heart, she seems to give her heart a separate existence by referring to it as "the heart in my breast" (καρδίαν ἐν στήθεσιν).[16] These constructions, using personal pronouns as either indirect or direct objects, point to a speaker who is the object rather than the subject of bodily sensation.

Furthermore, near the end of the poem, in lines 15–16, the speaker's declaration that she appears to herself to be little short of death (τεθνάκην δ᾽ ὀλίγω ᾽πιδεύης / φαίνομ᾽ ἔμ᾽ αὔτ[ᾳ) reinforces the sense of bodily alienation and fragmentation that seems to characterize the speaker's experience of self. Indeed, the four complete stanzas of the poem are framed by the verb "to seem" (φαίνεσθαι). The opening line, φαίνεταί μοι, refers to the man (κῆνος) as the object of the speaker's gaze, while, in stanza 4, the speaker uses the verb "seem" in the first person. *She* now becomes the object of her own gaze; her expression in lines 14–15, χλωροτέρα δὲ ποίας / ἔμμι ("I am paler than grass"), reinforces the sense in which the speaker sees herself as if from outside. She contemplates from a position of historical distance her own reactions to the presence of the beloved. The speaker's increased emotional control culminates in her ability not only to see herself but also to address herself in a voice of confident self-assertion. The speaker tells herself at the end that all her symptoms can be borne: ἀλλὰ πὰν τόλματον. The imperative tone of τόλματον reinforces the degree to which the voice of the speaker has undergone a change. Furthermore, as some have pointed out, τόλματον may mean "can or must be ventured" rather than "can be borne."[17] The Sapphic speaker then appears not only to have achieved some sort of

15 See Prins 1996 on this point.

16 The sense that the speaker's heart in Sappho's poem has a separate existence from her body as a whole may be compared to Homeric conceptions of the body. In this context, Snell's analysis of the image of the Homeric body is useful for an understanding of Sappho's images of dismemberment. See especially Snell's chapter, "Homer's View of Man," 1953.1–22.

17 See Wills 1967.190 on this point.

recovery, but also to have reconstituted herself out of the experience of erotic disintegration. Indeed, the word πάν in the last line seems to gather up the pieces of the body into an integral whole. It is the "I" that is produced in the process of re-collecting her disordered past that bestows on the speaker not only a reconstituted self, but also the confidence to venture, to dare to enter again the beloved's devastating, irresistible presence.

While the speaker in the Catullus poem also pictures himself robbed of his faculties, he does so in a way that is markedly different from the Sappho speaker. The Catullan speaker compresses all sensation into a totality of effect. In lines 5–7, he begins by telling us that *omnis / eripit sensus mihi* ("all senses have stolen from me") and that *nihil est super mi* ("nothing remains for me"). Although the speaker appears to imitate Sappho's description of emotional and bodily disintegration, the use of "all" and "nothing" in Catullus' version seems rather to suggest the persistence of an integral identity. In Sappho's poem, on the other hand, the self is systematically disfigured as it is broken down into its component parts. The most striking image of disfigurement in Sappho's poem is the image of the "broken tongue" that occurs at line 9. As several commentators have observed, Sappho heightens the effect of this image by creating a metrical hiatus between γλῶσσα and ἔαγε in which the two vowels coming together form "an awkward, dysphonious phrase" that dramatically represents a tongue literally and figuratively broken.[18]

The Catullan speaker, however, describes his physical symptoms, including his vocal rupture, in a way that suggests, at most, only partial disintegration. In the first place, he describes his tongue not as broken but as merely sluggish or numb (*lingua sed torpet* in line 9). While Sappho's speaker says in lines 9–10 that "at once a thin flame runs under my skin" (λέπτον / δ᾽ αὔτικα χρῷ πῦρ ὐπαδεδρόμηκεν), the Catullan speaker describes the fire as flowing down under his limbs (*tenuis sub artus / flamma demanat*). The change from "runs under" to "flows down" and the omission of the temporal adverb "at once" (αὔτικα) diminish the sense of urgency in the dislocation of self brought on by the sight of the beloved in the Sappho poem. Moreover, Catullus transforms into rhetorical figures

18 For illuminating discussions of the image of the "broken tongue" in Sappho's poem, see especially: O'Higgins 1990.156–67, duBois 1995.70, Prins 1996. O'Higgins sees the metrical irregularity in the hiatus as "deliberate, intended audially to reproduce the 'catch' in the poet's voice" (159).

Sappho's direct expressions of failure of both sight and sound. Sappho's speaker declares that "there is no sight in my eyes" and that "ears hum," whereas the Catullan speaker tells us that "ears ring with their own sound" (*sonitu suopte / tintinant aures*) and that "eyes are covered with a double night" (*gemina teguntur / lumina nocte*). Catullus' use of hyperbole in both these images, particularly his use of sound-play in *sonitu suopte*, not only calls attention to the self-conscious artistry of the poet, it also draws us away from the immediacy of an erotic encounter. The self-reflexiveness in the image of "ears ringing *with their own sound*" and the fact that a distinct obstruction to sight has closed over him in the image of the double night reinforce the way in which the speaker is cut off from the world, more absorbed in his own image-making than in the effect of the beloved's presence on him. Moreover, the sense that the speaker is isolated from the external reality of the beloved's presence is accentuated by the double meaning of *lumina* as both eyes and light. The double night—both internal and external to the speaker—suggests that the speaker's "disintegration" is caused not only by visual contact with the beloved, but by an encounter with an exterior world that threatens the speaker's erotic identity.

Sappho's images of disintegration, on the other hand, have an immediacy and vitality that constantly remind us of the unsettling effect that the beloved's presence has on the lover. While the narrator in Catullus' poem begins his description of his physical symptoms by saying that all senses are taken from him and that nothing remains in him, Sappho's narrator tells us that something (τό) has excited or stirred the heart in her breast. Moreover, the generalizing force in the use of the present subjunctive in line 7, ὡς γὰρ ἔς σ᾽ ἴδω ("whenever I see you"), creates a sense of atemporality in which the operations of the speaker's gaze evoke the repetition and regeneration of desire. Although the speaker in Sappho's poem describes herself as being "little short of death," the image of herself as "paler than grass" (χλωροτέρα δὲ ποίας) links the speaker to the natural world. In Greek, the adjective χλωρός is often used in relation to young shoots and also to the yellowish green band in the spectrum of the rainbow.[19] These images drawn from nature suggest not only rebirth but also the cycles of nature in general that may serve as a metaphor for the inevitable ups and downs of love. While desire has shattered the tongue of the narrator and brought her to a place near death, it has also engendered the

19 On the meaning of χλωρός in this poem, see Irwin 1974.65–67. See also Snyder 1991.13.

awareness of continuity, of the potential for the renewal of erotic experience through recollection. From the outset, the Sapphic narrator presents herself as being in a heightened state of sensual arousal, whereas Catullus' narrator describes himself as *devoid* of his faculties: *nihil est super mi*. Further, the historical specificity in naming his beloved and in describing his gaze in the past tense, *nam simul te, / Lesbia, aspexi* ("for as soon as I have seen you") implies a temporality that distances the speaker from the immediacy of erotic encounter and suggests that desire in the Catullus poem is neither completely debilitating for the speaker nor does it offer the potential for erotic renewal in the face of abandonment or separation.

Sappho's description of her narrator's dissolution corresponds with a breathless piling up of symptoms that goes on for nearly three stanzas. Despite the fact that the speaker is describing how *eros* has robbed her of her powers, of her very control over her bodily functions, she exhibits intense erotic power in the degree to which her senses are aroused by the sight of the beloved. Sappho's images of speechlessness, sweat, trembling, fire under the skin, and, in general, an overwhelming of the senses leading to near death suggest the completion and climax of the sexual act. Catullus' speaker, by contrast, condenses the description of his symptoms into one stanza, beginning with the image of his sluggish tongue and ending with the image of eyes covered with a double night.[20] Nothing in the speaker's description of his responses to Lesbia's presence evokes the vitality of an erotic encounter. Rather, the images in his description have a gloomy self-referentiality that emphasizes the way in which desire turns the speaker in on himself and separates him from the world of *negotium* evoked in the opening stanza.

In the last stanza of Catullus' poem, the voice of the speaker turns abruptly away from his interior world of poetic images and back toward male public culture. This fourth stanza, which has no equivalent in Sappho's original, has been the subject of much controversy.[21] The sudden shift from

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20 Indeed, Lipking contends that Catullus' poem thoroughly distorts Sappho's original "with his premature climax . . . a sort of poetess interruptus" (1988.65). Catullus' suppression of Sappho's fourth stanza leads, in Lipking's view, to a weak climax in his third stanza, which "can hardly substitute for the powerful accumulation of details—sweat, trembling, pallor, death—that precisely defines the original structure" (65).

21 See especially: Fredricksmeyer 1965.153–63, Woodman 1966.217–26, Frank 1968.233–39, Segal 1970.25–31, Copley 1974.25–37, Kinsey 1974.372–78, Itzkowitz 1983.129–34, Finamore 1984.11–19, Wiseman 1985.152–53, Vine 1992.251–58. For *otium* in Latin literature, see André 1966 and Laidlaw 1968.42–52.

the speaker's absorption in his disintegration to his apparent rejection of the erotic and imaginative life has led many scholars either to consider the fourth stanza spurious or to construct elaborate explanations of poetic unity. My reading of Catullus' departure from Sappho's original in this stanza will do neither. What seems to concern scholars most is the apparent lack of coherence between the debilitated voice of the speaker in stanza three and the voice of the speaker in the final stanza, a voice that seems to be identified with the very un-Sapphic concerns of politics and empire. These disjunctive voices, however, are entirely consistent with the multi-voiced *ego* presented in a number of Catullus' poems, particularly those about Lesbia. In the Lesbia poems, the speaker, typically, either addresses himself as "Catullus" in the second person or refers to himself in the third person.[22] The effect of this multi-voiced speaker is often to dramatize the conflict not only between "loving" and "hating" Lesbia, but also between what he knows to be "right"—according to Roman conceptions of duty and rationality—and what he feels. Moreover, as I have argued elsewhere,[23] this tension in Catullus' Lesbia poems is often expressed as a vacillation between "masculine" and "feminine" voices attached to the voice of the speaker and the voice identified as "Catullus." The voice of "feminine" helplessness and hysteria is shown to be in conflict with a "masculine" voice that the feminized male speaker calls up in himself in order to rescue himself from the debilitating effects of *amor*. I would thus argue that the last stanza of poem 51 is entirely consistent with Catullan themes of self-reproach, but, in addition, reveals the characteristically Catullan conflict between the demands of *negotium* and the attractions of the Sapphic vision for the poet/lover.

After describing the devastating effect of Lesbia on him and, in particular, how it seems to separate him from the outside world, the speaker then awakens suddenly as if from a bad dream and warns himself about the dangers of *otium*. *Otium* was considered to be in direct opposition to *negotium*; it constituted an antithesis to public life and meant living a life free from the burdens of official duties and responsibilities. More than that, *otium* is associated with the "frivolous," un-Roman pursuits of love and poetry.[24] It is thus, as Charles Segal points out (1970.25), both a mode of

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22 See Adler 1981 for a detailed discussion of the use of multiple speaking voices in Catullus' poetry.

23 See Greene 1995.

24 See Platter 1995.218–20. Platter rightly observes that "*Otium* creates a space both oppositional and imaginative within which the poet can rhetorically resist the ideological demands of Roman society for business and duty in their conventional sense" (218).

life and an aesthetic. The implication of the speaker's apparent repudiation of the erotic and imaginative life is that *otium* has caused him harm because it has led him to abandon not only his duties to the community but also his reason. The speaker's words in line 14, *otio exsultas nimiumque gestis* ("you revel in leisure and you desire excessively"), invoke Cicero's description (and implicit condemnation) of a man conquered by emotion.[25] Succumbing to private passions was considered not only "unmanly" but morally weak as well. Indeed, morality and "masculinity" are inextricable from one another as distinguishing features of "Romanness." As Catharine Edwards points out, "those who could not govern themselves, whose desires were uncontrollable, were thought to be unfit to rule the state" (1993.26). The capacity for self-regulation is crucial if one is to maintain *dignitas* or social standing—without which a Roman male could not negotiate *negotium*, the world of Roman politics and power relations. Thus the speaker's desire for Lesbia and his attendant ambivalence about pursuing the erotic life can only be understood in the context of a climate of Roman moralizing discourses.

The voice of the speaker in the last stanza is associated with the moralizing, "manly" voice of self-rebuke we see in many of Catullus' poems about Lesbia, while the figure named "Catullus" is implicitly identified with the world of the lover and the poet. Indulgence in *otium* is an indulgence in the pleasures of love and poetry, pleasures that the speaker seems both to relish and reject. The speaker implies in the last two lines of the poem that *otium* destroys the lover and poet in the same way that it causes the downfall of kings and "blessed cities." But this inapt comparison between lovers and kings, between poetry and empires, only points to the gulf between the public world of *negotium* and the private world of the lover. *Otium*, in fact, does not destroy the lover. Rather, it creates the conditions that make amatory experience and discourse possible. The speaker's passion—set against the world of kings and cities—links the world of the lover to the larger context of Roman politics and empire. The speaker may implicitly be expressing the hope here that an adherence to traditional Roman ideals will enable him to get over his irrational passion.

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25 Frank 1968 points out that Catullus' words *exsultas nimiumque gestis* closely parallel Cicero's description of a man overcome by emotions: *exsultans et temere gestiens* (*Tusc.* 5.6.16). Further, Frank argues that both Cicero and Lucretius condemn *amor* as a form of mental illness. "To a Roman," Frank writes, "anything destructive of *res*, *officia*, and *fama* must have seemed dangerous indeed" (235).

But if *otium* has no place in the world of empire, then neither does the lover or the poet. The speaker's concern about the potential dangers of *otium* may be regarded as an inquiry into the efficaciousness of living a life of passion and imagination in a culture that values *negotium* more than *otium* and that, at the same time, considers virtue coextensive with masculinity. The sense of fragmentation in the disjunctive voices of the speaker and of "Catullus" reminds us, at the end, not of the comparison between the nameless, powerful "other man" and the wretched lover, but of the speaker's own conflict in resolving the contradictions of desire and *dignitas*.

Unlike Catullus, Sappho dramatizes the debilitating effects of *eros* without recourse to moralizing discourses. There is no ambivalence for Sappho about the efficacy of love: the question is "how can it be tolerated, how can it be ventured?" "Bearing" or "venturing" the presence of the beloved while remaining intact is the central issue for the Sapphic lover. For the Catullan lover, the fragmentation that occurs through contact with the beloved is presented in the larger context of a self divided between the oppositional discourses of the private and public worlds. The attempt to master private feelings by gaining valorization from the public world simply has no analogue in Sappho's poem. For Sappho, the exterior world, embodied in her poem as "that man," represents the losses and contingencies that potentially threaten the world of the lovers. Although homosexual erotic relations among women in seventh-century Lesbos may have had an educational and social function, those relations were not linked to institutional structures of power.[26] The discursive position of even the most educated and cultured of women in the context of the male-dominated public sphere must surely have been *outside the center*, to use Teresa de Lauretis' expression.[27] It is precisely this position of eccentricity that allows the Sapphic lover to turn away from the figure of the other man and resolve

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26 See Cantarella 1992.83. In her study of the historical and cultural context of homosexuality in ancient Greece, Cantarella points to a sharp contrast between the social roles of male and female homosexual bonds. As Cantarella puts it: "But what symbolic and social significance could be attached to love between women? Sex between women takes place on an equal basis, it does not involve submission, it cannot symbolize the transmission of power (not even the power of generation, the only power held by women)" (83).

27 See de Lauretis 1990.115–50. de Lauretis argues that the desiring female subject represents "an eccentric discursive position outside the male . . . monopoly of power." See also Skinner 1993.125–44 for a discussion of the ways in which Sappho's position of marginality (as a woman) allows her to construct an alternative to the phallic representation of desire.

at the end of her poem to face the pain of erotic encounter. The power of the poet to keep desire alive, to renew in her imagination a continuing erotic affiliation, is what gives her declaration of endurance its impetus in the last surviving line of the poem.

For Catullus, on the other hand, desire itself is problematic; the issue of the lover's disintegration can only be construed in the context of larger concerns about the efficacy of *eros* in a world of empire—where endurance means resistance to the "unmanly" provocations of desire. Catullus' "translation" of Sappho's poem is not so much an attempt to protest the values of *negotium*, but rather to express his own inability to enter fully the mode of life and aesthetic represented in Sappho's world of feminine desire and imagination. If the name Lesbia alludes to Sappho, then it is certainly possible to regard "that man" in Catullus' poem as a signifier of the Roman masculinist values that separate the speaker from an object of desire that seems more literary than erotic. While, in Sappho's poem, the beloved's beauty evokes desire in the lover and leads to both a fragmentation and recuperation of lyric voice, in Catullus' poem, the speaker's tongue grows sluggish as he gazes at Lesbia, at a legacy of lyric passion that a world of *negotium* has made virtually untranslatable.

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