

METER: choliambic (a variant of the iambic line, devised by Greek poets for satire and mockery; the term means "limping iambic." The limping effect has been achieved by making the next to the last syllable long instead of short). The pattern is:

≡ - | - | - | - | - | - | - ≡

A *caesura* (word-end within a metrical foot, frequently coinciding with a pause in the sense of the line) often falls in the middle of the third foot.

- 1 **Catulle:** vocative, from **Catullus**, -ī (*m*).
- ***dēsīnō**, **dēsīnere** (3), **dēsīi**, **dēsītum** (+ *infinitive*), to give up, stop. Translate the hortatory subjunctives **dēsīnās** (1) and **dūcās** (2) as imperatives.
- īneptiō**, **īneptire** (4), to play the fool, be a fool.
- 2 **quod . . . dūcās:** supply **id** as the understood antecedent of **quod**. Word order: **dūcās** (*id*), **quod perisse vidēs**, **perditum** (*esse*). **perisse:** from the verb **pereō**, **perire**. **perisse:** = **periisse**. What tense is the infinitive? ***perdō**, **perdere** (3), **perdidī**, **perditum**, to destroy, ruin, lose. **perditum esse:** what tense and voice?
- dūcō**, **dūcere** (3), **dūxī**, **ductum**, (here) to consider, (in line 4) lead.
- 3 ***fulgeō**, **fulgēre** (2), **fulsī**, to shine, glitter. **Fulsēre:** = **Fulsērunt**.
- ***quondam**, once. ***candidus**, -a, -um, bright, dazzling.
- 4 **ventitō** (1), to come often.
- 5 **nōbīs:** = **ā mē**. **nūlla:** supply **puella**.
- 6 **ibi**, then, at that time. **illa multa:** with **iocōsa** after **cum**. **iocōsa**, -ōrum (*n pl*), playful things, playful moments.
- 9 ***iam . . . nōn**, no longer. **illa:** i.e., **puella**. **volt:** = **vult**. **impotēns**, **impotentis**, lacking self-control, headstrong, powerless, weak in will. Which definition fits the context best? **nōlī:** what form is this?
- 10 **quae:** supply **eam** as antecedent of **quae** and object of **sectāre**. **sector**, **sectārī** (1), **sectātus sum**, to chase after. **sectāre:** the present singular imperative of the deponent verb **sector**. The imperative of deponent verbs ends in -re in the singular and -minī in the plural.
- 11 **obstinātus**, -a, -um, resolved, determined. **perferō**, **perferre** (*irreg.*), **pertulī**, **perlātum**, to bear through, endure. ***obdūrō** (1), to be firm, persist.
- 13 **requirō**, **requirere** (3), **requīsivī**, **requīsītum**, to look for again, seek after.
- ***īvītus**, -a, -um, unwilling. **īvītam:** **tē** is understood.
- 14 **nūlla:** adverbial, "not," "not at all" (a colloquial usage).
- 15 **scelestus**, -a, -um, wicked, unfortunate, wretched. **vae tē**, woe to you.
- quae:** take this interrogative adjective with **vīta**.
- 16 **adeō**, **adīre** (*irreg.*), **adii**, **adītum**, to approach, visit. ***bellus**, -a, -um, pretty, nice, cute.
- 17 **Cuius esse dicēris:** first translate this literally, then find a more idiomatic way of saying it. In the 3rd conjugation, an *e* is used for both the present and future of the 2nd person singular passive. How does the length of the vowel help you decide the tense?
- 18 **bāsīō** (1), to kiss. **Cui:** dative of reference; here, translate as a genitive, "Whose . . . ?" **labellum**, -ī (*n*), little lip. Catullus is fond of using *diminutives* (words with suffixes, such as -ellus, -olus, and -ullus, that denote smallness) to express a variety of feelings such as affection, delicacy, humor, or mockery.
- mordeō**, **mordēre** (2), **momordī**, **morsum**, to bite, nibble.
- 19 **destinātus**, -a, -um, fixed, decided, firm, steadfast.

CATULLUS 8

Catullus, Stop Being a Fool!

Catullus, hopelessly in love, exhorts himself to pull out of the love affair. Memories of happy moments and of the girl, however, weaken his resolve.

Miser Catulle, dēsinās ineptire,
et quod vidēs perisse perditum dūcās.
Fulsēre quondam candidī tibi sōlēs,
cum ventitābās quō puella dūcēbat
5 amāta nōbīs quantum amābitur nūlla;
ibi illa multa cum iocōsa fiēbant,
quae tū volēbās nec puella nōlēbat,
fulsēre vērē candidī tibi sōlēs.
Nunc iam illa nōn volt: tū quoque impotēns nōlī,
10 nec quae fugit sectāre, nec miser vīve,
sed obstinātā mente perfer, obdūrā.
Valē, puella. Iam Catullus obdūrat,
nec tē requīret nec rogābit invītam.
At tū dolēbis, cum rogāberis nūlla.
15 Scelestā, vae tē, quae tibi manet vīta?
Quis nūc tē adībit? Cui vidēberis bella?
Quem nunc amābis? Cuius esse dīcēris?
Quem bāsiābis? Cui labella mordēbis?
At tū, Catulle, dēstinātus obdūrā.

1. Divide the poem into different sections according to the use of key transitional words (e.g., *quondam*). What is the mood of each section and what causes the shifts in mood? What role does time play in these sections?
2. It is commonly accepted that poets project different aspects of themselves onto the real or imaginary characters of their poems. A poet may, for instance, adopt the identity of a wise traveler, homeless youth, or loving parent. This adopted identity is called *persōna* (Latin for “mask”). What *persōna* does Catullus assume for himself in this poem? Why does he address himself in the 3rd person?
3. Explain what Catullus means in line 2.
4. Lines 3 and 8 act as a frame for the memory of an earlier time. How can you interpret the words *candidī* . . . *sōlēs* metaphorically (*metaphor* is an implied comparison between two objects)? What difference does the substitution of *vērē* (8) for *quondam* (3) make in the meaning of the repeated line?
5. This poem presents a classic confrontation between the will and the emotions (sparked by memories of happier days). Which side seems stronger? What weakens the poet’s resolve to end the affair? Support your answer by reference to the poem.
6. Reread the poem and note words or phrases that are repeated. What is significant about the repeated words? Why would repetition be such a major part of this poem? Find examples of words with a double *l*. What pattern do they form?
7. Why are limping iambics an appropriate meter for this poem?