

This paper revisits the grammatical gender of *pumex* (“pumice”) at Catullus 1.2 and provides neglected evidence to support Servius’ claim that Catullus here uses the noun in the feminine gender.

Goold (1981) presents compelling reasons to retain the manuscript reading *arido* at Catullus 1.2 against the lone testimony of Servius’ *arida*. The masculine gender has significant support: attestation in all extant manuscripts of Catullus; quotation from three ancient authors; an imitation by Martial; and, most damningly, the exclusively masculine use of *pumex* throughout Latinity. In capably discrediting Servius, Goold removes the best, perhaps only, evidence for *arida*.

While scholars have attempted to account for feminine *pumex* by appealing to a Greek intertext (Klotz 1931; Wiseman 1979) or humanist testimony (Thomson 1997), only Renehan (1998) has effectively challenged Goold. By placing the alleged change of gender within a larger poetic context, he counters Goold’s blanket assertion that “ambiguous genders in Latin have no literary significance but constitute a morphological problem” (Goold 1981.234). I confront the second part of Goold’s argument: is Servius a reliable source for reconstituting the text of Catullus? Serv. *Aen.* 12.587 reads in Thilo’s edition thus (DS tradition is underlined): *IN PUMICE autem iste masculino genere posuit, et hunc sequimur. nam et Plautus ita dixit: licet Catullus dixerit feminino.* By comparing the syntax of this note to the practice of DS elsewhere, I argue that the references to both Plautus and Catullus derive from Servius’ source. If that source is Donatus, as scholars commonly maintain, then Goold’s forceful claim that Servius does not have access to a text of Catullus becomes irrelevant, since Donatus elsewhere shows first-hand familiarity with the poet. We therefore have in Donatus an earlier and more reliable witness than Servius to attest that Catullus did indeed write *arida ... pumice*.

#### **Literature Cited:**

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