

CAMWS 2021
Inclusus aut exclusus lector? The reader's postures in Catullus

Link to the abstract:

<https://camws.org/sites/default/files/meeting2021/abstracts/2525ReaderposturesCatullus.pdf>

1. Catullus, Poem 50, transl. P. Green, 2005, with modifications

Being at leisure yesterday, we had great fun, Licinius, with impromptu verses (on agreement to be light and witty), each alternately scribbling little squiblets, (5) playing around with every kind of metre, matching jest with jest, vintage with vintage. When I left I was so high on your dazzling charm, Licinius, and your smart one-liners, eating afforded me (ah poor me!) no pleasure, (10) sleep just would not quietly close my eyelids—there I lay on my bed in mad excitement, tossing, eager for morning, which would let me be with you, talk with you. But when, exhausted by such work, my limbs were sprawled across my (15) truckle bed, half dead from all the effort, then I made this poem for you, sweetheart, so you could see in it the depth of my emotion. Now please don't be thoughtless, don't despise our prayers, we beg of you, precious, lest hereafter (20) Nemesis catches you, demands repayment: she's a vehement goddess, don't provoke her.

Hesternō, **Licini**, die otiosi multum **lusimus** in **meis** tabellis, ut **conuenerat** esse **delicatos**: **scribens** uersiculos **uterque** nostrum (5) **ludebat** numero modo **hoc** modo **illoc**, **reddens** **mutua** per iocum atque uinum. atque illinc **abii** **tuo** **lepore** **incensus**, **Licini**, **facetiisque**, ut nec **me** **miserum** cibus iuuaret (10) nec somnus tegeter quiete **ocellos**, sed toto **indomitus** furore lecto **uersarer**, **cupiens** uidere lucem, ut **tecum** **loquerer** **simulque** ut **essem**. at **defessa** labore **membra** postquam (15) **semimortua** lectulo **iacebant**, hoc, **iucunde**, **tibi** poema feci, ex quo **perspiceres** **meum** **dolorem**. nunc **audax** caue sis, precesque **nostras**, **oramus**, **caue** despuas (spit), **ocelle**, (20) ne poenas Nemesis repositat a **te**. est uehemens dea: laedere hanc **caueto**.

2. Catullus, Poem 36, transl. P. Green, 2005, with modifications

You, Volusius' *Annals*, shitty sheets, please carry out this vow made by my girlfriend: she to holy Venus and to Cupid swore that, should she get me back, and if I (5) stopped unleashing my harsh iambs on her, she'd serve up all the choicest writings of the dead-worst poet to the crippled god for roasting on funereal firewood. She, the dead-worst girl herself, supposed this vow to all the (10) gods a **witty joke**, so now, O Thou formed from the dark blue sea, who hauntest all Thy holy sites like Idalium and Urii's open roadstead, Ancona, reedy Cnidus, Amathus too and Golgi, not to mention (15) Durrachium, famed Adriatic tavern-

Annales Volusi, **cacata carta**, uotum **soluite** pro mea puella. nam sanctae Veneri Cupidinique uouit, si sibi restitutus essem desissemque truces uibrare iambs, electissima pessimi poetae scripta tardipedi deo daturam infelicibus ustulanda lignis. et hoc pessima se puella uidit (10) **iocose** ac **lepide** uouere diuis. nunc o caeruleo creata ponto, quae sanctum Idalium Vriosque apertos quaeque Ancona Cnidumque harundinosam colis quaeque Amathunta quaeque Golgos (15) quaeque Durrachium Hadriae tabernam,

note this vow as entered and discharged, and not entirely **charmless** or **unwitty**.
You, though, meanwhile serve the fire as fuel,
one great load of countrified ineptness,
(20) You, Volusius' *Annals*, shitty sheets.

acceptum face redditumque uotum,
si non **illepudum** neque **inuenustum** est.
at **uos** interea **uenite** in ignem,
pleni raris et inficetarum
(20) *Annales* Volusi, **cacata carta**.

3. Catullus, Poem 14, transl. P. Green, 2005, with modifications

More than my own eyes I love you, Calvus,
you great tease: were it not so, for that ghastly
gift of yours I'd hate you like-Vatinius!
What did I ever do or say to make you
(5) finish me off with all these rotten poets?
May high gods heap troubles on that client
who sent you such a parcel of blashemers!
Still, if (as I suspect) this new *recherché*
gift came to you from Sulla, Man of Letters,
(10) I don't take it amiss, but am delighted,
seeing that all your work has not been wasted.
Great gods, what a disgusting little booklet,
and you carefully chose the time to send it
to your Catullus, so that you would kill him
(15) on that best of all days, the Saturnalia!
No, you won't get away with this, you smart-
ass—
first thing tomorrow morning I'll go round
the booksellers' stalls, buy Caesius, Aquinus,
(20) Suffenus, all the poison on the market,
pay you back with a counterdose of torture.
Meanwhile, you lot, out —back where you
hailed your
bad feet from, time's trash, appalling poets!

Ni **te** plus oculis meis amarem,
iucundissime Calue, munere isto
odissem **te** odio Vatiniano:
nam quid feci ego quidue sum locutus,
(5) cur me tot male **perderes** poetis?
isti di mala multa dent clienti,
qui tantum **tibi** misit impiorum.
quod si, ut suspicor, hoc nouum ac repertum
munus dat **tibi** Sulla litterator,
(10) non est mi male, sed bene ac beate,
quod non dispereunt **tui** labores.
di magni, horribilem et sacrum libellum!
quem **tu** scilicet ad **tuum** Catullum
misti, continuo ut die periret,
(15) Saturnalibus, optimo dierum!
non non hoc **tibi**, **salse**, sic abibit.
nam, si luxerit, ad librariorum
curram scrinia, **Caesios, Aquinos,**
Suffenum, omnia colligam uenena,
(20) ac **te** his suppliciis remunerabor.
uos hinc interea **ualete abite**
illuc, unde malum pedem **attulistis**,
saecli **incommoda, pessimi poetae**.

4. Catullus, Poem 16, transl. P. Green, 2005, with modifications

I'll fuck your ass and fuck your mouth
Queen Aurelius, Furius the faggot,
who dared judge me on the basis of my verses-
they mayn't be manly: does that make me
indecent?
(5) Squeaky-clean, that's what every proper poet's
person should be, but not his bloody squiblets,
which, in the last resort, lack salt and flavor
if not "unmanly" and rather less than decent,
just the ticket to work a furious itch up,
(10) I won't say in boys, but in those hirsute
clods incapable of wiggling their hard haunches.
Just because you've read about my countless
thousand kisses, you think I'm less than virile?
I'll fuck your ass and fuck your mouth!

Pedicabo ego uos et irrumabo,
Aureli pathice et cinaede Furi,
qui **me** ex uersiculis **meis** putastis,
quod sunt molliculi, parum pudicum.
(5) nam castum esse decet pium poetam
ipsum, uersiculos nihil necesse est;
qui tum denique habent salem ac leporem,
si sunt molliculi ac parum pudici,
et quod pruriat incitare possunt,
(10) non **dico** pueris, sed his pilosis
qui duros nequeunt mouere lumbos.
uos, quod milia multa basiorum
legistis, male **me** marem **putatis?**
pedicabo ego uos et irrumabo.

5. Catullus, Poem 42, transl. P. Green, 2005, with modifications

Come, you hendecasyllables, in force now,
each last one of you, from every quarter—
this vile slut seems under the impression
I'm a walking joke, won't give me back my
(5) writing tablets —really, can you beat it?
Let's go after her, call for their surrender!
Which one is she, you ask? The one you see there,
her with the vulgar stride, the quite revolting
stage-door laugh, the face like a French poodle's.
(10) Close in round her now, demand in chorus:
"Rotten slut, give back the writing tablets!
Give back, rotten slut, the writing tablets!"
Not one farthing she cares, the filthy scrubber
(fill in any nastier name you think of).
(15) Still, don't let's make this our final effort—
even though we can't do more, let's raise a
burning blush on the bitch's brazen face, so
all shout one more time, and even louder,
"Rotten slut, give back the writing tablets!"
(20) Give back, rotten slut, the writing tablets!"
Still this gets us nowhere, she remains un-
moved, you'll need to change your tune and method.
Try this, then, see if it gets you further:
"Pure chaste maid, give back the writing tablets!"

Adeste, hendecasyllabi, quot estis
omnes undique, quotquot estis omnes.
iocum me putat esse moecha turpis,
et negat mihi nostra reddituram
(5) pugillaria, si pati potestis.
persequamur eam et reflagitemus.
quae sit, quaeritis? illa, quam uidetis
turpe incedere, mimice ac moleste
ridentem catuli ore Gallicani.
(10) circumsistite eam, et reflagitate,
"moecha putida, redde codicillos,
redde putida moecha, codicillos!"
non assis facis? o lutum, lupanar,
aut si perditius potest quid esse.
(15) sed non est tamen hoc satis
putandum.
quod si non aliud potest ruborem
ferreo canis exprimamus ore.
conclamate iterum altiore uoce.
"moecha putida, redde codicillos,
(20) redde, putida moecha, codicillos!"
sed nil proficimus, nihil mouetur.
mutanda est ratio modusque uobis,
siquid proficere amplius potestis:
"pudica et proba, redde codicillos."

6. Catullus, Poem 51, transl. P. Green, 2005, with modifications

In my eyes he seems like a god's equal,
he, if I dare say so, surpasses the gods,
who now face to face, uninterrupted,
watches and hears you
(5) sweetly laughing —that sunders unhappy me
from all my senses: the instant I catch sight of
you now, Lesbia, dumbness grips my <voice, it
dies on my vocal cords>,
my tongue goes torpid, and through my body
(10) thin fire lances down, my ears are ringing
with their own thunder, while night curtains both my
eyes into darkness.
Leisure, Catullus, is dangerous to you:
leisure urges you into extravagant behavior:
(15) leisure in time gone by has ruined kings and
prosperous cities.

Ille mi par esse deo uidetur,
ille, si fas est, superare diuos,
qui sedens aduersus identidem te
spectat et audit
(5) dulce ridentem, misero quod omnis
eripit sensus mihi: nam simul te,
Lesbia, aspexi, nihil est super mi
<vocis in ore>
lingua sed torpet, tenuis sub artus
(10) flamma demanat, sonitu suoapte
tintinant aures, gemina teguntur
lumina nocte.
(15) otium, Catulle, tibi molestum est:
otio exsultas nimiumque gestis:
otium et reges prius et beatas
perdidit urbes.

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