

OBSERVATIONS ON THE TEXT OF CATULLUS

Abstract: Several passages of Catullus are explained.

Keywords: Catullus, textual criticism.

Resumen: Se explican diversos pasajes de Catulo.

Palabras clave: Catulo, crítica textual.

29. 17-19:

*paterna prima lancinata sunt bona,
secunda praeda Pontica, inde tertia
Hibera, quam scit amnis aurifer Tagus.*

Lomax¹ argues that *amnis* is “superfluous”, and suggests that we should print line 19 as follows:

Hibera qua nitescit aurifer Tagus.

Textual alteration is, however, not warranted. The personified² river Tagus is said to know about the booty. For *amnis aurifer Tagus* cf. Ovid, *Met.* 2, 251: *quodque suo Tagus amne vehit, fluit ignibus aurum.*

63. 3-5:

*adiitque opaca silvis redimita loca deae
stimulatus ibi furenti rabie vagus animis
devolsit ili acuto sibi pondera silice*

line 4 *ibi* : *ubi* v.l. *animis* Lachmann : *animi* mss.

Lomax³ notes that scholars have been puzzled by the text of line 4. Perfect sense can be restored to this passage if we print the reading *animi* and translate as follows: “and goaded (*stimulatus*) he came to the forest, where (*ubi*) wandering (*vagus*) due to the raging madness of his mind (*furenti rabie* ... *animi*⁴) he cast down with sharp flint-stone the burden of his members.” In other words, Attis castrated himself.

¹ Cf. John M. Trappes-Lomax, *Catullus, A Textual Reappraisal*, Swansea 2007, page 88 f. I have used this very learned and informative monograph as the starting point of my research.

² For personification cf. my *Studies In The Text Of Propertius* (Athens 2002), page 157.

Cf. especially O.L.D., s.v. *amnis* “with proper names in apposition”.

³ *Op. cit.*, page 159.

⁴ Cf. Lewis-Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, s. v. *rabies* II: *animi... rabiem* (Cic. Tusc. 3.26.63).

63. 21-22:

*ubi cymbalum sonat vox, ubi tympana reboant,
tibicen ubi canit Phryx curvo grave calamo*

Lomax⁵ was puzzled by the epithet *curvo* in line 22, and suggested that this line forms part of an interpolation. It should, however, be noted that the epithet *curvo* suits the context. The Phrygian *tibia*⁶ was a straight tube of wood with a curved piece of horn or metal at the end.

63. 31-32:

*furibunda simul anhelans vaga vadit animam agens
comitata tympano Attis per opaca nemora dux,*

Lomax⁷ notes that *animam agens* usually means “expiring”. I would like to point out that perfect sense can be made of the transmitted text if we place a comma after *animam*, and translate as follows:

“Frenzied exhaling breath (*anhelans*⁸... *animam*), uncertain Attis wanders, attended by the timbrel, a guiding (*agens*) leader (*dux*) through the dark forests.”

63. 35-38:

*itaque, ut domum Cybebes tetigere lassulae,
nimio e labore somnum capiunt sine Cerere.
piger his labante languore oculos sopor operit;
abit in quiete molli rabidus furor animi.*

Lomax⁹ is puzzled by the expression *labante languore*. He states that “*labante* (‘tottering’) is a strikingly inappropriate epithet for overmastering sleep”, and argues that line 37 is an interpolation. It should be noted, however, that the transmitted text makes perfect sense. Catullus states that the *Gallae* sink into sleep because they are tired. We should translate as follows:

“a lazy slumber covered their eyes due to a sinking weariness (*labante*¹⁰ *languore*)”.

Thomson notes that “Catullus repeats the notion of drowsiness, in different phrases”¹¹.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, page 162.

⁶ Cf. Fordyce *ad loc.*, quoting Virgil, *Aen.* 11, 737 *curva ... tibia Bacchi*.

⁷ *Op. cit.*, page 163.

⁸ Cf. Lewis-Short, s.v. *anhelo* II: “Verb. act., to breathe out... *rabiem anhelare*, Luc. 6.92”.

⁹ *Op. cit.*, page 163.

¹⁰ Cf. Lucan 6, 93 (of dying persons): *inde labant populi*. For the comparison between sleep and death cf. *Mus. Phil. Lond.*, 9, 1992, page 49.

¹¹ Cf. my paper in Πλάτων vol. 55, 2006-2007, page 48 f.

63. 42-43:

*ibi Somnus excitum Attin fugiens citus abiit;
trepidante eum recepit dea Pasithea sinu.*

Lomax¹² notes that these lines refer to Pasithea and Somnus, who are “an old married couple”. He then suggests that we should accept Bentley’s alteration *tepidante*. I would like to point out, however, that the mss. reading *trepidante* makes perfect sense. Pasithea is said to receive Somnus “with anxious bosom” (*trepidante... sinu*)¹³. Note the use of adjectival *enallage*. Pasithea is anxious about her husband¹⁴.

63. 53-54:

*ut apud nivem et ferarum gelida stabula forem
et earum omnia adirem furibunda latibula,*

Lomax¹⁵ states that *furibunda* “would be a most unnatural epithet with *latibula*.” It should be noted, however, that Ellis pointed out that *furibunda* suits *latibula* “as sheltering lions and other fierce beasts of prey.” We are, in other words, faced with an example of adjectival *enallage*¹⁶. Cf. Horace, *Epist.* I, 10, 17 *furibundus* (*Leo*). Cf. also Virgil, *Aen.* 10, 723 ff. where maddening hunger (*vesana fames*) is said to drive a lion to seek prey.

63. 63-64:

*ego mulier, ego adolescens, ego ephebus, ego puer,
ego gymnasi fui flos, ego eram decus olei.*

Lomax¹⁷ was puzzled by the meaning of line 63. There is no awkward opposition of tenses (cf. Fordyce and already Ellis *ad loc.*), because we must put a query after *mulier*, the sense being: “Am I a woman? I was a stripling, a youth, a boy.”

The question “*Ego mulier?*” is paralleled by the other questions in lines 55, 58, 59, 60, 62, 69, 70, 72. Attis, who is seen by the poet as a masculine being (*excitum* 42, *tenerum* 88), doubts his own newly acquired feminine gender. Schuster’s punctuation seems to indicate that he had an inkling of the truth: he puts not a query, but a dash after the word *mulier*.

Note the ellipse of “praesentisch” *sum*, whereas “unpraesentisch” *fui* is not omitted (cf. Szantyr, *Lat. Synt.*, page 421).

¹² *Op. cit.*, page 164.

¹³ Cf. my *Studies*, page 164 and *Myrtia* 16, 2001, page 77 f. Cf. also Flower Smith’s note on Tibullus I, 3, 6 *maestos... sinus* and Fordyce *ad loc.* (*corde micante*).

¹⁴ The mss. reading *excitum* is correct, cf. Schuster’s apparatus *ad loc.*, and *tenerum* in line 88.

¹⁵ *Op. cit.*, page 165.

¹⁶ Cf. my *Studies*, page 164.

¹⁷ *Op. cit.*, page 166.

63. 74-75:

*roseis ut huic labellis sonitus (citus) abiit,
geminas deorum ad aures nova nuntia referens,*

Lomax¹⁸ was puzzled by the meaning of line 75. The plural *deorum*, which has perplexed scholars (cf. Fordyce *ad loc.*) designates Cybele: it is the *pluralis poeticus* of *deus* meaning “goddess”: cf. Lewis-Short, s. v. *deus* I, C, 1¹⁹.

63. 88

tenerumque vidit Attin prope marmora pelagi

marmorea pelago v. l.

Lomax²⁰ is puzzled by the meaning of the expression *marmora pelagi*, which he argues must be corrupt. I would like to suggest that *marmora*²¹ means here “statues”. It should be noted that the sea-deities had temples on the shore: cf. Fordyce *ad* Catullus 4.22 *litoralibus deis*²².

64. 52:

namque fluentisono prospectans litore Diae

Lomax²³ notes that *fluentisono* means “flowing-sounding” or “stream-sounding”. I would like to point out that this adjective refers to the fact that rivers were said to flow down to the sea²⁴. Note the use of adjectival *enallage*. The epithet *fluentisono* refers to the rivers rather than to the shore (*litore*) down to which the rivers flow²⁵.

64. 89-90:

*quales Eurotae praecingunt flumina myrtus
aurave distinctos educit verna colores,*

¹⁸ *Op. cit.*, page 168.

¹⁹ For another example of the *pluralis poeticus* cf. Giangrande, *Veleia* 23, 2006, page 394, note 2.

²⁰ *Op. cit.*, page 170.

²¹ Cf. Lewis-Short, s. v. *marmor* II, B, 1: “marble statue”. Cf. also Ovid, *Met.* 7, 790 *duo marmora campo* (“two marble images on the plain”).

²² *Marmora pelago* suggests statues in the water of the sea shore. *Marmora pelagi*, on the other hand,

could mean *marmoreum pelagus*: cf. Virgil, *Aen.* 6, 729 *marmoreo... sub aequore* and G. Giangrande, *saxa columnae, vina soporis* (*Veleia* 23, 2006, page 416).

²³ *Op. cit.*, page 176.

²⁴ Cf. my *Studies*, pages 26 and 72. Cf. also my *New Chapters In Hellenistic Poetry* (Athens 1996), page 12.

²⁵ Lomax argues that *fluctisonus* cannot be applied to the shore, to which only an epithet like *fluctisonus* could refer.

In these lines Ariadne is compared to myrtle growing by the Spartan river Eurotas. Lomax²⁶ was puzzled by the fact that Catullus refers here to myrtles. I would like to point out that the myrtle²⁷ was sacred to Venus. Moreover, brides are compared to flowers at Catullus 61.22 (*myrtus*) and 89 (*hyacinthus*). Ariadne was loved by Bacchus, who placed her crown as a constellation in the heavens. Cf. my *Studies*, page 111 where I point out that at Manilius 5, 253 ff. the constellation known as Ariadne's crown is connected with garlands of flowers. We may therefore conclude that the reference to myrtle and to other flowers suits the context.

64. 110-111:

*sic domito saevum prostravit corpore Theseus
nequiquam vanis iactantem cornua ventis.*

Lomax²⁸ notes that scholars have been puzzled by the meaning of *saevum*. I would like to suggest that *saevum*²⁹ is an adverb meaning “fiercely”, “furiously”. Theseus³⁰ fought against the monster, and laid it low “fiercely”.

64. 136-137:

*nullane res potuit crudelis flectere mentis
consilium?*

Lomax³¹ notes that the reading *crudelis flectere mentis* is found in R2. He points out that “we may reasonably assume that good R2 variants are ancient”: cf. page 17. There is therefore no reason why we should print the alteration *crudele*, as Lomax conjectures, rather than *crudelis*, which may well be the original reading.

64. 187:

omnia sunt deserta, ostentant omnia letum

Lomax³² states that Ariadne is the only human creature on the island, and that everything “threatens” death. He therefore suggests the alteration *intentant omnia letum*, and compares Virgil, *Aen.* I, 91 *praesentemque viris intentant omnia mortem*. Textual alteration is, however, not warranted,

²⁶ *Op. cit.*, page 179 f.

²⁷ Cf. Lewis-Short, s.v. *Myrtea*: “the goddess to whom the myrtle is sacred, i.e. Venus.” Cf. also *Culex* 400 *Spartica myrtus*.

²⁸ *Op. cit.*, page 182.

²⁹ Cf. Lewis-Short, s. v. *saevus* II, B: “Adv., in three forms, *saeve*, *saeviter*... and *saevum*”.

³⁰ Cf. Virgil, *Aen.* I, 458 *saevum... Achillem*. Cf. also Stat. *Theb.* 3, 589 *saevum* = “cruelly”.

³¹ *Op. cit.*, page 185.

³² *Op. cit.*, page 190.

since *ostento* can mean “threaten”: cf. Lewis-Short, s. v. *ostento* II, D: “To hold out in a threatening manner; to threaten.” Cf. also O.L.D. s. v. *ostento* (7).

64. 259-260:

*pars obscura cavis celebrabant orgia cistis,
orgia quae frustra cupiunt audire profani;*

Lomax³³ was perplexed by the meaning of these lines. Textual alteration is, however, not necessary. We are faced here with an example of *falsa anaphora*³⁴. Thus *orgia* means “sacred objects” in line 259, and “mysteries” in line 260. The sacred objects were concealed in boxes, whereas the mysteries (*orgia*) were accompanied by wild Bacchanalian cries³⁵.

64. 281-282:

*quos propter fluminis undas
aura parit flores tepidi fecunda Favoni*

Lomax³⁶ notes that scholars have been puzzled by the meaning of line 282. Textual alteration is, however, not necessary. Catullus refers here to the breath of the personified³⁷ West wind. Translate as follows:

“the flowers that near the river’s stream the fruitful breath of warm Favonius produces (*parit*)”.

64. 357-360:

*testis erit magnis virtutibus unda Scamandri,
quae passim rapido diffunditur Hellesponto,
cuius iter caesis angustans corporum acervis
alta tepefaciet permixta flumina caede.*

Lomax³⁸ is puzzled by the text of line 359. Textual alteration is, however, not warranted. Catullus has employed adjectival *enallage*. Cf. Lewis-Short, s. v. *caedo* B, 1, b: “In poet. hypallage: *caesi corporum acervi*: (for *caesorum*), Cat. 64, 359.”

³³ *Op. cit.*, page 194 f.

³⁴ For *falsa anaphora* cf. my *Studies*, page 163.

³⁵ Cf. Lewis-Short, s. v. *orgia*. The poet states that the profane desire in vain to hear the mysteries. He means that they are not allowed to take part in the noisy religious rites.

³⁶ *Op. cit.*, page 197.

³⁷ Cf. my *Studies*, page 157.

For the fruitful nature of *Favonius* (= *Zephyrus*) cf. my *New Chapters In Hellenistic Poetry*, page 37.

Cf. Also Lucretius 1, 11 *genitabilis aura favoni*.

Conclusion: Lomax, together with Housman and Courtney whom he quotes, are wrong. The reading *parit* is correct, cf. Ovid, *Ars Amat.* 3, 185, quoted by Schuster.

³⁸ *Op. cit.*, page 201 f.

Note also the use of adjectival *enallage* in line 357. The water of the Scamander will witness noble deeds of valour (*magnis virtutibus*). Catullus is referring to the fact that Achilles was noble (*magnus*)³⁹.

Conclusion. Trappes-Lomax's systematic "reappraisal" is a meritorious and welcome re-examination of the problems presented by the text of Catullus. I hope I have shown that such problems can be solved in the light of our knowledge of the poet's *Sprachgebrauch*.

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³⁹ Cf. Virg. *Ecl.* 4, 36. On *testis* of a river witnessing a hero's exploits cf. Fordyce *ad loc.*