PAIDEIA

rivista di filologia, ermeneutica e critica letteraria

FONDATA DA
V. PISANI e G. SCARPAT

Estratto da

«Paideia» LXXIII - 2018

Pars tertia (III/III)

EDITRICE STILGRAF
CESENA

BIBLIOTECA MALATESTIANA

CATULLUS IN NEW ZEALAND POETRY: BAXTER, STEAD, AND JACKSON READ CATULLUS, POEM 11

Abstract

This paper examines the Catullan adaptations of three New Zealand poets, James Baxter, Karl Stead, and Anna Jackson. Each composed one or more sequences in imitation or emulation of Catullus. These are discussed here principally by way of a focus on their responses to the imagery of Catull. 11.

Keywords: Catullus; reception; English poetry; Latin poetry; Sappho; Mimnermus.

1. Catullus in New Zealand

«Simple, sensuous and passionate». So Swinburne on Catullus, attributing to the Roman those qualities by which Milton characterised poetry itself[1]. The reader partial to the erudite intricacies of *doctus Catullus* may well find Swinburne's assessment an odd one[2]. But in the reception of Catullus, from antiquity to the present in all its twists and turns, a preference for the love poet who sings in lucid, accessible verses has predominated: here was poetry into which one could easily read oneself. This has been especially true in the traditions of English poetry[3]. Hence Catullus' broad appeal, beloved by Tennyson no less than Pound, by Frost no less than Yeats. For the Romantics, Catullus gave classical cover to subversion and hedonism. Poets in the twentieth century, too, whatever their professed affiliations or critical doctrines, could view Catullus as, like themselves, rebellious and antibourgeois. For English readers,

1 T.L. MEYERS, *The Uncollected Letters of Algernon Charles Swinburne, vol. 3: 1890-1909*, London 2004, p. 72.

2 *Doctus Catullus*: *e.g.* Hor. *sat.* 1,10,19; Tib. 3,6,41; Ov. *am.* 3,9,62; Mart. 7,99,7; 8,73,8.

3 B. ARKINS, *The Modern Reception of Catullus*, in Marilyn B. SKINNER (ed. by), *A Companion to Catullus*, Oxford 2007, pp. 462-478; Julia Haig GAISSER, *Catullus*, Oxford 2009, pp. 166-221; H. STEAD, *A Cockney Catullus: The Reception of Catullus in Romantic Britain, 1795-1821*, Oxford 2015.

it seems, Catullus is always and persistently *modern*, collapsing and conflating past and present. Much has been invested in what David Wray describes as «the stratagem of making Catullus into our man in Rome»[4].

What has proved true of English literature comprehensively is true also of English literature in New Zealand. Here, too, Catullus attracts and influences. But here there are wrinkles. New Zealand is a bicultural society, the twin elements of which are Māori, New Zealanders descended from the country's indigenous Polynesian inhabitants, and non-Māori New Zealanders, who are collected, in no very systematic way, under the headings of Pākehā or tauiwi. Although the dominant language in New Zealand is English, the relationship between New Zealand culture and European culture is anything but a simple one and remains a contestable one. No nation lies so far from Europe as New Zealand, and the country's Asian-Pacific situation is crucial to its modern identity[5]. In this context, the status of a classical poet, however modern he comes across, cannot be straightforward.

Classical culture none the less sustains a profound, if sometimes controversial, presence in many aspects of New Zealand society. The subject is a large one[6]. Here it must suffice to observe how the literatures of Greece and Rome have, since the arrival of Europeans in New Zealand, been put to very different uses by New Zealand's writers. Although New Zealanders have instinctively turned to ancient paradigms when reflecting on profound subjects like the nation's trauma during wartime, and although variations on the sentiments of Catullus 101 are ubiquitous in New Zealand's cemeteries and war memorials[7], the appearance of clas-

4 D. WRAY, *Catullus and the Poetics of Roman Manhood*, Cambridge, 2001, p. 129. See also STEAD, *Cockney Catullus*, cit. n. 3, p. 7, for the Romantic view of Catullus as a kind of contemporary.

5 Useful introductions include J. BELICH, *Making Peoples: A History of the New Zealanders from Polynesian Settlement to the end of the Nineteenth Century*, Auckland, 1996; Claudia ORANGE, *An Illustrated History of the Treaty of Waitangi*, Wellington 2004; J. BELICH, *Paradise Reforged: A History of the New Zealanders from the 1880s to the year 2000*, Auckland 2001.

6 The essential starting point is now S. PERRIS, *Introduction*, in Diana BURTON, S. PERRIS, and J. TATUM, (ed. by), *Athens to Aotearoa: Greece and Rome in New Zealand Literature and Society*, Wellington 2017, pp. 9-47.

7 See, *e.g.*, M. TRUNDLE, *The Reception of the Classical Tradition in New Zealand War Reporting and Memory in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*, in BURTON, PERRIS, and TATUM, *Athens to Aotearoa*, cit. n. 6, pp. 313-325. On Catull. 101, see G.G. BIONDI, *Il carme 101 di Catullo*, «Lingua e stile» 11, 1976, pp. 409-425.

sical references in literature has sometimes signalled not unity but cultural competition.

From its origins to the present day New Zealand society has valued its egalitarian principles, one manifestation of which occasionally resides in a censorious reaction, even on the part of New Zealand's literary set, to displays of high culture, a symptom of what is locally denominated the Tall Poppy Syndrome[8]. The disadvantage for classical learning represented by this disposition is obvious. Still, for some writers, especially early writers in New Zealand, classical erudition signalled a kind of Britishness to be embraced or rejected or challenged depending on a writer's attitude toward the fashioning of a distinctively New Zealand literary identity. The significance of this issue in New Zealand's literary history can hardly be exaggerated. Indeed, what kind of literature New Zealanders ought to write, or whether there ought to be an identifiably New Zealand brand of literature at all, were factious issues during the twentieth century[9]. This was a culture war in which classical learning was often a site of fierce contention[10].

Still, classical literature in New Zealand is far more than a kind of code for a kind of Britishness. Classical allusions and imitations, because they can be viewed as a means of inscribing one's work into a tradition not of European literature but of Literature full stop, offer some writers a rich, highly suggestive substance out of which to fashion characters

8 PERRIS, *Introduction*, cit. n. 6, pp. 28-30 (assembling further references). Especially important on this issue is Lydia WEVERS, *The Politics of Culture*, in M. WILLIAMS (ed. by), *Writing at the Edge of the Universe*, Christchurch 2004, pp. 109-122. See, too, Anna SMAILL, *Balance and Awkwardness: Personal Poetry in Britain and New Zealand*, in P. ROBINSON (ed. by), *The Oxford Handbook on Contemporary British and Irish Poetry*, Oxford 2013, pp. 596-614.

9 On the early trajectories and controversies of New Zealand English literature, see P. EVANS, *The Penguin History of New Zealand Literature*, London, 1990; S. MURRAY, *Never a Soul at Home: New Zealand Literary Nationalism and the 1930s*, Wellington, 1998, and the relevant chapters in T. STURM (ed. by), *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English*, 2nd ed., Oxford, 1998 and M. WILLIAMS (ed. by), *A History of New Zealand Literature*, Cambridge 2016; R. HORROCKS, *When the Mode of Music Changes*, «Journal of New Zealand Literature» 34, 2016, pp. 33-60, is also useful. An excellent sense of the issues at stake can be got from the polemical essays of three important poets: J.K. BAXTER, *James K. Baxter as Critic*, ed. by F. MCKAY, Auckland 1978; C.K. STEAD, *From Wystan to Carlos: Modern and Modernism in Recent New Zealand Poetry*, in ID., *In the Glass Case; Essays on New Zealand Literature*, Auckland 1981, pp. 139-159; B. MANHIRE, *Doubtful Sounds: Essays and Interviews*, Wellington 1999.

10 See, for instance, G. MILES, J. DAVIDSON, and P. MILLAR, *The Snake-Haired Muse: James K. Baxter and Classical Myth*, Wellington 2011, pp.15-39.

engaged in dialogues or complaints that help to render New Zealand society part of a larger and cosmopolitan world. Witi Ihimaera, for instance, appropriates Aeschylus' *Oresteia* in his novel *The Dream Swimmer* as a vehicle for exploring the lasting harm done in a single Māori family by the depredations of New Zealand's colonial past. There Greek myth is not an expression of unwelcome European hegemony but a fully integrated, indeed indispensible facet of Ihimaera's artistic expression of generational sacrifice and pain. By contrast, in his collection of poems, *Star Waka*, Robert Sullivan interrogates the possibility of discovering any real identity between Greek and Māori gods in the national mythology only to reject it, instead installing both traditions into a single universe in which Polynesian culture seizes priority[11].

Catullus, perhaps because he *is* deemed simple, sensuous and passionate, or perhaps because he is so readily taken to be modern, already countercultural in important respects, has attracted little controversy in New Zealand despite his presence in the classical canon. He has perhaps signalled a different order of literary tradition, for it is not only in the Latin syllabus that Catullus is important. Many Modernist poets – and especially Ezra Pound – deeply admired Catullus[12]. Catullus, on this view, exhibits polished technique, an impressive degree of learning, and a talent for reinvigorating classical models. And he makes an impression: «Catullus has the intensity», as Pound put it[13]. In short, Catullus is, from the perspective of an ambitious writer with Modernist inclinations, instantly employable in the making of good writing. And yet, and this is surely another aspect of his appeal, Catullus is anything but easy. «No one», Pound insisted in 1942, «has succeeded in translating Catullus into English»[14]. For more than a few twentieth century poets in New Zealand, both Modernists and poets writing in reaction to Modernism, here was an endorsement, and a challenge, that was difficult to ignore[15]. Emulousness, quite naturally, supervened.

11 On the operations of classical literature in New Zealand society, see further the essays in BURTON, PERRIS, and TATUM, *Athens to Aotearoa*, cit. n. 6.

12 ARKINS, *Catullus*, cit. n. 3, pp. 466-470.

13 E. POUND, *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907-1941*, New York 1950, p. 87.

14 E. POUND, *Selected Prose of Ezra Pound, 1909-1965*, New York 1973, p. 324.

15 Modernism was both influential and problematic in twentieth century New Zealand poetry: e.g. M. WILLIAMS, *Literary Scholarship, Criticism, and Theory*, in STURM, *The Oxford History*

2. Baxter, Stead, and Jackson

In this paper, I examine closely a few features of the compositions of three New Zealand poets – James Baxter, Karl Stead, and Anna Jackson – whose work exhibits an extended and robust reaction to Catullus. I do so by looking closely at how each of these poets adapts, rewrites, and reconceptualises the famous simile of the plough and the flower in Catullus 11. In a subsequent paper (see note 52), by way of altering the perspective and opening the aperture a bit, I look at the programmatic poems in the Catullan collections of each poet. I try to consider how these poems operate within their own volumes and to what extent they are animated by the poetics of Catullus' programmatic pieces.

The collocation of these poets is not entirely coincidental: Stead's Catullus, as we shall see, is in important ways influenced by Baxter's[16], and Jackson signals Stead's Catullus as an important inspiration for her work[17]. From that perspective, at least, we have in these poets a tradition of New Zealand poetry that spans more than one generation. Still, there is always something slightly artificial about lining up a sequence of poets for close scrutiny. And this artificiality, it may be felt, is exacerbated when these writers are examined almost solely on the basis of the dialogue between their verses and the Catullan poems on which they are, in some sense, modelled. This is a worry I disregard here – in the hope that this exercise may result in a good critical haul. A good haul, but not a comprehensive one – there is too much poetry involved for that – which means that our observations here must necessarily be provisional. First, however, introductions.

James K. Baxter (1926-1972) was a poet, playwright, and critic. He remains one of New Zealand's most admired writers and an important influence on New Zealand literature. Baxter attended Otago University

of New Zealand Literature, cit. n. 9, pp. 695-736; H. RICKETTS and M. WILLIAMS, *From Hiruharama to Hataitai: The Domestication of New Zealand Poetry, 1972–1990*, in WILLIAMS, *A History of New Zealand Literature*, cit. n. 9, pp. 227-245.

16 According to Stead, «Baxter's there somewhere in the background, I suppose, but quite well back», cited in S. HARRISON, *Catullus in New Zealand: Baxter and Stead*, in ID., *Living Classics: Greece and Rome in Contemporary Poetry in English*, Oxford 2009, p. 310.

17 Anna JACKSON, *Catullus in the Playground*, in HARRISON, *Living Classics*, cit. n. 16, p. 85.

in 1944, where he studied Latin, though with little success. By the end of the year, although Baxter had withdrawn from university studies, he published his first volume of poetry, *Beyond the Palisades*, which attracted critical acclaim[18]. Baxter worked in various, sometimes menial, jobs for the remainder of his life, yet remained a prolific writer. An eclectic reader, Baxter's poetry reflects his interest in classical and Romantic – and especially Modernist – literature. In 1953 Baxter enrolled at Victoria University of Wellington, where he studied Greek art, history, and literature. Again, he failed to complete a degree. An activist as well as a writer, in 1969 Burns founded Jerusalem, a commune organised on the basis of his view of the spiritual values of Māori life. He quit Jerusalem for Auckland in 1972, in which year he died unexpectedly of a coronary thrombosis[19].

C.K. Stead (1932-) is one of New Zealand's leading literary figures. He is a successful novelist, poet, essayist, and critic. Educated at the University of Auckland, Stead completed his Ph.D. at the University of Bristol. He is now Professor Emeritus of English at the University of Auckland. Stead established himself as a major critic with *The New Poetic: Yeats to Eliot* (London 1964), a seminal study of Modernism. Stead's poetry began to appear in the 1950s and in 1964 he published his first volume of poems, *Whether the Will Is Free: Poems 1954-62*. Like Baxter, Stead is a prolific writer. And an honoured one. In 1984 he received a CBE for his services to literature. This was followed by the Queen's Medal in 1990, and in 2007 he was awarded the Order of New Zealand. Stead is a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, and from 2015 to 2017 he was New Zealand's Poet Laureate[20].

Anna Jackson (1967-) enjoys a rising reputation in the New Zealand literary scene. Educated at the University of Auckland, she took her D.Phil. at Oxford. Jackson is an expert in Victorian literature and in young adult fiction, and currently she is Associate Professor of English at Victoria University of Wellington. Her first volume of poetry, *The Long Road to Teatime*, appeared in 2000. Several more volumes have followed. Her work is routinely nominated for literary prizes, and in 2015 she received the prestigious Katherine Mansfield Menton Fellowship.

18 J.K. BAXTER, *Beyond the Palisade*, Christchurch 1944.

19 The standard biography of Baxter is F. MCKAY, *The Life of James K. Baxter*, Auckland 1990.

20 Judith Dell PANNY, *Plume of Bees: A Literary Biography of C.K. Stead*, Auckland 2009 is a useful biography of Stead.

3. Flowers

a. Catullus, Poem 11

Critics, especially but not exclusively critics inclined toward a biographical reading of Catullus' poetry, routinely see in Poem 11 Catullus' final repudiation of Lesbia:

> Furi et Aureli, comites Catullis,
> sive in extremos penetrabit Indos,
> litus ut longe resonante Eoa
> tunditur unda,
>
> sive in Hyrcanos Arabasve molles,
> seu Sagas sagittiferosque Parthos,
> sive quae septemgeminus colorat
> aequora Nilus,
>
> sive trans altas gradietur Alpes,
> Caesaris visens monimenta magni,
> Gallicum Rhenum, †horribilesque† ulti-
> mosque Britannos,
>
> omnia haec, quaecumque feret voluntas
> caelitum, temptare simul parati
> pauca nuntiate meae puellae
> non bona dicta.
>
> cum suis vivat valeatque moechis,
> quos simul complexa tenet trecentos,
> nullum amans vere, sed identidem omnium
> ilia rumpens:
>
> nec meum respectet, ut ante, amorem,
> qui illius culpa cecidit velut prati
> ultimi flos, praeter eunte postquam
> tactus aratrost.

> Furius and Aurelius, Catullus' comrades, whether he makes his way into farthest India, where the shore is beaten by a far-resounding eastern wave, or to the Hyrcanians, or to the effeminate Arabs, or to the Sythians and the Parthians with quivers, or the flat delta which the sevenfold Nile colours, or even should he tramp across the steep Alps, viewing the monuments of great Caesar, the Gallic Rhine, or the uncultured Britons, most distant of men – ready as you are to join me in all these things, whatever the will of the heavenly race may bring, take this short message, extremely unkind words, to my girl. Tell her to live and be well with her adulterous lovers, whom she embraces three hundred at a time, loving none of them truly, but again and again busting the groins of them all. Tell her not to look for my love, as before, which through her fault lies fallen like a flower at a field's edge when it has been nicked by a passing plough.

The complexities of this piece need not detain us here, but a few general observations are pertinent[21]. The poem begins with a survey of the reach of Rome's power and imperialist ambitions, an expansive and dangerous terrain in which Furius and Aurelius boldly promise to join Catullus wherever he seeks to go. The diction is epic, the style grand, and the atmosphere is masculine and companionable. The poet, however, asks of Furius and Aurelius only that they deliver Lesbia a harsh message on his behalf. The register then changes from epic to iambic and Lesbia is savagely dismissed as a cold creature driven by a fierce, enormous sexual appetite. These aspersions suddenly, perhaps surprisingly, give way to a more lyric strain in a now famous simile. Few images from ancient literature can match these lines in their poignancy and pathos. The flower of Catullus' love, having been carelessly, indeed, impersonally nicked by a passing plough, droops and dies. The variegation in style and tone that marks this poem, as well as its range of topics - imperialism and Roman politics; love and death; gender and identity; genre and literary tradition; style and language – render it a challenge for any reader and certainly for poets seeking to adapt or appropriate it for purposes of their own.

b. Baxter, The Flower

Baxter's sequence, *Words to Lay a Strong Ghost, after Catullus*, appeared in *Runes*, a posthumously published collection of poems Baxter was arranging at the time of his death[22]. Baxter began writing about Pyrrha, as he denominates his beloved, during his tenure as the Robert Burns Fellow at the University of Otago, a postion he held in 1966 and 1967. Pyrrha is Baxter's pseudonym for Jane Aylward, a medical student

21 Useful starting points include: E.A. FREDRICKSMEYER, *Method and interpretation: Catullus 11*, «Helios» 20, 1993, pp. 89-105; W. FITZGERALD, *Catullan Provocations: Lyric Poetry and the Drama of Position*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1995, pp.179-184; Ellen GREENE, *Catullus, Caesar and Roman masculine identity*, «Antichthon» 40, 2006, pp. 49-64; M.C.J. PUTNAM, *Catullus 11: The Ironies of Integrity*, in Julia Haig GAISSER (ed. by), *Oxford Readings in Classical Studies: Catullus*, Oxford 2007, pp. 87-106.

22 J.K. BAXTER, *Runes*, Oxford, 1973; cfr. W.H. OLIVER, *James K. Baxter: A Portrait*, Wellington 1983, p. 117; MCKAY, *James K. Baxter*, cit. n. 19, pp. 222-223. Classicists discussing Baxter's Catullus include J. DAVIDSON, *Catullus, Horace and Baxter*, «Islands: A New Zealand Quarterly of Arts and Letters» 5, 1976, pp. 86-94; FITZGERALD, *Catullan Provocations*, cit. n. 21, pp. 222-225; HARRISON, *Catullus in New Zealand*, cit. n. 16, pp. 295-323.

whom Baxter tutored in Latin and with whom he had an unsuccessful love affair in 1947[23]. During his years as the Burns Fellow, Baxter, a writer already well read in classical literature, frequently discussed poetry with Kenneth Quinn, who at the time was Professor of Classics at Otago and a leading figure in the study of Catullus[24].

In 1968 Baxter supplied biographically inclined readers with an account of Pyrrha's genesis:

> So I came down to Dunedin. The first year I wrestled with the ghost of an ancient mistress who came back to haunt me, and I got a number of written lectures and some grim, dry poems out of the encounter[25].

It appears, however, that Baxter had been preoccupied with Catullus as a vehicle for the poetic expression of unrequited love for some time before taking up his fellowship at Otago. In an omnibus review from 1960 Baxter furnished a one paragraph assessment of *The Solitudes, and other poems* by Ronald Duncan, a minor Modernist poet better known as a librettist, playwright, and memoirist[26]. Baxter's interest in Duncan's volume is patent. Indeed, he gives it more space than he does Ezra Pound's *Thrones, cantos 96-109 de los cantares* or Ted Hugh's *Lupercal*, each of which was also noticed in the same omnibus review:

> Mr Duncan has tried to imitate Catullus. Sincerity, accuracy, an intensely personal note, in these poems provoked by a love-affair, do not wholly balance the lack of formal unity. Nor is Mr Duncan's bitch-goddess ever as real as her archetype, Lesbia. Yet he writes with dramatic effect; and contrives in one poem to introduce four-letter words without smashing the pattern of argument – in itself, a rare enough feat[27].

It is evidence of Baxter's acumen that he observes how Duncan's sequence fails to achieve any kind of organic unity. In fact, Duncan's poems were not originally composed as a sequence, and their ultimate

23 MCKAY, *James K. Baxter*, cit. n. 19, pp. 95-97. Baxter takes the name Pyrrha not from Catullus but from Hor. *carm.* 1,5, which is the model for his poem *The Change-Over*.

24 Baxter's friendship with Quinn: MCKAY, *James K. Baxter*, cit. n. 19, p. 223.

25 J.K. BAXTER, *The Complete Prose*, vol. 2, ed. J. Weir, Wellington 2015, p. 615.

26 R. DUNCAN, *The Solitudes, and other poems*, London 1960. Baxter's omnibus review: J.K. BAXTER, *The Complete Prose*, vol. 1, ed. J. WEIR, Wellington 2015, pp. 427-428, originally published in «New Zealand Literature» 11, November 1960, p. 14.

27 BAXTER, *The Complete Prose*, vol. 1, cit. n. 26, p. 428.

arrangement owes a good deal to the editorial intervention of T.S. Eliot (the volume was published by Faber and Faber)[28]. The most striking aspect of Baxter's review, however, is its stunning discrepancy with the actual subject matter of Duncan's poems. Duncan's collection does *not* explicitly adduce Catullus as its model – nor, in any obvious way, does it actually adapt Catullus' poetry. Duncan's poems do, however, convey the psychological despair of a passionate, if somewhat ugly, failed love affair, and it is obvious that Baxter was predisposed to detect, even in the absence of any true evidence, the presence of Catullus and Lesbia in Duncan's very personal, very tormented poems. And he persisted in reading them as *Catullan* poems. As we shall see, unmistakeable aspects of Duncan's poetry are carried over into Baxter's sequence.

Baxter deploys Catullus' simile in *The Flower*, the penultimate poem in his sequence. Here the poet is directly addressing his beloved years after their affair has ended. Looking at himself now, he sees:

– a forty-year-old baby
Crying out for a lost nurse

Who never cared much. The principle
That should have made me tick went early
Half underground, as at the paddock's edge
You'll see in winter some flower

(Let's say a dandelion)
Go under the farmer's boots
Like a faded sun
Cut with a spade.

Baxter's image, like Catullus', is agricultural. Catullus' meadow (*pratum*) becomes, in good New Zealand parlance, a *paddock*. The introduction of a native word is, in a sense, a very Catullan act, if we can believe Quintilian that *ploxenum* (Catull. 97,6, referring to the body of a carriage) is a word he transplanted to Rome from his native Transpadane (Quint. 1,5,8). Bill Manhire has perceptively described Baxter as a «code-switcher», and that is more than casually the case in this instance[29]. True, *paddock* is more natural in New Zealand, even now, than

28 D.C. Lane, *The Poetry of Ronald Duncan*, University of Plymouth dissertation, Plymouth 1996, pp. 72-74.

29 Manhire, *Doubtful Sounds*, cit. n. 9, p. 18.

is *meadow*. But in the 1960s these two words were the focus, in literary New Zealand, of a controversy involving Margaret Mahy's children's story, *The Lion in the Meadow*, first published in 1956. Why, her New Zealand critics demanded, had she preferred *that* word?[30] *Paddock*, it was clear, carried the charge of local literary authenticity, and its presence here is a distinctly marked one.

Baxter, we can conclude, was a close reader of commentaries. In what for him was still the standard reference in English, Ellis' 1889 commentary[31], Baxter learned that Catullus almost certainly based his image on a simile in Sappho:

> οἴαν τὰν ὐάκινθον ἐν ὤρεσι ποίμενες ἄνδρες
> πόσσι καταστείβοισι, χάμαι δέ τε πόρφυρον
> ἄνθος …
>
> like the hyacinth in the mountains which the shepherds tread underfoot, and on the ground the purple flower …[32]

The local and Latin prism for Catullus' refraction of Sappho's image – translating her pastoral hyacinth into a Roman farmland flower – is also noted in the commentaries available to Baxter. The passage routinely adduced is Festus 363M:

> tam perit quam extrema faba in proverbio est, quod ea plerumque aut proteritur aut decerpitur a praetereuntibus
>
> There is a proverbial saying, «it perished just like an outermost bean». This is because that bean is often trod underfoot or plucked by passers by.

Whether or not Catullus knew this homely proverb, and there is no reason to believe he did not, it is clear that critics like Ellis and Kroll perceived in this folksy saying an expression relevant to his adaptation of Sappho[33].

30 See, further, Anna JACKSON, *From Meadow to Paddock: Children's and Young Adult Literature*, in WILLIAMS, *A History of New Zealand Literature*, cit. n. 9, p. 348.

31 R. ELLIS, *A Commentary on Catullus*, Oxford 1889, p. 43; so, also, K. QUINN, *Catullus: An Interpretation*, London 1971, p. 161.

32 Sapph. fr. 105c in D.A. CAMPBELL, *Greek Lyric*, *vol. 1: Sappho and Alcaeus*, Cambridge, Mass., 1982; cfr. Verg. *Aen*. 9,435-436; Hom. *Iliad* 8,308-310; Stesich. *Geryoneis*, fr. 15 in D.A. CAMPBELL, *Greek Lyric*, *vol. 2: Steisichorus, Ibycus, Simonides, and Others*, Cambridge, Mass., 1991.

33 ELLIS, *A Commentary*, cit. n. 31, p. 43; W. KROLL, *Catull*, Stuttgart 1959, p. 26.

And so Baxter, like Catullus before him, domesticates a simile from a classical author. Baxter makes it obvious that he knows what he is doing in shaping his poem's image by abandoning Catullus' plough and restoring Sappho's treading feet, a form of conflation that supplies the reader with a guide to its literary pedigree by way of a technique modern critics sometimes call a window-reference. But in Baxter these are a farmer's feet, not a shepherd's, and Baxter's introduction of a spade acknowledges the original implement of his Catullan model. Baxter also adds a bit of metapoetic commentary, almost a signal to his reader to look again at his two principal literary sources. Sappho's flower is specifically a hyacinth, but Catullus' *flos* is any flower or blossom. Baxter correctly renders Catullus' *flos* – «some flower» – but immediately, following Sappho though only so far, allows it to be not any flower but a dandelion, a weed.

And because it is a weed, the orientation of Catullus' simile is significantly altered. In this poem, Baxter has not merely recovered Sappho's treading feet: he fills them, in a sense. The *principle* that has been crushed by the farmer's boots is still alive and must be dug out. This is a very different conception of lost love from the one we find in Catull. 11. There the plough, obviously associated with Lesbia, indifferently destroys the (passive) flower of Catullus' love: Catullus is thus the victim. Baxter's Catullus, although he remains a kind of victim, is never the less the agent who cannot quite kill the weed that is his old passion for Pyrrha.

These final lines of the poet's final address to Pyrrha, freighted as they are with classical references, also draw on what for Baxter was a contemporary source, Duncan's *The Solitudes, and other poems*. The relationship is an obvious one:

> Oh! Whose hand can hold the spade
> And sow our eyes into each others hearts again
> till the ghost we are, is laid? (*Strophe and Anti-Strophe at Bakerloo*)[34]

Here we can spy something of the origins of Baxter's formulation for his haunting by Pyrrha. And this passage makes clear how much desperation is signified by Baxter when he takes up his spade. Still, it must be noted, in turning to Duncan for the imagery of these lines, Baxter does not, on his own view, abandon his classicising perspective. Dun-

34 DUNCAN, *The Solitudes*, cit. n. 26, p. 56.

can's sequence, after all, is Catullan – at least according to Baxter's very personal reading of it.

c. *Stead,* The Clodian Songbook, *poem 7*

We turn now to Karl Stead, whose appropriation of Catullus has, since 1979, been a continual feature of his work[35]. Stead, unlike Baxter, reads Catullus in translation[36]. In *The Clodian Songbook*, poem 7, Stead, like Baxter, supplies his readers with a thoroughly domesticated rendition of Poem 11, a version rendered unmistakeably local through its references to Air New Zealand, rugby, and Masport mowers («proudly designed and engineered in New Zealand», as their publicity still puts it). At the same time, this poem rehearses many of the principal elements of its Catullan model. The remarkable variation in stylistic registers – epic, iambic, lyric – that characterises Catullus' poem, however, is absent here. Stead has eliminated the variegation of his original, ironing out Catullus' elevations and depressions:

> Air new Zealand
> old friend of Catullus
> you offer a quick hike
> to Disneyland
> the South Pole
> Hong Kong's hotspots
> to ease a jealous ache.
>
> Thanks brother
> but I'd rather
> you flew downcountry a message to Clodia.
>
> Tell her she's known to her 200 loveless lovers
> as the scrum machine.
> Tell her
> Catullus loves her
> as the lone lawn daisy
> loves
> the Masport mower.

35 C.K. STEAD, *Walking Westward*, Auckland 1979; C.K. STEAD, *Geographies*, Auckland 1982; C.K. STEAD, *Between*, Auckland 1988; C.K. STEAD, *Straw into Gold: Poems New and Selected*, Auckland 1997; C.K. STEAD, *The Yellow Buoy, Poems 2007-2012*, Auckland 2013. The most extensive discussions of Stead's Catullan poems are PANNY, *Plume of Bees*, cit. n. 20, pp. 112-22 and Maxine LEWIS, *C.K. Stead Writes Catullus: Persona, Intention, Intertext and Allusion*, in BURTON, PERRIS, and TATUM, *Athens to Aotearoa*, cit. n. 6, pp. 245-266.

36 C.K. STEAD, *Shelf Life: Reviews, Replies and Reminiscences*, Auckland, 2016, p. 288.

Discrepancies of a different order operate here. Addressing Air New Zealand as an «old friend» seems strange – this is a business and not a pal – but is perhaps not entirely unnatural if we imagine our speaker as a middle class frequent flyer comfortable in corporate relationships[37]. Stead's Catullus names three destinations that are on offer: Disneyland, the South Pole, and Hong Kong. The first and third are obvious commercial attractions, though for very different reasons. Disneyland is for families, or, more precisely, for children. The hotspots of Hong Kong offer diversions of an entirely different kind. One destination looks to Asia, the other to America, and neither is a «quick hop» in any sense. Still, each is easily accessible for comfortable, suburban professionals in New Zealand, and the atmosphere of this poem, neither soldierly nor heroic, activates a tension between ancient and modern adventuring. Here we have to do with tourism, not military conquest. Still, even if Stead's destinations are not epic choices, they are sufficiently far-flung to mark a contrast with the poet's final instruction to the airline, which is to make a trip *downcountry*.

Stead's reference to the South Pole, however, shatters the suggestion of consolation conjured by Air New Zealand's friendly offer. In a service which commenced in 1977, Air New Zealand routinely carried sightseers over Antarctica. But on 29 November 1979 there was a terrible crash, known in New Zealand as the Mt Erebus disaster, the deadliest loss of life in peacetime for New Zealanders. This shocking event left a deep national wound. As James Brown put it, in his *The Poem that Took the Place of a Mountain*:

> Some New Zealanders
> can remember
> exactly where they were
> that evening – like folks with
> Elvis, Lennon, JFK –

Investigations into this accident were protracted and led to lasting legal controversy and public outrage, much of it directed against Air

37 Critics often describe Stead's poetry as middle class in manner and orientation: *e.g.* A. RIACH, *'Physician of Society': the Poet in the 1950s and 1960s*, in WILLIAMS, *A History of New Zealand Literature*, cit. n. 9, p. 216. This quality, at least with respect to his Catullan sequences, marks a divergence from Baxter's steadfast hostility to suburban New Zealand: *e.g.* RIACH, *'Physician of Society'*, cit. *supra*, p. 227; V. O'SULLIVAN, *Urgently Creating a Past: Remarks on James K. Baxter*, in K. SINGH (ed. by), *The Writer's Sense of the Past: Essays on Southeast Asian and Australasian Literature*, Singapore 1987, p. 95.

New Zealand. In the end, the airline issued a formal apology for its failures in the Mt Erebus disaster and its aftermath on 23 October 2009. The ordeal of coming to terms with the Mt Erebus disaster, still very much unfinished business in New Zealand, damaged the public's confidence in the courts, the government, and in national institutions. In the contemporary history of New Zealand, it marked out «the advent of a new era»[38].

The obtrusion of the Mt Erebus disaster into New Zealand poetry was inevitable, and in 1982, in his collection *Solo Flight*, Bill Sewell included a poem entitled *Pearse at Mt Erebus*. In 1999 he published a longer and more serious work, *Erebus: A Poem*. Brown's poem, adduced above, appeared in his 1995 collection, *Go Round Power Please*, and Bill Manhire's *Lifted*, published in 2005, included *Erebus Voices*[39].

Stead's Catullus, of course, does *not* talk about the Mt Erebus disaster. But he unavoidably locates it on Air New Zealand's holiday map. The reference is anything but subtle for New Zealand readers. Setting an allusion to the Mt Erebus disaster in parallel with Disneyworld perhaps borders on poor taste, but this reference must also be read against the geography of Catull. 11, the locales of which are unspeakably dangerous and, in the case of Caesar's European campaigns, sites of imperialist genocide[40]. Seen from this perspective, the deadly crash and the official and corporate lapses that supervened can appear apt comparanda. Indeed, the pertinence of Stead's reference is enhanced by a political debate in New Zealand, which preceded the Mt Erebus disaster, that tended to link New Zealand's cooperation with American activities in the Antarctic with an imperialist urge inappropriate to New Zealand society[41]. Stead's geography, then, re-enacts at least some of the darker features of Catullus'.

38 Quotation from BELICH, *Paradise Reforged*, cit. n. 5, p. 391; see P. HOLMES, *Daughters of Erebus*, Auckland 2011.

39 See B. SEWELL, *Solo Flight*, Dunedin 1982; J. BROWN, *Go Round Power Please*, Wellington 1996; B. SEWELL, *Erebus: A Poem*, Christchurch 1999; B. MANHIRE, *Lifted*, Wellington 2005.

40 A.J. WOODMAN, *From Poetry to History: Selected Papers*, Oxford 2012, pp. 18-21.

41 See the detailed discussion by Katie PICKLES, *Southern outreach: New Zealand claims Antarctica from the 'heroic era' to the twenty-first century*, in Katie PICKLES and Catharine COLEBORNE (ed. by), *New Zealand's Empire*, Manchester 2016, pp. 229-244.

Catullus describes his message for Lesbia as *non bona dicta*, «extremely unkind words» (in Latin, litotes frequently, as here, adds emphasis). The expression can also mean something along the lines of «not well put», as if the invective to follow is not exactly what the poet means to say, a confession that perhaps prepares the reader for the immediate transition to vulgar abuse or, again perhaps, prepares the reader for the disturbing inconcinnity between the outrage of Catullus' invective and the tender pathos of his closing image. Catullus' variation in tone, however, is dropped by Stead.

Instead, he reorients Catullus' vituperative farewell. For Catullus, Lesbia is a mankiller who loves no one (Catull. 11,19-20). Stead's Catullus, however, is unconcerned with *Clodia's* feelings. Admittedly *loveless* in Stead's version could just indicate that Clodia's lovers are unloved by her, but the focalisation of these lines concentrates our attention on the lovers' point of view. They see her as a *scrum machine*, a metal framework that gets pushed around the paddock during training (this is done by piling on either side of the frame, one gang supplying ballast while the other practises scrummaging). Not only does this image convey an unmistakeable lack of affection, it hardly signals sex. This point of view, aggressively masculine in its tenor, tends to converge the perspectives of Stead's Catullus and Clodia's lovers: they are all of them men and all of them, in one way or another, looking at her. And they all see her as a kind of tool, one more dangerous than the other.

This brings us to Stead's daisy. In recasting Catullus' simile, it is obvious, Stead also has Baxter's version in view. Here, however, instead of the agricultural setting in Catull. 11 or *The Flower*, we find ourselves in a suburban garden, a landscape following naturally from the middle class geography of the poem's opening. Baxter's dandelion is now a daisy on the lawn. The gendering that marks Catull. 11 (though not *The Flower*) is preserved: Clodia is like a Masport mower and Stead's Catullus is associated with a vulnerable flower. But, once again, the focalisation is altered and this blurs the sharply contrasting gender roles that mark Catullus' simile. By rendering this simile's *love* a verb (in Catullus and Baxter we find nouns: *amorem* and *principle*), Stead lends his doomed daisy a clear measure of agency – and defiance. This daisy is less a symbol of this Catullus' love than it is a means for conveying the powerful «jealous ache» that animates his outburst here. *That* is how *he* loves Clodia.

How Catullus loved Lesbia is an important theme in his poetry. No woman, he claims, has been loved as Lesbia has been loved by Catullus (Catull. 8,5; 37,12; 87,1-2), a unique and metaphysical quality of affection he labours to describe – sometimes by employing the language of covenant and treaty (Catull. 76; 87; 109), sometimes the language of masculine friendship (Catull. 72; 75)[42]. This has not changed in Poem 11. Indeed, that is what lends its final lines such pathos. Stead's poem concludes on a drastically different note. Of course the daisy in the garden does *not* love the lawnmower, not in any sublime way anyway, and the Catullus of this poem is sending Clodia a message so utterly sarcastic that it comes very close to being simply one more insult in a row between a bickering suburban couple – and nothing like a lyric lover's *cri de coeur*.

d. Jackson, [To Caelius Rufus] *and* No rough verses

Jackson, like Stead, reads Catullus in translation. As she puts it, «The Catullus I have encountered has always been someone else's Catullus»[43]. Her engagement with the poet's reception, although it looks so far back as the English renaissance, does not fail to take notice of New Zealand poetry. Stead's Catullan collections, she remarks, «first gave me a Catullus I could feel at home with»[44]. In 2003 Jackson published *Catullus for Children*, an adaptation of Catullus that did not merely translate the Roman poet into a New Zealand idiom but actually brought him into her household, «into my own life and the lives of my children», as Jackson has described it[45].

I, Clodia, which Jackson published in 2014, is a very different collection. Here the speaker of every poem is Clodia Metelli. It is a premise of the work that she is the flesh and bone addressee of Catullus' Lesbia cycle[46]. Jackson's Clodia is a poet, and another premise of *I, Clodia* is

42 *E.g.* R.O.A.M. LYNE, *The Latin Love Poets from Catullus to Horace*, Oxford 1980, pp. 24-41; W.J. TATUM, *Friendship, Politics, and Literature in Catullus: Poems 1, 65 and 66, 116*, in GAISSER, *Oxford Readings*, cit. n. 21, pp. 374-379.

43 JACKSON, *Catullus in the Playground*, cit. n. 17, p. 84.

44 Anna JACKSON, *I, Clodia, and other portraits*, Auckland 2014, p. 68.

45 JACKSON, *Catullus in the Playground*, cit. n. 17, p. 84.

46 T.P. WISEMAN, *Catullus and His World: A Reappraisal*, Cambridge, 1985, pp. 211-245, supplies a selective survey of literary adaptations of Clodia.

that between its covers a reader finds, not Clodia's actual verses but instead «translations of the lost originals by an imaginary translator»[47]. Jackson's Clodia, then, is very much another rewriting of Catullus and the poems of Catullus, refracted, in highly interesting ways, through Catullus' Lesbia, who in this collection struggles with the effect of the poet on her historical and her literary identity[48].

Let us return to Catullus' flower simile. Catull. 11 is not for kids. Unsurprisingly, it does not make its way into *Catullus for Children*. As for *I, Clodia*, the poem could hardly fail to make an appearance there. Jackson, however, does not reprise Catullus' simile so closely as do Baxter and Stead, for the very natural reason that Clodia must see things differently. Clodia also and unsurprisingly writes differently from Catullus, finding a different Greek model for the expression of her passions, passions which, although they diverge from Catullus' construction of them, are not altogether foreign to his essential portrayal of Lesbia.

In the world of *I, Clodia*, it appears, Furius and Aurelius do their part. They deliver their message. Catull. 11, of course, is not a private communication, and Clodia responds with a poem of her own, addressed, not to Catullus – after all, Catull. 11 was not addressed to her – but to one of Catullus' rivals.

Jackson, *[To Caelius Rufus]*

So there are verses about me circulating about the city.
At least they keep a pretty metre.
Campaigning against them
would be like campaigning against blossoms falling in the spring –
lean over? Let me brush a petal off your hair.

Here Clodia is cool, but hardly cold, and she concedes the technical excellence of Catull. 11 («a pretty metre»). As for that poem's expansive imperialist geography, she leaves it aside, marking her awareness of it by way of a double reference to *campaigning*. Instead, she concentrates on Catull. 11,16-20. The hyperbole and obscenity of those lines are understandably ignored. But their essential thrust does not go unnoticed.

47 Anna JACKSON, *'I, Clodia': I Had a Dream I Was a Ghost*, in BURTON, PERRIS, and TATUM, *Athens to Aotearoa*, cit. n. 6, p. 103.

48 Maxine LEWIS, *Anna Jackson's I, Clodia: Catullus, women's voices, and feminist implications*, «Classical Receptions Journal» 10, 2018, pp. 127-48.

Catullus, in dismissing Lesbia, instructed her to keep on carrying on (Catull. 11,16: *cum suis vivat valeatque moechis*). With these words, as we have seen, he appeared to mark the end of their affair[49]. But in doing so he inevitably marked the beginning of affairs yet to come – for Lesbia – if, indeed, she was the kind of woman he portrayed her as being in Catull. 11. And Jackson's Clodia seems prepared to play that part, by way of her own take on Catullus' love poetry.

Vivat at Catull. 11,16 sends Clodia back to Catull. 5, the poem that famously begins:

> vivamus, mea Lesbia, atque amemus.
>
> Let us live, my Lesbia, and let us love.

This same poem proceeds to discredit any solicitude about sexual sporting stimulated by rumour or gossip, and it is obvious how that attitude is pertinent to Clodia's response to Catull. 11 in *[to Caelius Rufus]*. As part of its argument, Catull. 5 insists that love exists in the moment, and this moment, in the nature of things, is all too brief:

> soles occidere et redire possunt:
> nobis cum semel occidit brevis lux,
> nox et perpetua una dormienda (Catull. 5,4-6)
>
> The sun can set and rise again. For us, once our brief light has set, there is only one everlasting night to be slept through.

This conceit, as is well known, became a commonplace in Latin erotic poetry (e.g. Tib. 1,1,69-70; Prop. 2,15,23-24) and in European erotic poetry more generally – not least in English poetry, in the record of which Catull. 5 is by far the Catullan poem most frequently translated or adapted.

Clodia, like Baxter, is too clever, when reading Catullus, not to look things up. Consequently, she is aware that the brevity of young love is a poetic idea the Roman found in the Greek elegiac poet Mimnermus, where transitory sunshine combines with fading blossoms to give literary expression to the urgency of youthful sexual pleasure. Two surviving fragments, doubtless the Mimnerman poems that inspired Catullus, are pertinent:

49 WOODMAN, *From Poetry to History*, cit. n. 40, p. 22.

ἡμεῖς δ᾽, οἷά τε φύλλα φύει πολυάνθεμος ὥρη
    ἔαρος, ὅτ᾽ αἶψ᾽ αὐγῇς αὔξεται ἠελίου,
τοῖς ἴκελοι πήχυιον ἐπὶ χρόνον ἄνθεσιν ἥβης
    τερπόμεθα, πρὸς θεῶν εἰδότες οὔτε κακὸν
οὔτ᾽ ἀγαθόν· Κῆρες δὲ παρεστήκασι μέλαιναι,
    ἡ μὲν ἔχουσα τέλος γήραος ἀργαλέου,
ἡ δ᾽ ἑτέρη θανάτοιο· μίνυνθα δὲ γίνεται ἥβης
    καρπός, ὅσον τ᾽ ἐπὶ γῆν κίδναται ἠέλιος.
αὐτὰρ ἐπὴν δὴ τοῦτο τέλος παραμείψεται ὥρης,
    αὐτίκα δὴ τεθνάναι βέλτιον ἢ βίοτος·[50]

We are like the leaves which the flowery season of spring sprouts, when they grow, quickly, in the rays of the sun. Like them we take pleasure in the blossoms of youth for a short space of time, knowing nothing of the bad that comes from the gods, or the good. But black demons of destruction stand beside us. One holds out as our end a grievous old age, the other death. The fruit of youth is as short-lived as the sunlight which spreads over the earth. And when the conclusion of this season has passed, then death is better than life.

τίς δὲ βίος, τί δὲ τερπνὸν ἄτερ χρυσέης Ἀφροδίτης;
    τεθναίην, ὅτε μοι μηκέτι ταῦτα μέλοι,
κρυπταδίη φιλότης καὶ μείλιχα δῶρα καὶ εὐνή,
    οἷ᾽ ἥβης ἄνθεα γίνεται ἁρπαλέα
ἀνδράσιν ἠδὲ γυναιξίν· ἐπεὶ δ᾽ ὀδυνηρὸν ἐπέλθῃ
    γῆρας, ὅ τ᾽ αἰσχρὸν ὅμως καὶ καλὸν ἄνδρα τιθεῖ,
αἰεί μιν φρένας ἀμφὶ κακαὶ τείρουσι μέριμναι,
    οὐδ᾽ αὐγὰς προσορέων τέρπεται ἠελίου,
ἀλλ᾽ ἐχθρὸς μὲν παισίν, ἀτίμαστος δὲ γυναιξίν·
    οὕτως ἀργαλέον γῆρας ἔθηκε θεός[51].

What life, what pleasure without Aphrodite? May I die, when these things no longer matter to me, lovers' assignations and persuasive gifts and the bed, the blossoms of youth which are alluring for men and women. For when grievous old age comes, which brings a shameful ugliness even to a beautiful man, then terrible woes waste away his inner nature nor does he find pleasure in seeing the rays of the sun. Instead he is hateful to boys, dishonoured by women. So harsh has god made old age.

In her flirtatious address to Caelius, Clodia takes up this imagery. In her poem she re-enacts the lover's suit pressed by Catullus in Poem 5. In that poem, Catullus urged her to enjoy sensual pleasure – now. And

50 Mimn. fr. 2.1-10 in D.E. GERBER, *Greek Elegiac Poetry from the Seventh to the Fifth Centuries BC*, Cambridge, Mass., 1999.

51 Mimn. fr. 1 in GERBER, *Greek Elegiac Poetry*, cit. n. 50.

so, in *her* poem, she is again prepared to do so – but without Catullus. Indeed, by making the first move, she usurps the role played by Catullus in Poem 5, a shift in gender that responds to the dynamics of the simile in Poem 11. And it is to Poem 11, as we have seen, that *[To Caelius Rufus]* reacts. Clodia will carry on with other lovers, just as Catullus told her to do.

Clodia does not illustrate her poem with a Catullan image or even an image taken from Catullus' favourite Greek exemplar, Sappho. She prefers, it is obvious, Mimnermus, Catullus' source for Poem 5. This is a slightly more complicated specimen of window-allusion than the one we observed above in discussing Baxter's *The Flower*. But it is no more difficult to discern. Nor is its immediate message unclear. Clodia's dying blossoms, unlike the dying flower of Catull. 11, signal not the end of a love affair but, possibly, a fresh start.

And yet Mimnermus makes it plain how falling blossoms unavoidably suggest that time is running out. Or at the very least they signal that what lies ahead is the ineluctable end of sex and of love – and of life. This is, after all, the nub of Mimnermus' insistent references to the shortness of youth. Mimnermus' lines, again this is well known, borrow from Homer, where the same image introduces the inevitability of death, even for a hero (*Iliad* 6,146-149). Falling leaves as a signal of death have a long poetic pedigree, and this association is an unmistakeable presence in Clodia's poem.

This connection between setting suns and falling blossoms is, in a sense, also a Catullan motif, even if it is not actually to be found in the Catullan corpus, because it appears in Baxter's Catullan sequence. In *The Peach Tree*, when the poet reflects on lovemaking with Pyrrha in a house supplied by Allius (a reference to Catull. 68b), he concludes with

> Now – the peach tree will drop its flowers
> Today or tomorrow – after the light
> Goes out, lady, we're going to have
> A long, long sleep.

Here the imagery of Mimnermus is combined with the imagery of Catull. 5 in a passage that must also lie behind Clodia's verses. Clodia, like Baxter and Stead, is a New Zealand poet.

For Clodia, although the end is not sharply signalled by dying blossoms, the suggestion is unquestionably there. Her poem, like Baxter's, entrains anxiety. Clodia, it appears, is not entirely comfortable playing the part Catullus has assigned her in Catull. 11. Perhaps that is why, in her next poem, *No rough verses*, a clear reference to *non bona dicta* in Catull. 11, Clodia turns again to Catullus – in an effort to make her case.

Jackson, *No rough verses*

No rough verses, but like a surf-tossed sailor
wielding wisely his gaff-rigged fore-and-aft sail,
so shall I keep your favourite of Greek metres
to steer my way free of your storm of curses.
What I owe you – these claims you make are madness –
but to counter them one by one in order:
first, consider what we owe Aphrodite –
your voyage here, as plunder of my husband,
your change of plans, your brother left unaided,
none of this can be laid as charges on me,
all was fated, and I merely received you.
Oh, I loved you, and being loved by me did
you not take more than you could ever give me?
Your 'exile' here – to live in Rome is *living*,
I don't see you, in thrall to me no longer,
rushing back to your farmhouse in Verona, or
setting sail to do business in Bithynia.
Had you stayed put, a poet of the provinces,
not one person would know your name – or care to.

In English, *rough verses* usually indicates unpolished lines, a sense, as we have seen, *non bona dicta* can also carry. And Clodia's poem is not unconcerned with the things Catullus' poetry about her has got wrong. But it is invective Clodia seeks to evade here, Catullus' «storm of curses», and this poem, like its predecessor, appears to respond to Poem 11.

Clodia's poem adapts a familiar passage from tragedy. In Euripides' *Medea*, Jason, aware of Medea's abuse of him for breaking off their marriage, puts forward arguments the purpose of which is to persuade her that he is not her enemy and that, in reality, despite his leaving her, she is none the less better off for having been his wife than had she remained amongst barbarians (*Med.* 522-575). This is a speech Clodia reprises here, in yet another reversal of gender roles inspired by Catullus. In a later poem, *Medea, he calls me*, a reference to Cicero's famous description of Clodia as *Palatina Medea* at *Cael.* 18, Clodia tells Catullus «I am

the heartless Jason in your version of our story». By then, however, Clodia is herself lovesick and complains «it is you who sailed away, leaving me/alone». But these are sentiments that lie ahead. In *No rough verses*, unlike the indifferent Lesbia of Catull. 11, Clodia condescends to say «Oh, I loved you, and being loved by me did / you not take more than you could ever give me?». It will be obvious to any reader of Catull. 11 that Catullus disagrees. And for the reader of *No rough verses*, Clodia's willingness to play the part of the treacherous Jason does her little credit. Once again, it augurs ill for her future in this sequence[52].

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52 It is with great pleasure that I include this paper in a volume dedicated to the scholarship of Giuseppe G. Biondi. Earlier drafts were read by Diana Burton, Geoff Miles, and Simon Perris, to each of whom I am grateful. This study of Baxter, Stead, and Jackson is continued in W.J. TATUM, *Catullus in New Zealand Poetry: the programmatic poems of Baxter, Stead, and Jackson*, forthcoming in «Paideia» 74, 2019.

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Finito di stampare nella *Stilgraf* di Cesena
nel mese di agosto 2018

PAIDEIA
rivista di filologia, ermeneutica e critica letteraria
PERIODICO ANNUALE

QUADERNI DI «PAIDEIA»
collana di studi di antichistica e filologia

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Registrazione presso il Tribunale di Parma del 25-11-2004

ISSN: 0030-9435

Stampa

STILGRAF – Viale Angeloni, 407 – 47521 CESENA (FC)
Tel. 0547 610201 – www.stilgrafcesena.com
e-mail: info@stilgrafcesena.com

www.paideia-rivista.it

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