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## Catullus' Fantastical Memories – Poem 68 and Writing Trauma

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### Abstract

In the many evocations of memory in the Catullan corpus, fantasy plays a significant, albeit discrete role. Fantasy embellishes memories in Catullus' poems, not necessarily making them bearable but enabling them to be understood, in part. I argue that in poem 68 there are two different approaches to fantastical memories: the intense and vivid memories of his brother's death, and the memories of Lesbia that move both towards, and away from, overt fantasy. In this sense, and in the context of poem 68, fantasy communicates the memory of trauma in a way that includes vivid, hyperbolic, symbolic and metaphoric modes of expression. In the case of the fantasy embedded in the memory of Lesbia, it also entails wish fulfilment.

**Keywords:** Catullus 68; memory; brother; Lesbia; Catullus 65; fantasy; trauma

Memory features in the poetry of Catullus far more than has been traditionally assumed and analysed.<sup>1</sup> Far more personal than communal, memory is a theme, and its recording a device, to express bereavement. The recipients of these major outpourings, Hortalus (poem 65) and Allius/Manlius / Manius/Mallius (poem 68) receive poetry in letter form as a more intimate, looser format of artistic communication. Whether this format, the short-lived, experimental verse epistle of Catullus, which Clay (2013) regards as having been lost from sight, had some influence on the introspective, fantastical, and structurally messy expression of memory and trauma remains open to debate. It does, however, suggest that epistle format matches poetic subject matter,

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Appendix II for a preliminary outline of the major examples of memory and memory 'types' in the Catullan collection. On memory (and memory and grief) more broadly, and pertaining to Rome, cf., for example, Kaster (2005), Hope and Huskinson (2011), Galinsky (2016), Latham (2016), Pi (2019).

offering a way of talking<sup>2</sup> to Hortalus and Allius/Manlius / Manius/Mallius. Through these two talking epistles, we are witness to a series of asides, cross-wires, and mistaken identities that speak to emotional trauma and, as a result, faulty and fantastical memories.

The experimental masterpiece poem 68<sup>3</sup> is an early example of communicating memory and trauma – or the memory of trauma. The trauma is not grand, nor heroic. Catullus' world is small and intimate, as are his memories and his traumas. They involve neither post-traumatic stress from battle, nor the haunting flashbacks of abuse. They are the traumatic memories of the lyric poet: the death of a sibling and the death of a relationship. The two themes of memory and trauma, intermingled and inseparable, are communicated in a highly intermingled and inseparable fashion. Part epistle, part stream-of-consciousness (Quinn 1970),<sup>4</sup> with only traces of traditional elegy, the poem takes form through the absence of overt form. Poem 68 thereby matches poetic concerns with poetic composition, coming close to communicating incommunicable memory and trauma, with neoteric experimentation and Catullan introspection.

There are the intense and vivid memories of his brother's death, which appear and disappear with seemingly limited elaboration, until the introduction of the extended simile of Laudamia and Protesilaus. In contrast, the memories of Lesbia are emotionally negotiated by movements both towards, and away from, overt fantasy, with the poet initially indulging in fantasy but later rejecting it. In the treatment of fantastical memories in this analysis, the term 'fantasy' denotes a memory that is overly elaborate as to verge on, and sometimes to cross over into, the realms of both the unreal and the patently untrue. In this way it acknowledges the Freudian theory that experiential memories may be true or false, but are more likely a mixture of both, and may come from a state of unconscious daydreaming. In the case of the fantasies pertaining to Lesbia in particular, my use of the term 'fantasy' acknowledges Freud's theories of desire and wish fulfilment but contextualises them

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Lowrie (2006) for poem 68 and ideas of talking, as well as the importance of the poem as a physical letter.

<sup>3</sup> This article reads the work as one complete poem as recorded in all extant manuscripts. The scholarly arguments around the unitarian and separatist debates are too vast to concern us in detail. However, it is useful to list some contributors to exemplify the extensive history of the issue. On the unitarian reading: Skutsch (1892), Vahlen (1902) 1043, Diels (1918) 936 n. 1, Vollmer (1919) 7–8, Wheeler (1974 [1934]) 171–2, Prescott (1940) 493–7, Pennisi (1959), Lieberg (1962) 153–4, Salvatore (1965) 97–125, Williams (1968), 229–30, Witke (1968) 33 n. 1, Solmsen (1975) 260 n. 1, Bright (1976), Levine (1976), Sorci (1980–81), Most (1981) 122, Bright (1982), Godwin (1995). Unitarian readings have also surfaced in reviews: Jachmann (1925) 209, Fraenkel (1962) 262. On the separatist reading: Baehrens (1885) 2:493–5, 501–3, Kroll (1968), Fordyce (1961), Vretska (1966), Kinsey (1967), Ross (1969) 121, Skinner (1972), Coppel (1973) 97–140, McClure (1974), Wiseman (1974) 77–103, Shipton (1978), Tuplin (1981), Thomson (1997), Theodorakopoulos (2007) 315–16.

<sup>4</sup> Not that Quinn (1970) 373 is completely impressed with the poem, writing: 'Whatever the genius of the poem, the transitions in this early experiment in stream of consciousness technique are too obviously contrived. Nor can the quite exceptional richness of the imagery disguise a good deal of shoddy craftsmanship.'

within the confines of an artificial or poetic environment that acknowledges a poetic hesitation between the real and the unreal. This approach to reading the fantastical memories of Lesbia, underpinned as they are by trauma and grief, is also aligned with my reading of the poet's fantastical memories as occupying an uneasy form of expression between the mimetic and the extraordinary. In other words, I do not seek to restrict the poem by applying a technical and complex set of strictly psychoanalytical theories of fantasy that place Catullus on Freud's couch or in front of Lacan's mirror (despite my use of Oliensis and Janan as below). Instead, I aim to privilege the beautiful and seemingly impenetrable veneer of the poet's concession to pain that sees him attempting to talk about trauma and bereavement in letters that reveal a man grappling with how things are, and how he wishes they had been.

Scholars regularly confess that one can never really become completely intimate with poem 68. In part, this may be because the poem is so deeply overlaid with what I call 'fantastical memory', which jeopardises reality. In his study of silence in the Catullan corpus, Stevens (2013: 135) writes of the brother's death and the poet who 'struggles with the feeling that no expression will feel meaningful, only merely emotional' because 'poetic language' is, simultaneously, both 'capacious and yet so ineffectual'. While I agree with Stevens' response, which has been expressed with variations over centuries of scholarship, I also detect success in Catullus' resistance to the limitations of poetry to express something meaningful.<sup>5</sup> The result is messy, as the scholarly tradition is only too happy to point out, but perhaps in the very imperfections of poem 68 lies its success in articulating, as much as a poet can, the human experiences of memory and trauma. This reading can lead to a better understanding and acceptance of the poem's awkward and flailing structure, its uncontrolled and unwieldy similes with their seemingly wayward connections, and its artistic uncertainties ('I cannot compose a poem ... I have composed a poem'). To follow such a path is, perhaps, a way of reading poem 68 as an authentic poetic account of memory, trauma, and creativity.

Such an approach acknowledges Oliensis' reconfiguration of the psychological textuality of poem 68 (or, as she interprets it, 68b) as well as poem 65 as 'textual unconsciousness, as opposed to the poetic self-consciousness, which has so fascinated Catullus' readers'.<sup>6</sup> This recalibration of the state of mind that shapes or, more accurately, misshapes the poem, lends an authentic voice to, or textual surface for, 'unconscious' words or talk of memory and trauma, and the trauma of remembering and remembrance. It does so because, in part, it shows us 'an irruption of memory'<sup>7</sup> that cannot be made quiet. This is 'textual unconsciousness' or, in the words of Gowers (2002: 146) on Horace and writing trauma, 'textual "amnesia"'.

Dissecting poem 68 in turn dissects its 'textual unconsciousness', cauterising the intensity of its written trauma and its masterful achievement of

<sup>5</sup> Stevens does not argue that Catullus is unsuccessful in communicating something meaningful but rather that he is aware of the challenges involved.

<sup>6</sup> Oliensis (2009) 27. I include myself among these fascinated readers: cf. Johnson (2006).

<sup>7</sup> Oliensis' reading of Horace's *Satire 1.7* via Gowers (2002) 7.

immersive reception in which the reader enters Catullus' 'timeless zone where wounds never heal' (Oliensis 2009: 28). Unlike Oliensis, Janan (1994: 114) argues for a unitarian reading of the poem, partly because a 'fragmented narrative within a unified text' fits her Lacanian methodology. Accordingly, she emphasises the integrated system of form and content and the persuasive suggestion that as one poem, not two, its disordered structure is the product of 'a principled textual strategy rather than the lamentable evidence of a careless manuscript tradition'. But unlike Oliensis, Janan maintains that self-consciousness not unconsciousness characterises the poetic voice.

Therefore, and in order to advance the arguments around memory in what follows, I work with a combination of the positions taken by both scholars. I see the interpretive advantages of Janan's (Lacanian) unitarian reading for a fuller appreciation of the symbiosis between form and content, evidenced by an unwieldy structure that reflects an unwieldy subject matter. But I also seek to temper that reading with Oliensis' (Freudian) privileging of unconsciousness over Janan's self-consciousness. This combination, I propose, best suits a reading of poem 68 as an authentic account of memory and trauma.

## Brother

Catullus' memories of his brother's death appear and disappear with seemingly limited detailed descriptions, until one realises that the extended simile of *Laudamia* and *Protesilaus* (ll. 73–130) provides a major elaboration – a major fantasy – centring on the place of death with its metaphorical potency (cf. Feeney 1992, especially 40–4). Thus, there are two approaches to memory in relation to the brother: memory communicated in what may be classified as a relatively unadorned style (albeit with imagery and description; ll. 13–14, 15–24) when compared to a more complicated memory evocation through extensive fantasy embedded in the *Laudamia* and *Protesilaus* simile, expressly at ll. 91–100.

With limited elaboration, ll. 13–14, which constitute Catullus' explanation to *Allius* concerning his inability to fulfil a request, allude to the trauma of the recent event. This couplet, expressly l. 13, which is referenced in the opening line of poem 101,<sup>8</sup> suggests that the appeal for a gift is a memory trigger:

accipe, quis merser fortunae fluctibus ipse,  
ne amplius a misero dona beata petas.<sup>9</sup>

Catull. 68.13–14

<sup>8</sup> The scholarship on poem 101 is vast in proportion to the brevity of the piece; for a list of some of the significant contributors to the analysis of the poem, cf. Biondi (1976), Gelzer (1992), Feldherr (2000). Cf. also Fitzgerald (1995) 185ff. (on the brother suite per se, and 187–8 on poem 101). Importantly for the discussion on the complexity of structure and inexpressible emotions in poem 68, Fitzgerald's excellent reading of the brother poems includes a discussion of poem 101 with emphasis on the challenges of the chosen genre, the difficulties detected in poetic expression, and the issue of futility in fulfilling an emotional need.

<sup>9</sup> The text is Mynors (1958). All translations are my own.

listen to what waves of misfortune I myself am drowning in,  
lest you should continue to seek blessed gifts from a wretched man.

Such a memory flash, which Hamann (2001) categorises as ‘explicit memory’ (discussed below), relates memory to emotional arousal:

It has long been known that emotionally arousing events are more likely to be later recollected than similar, neutral events. An extreme example of this enhancement of memory by emotion is the so-called flashbulb memory: a highly vivid memory for an intensely emotionally engaging event such as hearing the news of the death of a relative ...

Hamann (2001) 394

The lines that follow (*ll.* 15–24) provide, in clear and unadorned style, two memories, one distant and one recent, which function as elaborations on the memory flash (*ll.* 13–14). *Ll.* 15–24 recall two memories: Catullus’ happy youth (*ll.* 15–18) and the death of his brother (*ll.* 19–24):

tempore quo primum uestis mihi tradita pura est,  
iucundum cum aetas florida uer ageret,  
multa satis lusi: non est dea nescia nostri,  
quae dulcem curis miscet amaritiam.  
sed totum hoc studium luctu fraterna mihi mors  
abstulit. o misero frater adempte mihi,  
tu mea tu moriens fregisti commoda, frater,  
tecum una tota est nostra sepulta domus,  
omnia tecum una perierunt gaudia nostra,  
quae tuus in uita dulcis alebat amor.

Catull. 68.15–24

When the white garment was first handed to me,  
when my blossoming time of life was savouring a joyous spring,  
then I sported enough: the goddess is not unaware of me,  
she who mixes sweet bitterness with desire.  
But the death of my brother has replaced all this joy with grief.  
O brother, torn from wretched me,  
in dying you destroyed my purpose in life,  
with you our entire house is buried,  
with you all our joys have perished,  
which your sweet love nourished while you lived.

Here there is another textual ‘flash’ to poem 101, which elides the poet’s memory with his text, as if both are coextensive. Indeed, this unpredictable resurfacing of different phrases from the poems seems to match the unpredictable resurfacing of memories from the poet’s past.

The two recollections of *ll.* 15–24 are followed by an equally unadorned, albeit emotional, statement:

cuius ego interitu tota de mente fugavi  
haec studia atque omnes delicias animi.

Catull. 68.25–6

At his death I completely banished from my mind  
these joys and all pleasures of the intellect.

The story of Laudamia and Protesilaus communicates the same memory but through the use of fantasy. Through this extended simile, the memory of the death of the brother returns, triggered by the story of the Trojan War, or specifically Troy itself (cf. Gale 2012), which lies at the heart of the poet's focus on the newlyweds' story. As Seider (2016: 297) comments: 'In poem 68b his sibling's unexpected appearance in the midst of a simile portends his deeper hold on Catullus' memory and also re-engages with the same mythological context seen in poem 65.' This second approach to the evocation of the memories of the death of Catullus' brother in the poem, namely, memory evocation through indirect connection to fantasy-infused imagery, results in a more stylised representation of memory and, as a result, a more complicated one. Having introduced the simile of the story of Laudamia and Protesilaus at *l.* 73 in reference to the comparison of Lesbia with Laudamia, the passage on Troy embraces the memory of the death of Catullus' brother:

quaene etiam nostro letum miserabile fratri  
attulit. ei misero frater adempte mihi,  
ei misero fratri iucundum lumen ademptum,  
tecum una tota est nostra sepulta domus,  
omnia tecum una perierunt gaudia nostra,  
quae tuus in uita dulcis alebat amor.  
quem nunc tam longe non inter nota sepulcra  
nec prope cognatos compositum cineres,  
sed Troia obscena, Troia infelice sepultum  
detinet extremo terra aliena solo.

Catull. 68.91–100

did she [Troy] not also cause the heartbreaking death of my  
brother Alas, brother, torn from wretched me,  
alas, delightful light torn from my wretched brother,  
with you our entire house is buried,  
with you all our joys have perished,  
which your sweet love nourished while you lived.  
Now so far away, not among familiar tombs,  
not laid to rest near the ashes of male kin,  
but buried at obscene Troy, at barren Troy,  
a foreign land traps you at the end of the world.

Initially the memory described at *ll.* 91–100 is passionate but, again, unadorned. It is the story on either side of *ll.* 91–100, the extended simile of

Laudamia and Protesilaus, which provides the fantasy and expression of the complexity and depth of emotions. This extended simile begins earlier at l. 73 and takes the reader to the end of the story at l. 90 with Laudamia learning of her husband's death at Troy. At l. 101, when the tale proper is resumed, the cause of Protesilaus' death, the Trojan War, is evoked, which leads to a series of extended similes on the grief of Laudamia (a heroine who refuses to forget her husband),<sup>10</sup> which finally end at l. 130. The following structural division<sup>11</sup> of the simile maps the progression of the narrative elements, and highlights the significance of the inlay of the memory of the brother's death:

- 73–86 Mythical *exemplum* I: Laudamia (compared to Lesbia as a bride who comes to the *domus* of her *uir*)
- 87–90 Mythical *exemplum* II: Trojan War / Helen (cause of Laudamia's bereavement)
- 91–100 Catullus' misfortune: death of brother (who dies at Troy)  
Constitutes memory flashback**
- 101–4 Mythical *exemplum* III: Trojan War / Paris (cause of Laudamia's bereavement)
- 105–8 Mythical *exemplum* IV: Laudamia (her bereavement)
- 109–16 Mythical *exemplum* V: Hercules (the abyss he must drain – compared to Laudamia's bereavement and passionate *amor*)
- 117–18 Mythical *exemplum* VI: Laudamia (her sexual *amor*)
- 119–24 Real life *exemplum*: Roman family (compared to Laudamia's familial *amor*)
- 125–8 Nature *exemplum*: dove (compared to Laudamia's familial *amor*)
- 129–30 Mythical *exemplum* VII: Laudamia (her *furores*)

Therefore, what initially seems to be an intense but unembellished memory of his brother's death at ll. 91–100 is revealed as both a complex and fantastical recollection, and the sense of interruption in the poem's structure (as illustrated above) powerfully evokes the unpredictable nature of memory triggers and flashbacks. And, importantly for this analysis, Catullus never undoes the fantasy evoked in ll. 91–100 by allowing realism to intervene in the memory

<sup>10</sup> Leigh (2016) 209–10 comments: 'The idea of a wife who clings to the memory of the dead rather than remarrying and continuing the family line has no little significance for this poem.' Also of relevance here is Berenice's devotion to the memory of her spouse, Ptolemy III, while he campaigns along the Syrian frontier; Clay (2013) 215 further observes: 'It is a remarkable coincidence – and no coincidence at all – that Catullus should describe Berenice's separation from Ptolemy as a "grievous parting from a dear brother" (*fratris cari flebile discidium*, 66.22; cfr. 65.5–14). Cf. also Miller (1994) 114 (referencing King (1988) 387–8): 'Moreover Berenice's husband, following Ptolemaic tradition, is also her brother. The themes of separation from both a lover and a brother are thus conjoined here, linking 66 again with both 65 and 68, in which the poet also mourns the loss of his brother and, as in 65, cites his grief as the reason for not being able to fulfill a friend's request for a poetic composition (while nonetheless writing a poem).'

<sup>11</sup> The structural division of the Laudamia–Protesilaus simile is my own, as is the division of the complete poem in Appendix I. Only a few commentators include a structural division; cf., for example, Fordyce (1961) 344; Bright (1976); Godwin (1995) 207–8. For a survey of issues of division, cf. Skinner (1972) especially 497 n. 5.

of his brother's death at Troy. Not a regular cog in the wheels of the Roman empire, but a Homeric Greek, Catullus' brother remains the hero of the poet's own fantastical memory. In this way, the poetic and emotional power of the presentation of memory monumentalises the event through the elevation of it to a personalised legend.<sup>12</sup>

## Lesbia

In contrast to the passages on the death of his brother, Catullus' memories of Lesbia are emotionally negotiated by movements both towards, and away from, overt fantasy. Except for the mundane memory at *ll.* 27–30, in which Catullus rather flatly quotes Allius' lines about her infidelity, memories of Lesbia are, for the most part, directly fantastical. However, whereas Catullus leaves his brother as a legendary figure, his evocations of memories of Lesbia – more immediately fantastical compared to the memories of his brother – are brought back to earth with a thud.

The first direct memory of Lesbia at *l.* 67 begins with a clearly articulated explanation of his gratitude to Allius:

is clausum lato patefecit limite campum,  
isque domum nobis isque dedit dominae,  
ad quam communes exerceremus amores.

Catull. 68.67–9

He opened a closed field with a wide path,  
he gave a house to me and my mistress,  
where we could partake in shared love.

Then Catullus recalls the blessed day when the lovers met in private:

quo mea se molli candida diua pede  
intulit et trito fulgentem in limine plantam  
innixa arguta constituit solea,  
coniugis ut quondam flagrans aduenit amore  
Protesilaeam Laudamia domum  
inceptam frustra, ...

Catull. 68.70–5

To this place my shining goddess with soft tread

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Conte (2007 [1971]) 174 n. 15: '... *Carmina* 68.92, *ei misero frater adempte mihi* ('O brother, taken from wretched me'), which was written when Catullus was still in the grip of grief, soon after his brother's death. On that occasion his strong hatred for Troy, which had just robbed him of his brother (*Carmina* 68.99), *Troia obscena, Troia infelice sepultum* ('buried in hateful Troy, ill-omened Troy'), led him to treat the legendary heroes who had died at Troy as young men ruined by bad fortune, like his own brother (the name of Protesilaos stands for all, as in other examples of elegiac poetry).'



took herself, then paused, having pressed her resplendent sole  
 on the smooth threshold by means of a tap of her slipper,  
 as, burning with love for her husband, Laudamia  
 came to the house of Protesilaus,  
 a house begun in vain, ...

Lesbia makes a delayed return at *ll.* 131–7. The continuity between these lines and *ll.* 70–5 are sustained by the imagery of her as a goddess in a fantastical memory embellished as a ‘divine epiphany’ (Leigh 2016: 209). And when she reappears some fifty lines later (*ll.* 131–7), Catullus’ memory returns to the very same spot at which he left her at *l.* 75 (and, incidentally, at poem 8.3: *fulsere quondam candidi tibi soles*). At *ll.* 131–4 especially, once more she is a divinity, once more she is resplendent (*lux mea*), she shone brightly (*fulgebat ... candidus*), she is one to whom he may be able to yield – if only ever-so slightly – she is a goddess accompanied by Cupid:

aut nihil aut paulo cui tum concedere digna  
 lux mea se nostrum contulit in gremium,  
 quam circumcursans hinc illinc saepe Cupido  
 fulgebat crocina candidus in tunica.

Catull. 68.131–4

Worthy to yield to her either not at all or a little was  
 my light who, on that occasion, conveyed herself to my embrace,  
 around whom, often flying here and there, Cupid  
 shone in radiant saffron tunic.

In such moments, the Freudian meaning of fantasy that references theories of desire and wish fulfilment come into play. But reality intrudes upon such rarefied fantasies, and doubt destroys them as we read at lines *ll.* 135–7 when there are discernible traces of hesitation between the real and the unreal in the first of what I call ‘abandoned fantasies’:

quae tamen etsi uno non est contenta Catullo,  
 rara uerecundae furta feremus erae,  
 ne nimium simus stultorum more molesti.

Catull. 68.135–7

Even if she is not satisfied with Catullus only,  
 I can endure the rare indiscretions of a dignified mistress,  
 lest one becomes too tedious in the manner of fools.

Nevertheless, fantasy fights its way back in as Catullus’ thoughts turn to the trials and tribulations of another great love-match, Juno and Jove, albeit one that is tainted with recollections of Jove’s infidelities (*ll.* 138–40). Memories cast as fantasies of the divine, the bridal, the wifely Lesbia finally end. The fantasy Lesbia crumbles and the real one takes her place. But fantasy plays a role

in the journey to acceptance of painful memories, moving the poet along to the bittersweet realisation in a problematic vignette, marred by a lacuna:

atqui nec diuis homines componier aequum est,

\* \* \* \* \*

\* \* \* \* \*

ingratum tremuli tolle parentis onus.  
nec tamen illa mihi dextra deducta paterna  
fragrantem Assyrio uenit odore domum,  
sed furtiua dedit mira munuscula nocte,  
ipsius ex ipso dempta uiri gremio.  
quare illud satis est, si nobis is datur unis  
quem lapide illa dies candidiore notat.

Catull. 68.141–8

And yet, it is not proper that men be compared to gods,

\* \* \* \* \*

\* \* \* \* \*

lift up the thankless burden of an anxious parent.  
However that may be, she did not come to a house  
sweetened with Assyrian oil, led by a father's right hand,  
but during a wonderous night she granted stolen tokens  
snatched from the very heart of her own husband.  
And so, it is enough if for me alone is given that day  
which she marks with a whiter stone.

In these fantastical recollections of Lesbia, we detect what Huyssen (1995: 6) refers to as 'memory ... associated with some utopian space and time'. While these fantastical lines clearly reflect emotional pain, perhaps they suggest a sense of hope as well. For example, the poet jolts himself out of such reveries. Additionally, the very process of recording the fallacious and fantasy-based memories serves as an attempt to write himself out of 'utopian longing'.<sup>13</sup> This takes us back to the earlier discussion of Oliensis' unconsciousness and Janan's self-consciousness in relation to poem 68, and my preference for Oliensis' reading of the poem. It does so in relation to the expression of memory as the 'dialectics of in/articulacy' (Rowland 2014), in which '[t]he process of memory consists of a constant sifting of images which inform, and are affected by, changing notions of individual ... identities. Private memories are composed of broken narratives that represent (possible) past events' (Rowland 2001: 196). And while the art of poetry is in fact art as artifice that involves a degree of self-consciousness, the slippery and ephemeral nature of memory, as Rowland implies, naturally involves a degree of dialectical inarticulacy that may be said to come from attempts at expressing the inexpressible. This further reminds us of the earlier suggestion by Quinn (1970) that poem 68 has

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Huyssen (1995) 58; he is referring to Christa Wolf. For more on the spatial turn and poem 68, cf. Lewis (2019).

elements of stream-of-consciousness in both content and form. Stream-of-consciousness elides with memory, which, as Crangle (2004: 148), writing on Wordsworth's *The Grasmere Journals*, suggests 'is frequently considered integral to the rendering of the stream of consciousness'.

Examples of stream-of-consciousness, which I equate with Oliensis' unconsciousness, are evident throughout the poem. Indeed, considering stream-of-consciousness as a feature of poem 68 *in toto* may be a means of explaining the change in direction from ll. 1–40 to ll. 41–160. It achieves this, obviously, by removing the separatist consternation at the sudden change of heart (as paraphrased above: 'I cannot compose a poem ... I have composed a poem'). Indeed, this jagged thought process is evident both before and after the standard 68a and 68b 'division' in, for example, the excruciating series of excuses offered at ll. 19–40, which can be interpreted as symptomatic of the random thoughts of a person caught in the emotional turmoil of grief. In the light of the random ideas and contradictions that constitute the lines preceding the powerful recantation of ll. 41–50, content based on stream-of-consciousness suggests unity based on disunity. This style, this movement back-and-forth, these altered states, characterises the structure of the poem in its entirety. It also alleviates the alleged problem of the awkward transition from l. 148 and l. 149, which is usually overlooked by separatists or, as in the work of Kröll (1968: 218–20) which was developed by Bright (1976), can be solved by accepting poem 68 as a complete work with a tripartite structure.

It is in the context of the concept of stream-of-consciousness, which I regard as permeating the poem as a result of grief and the emotional scramble to both cling to, and yet to let go of memory, that one final interpretation of the lacuna at ll. 142–3 may be proffered. Obviously, the lacuna may be excised, thus uniting l. 141 to l. 142 but scholars have traditionally rejected such proposals, and have accordingly offered various solutions.<sup>14</sup> There have also been attempts to emend l. 141 and l. 142 to make the erasure of the lacuna more palatable by matching the warning about the gods with the image of the anxious parent.<sup>15</sup> If one were to remove the lacuna, thus producing the couplet as – 'And yet, it is not proper that men be compared to gods, / lift up the thankless burden of an anxious parent.' – one may argue for an equation of style with emotion. The combination may, initially, seem jarring, the ideas uncomfortably jammed side-by-side, but it is not out-of-kilter with the so-called problematic jumps at, for example, ll. 40–41 and ll. 149–60. However, if one takes *tollere* (l.142) to literally mean 'to lift up', one may suggest that the erased lacuna produces two steadfast resolutions on the part of Catullus: 'I should not compare Lesbia to a goddess' and 'I should accept or lift up the burden of loving her'.

<sup>14</sup> Cf., for example, the inventive reordering of l. 137 and l. 141 by Fröhlich (1849) 266. Cf. also, the suggestion by Kröll (1968) 238 that l. 142 may have been transposed, but his suggestion replaces one lacuna with another owing to the hexameter lines on either side. Sarkissian (1983) 53 n. 91 provides a concise summary of the scholarship.

<sup>15</sup> For example, Postgate (1888) 253 posits *opus for onus*; Birt (1904) 429 *tale for tolle*.

Interpreting poem 68 as the closest one comes to truly 'knowing' the poet (cf. De Villiers 2020: 112), I find Quinn's stream-of-consciousness useful. This is largely because I regard Catullus as expressing his state of emotional and mental exhaustion in an authentic way, which results in the expression of complex and changing states-of-mind in one poem. Additionally, I suggest that the poem achieves what Shelley (2012 [1840]: 9) defines as the role of poetry: 'It awakens and enlarges the mind itself by rendering it the receptacle of a thousand unapprehended combinations of thought.' Indeed, Catullus, like Shelley, evoked 'a thousand unapprehended combinations of thought' well before the expression 'stream-of-consciousness' became part of modern psychological, philosophical, and literary phraseology. James coined the phrase in his 1890 work, *Principles of Psychology*, to describe 'the unbroken flow of thought and awareness in the waking mind' (Abrams and Harpham 2012: 380).<sup>16</sup> Since then the term has been refined and used as a tool of literary criticism to convey:

... a special mode of narration that undertakes to capture the full spectrum and the continuous flow of a character's mental process, in which sense perceptions mingle with conscious and half-conscious thoughts, memories, expectations, feelings, and random associations.

Abrams and Harpham (2012) 380

This definition clearly reflects the use of stream-of-consciousness post-1920, and while its reference to 'sense perceptions' is more applicable to the narrative styles of Woolf and Joyce, other components of its definitional boundaries can be applied to facets of poem 68.

## Memory and Poem 65

The importance of examining how memory is presented in the Catullan corpus – in the case of this article, emotional episodic memory – is to acknowledge the usefulness of memory as a means of determining a hierarchy of experiential significance. Of course, this is only if one were to take the *Carmina* as a direct transcription of the poet's experiences, which should be attended by the analytical caveat that the extant verse of Catullus encompasses all the most important events 'in the life of the poet'. With what remains, and reading the poems as an expression of self,<sup>17</sup> it is noteworthy that the two poems that include detailed and explicit use of fantasy as part of memory evocation – poems 65 and 68 – are based on the death of

<sup>16</sup> James (1905 [1890]) 2: 476 writes: 'the free and powerful flow of thoughts ... This free and powerful flow means that brain-paths of association and memory have more and more organized themselves ...'.

<sup>17</sup> There have been suggestions that Catullus (and other poets) engage in *faux* subjectivity, and while these have been, in part, responses to the Romanticism of scholars such as Schwabe (1862), and are thus somewhat understandable, there has yet to be a definitive argument for the artificiality of a constructed Catullan poetic *persona*.

Catullus' brother,<sup>18</sup> with poem 68 also including the end of Catullus' relationship with Lesbia. This would suggest that these two events, particularly the death of the brother, are the most important experiences in the life of the poet. Poem 65, which is a cover letter to Hortalus – as poem 68 is a letter to Allius – also takes form and shape through memory evocation, stream-of-consciousness, and an experimental structure. Therefore, as a final word on Catullus' fantastical memories in poem 68 and the writing of trauma, a brief discussion of poem 65 seems both appropriate and useful.<sup>19</sup>

Poem 65 bears many similarities to poem 68. Not only is there the theme of fraternal death – and fraternal mourning – but a letter to a friend, a poetic gift, and a reflection on memory. In fact, memory is both present and absent in poem 65: the memory of the death of his brother is on Catullus' mind, causing intense emotional and creative turmoil and, in contrast, memory is also failing the poet who cannot attend to short-term requests. Like poem 68, poem 65 signals the state of Catullus' grief through the equation of form with content. For example, poem 65 is comprised of one single sentence of twenty-four lines, including an abrupt parenthesis beginning at *l.* 5, which ends at *l.* 14. Oliensis (2009: 27) notes the 'textual unconscious of poem 65', which she suggests – in somewhat contradictory terms – 'is produced in the interstices of its orderly syntax',<sup>20</sup> and Godwin (1995: 176) draws attention to 'its main verb being in lines 15–16' and the fact that 'the poem reads like a spontaneous outpouring of grief for his brother filtered through the poetic artistry of the medium.' And, like poem 68, the structure – though arguably another example of stream-of-consciousness with a decidedly detectable sense of randomness – can sustain a structural analysis, as presented by Godwin (1995: 176):

- 1–4 poet's inability to write
- 5–8 brother's death stated
- 9–12 apostrophe to brother
- 13–14 Procne simile
- 15–16 poet to Hortalus
- 17–18 image of carelessness

<sup>18</sup> Of course, there is also the very clear, unadorned poem 101. And while this poem is short, epitaph-like, it too is about memory. Continuing his interpretation of the brother poems (as outlined in n. 12 above), Conte (2007 [1971]: 174 n. 15) speaks to the theme of fantastical-mythical memory as addressed in this article with his words on the Troy imagery in poem 101: 'now, the harshness of his grief soothed by time, Catullus, before the tomb of the brother buried in the land of myth, can discover – in order to pay honor to his own dead – the memory of those heroes with whom he would now wish him merged.' Conte is correct in noting the emotional differentiation between the expressions of grief in poems 65 and 68, and poem 101. Clarke (2008) 133 rightly points to the epitaph form of the latter poem as an explanation for this differentiation: 'the poetic form of the inscription affects the nature of the lament: as a metrical form of expression, it makes use of prior poetic representations of mourning and thus has a tendency to be more stylised and prescribed.'

<sup>19</sup> For scholarship on the poem dealing with matters that concern us here, cf. Clarke (2008); McCarthy (2019) 198–200.

<sup>20</sup> Earlier in the analysis of poem 65, Oliensis (2009) 26 comments on both its and poem 68's 'opacity and waywardness' and their 'unreadability'.

## 19–24 simile of girl and apple

Godwin (1995: 176) also provides a twofold division based on ll. 1–12 and ll. 13–24, which is part of his case for an ‘elegantly symmetrical’ structure.<sup>21</sup> Like poem 68, especially its strange simile of Laudamia and Protesilaus with its surface-level ‘lack of fit’, poem 65 retains an essence of form that can, eventually, be gently teased out. Additionally, as with my discussion of poem 68, memory in poem 65 is also classified as emotional episodic memory that involves fantasy (Procne, and the *uirgo*). What distinguishes the treatment of memory in both elegies is the self-reflexive awareness of the poet’s loss of memory. Catullus evokes metaphors of memory loss as words vainly trusted to the winds (ll. 17–18) and as pouring out of one’s mind (l. 18) before the final image of the forgetful girl whose predicament concludes the poem (ll. 19–24). On the simile of the forgetful girl, McCarthy (2019: 199) rightly notes the symbol of the poet’s self-presentation, which ‘also expands on the claim that the speaker did not want Hortalus to think he had forgotten his promise’.

Memory is fractured and so fractures. It fractures when it is recalled in words both spoken and written. It surfaces amid competing narratives, erupting at relevant and inopportune moments. In this way, it is made manifest, as Oliensis suggests, as an unconscious interruption. And, additionally and importantly, such disruptions of thought emerge in unconsciously ungovernable ways. The memory that involves trauma in the form of the death of a loved one or the death of a relationship marred by betrayal sometimes evades conscious or logical expression. Hence, Oliensis (2009: 49) poses the right rhetorical questions in relation to poem 68: ‘Is Catullus mourning an erotic or fraternal loss? Or have the two somehow gotten so tangled up with each other as to be no longer readily distinguishable?’ These are key questions, and I would argue that Catullus *is* mourning both types of love that *have* become intermingled. A caveat is, however, that the issue raised by the second question points to the complex intermingling of the two states of mourning. And while this merging of the two events makes for a ‘tangled up’ reading experience, it does ultimately communicate two distinct emotional situations, which in turn reveals the genius of the choice of metre: one of love, and mourning. Moving away from the Freudian model of mourning predicated on the gradual withdrawal of libidinal fixation from what is lost, Oliensis (2009: 26) suggests Derrida’s ‘mid-mourning’ as more applicable to poem 68 because it speaks to the poet’s state of dwelling in ‘the anguished middle, half-remembering, half-forgetting’.<sup>22</sup> This alternative reading reminds us why Catullus haphazardly disregards or forgets the Muses as the font of all memory knowledge and

<sup>21</sup> Both Fordyce (1961) 325 and Quinn (1970) 351–2 praise the structure.

<sup>22</sup> For Freud’s model of mourning, see Freud (1957 [1917]); for Derrida’s ‘mid-mourning’ see Derrida (1987 [1980] 335). Clarke (2008) 136 raises similar points in relation to poem 65, drawing attention to the adjective *Lethaeo* as ‘an allusion to the fear of forgetting for Lethe was of course the river of forgetfulness’. The fear of loss of memory is reciprocal in this metaphor, as Clarke suggests, for the river stands in for the poet’s own fears of forgetfulness and presages his brother drinking from the river that will cause him to forget his earthly life.

artistic inspiration in poem 68, which Derrida (1994 [1993] xviii) might be tempted to see as the embrace of a 'being-with specters', which is 'not only but also, a politics of memory, of inheritance, and of generations'.<sup>23</sup>

Catullus is mindful of forgetfulness. Several times throughout the corpus, he writes of the crime of being *immemor*; from the earlier pieces in the long poems, namely poems 64 and 65, Catullus is particularly attuned to this theme, castigating Theseus, the *perfidus* (64.132), as a result of his forgetfulness and evoking the blush of the forgetful *uirgo* who absentmindedly lets the apple fall from her lap (65.19–24). Memory is on Catullus' mind in the long poems. Indeed, his own memory is one of the major themes in poem 68 and it is not well-matched to literary articulation (or any form of linear articulation, for that matter). Therefore, to put forward an extreme reading of one of the key arguments of the separatists, and as a testimony to memory, trauma and dialectical inarticulacy, one could suggest that the issue of the name of the addressee, which has constituted much academic labour, is not an indication of two separate poems, nor a scribal error, but a genuine mistake on the part of a poet engulfed by suffering.<sup>24</sup> How far astray do expressions of grief, trauma, and memories go when one tries to write about them? When does Janan's argument for self-consciousness yield to Oliensis' argument for unconsciousness? What does an authentic expression of remembering grief look like? Put another way, Skinner (2003: 169) identifies as a concern of Catullus in poem 68 the 'fundamental question – whether art is conceivable in the face of suffering and death'.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> In an extension on his philosophies on mid-mourning from 1980, Derrida turns to ghosts in 1993. On abandoning the Muses in poem 65, cf. McCarthy (2019) 199.

<sup>24</sup> The name of the addressee dictates the rules in virtually every discussion of poem 68 and is the lynch-pin of the separatist platform, it being doubtful whether 'anyone would have made a case for the disunity of 68 had the manuscript variation in appellatives not existed' (Janan 1994: 174 n. 26). Of course, editing the text can produce one addressee (as follows). The addressee is named six times: 68.11, 30, 41, 50, 66, and 150. At ll. 11 and 30 the name must begin with a consonant (hence Mynors' 'Mani' = 'Manius'). In the other lines, however, the name appears to be Allius and in l. 50 the name must begin with a vowel. So, one must decide whether Manius/Mallius/Manlius and Allius are the same person. The addressee of poem 68 can be considered to be the same, however, because V's *mali* can be taken as a corruption of *mi Alli* at 68.11 and 30. Undermining this whole discussion, however, is the (highly unlikely) possibility that Catullus may actually be writing to himself, which could be predicated on what one could interpret as the poem's unhappy wordplay: *allius* from *allos* (an alter ego); *manius* from *manes* (a shady or ghostly recipient).

<sup>25</sup> Clarke (2008) 138 raises a similar interpretation of the textual problem of poem 65.9, namely, the lacuna 'for which no satisfactory lines has been devised', commenting that 'the omission of the hexameter at this point in the poem could be a deliberate ploy on Catullus' part. The missing line in no way detracts from the power of the poem; in fact it enhances the effect of the preceding couplet, mimicking the silence of the grave.' While Clarke takes the lacuna as a deliberate omission for artistic purposes, I would regard it, in keeping with the point about the confused name of the addressee in poem 68, as a more organic 'slip' in the face of trauma. Of course, this flies in the face of all sensible Catullan scholarship. Therefore, if I were to pursue Clarke's idea but argue for an unconscious rather than a conscious lacuna, I would need to present the poem – not as the result of scribal error – but ultimately, as an unfinished work as faithfully recorded in all extant manuscripts. These thoughts and suggestions require a brief return to the issue of the lacuna at

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## Appendix I: Structural Division of Poem 68

- 1–10 Allius' letter  
Allius' request for *munera*  
Allius' misfortune = absence of his *uita*
- 11–14 Catullus' misfortune (not specified)  
Preparation for rejection of request for *munera*  
**Includes memory flashback – ll. 13–14**
- 15–18 Catullus' youth and *amor*  
**Constitutes memory flashback**
- 19–26 Catullus' misfortune: death of the brother = Catullus' reason for rejection of request for *munera*  
**Includes memory flashback – ll. 20–4**
- 27–30 Allius' letter  
Catullus' misfortune: Lesbia
- 31–2 Catullus' reason for rejection of request for *munera* = death of brother, and Lesbia
- 33–40 Catullus reason for rejection of request for *munera* = absence of library
- 41–50 Catullus compelled to accept request for *munera* = Allius' assistance  
**Includes memory flashback – ll. 41–2**
- 51–72 Catullus' misfortune: tortuous *amor* for Lesbia  
Allius' assistance: provision of *domus* for Catullus and Lesbia  
Lesbia (as a bride at Allius' *domus*)  
**Constitutes memory flashback**
- 73–86 Mythical exemplum I: Laudamia (compared to Lesbia as a bride who comes to the *domus* of her *uir*)
- 87–90 Mythical exemplum II: Trojan War / Helen (cause of Laudamia's bereavement)
- 91–100 Catullus' misfortune: death of brother (who dies at Troy)  
**Constitutes memory flashback**
- 101–4 Mythical exemplum III: Trojan War / Paris (cause of Laudamia's bereavement)
- 105–8 Mythical exemplum IV: Laudamia (her bereavement)
- 109–16 Mythical exemplum V: Hercules (the abyss he must drain – compared to Laudamia's bereavement and passionate *amor*)
- 117–18 Mythical exemplum VI: Laudamia (her sexual *amor*)
- 119–24 Real life exemplum: Roman family (compared to Laudamia's familial *amor*)
- 125–8 Nature exemplum: dove (compared to Laudamia's familial *amor*)
- 129–30 Mythical exemplum VII: Laudamia (her *furores*)
- 131–7 Lesbia (compared to Laudamia)  
**Includes memory flashback – ll. 131–4**
- 138–40 Mythical exemplum VIII: Juno–Jupiter (compared to Catullus [Juno] & Lesbia [Jupiter])
- 141–8 Lesbia  
**Constitutes memory flashback**

68.142–3, discussed above. There I suggested that *l.* 141 and *l.* 144 could be joined, but of course this is impossible in terms of poem 65 because of the need for a hexameter at *l.* 9.



- 152 Marguerite Johnson
- 149–52 Allius' request fulfilled: Catullus has provided the *munus*
- 153–4 The gods: they will add *munera*  
Allius and his *uita*
- 156 Catullus and Lesbia  
**Constitutes memory flashback**
- 157–8 Corrupt lines
- 159–60 Lesbia  
**Includes memory flashback – l. 156**

## Appendix II: Memory in the Catullan Corpus

- (i) emotional episodic memory without fantasy  
Poem 3.6–20: happiness and nostalgia for Lesbia's *passer*  
Poem 8.3–8: sorrow for happy days with Lesbia  
Poem 28: anger at Memmius' treatment of Catullus in Bithynia  
Poem 30: sorrow for Alfenus' disregard and abandonment of Catullus  
Poem 53: happiness and affection for Calvus' performance in court  
Poem 72: sorrow for happy days with Lesbia  
Poem 76: grief for the end of the relationship with Lesbia
- (ii) emotional episodic memory with fantasy  
Poem 65: grief and bereavement over the death of his brother  
Poem 68: grief and bereavement over the death of his brother *and* grief for the end of the relationship with Lesbia
- (iii) emotional episodic memory through a fictional persona  
Poem 4.6–26: nostalgia for the little yacht's younger days  
Poem 63.63–9: grief for Attis' pre-castration youth  
Poem 64.149–51: anger and sorrow for Ariadne's personal sacrifice for Theseus

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