Notes on the Text and Interpretation of Catullus 101

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Received July 2016 | Accepted July 2017

Here I have printed the text of Goold (1983) with my own apparatus. All translations are my own unless otherwise stated. The siglum A, rather than V, represents the agreement of O, G, and R, since McKie has shown that there must have been a manuscript that came between O, X (the common source of G and R), and V.

multas per gentes et multa per aequora vectus  
adenio has miseras, frater, ad inferias,  
ut te postremo donarem munere mortis  
et mutam nequiquam alloquerer cinerem,  
quandoquidem fortuna mihi tete abstulit ipsum,  
heu miser indigne frater adempte mihi.  
nunc tamen intera haec, prisco quae parentum  
tradita sunt tristi munere ad inferias,  
accipe fraterno multum manantia fletu,  
atque in perpetuum, frater, ave atque vale!  

2 adveni Avantius 1535 3 supremo Broukhusius amoris Puccius 6 ei (hei iam Avantius 1535) Baehrens: heu A miserio Puccius indigno Trappes 7 haec t. i. ed. 1473 et suo Marte Trappes: nunc t. i. haec O: nunc t. i. hoc X 8 tristes (unde tristis Lachmann) munera Calph.

Carried past many tribes, past many seas  
I come, my brother, for these wretched funerary rites,  
so I can give you the final offerings owed to the dead

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1 For the history of Catullus' textual transmission, see Thomson 1997, 22-43.
and talk to your mute ashes in vain,
since fortune has taken you yourself away from me,
alas poor brother, unfairly taken from me.
Still, with things as they are, accept these now, which have been given
in the way our forefathers did for your sad funerary rites.
Accept them all dripping with a brother’s tears,
and now forever, brother, hail and goodbye!\(^2\)

The first problem I want to draw attention to is the strange phrase *postremo ... munere mortis*, which is usually understood as ‘the final gift owed to the dead’ or ‘the final funerary gift’. The collocation *postremo ... mortis* is rather unidiomatic in this context. If it is correct and it is to be understood as ‘the final funerary gift’ then the two words redundantly express the same idea. On the other hand, if we interpret this phrase as ‘the final gift owed to the dead’ it contradicts Roman funerary practice, since *munera* were regularly given after death.\(^3\)

There are two ways out of this. The first option is to make a conjecture that replaces *mortis*. The one that has appealed most is Puccius’ *amoris*. Trappes-Lomax worries that the phrase has unwelcome suggestions of courtship-gifts, but for *munus amoris* in a non-erotic context there is a parallel from Cicero in a letter dated to 44 BC: *hoc dempto munere amoris atque officii* (Cic. Att. 15.11.3). So there is nothing necessarily wrong with the tone. There may also be support for *amoris* in Meleager’s funerary epigram to Heliodora, which has often been compared to this poem:\(^4\)

\[
δάκρυα σοι καὶ νέρθε διὰ χθονός, Ἡλιοδώρα,
δωροῦμαι, στοργάς λείψανον, εἰς ἀϊδαν (A.P. 7.476.1-2, ed. Loeb)
\]

Tears, Heliodora, I send to you down in the earth,
even unto Hades, [as] the remains of my love

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2 Translations are my own unless otherwise stated.
3 *Postremo* also does not seem to have the correct meaning. It normally refers to the last in succession (*OLD* s.v. 4). This would translate as ‘latest’, but the context requires a word with a temporal meaning ‘final’. In every other writer who uses *munus or donum* with such an adjective, it is qualified by *supremus, ultimus, or extremus*—never *postremus*. Similar objections may also apply to 64.191, where the text transmits *postrema ... hora*, though equally it can be used as a counter-example to show that Catullus’ usage of *postremus* is peculiar to him.
4 E.g. Biondi 2007, 187f.