

CATULLUS, 55. 9-12¹

†avelte†, sic ipse flagitabam,
Camerium mihi, pessimae puellae.
quaedam inquit, nudum reduc. . . .
en hic in roseis latet papillis.

CATULLUS has been looking everywhere for his friend Camerius. In Pompey's arcade he has accosted all the girls who were hanging about there, but they have calmly disavowed knowledge of his friend's whereabouts. At line 9 Catullus breaks into a *flagitatio*,² the beginning of which is desperately corrupt: attempts to emend *avelte* have been made,³ but it seems more realistic to assume that *avelte* is the result of some corruption of *quas vultu* at the beginning of line 8 (with which it has four letters, *a v lt*, in common, and *e - - e* corresponding to *u - - u*), and that it has ousted the original beginning of line 9. In terms of a *flagitatio*—the girls are *pessimae* inasmuch as they are allegedly withholding what is Catullus' own, his friend, from him—the sort of word one expects is *redde* or *cedo*.⁴ Hence *reddatis*⁵ here, merely *exempli gratia*, would be one conceivable way of introducing the demand. (The ellipse of the imperatives *da* and *cedo* which Fordyce alludes to is a well-known feature of colloquial Latin,⁶ but it would be most unnatural in a *flagitatio* to omit the most significant and forceful word, the imperative claiming the return of Catullus' friend.)

ipse has caused difficulty: its meaning seems obviously 'alone',⁷ without the friends with whose assistance it was normal to conduct a *flagitatio*.⁸ Such an *ipse* is by no means otiose. An effect of mock pathos is produced: without Camerius Catullus is desolate. This is much more effective than Fordyce's 'actually' or the interpretations of Ellis, Baehrens, and Friedrich, substantially the same, of Catullus accosting the girls 'in person', instead of sending his *pedisequus* to do it.

Editors have demonstrated that supplements of line 11 involving *sinus* are not to be considered. Ellis's *nudum reducta pectus* is excellent, but not in the sense which he intended, 'with her bosom drawn back bare' (i.e. with her dress drawn back from her bosom so as to leave it bare). *nudum reducta pectus* would be a very odd and clumsy way of saying 'baring her bosom' in any Latin poem, let alone a colloquial one of this kind. However, besides meaning 'with her chest drawn back', 'with a hollow in her chest', as Fordyce translates, the phrase could more sympathetically be rendered 'with her naked bosom drawn apart'. The girl's bosom was already uncovered when Catullus came along. She was *en déshabillé* like the sort of girl Propertius hoped to pick up in the

¹ I am grateful to Professor R. G. Austin and Professor W. J. N. Rudd for their helpful scrutiny of this paper.

² See H. Usener, 'Italische Volksjustiz', *Rh. Mus.* lvi (1901), 1 ff. and, on this poem in particular, 21 = *Kl. Schriften* iv. 356-82, esp. 375.

³ e.g. 'avelli sinite' *ipse flagitabam* (Avantius), 'avertistis' *saepe fl.* (Riese).

⁴ Cf. 42. 11, 12, Plaut. *Most.* 603.

⁵ Equivalent to *reddite*, cf. 8. 1, 32. 7, 61. 95, etc.

⁶ See Hofmann, *Lat. Umgangsspr.*, p. 170.

⁷ See *T.L.L.* vii. 2. 334. 69 ff. for examples, and compare *Iliad*, 5. 880, etc., for the use of *αὐτός* in the same sense.

⁸ Cf. 42, where the poet's *hendecasyllabi* are summoned to perform this office for him.

theatre.¹ When subjected to the poet's *flagitatio* she poses with her breasts drawn apart, teasingly inviting Catullus to look there for his missing friend.

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¹ 2. 2. 28 'candida non tecto pectore si qua sedet', quoted but not utilized in this way by Kroll ad loc.