

READING 3

Offering a fresh approach to the theme of the jilted lover, Poem 8 dramatizes a conflict between Catullus's rational persona, the poet, and his irrational self, the lover, who is having difficulty accepting the fact that the relationship with Lesbia (the unnamed *puella*) is over. Repeated language conveys intense emotion and serves to define the structure of the poem. Poem 8, a mini-masterpiece, is remarkable because each line forms a complete unit of thought. The pause at the end of each line may be seen as contributing to the emotions of sadness and anguish.

FAREWELL, GIRL

CATULLUS CARMEN 8

Meter: Limping Iambics

- 1 Miser Catulle, *dēsinās ineptīre*,
et quod vidēs perisse perditum dūcās.
fulsēre quondam candidī tibi sōlēs,
cum ventitābās quō puella dūcēbat
- 5 amāta nōbīs quantum amābitur nūlla.
ībi illa multa cum iocōsa fiēbant,
quae tū volēbās nec puella nōlēbat,
fulsēre vērē candidī tibi sōlēs.

NOTES AND VOCABULARY

Line 1: **miser, misera, miserum** unhappy, lovesick

Catulle: the poem begins with a self-address, with Catullus the rational poet addressing Catullus the irrational lover.

dēsinō, dēsinere, dēsīi, dēsītum to cease, stop; *dēsinās* is a volitive subjunctive being used with the sense of an imperative. For example, “you should stop” is equivalent to “stop.”

ineptiō, ineptīre to make a fool of oneself



STUDY TIP

Verbs that mean “cease, stop” such as *dēsinō* take a complementary infinitive in Latin, but in English the complementary infinitive should be translated with -ing. Thus *dēsinās ineptīre* in line 1 translates “stop playing the fool.”

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- Line 2: **quod vidēs**: this phrase serves as the subject of *perisse*.
pereō, perīre, perīi, peritum to perish, die; *perisse* is the contracted form of *periisse*.
perdō, perdere, peridi, perditum to destroy, lose; *perditum* = *perditum esse*
dūcō, dūcere, dūxī, ductum to lead, consider; *dūcās* is a volitive subjunctive being used with the sense of an imperative; the verb introduces an indirect statement, *perditum [esse]*. Note how Catullus uses *dūcās* in line 2 with the meaning “consider,” but in line 4 *dūcēbat* is used with the more ordinary meaning of “lead.”
- Line 3: **fulgeō, fulgēre, fulsī** to shine; in poetry, third person plural perfect active verbs can appear in a contracted form in which *-ērunt* is replaced with *-ēre* and so here *fulsēre* = *fulsērunt*.
quondam, *adv.* once, formerly
candidus, -a, -um bright, radiant
sōl, sōlis, m. sun; note how the “suns” recall those of Poem 5.
- Line 4: **ventitō** (1) to go or come frequently; the verbal ending *-itō* implies repetition. *Ventitō* is derived from *veniō*.
quō, *adv.* where
- Line 5: **nōbīs**: dative of agent with *amāta*; *nōbīs* here may be a “true” plural, referring to both the irrational and rational Catullus, instead of a poetic plural that refers to just one person or thing. The dative of agent occurs often in poetry where prose would use the ablative of agent.
quantum, *adv.* as much as
- Line 6: **ibi**, *adv.* then, there
iocōsus, -a, -um joking, playful
fiō, fierī, factus sum to happen, take place
- Line 7: **volō, velle, voluī** to wish, want, be willing
nōlō, nolle, noluī to not wish, not want, be unwilling
nec . . . nōlēbat: observe the LITOTES in “she was not unwilling.”



REMINDER

As noted in the Caesar chapter of this book on p. 52, LITOTES is an understatement that expresses an affirmative by negating its opposite (e.g., not unlucky = lucky). A double negative frequently characterizes this figure of speech.

- Line 8: **vērē**, *adv.* truly
fulsēre . . . sōlēs: line 8 is nearly identical to line 3; the repeated lines act as a frame for this section on the lover’s past happiness.

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CATULLUS CARMEN 8, CONTINUED

nunc iam illa nōn volt: tū quoque inpotē<ns nōlī>,

10 nec quae fugit sectāre, nec miser vīve,

sed obstinātā mente perfer, obdūrā.

valē, puella. iam Catullus obdūrat,

nec tē requīret nec rogābit invitam.

at tū dolēbis, cum rogāberis nūlla.

15 scelesta, vae tē! quae tibi manet vīta?

quis nunc tē adībit? cui vidēberis bella?

quem nunc amābis? cūius esse dicēris?

quem bāsiābis? cui labella mordēbis?

at tū, Catulle, dēstinātus obdūrā.

NOTES AND VOCABULARY

Line 9: **nunc iam:** translate “now at this time.”

illa: construe as nominative singular, referring to Lesbia.

nōn volt: “to be unwilling”; *volt* is the archaic form of *vult*.

inpotēns, inpotentis powerless, weak; the adjective is best construed here as a substantive in the vocative. Translate “weak one,” “weaking.”

Line 10: **quae:** note that *eam*, “her” (referring to Catullus’s *puella*), is to be understood as the antecedent of *quae*; the relative clause *quae fugit* functions as the direct object of *sectāre*.

fugiō, fugere, fūgī, fugitum to flee

sector, sectārī, sectātus sum to follow, pursue; *sectāre* is a present imperative, not an infinitive.



STUDY TIP

Deponent verbs do not have a present active infinitive, and so a deponent verb form that looks like an infinitive is either a singular present imperative or the alternate form of a second person singular in the present tense.

Line 11: **obstinātus, -a, -um** resolute, determined

mēns, mentis, f. mind

perferō, perferre, pērtuli, perlātum to endure, put up with

obdūrō (1) to persist

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