Introduction

> *On the matter of Catullan arrangement, scholarly progress has moved glacially and without the impetus of global warming. Yet, after a century and a half, some limited consensus seems to have been reached . . . In the next 150 years we may finally see a satisfactory resolution of* die Catullfrage. *Or not.*
>
> Marilyn Skinner

> *All that* [sc. uncovering Catullus' literary models and affiliations] *is important for understanding the individual poems and can be done appropriately without supposing that the poems which claim to represent reality or to express the strong and genuine emotions of the poet are "simply" literary constructs . . . There is nothing "simple" about the relationship of literature, even the most accessible literature, and life.*
>
> Ian Du Quesnay and Tony Woodman

> *But there* [sc. the quotation above] – *until we find a better way of talking about emotional reality in ancient poetry – the book has to end.*
>
> Gail Trimble

The quotations above are the concluding remarks respectively of Marilyn Skinner's magisterial 2007 overview of the arrangement of Catullus' poems, of Ian Du Quesnay and Tony Woodman's equally authoritative retrospect of their 2012 volume on Catullus, and of Gail Trimble's fine review essay of that volume.[1] These pronouncements are offered as epigraphs marking the points of departure, and to some extent the ultimate ambitions, of this work.

Regarding the traditional problem discussed in the first of these epigraphs, the work immodestly proposes that Skinner's "satisfactory resolution" is at hand, and some 140 years earlier than she dared hope (or not): to the most general and most pressing questions concerning the poems'

[1] Skinner (2007) 47, Du Quesnay and Woodman (2012b) 272, Trimble (2013).

arrangement and circulation, it claims, determinate answers can confidently be given. It hastens, however, to add that this resolution proceeds almost entirely from the "limited consensus" already won on this question, and that its sole essential element going beyond that consensus has been repeatedly seen and persuasively argued for, most notably by Skinner herself.[2] This volume, then, does not *resolve* this laborious philological crux so much as *notice* that previous learned studies have already loosed the long-tied knot, if not yet in the same place and at the same time.

On the latter two epigraphs and the notorious problems they address, an apotropaic modesty is even more urgent. Examining the Catullan poems in accordance with this account of their arrangement and circulation does not reveal a "better way" of thinking about ancient authors, their texts, and their worlds in any general sense. It does, however, illuminate the ways in which this particular ancient author focalizes and manipulates those notorious relationships, above all by textually collocating his interest in the poems' own creation, at the seam between his poetry and his lived reality, with the seams internal to the poems: the openings, transitions, and closures of his books. Teasing these out, in turn, yields shifting metapoetic characterizations of the poems, guiding us through their sequence, explaining modulations in their poet-speaker's subjectivity, and globally integrating the parts of the corpus. How does the Catullan personal voice change or develop? To what extent does change or development in the author explain changes in the text? How, and to what extent, does the world of his first-person poems interact with those of his impersonal or less personal ones? How, and to what extent, does the content of the former reflect the lived reality of the poet and his associates? How, and to what extent, do these questions matter? Before readers ever posed these questions of Catullus' text, the text itself posed them to its readers, in pointed ways and with far-reaching results.

This work proposes, in broadest outline, that we can recover from the poems the overarching design for their mode of circulation on papyrus rolls. As this structural thesis develops, however, the work will also examine a series of related exegetical issues, the sum of whose conclusions amounts to a second global claim. That is, Catullus' design transforms how his poems read, above all by textually privileging their depictions of their own genesis and by inviting us to interrogate these depictions and their relation both to other Catullan texts and to purported extratextual realities.

[2] Skinner (1981) 80–92.

Three Catullan Books

The Catullan corpus, I claim, consists in three authorially designed books; at the close of one of these is found a short, heterogeneous run of poems, whose status is uniquely problematic. The books and their parts, which will be referred to throughout this work by the accompanying shorthand, are:

A: poems 1–51, consisting of a bipartite first half and a (unitary?) second half:
  1–14 and 14b–26
  27–51
  [**Ax**: 52–60]
B: 61–64
C: 65–116, consisting of halves:
  C1: 65–68b, itself consisting of halves:
    65–67 to Ortalus
    68a and 68b to Mallius
  C2: 69–116, itself consisting of halves:
    69–92
    93–116

The problematic run, **Ax**, are genuine Catullan poems, but they are also generically distinct from what precedes (and follows) them, frequently obscure, and apparently ill-fitting.[3] On these poems, I find that available evidence falls short of licensing firm, univocal conclusions about their nature, their relations to other Catullan texts, or the history of their original circulation and later transmission. What is overwhelmingly supported by the evidence, and what my thesis really requires, is the following core claim: there is some sort of textual and/or artistic discontinuity between poems 51 and 52. On different versions of this claim, the discontinuity will either mark **Ax** off as a textual intrusion, an "unauthorized" presence at the conclusion of **A**, or else as a distinct, subordinated "part" or "unit" there, a kind of postscript or annex to **A**.[4] On either option, our inability to pronounce unequivocally on how these poems present

[3] The shorthand is adapted from Hutchinson (2003), with the restriction of **A** to poems 1–51 and the coining of **Ax** for 52–60 my own innovation (in part for the cleaving implement many scholars would take to these poems, but more importantly for the view of them I mean to promote: ***Appendix Catulliana***). My use of Hutchinson's shorthand does not imply my agreement with his substantive views of the corpus (or vice versa). In fact my thesis shares considerable common ground but departs from his on important points.

[4] On this option, these poems will find a parallel in the role and function I claim for the "unit" consisting of poems 14b–26.

themselves to readers can be plausibly explained by the extensive textual corruption apparent in them, and poem 54 in particular.

All of these claims will be examined fully in what follows; in advance of this, it will already be clear to many readers how little of this picture is new. In brief, a familiar but nonstandard move, the exclusion of poems 52–60, is here adopted (or adapted, if one prefers that **Ax** be kept, but kept separate) and combined with the most orthodox claims for multi-poem unities and points of textual articulation in the corpus. That each of the two consecutive runs of poems 1–14 and 14b–26 bespeaks some sort of artistic unity is widely agreed, the core of Skinner's "limited consensus" just mentioned. Next, a clear metrical break (at least) separates these poems from 27 and following. While there are competing versions, it is entirely mainstream to see the divisions marking off 1–14 and 14b–26 as internal, with a larger affinity tying the two units together (my "bipartite first half"), and a still larger artistic integrity uniting them with some or all of the remaining shorter poems in various meters, 27–60. The artistic unity of these poems can then be seen as that of an authorial book.[5]

The claim that the longer, metrically diverse poems of **B** and the elegiac distichs of **C** are artistic units and/or books is also familiar, though the former is plausibly resisted even by some who accept the latter.[6] If the elegiac poems 65–116 are a book, its division into "long poem" and "short poem" halves, my **C1** and **C2**, is a patent reality; the mediality of this division is apparent from their matching line-counts.[7] My sole novelty here will be to argue for a medial division grouping 65–67 and 68a–68b respectively within **C1**.[8] The articulation of **C2** into 69–92 and 93–116, by contrast, is yet another widely shared claim.

Readers will have rightly detected the rhetorical pose of a modest tinkerer confronting a notorious problem, a humble practitioner quick to admit, and even perversely proud of, the wanting originality of his own thesis. Nonetheless, the same tinkerer proclaims to offer a convincing account of, and even resolution to, the dread *Catullfrage*. How?

[5] On the distinction between books and artistic units (and the attractive but problematic inference of the former from the latter), much more will be said.

[6] This includes Hutchinson (2003) 210–11 himself, whose christening of poems 61–64 as **B** I follow. On Hutchinson's view, **B** is a textual unit in the transmitted corpus, four independent longer pieces whose "partness" for us, so to speak, is an accident of transmission arising from their distinctness from the authorial collections preceding and following them. I will scrupulously attempt not to conceal this possibility or beg any questions against it.

[7] 326 lines, and perhaps one or two distichs more, constitute **C1**, while 320 lines, and almost certainly a few distichs more, constitute **C2**.

[8] Even this division, as we will see, is anticipated by Höschele (2009).

The crucial move is the bracketing of **Ax**.[9] The case for the ill-fitting heterogeneity of these poems is powerful in its own right, as my predecessors' studies have shown, and as I will further explore;[10] what is new here is primarily the synoptic investigation of the rest of the corpus, once these poems are bracketed. My most extraordinary claim about Catullan arrangement, I think, is not that the poet composed single-volume works that are as structurally neat (taken individually) and as tightly coherent and mutually illuminating (taken together) as the works of his Augustan successors often are. Rather, it is that we Catullans need only look at a leading variant of our own best account to see it: as soon as we inspect the corpus as a whole from the assumption that poems 52–60 are *definitely* distinct and problematic and *might well* be completely out of place as transmitted, we see that a clear, simple, and pervasive global design ranges over the remaining 97 percent of the text.

That is, the elegiac book **C** constitutes a chiastic responsion to **A** and **B**; **C1** answers to the latter and **C2** to the former, giving the triptych the effective form **A**, **B**, (**B′** + **A′**). Locating the close of the lyric book at poem 51 rather than 60, striking parallelisms abound.[11] The openings and closes of all three books conduct a rich intratextual dialogue; in particular, the end of **A** (poem 50, an epistle on poetic composition and gift-exchange, followed by 51, the translation of Sappho, a key model-text for the book) is mimed *both* by the beginning of **C** (the epistolary 65, followed by the Callimachean translation of 66) and by its end (116, which *refuses* a translated Callimachean poem 117).

Meanwhile, the respective halves of **C2** closely reprise the content and thematic movement of the respective halves of **A**; where studies of Catullan arrangement have fretted over the looser thematic arrangement later on in each collection of short poems, I point out that the structure of each, a thematically tighter first half followed by a looser second half, itself constitutes a pattern.[12] If a pattern of this sort is felt to be a plausible authorial design, but not elaborate enough to rule out nonauthorial recension or chance as explanations, I point out that it is accurate and

[9] Throughout this work I use "bracket[ing]" as a mild term of art for what I urge be done with these poems, the genus, as it were, of which the "exclusion" of these poems (from the three-book collection), and their "inclusion as separate part" (of the **A** book) are the species.

[10] Segal (1968b) 307 n. 1, Skinner (1981) 80–92, Hubbard (1983) 220–22 and (2005) 260–62, 269; cf. Richter (1881), Kroll (1924) x, Barwick (1928) 80, Heck (1951) 56 n.1, Clausen (1976) 37–41.

[11] If **Ax** is excluded, of course, poem 51 becomes the last in its line without qualification. But even on the retention of **Ax** as *corpus separatum*, it remains a core element of my thesis that poem 51 recognizably functions as a closural moment, at least for the run of poems beginning with poem 27, and preferably for "the lyric book proper" or some such characterization.

[12] While I do not say that the second halves are merely negative unities, miscellanies marked off by their exclusion from the narrative and other coherences of the first halves, such an account is clearly *possible*, and its possibility is clearly in my favor.

hardly tendentious to describe either **A** or **C2** in the following way: a tighter half focused on Lesbia and on Catullus' erotic rivals, followed by a looser half introduced by political invective, featuring the belated return of Lesbia with a plot of her reconciliation with Catullus, and ending with a drama of poem-translation and gift-exchange. Our Catullan text contains two such poem collections; this, I claim, is patently pattern-like, and hardly the sort of thing we would expect to arise by accident.

Closure at 51 also produces a remarkable correspondence in poem-count. I am rhetorically careful on this score, thinking the case sufficiently persuasive even without this point, on which reasonable people reasonably disagree. Given, however, the orthodox but contested judgments about poem-division I adopt (and share with Mynors' Oxford text and other editions), the number of poems in each half of **A** and **C2** is identical, each internal unity is pentadic in sum, and their collective sum is handsomely round: (15 + 10) + 25 and 25 + 25, for a neat century of Catullan short poems.[13] If this is correct, the well-attested tendency for pentadic and decadic multiples of poems in Augustan poetry books can be backdated to the late Republic and to our earliest extant and intact books of Latin poems.[14] Even for critics who disagree on one or both of the closely contested cases (poems 2/2b and 95/95b), another notable Augustan book feature, the medial break or division, is likewise found in Catullus. There is a clear formal disjunction between poems 26 and 27, and it is widely agreed that the latter programmatically marks a new beginning; on either view of poem(s) 2/2b, poem 27 falls at the middle of 1–51 by poem-count.[15] On the majority view that poem 27 is introductory and programmatic, it is also a "proem in the middle."[16]

Finally and briefly, there remains the question of **B**. I concede from the outset that the burden of proof for these poems' artistic unity is greater than is the case for **A** and **C**: the strictly independent physical realization of each of these poems remains a plausible alternative, and one which has yet to be adequately refuted.[17] Abundant new evidence and argument,

[13] Where this claim fits in the persuasive structure of my argument will be spelled out in its turn. In short, it is indeed important, but anyone who argues that the unification of poem 2b with 2 disproves this thesis has not understood it; the same goes for arguments that poem 2/2b unification disqualifies matching poem-counts as evidence of Catullan design.

[14] Port (1926) 456, Skutsch (1963), Griffiths (2002) 67–68. For doubts on this phenomenon, see Heyworth (2012) 221–22.

[15] It is the twenty-fifth of forty-nine or twenty-sixth of fifty poems.

[16] The programmatic reading of poem 27 was first put by Wiseman (1969) 7–8, and has been widely endorsed: Cairns (1975), Skinner (1981) 27–28, Holzberg (2002) 43–45, Gutzwiller (2012) 99. On "proems in the middle," see Conte (1992).

[17] The case for their independent circulation and against their status as a book is elegantly stated by Hutchinson (2003) 210–11.

however, can be presented in its favor. First, the beginning of its first poem, 61, and end of its last, 64, participate fully in the intratextual dialogue conducted by the terminal points of **A** and **C**. Meanwhile, the longer elegiac poems of **C1** not only respond globally to the four long poems of **B**, but do so in ways that resonate with its transmitted sequence. So too do I unearth a provocative case for seeing the poems of **B** foreshadowed, in sequence, in **A**. Finally, the nuptial theme of **B** is anticipated in an authorial **A** ending with poem 51: its Sapphic translation not only looks back on the short and erotic lyrics of **A**, acknowledging Sappho as their preeminent generic model, but also forward to the wedding song – in which genre she is even more preeminent – found in **B.**

Dramas of Composition

Thus my account of Catullus' books. Casting a global eye on the poems so arranged, one sees that a striking metapoetic feature is repeatedly found at terminal and transitional moments in the corpus. Poems 1 (opening **A**), 14 (at the hinge within the first half of **A**), 50 (twinned with 51, closing **A**), 65 (opening **C**), 68a and 68b (and notably its end, at the seam between **C1** and **C2**), and 116 (closing **C**) all feature the Catullan speaker representing and commenting on the artistic intention, conception, creation, textualization, and dedication of the Catullan poems themselves. These are my titular dramas of composition.[18] I argue that these dramas are of signal importance for understanding the poems in that they repeatedly actualize their intrinsic potential to enhance and transform the meaning of the compositions they depict and comment on.

In his seminal 2001 study, David Wray brilliantly put forth the influential but controversial case that poem 50 is a letter of dedication not (only) of *itself*, but (also) of poem 51;[19] depending on how one sees various details, this reframing potentially authorizes a vertiginous shift in one's understanding of that poem and its place in both the Lesbia plot in particular and the poems in general. At first glance, poem 50 appears to be little more than a light vignette, a frivolous occasional piece: "yesterday's" eroticized poetic play between

[18] The only clear example not at a transitional space is poem 35, whose importance to this study we will see. A broader characterization would include the poet's reply to his critics in poem 16, poems that dramatize Catullus' reading of *other* authors (22, 44), the drama of convivial poem-performance I read in 27, and poems that merely threaten future verse (e.g. 12 and 40). Reasonable criteria differing from my own are possible, and it suffices to say that the texts I call dramas of composition share certain metapoetically interesting characteristics; I need not and do not claim that any strict set of features defines them as a class.

[19] Wray (2001) 91–99, quietly anticipated by Lavency (1965).

Catullus and his poet-friend Licinius Calvus, followed by a sleepless night and quasi-medical symptoms of erotic longing, then by "today's" composition of "this poem," intended to show Calvus the depth of Catullus' *dolor*. Poem 51, by contrast, conveys the pain of Catullus' absence from Lesbia and the erotic symptoms he experiences in her presence. These we believe in – and respond to sympathetically. But if poem 51 is the referent of "this poem" in 50, and if the pain it brings to light is the erotic longing for Calvus which few would take at face value, does the pain of Catullus' separation from Lesbia in 51 (and potentially elsewhere) lose *its* claim to be taken seriously? Is the meaning of "Lesbia" in this poem (and potentially in all the poems) now subordinated to the homosocial world of Catullan friendship, which we now see aright, as the predominant focus of the poet's interest? And if so, can we countenance that result? Regardless of whether we can comfortably live with it ourselves – on this question I am of those who think our interpretive comfort is irrelevant at best – can we plausibly ascribe it to Catullus?

There are separate questions here, mutually imbricated but distinct. Poem 50 is a drama of composition – but of *which* composition(s)? Certainly, of "yesterday's" improvised polymetric scribblings (whether or not any historical correlate to these existed), and of poem 50 (which plainly does exist). For Wray and others, including me, poem 50 also dramatizes the composition of 51.[20] If that is so, it potentially comments on and alters the other Lesbia poems as well. But what, then, does poem 50 say about the compositions it dramatizes? How does the drama read? From the point of view of poem 51 – and anyone invested in a given understanding of that poem, by itself and on its own – this question is a troubling one. For there is a sense, if not necessarily a totalizing one, in which poem 51 becomes helpless in respect to 50, just as soon as we see 50 pointing down or right on the papyrus roll, gazing at *ille mi par esse*, and saying *hoc*.

To be clear, this is not to deny that a flatly unthinkable reading clearly foisted on a given poem by a given drama of composition would rule out the deictic reference on which it is predicated. On the contrary, opponents of taking "this poem" at 50.16 as 51 on the grounds of its reframing of 51 (and Lesbia) are on my view correct in their assessment of the power of the framing deictic, and they would be right to try to dig in here if they were right that it ruins 51 (and Lesbia). Nor am I claiming that the reframing of poem 51 by 50 interpretively nullifies anything in 51 found

[20] The improvised verses were composed "yesterday" (50.1–6), and "this poem" the next day (50.14–17); if 51 is "this poem," 50 was written after it as its cover-letter.

to be incompatible with this reframing. As we will see, this is far from my view. Rather, the point is that 51 loses control over itself once another poem claims the power to speak of it and for it; like the Catullan bride with a one-third voting share in respect to her own maidenhood (62.62–64), it must now negotiate for its own identity, and not from a position of strength.

Nonetheless, the case for seeing this deixis will be the better the more the indicated poem 51 bears it not only as a yoke to poem 50's metapoetic plow, but also as an arboreal prop for its own metapoetic vine. The more interesting, illuminating, and exciting poem 51 becomes, *as* pointed to by 50, the greater our confidence that it *is* pointed to by 50.

In short: what Wray did for the metapoetry of poems 50–51 I mean to do for the metapoetry of the dramas of composition in general, and to do again and differently for 50–51; what he did in revising the deictic referent of poem 50 I mean to do for two other compositional indexicals in Catullus, namely those in poems 14 and 65. From these works we reap rich and comprehensive results. Specifically, a powerful account of how the different parts of the corpus interact and are mutually enhanced is brought to light.

The following table summarizes the picture:

Drama of composition	Referent	Metapoetic characterization
poem 1: dedication to Cornelius Nepos	itself and 2–14 directly, 14b–51 by extension	charming, novel verse
14: epistle to Calvus after Calvus' Saturnalia gift of a poetry book to Catullus	itself and 14b–26	14b–26 as "horrid" invective inversion of 1–14, jocular "revenge" against Calvus
35: Catullus' address to epistolary papyrus, on Caecilius and a drafted poem about Cybele	itself and 63	more ambitious future work now in draft, the work in progress of the represented Catullus
50: Catullus' eroticized longing for Calvus "yesterday," after their eroticized poetic play	itself and 51, the lyric Lesbia by extension	the reality of her extratextual correlate makes writing Lesbia painful
65: Catullus, cut off from the Muses by his brother's death, sends translated Callimachean verse to Ortalus	itself and 66–67 directly, 68–116 by extension	66 and 67 composed before brother's death and for another purpose, now repurposed as gift-poems to Ortalus; all future poems to be tinged by grief

(*cont.*)

Drama of composition	Referent	Metapoetic characterization
68a: Catullus unable to fulfill Mallius' request for love (and) poetry	itself, its correspondent's prior epistle, the gift-poem it does *not* introduce	68a the unpoetic product of Catullus' grief-stricken poetic incapacity
68b: (the textualization of) Catullus' eventual fulfillment of Mallius' request	itself, 69–116 by extension	*inter alia* (!): poetic content explained by and inseparable from the poet's subjective reading of his life circumstances
116: Catullus had thought to conciliate Gellius with Callimachean verse, now promises invective	itself; 74, 78, 80, 88–91? Future poems?	high-minded intentions and high-genre poetry rejected in favor of low-register invective

Some of these characterizations are Catullan orthodoxy, some less so but familiar in the literature, and others are innovative. The metapoetry of *lepidum nouum libellum* and the like in poem 1 is no novelty.[21] Also familiar is the story that 1–14 and 14b–26 mirror each other;[22] new to these pages is the claim that the poems with which Catullus threatens Calvus at the end of 1–14 just are the upcoming 14b–26. As we will see, the explanatory power and transformational potential of this proposal are considerable. The claim that poem 35 refers not to Caecilius' poem on Cybele but to poem 63, Catullus' own work-in-progress on the goddess, was first put by Giuseppe Biondi (1998), and has been taken up and endorsed by Hunink (2000); for my project of integrating the first-person Catullus with the less personal poems,[23] the importance of Biondi's thesis will be obvious.

My reading of the metapoetics of poem 51 is also new, and its details can be only partially anticipated now; what does bear notice at this point is the presence of Catullus' poet-friend Calvus both at 14, the internal hinge of the first half of **A**, and at its close, the twinned 50–51. Both times,

[21] The tradition goes back as far as Baehrens (1885) 66; more recent discussions include Syndikus (1984) 71–72, Batstone (1998), and Feeney (2012) 34–36.

[22] Stroh (1990), Beck (1996).

[23] As we will see, which poems count as less personal and how impersonal each one is are far from self-evident. At this stage it is important to note that they are by no means coextensive with **B** and **C1**, the so-called *carmina maiora*. Poems 62–64 and 66 are surely among the "least personal" Catullan poems, but so are 34 and arguably 45; 65, 68a, and 68b are as fully personal as any of the poems; for different reasons, 61 and 67 pose serious difficulties in this respect.