

BERNADETTE MAYER'S CATULLAN EXPERIMENTS

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CAMWS

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BERNADETTE MAYER, B. 1945

Selected publications

1972 [rep. 2020]: *Memory*

1975: *Ceremony Latin (1964)*

1978: *Eruditio ex Memoria*

1982: *Midwinter Day*

1989: *Sonnets*

1990: *Formal Field of Kissing*

1992: *The Bernadette Mayer Reader*

2016: *Works and Days*



Bernadette Mayer, 1978

SONNET [YOU JERK YOU DIDN'T CALL ME UP]



You jerk you didn't call me up
I haven't seen you in so long
You probably have a fucking tan
& besides that instead of making love tonight
You're drinking your parents to the airport
I'm through with you bourgeois boys
All you ever do is go back to ancestral comforts
Only money can get—even Catullus was rich but

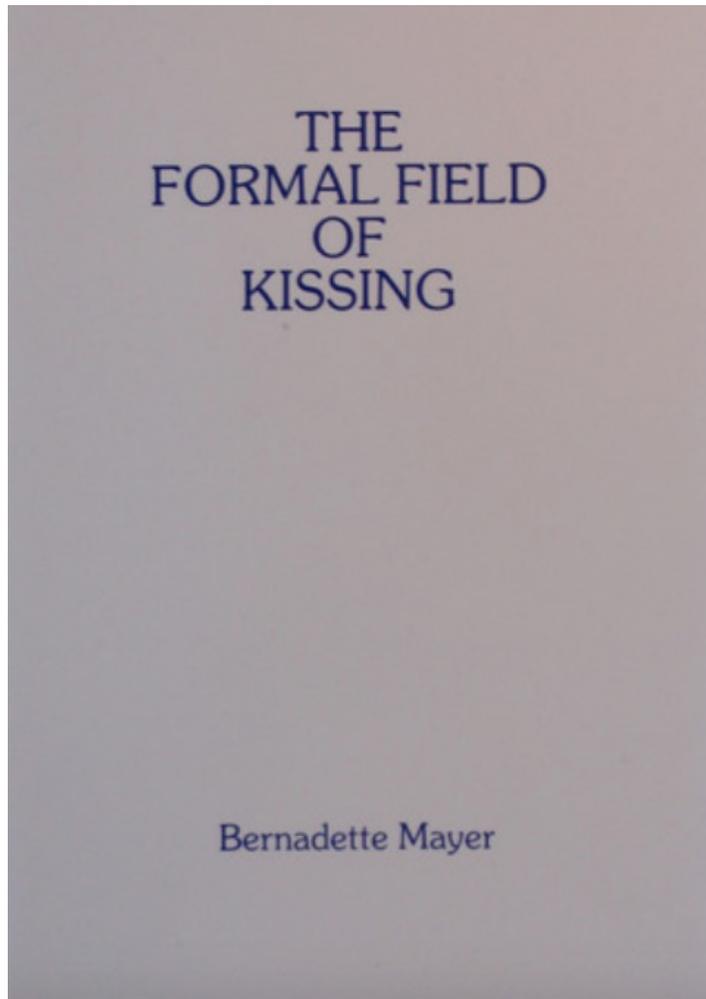
Nowadays you guys settle for a couch
By a soporific color cable t.v. set
Instead of any arc of love, no wonder
The G.I. Joe team blows it every other time

Wake up! It's the middle of the night
You can either make love or die at the hands of the Cobra Commander

To make love, turn to page 121.

To die, turn to page 172.

THE FORMAL FIELD OF KISSING (1990)



Quod in Libro Continentur:

Catullus #XLVIII	
Mellitos oculos tuos, Iuventi	2
I'd kiss your eyes three hundred thousand times	3
On Catullus #2	3
Horace Ode IV	
Solvitur acris hiems grata vice veris et Favoni	4
The bitterness of winter yields to spring and gentle winds	5
DWI (after Horace's fourth Ode)	6
Epigram: I'm the six-pack of Coke . . .	7
Poor John Egan Epigram	7
Epigram: La Clinica Dental	7
Sepulchral God the Father Epigram	7
Two from the Greek Anthology	9
Laundry, School and Food Epigrams	9
Catullus #XCIX	
Surripui tibi dum ludis, mellite Iuventi	12
Honey while you played I stole	13
After Catullus and Horace	14
Epigram: Some men think . . .	14
A Philosophy for Boys	15
Epigram after Auden	16
Epigram: I'm the pen your lover writes with . . .	16
Epigram: I was the song I sang . . .	16
Epigram: I'm an old known paint pigment . . .	16
Toy Epigrams	17
Catullus #LXVII	
O dulci iucunda viro, iucunda parenti	19
O sweet delightful door, a pleasure to the husband	21
Man and Woman Epigrams	24
Large Imitation Classical Lunc	25
Epigram: I'm the merest ball . . .	26
Epigram: I'm the bottle of beer . . .	26
American Imitation Amatory Epigram	26
Epigram: My daughter made a spider . . .	26
Amatory Epigram	27
Hendecasyllables on Catullus #33	27
Catullus #XLII	
Adeste, hendecasyllabi, quot estis	28
C'mere, all of you, my hendecasyllables	29

“CATULLUS 6 #48”
FROM *FORMAL FIELD*
OF KISSING

I'd kiss your eyes three hundred thousand times
If you would let me, Juventius, kiss them
All the time, your darling eyes, eyes of honey
And even if the formal field of kissing
Had more kisses than there's corn in August's fields
I still wouldn't have had enough of you



“AFTER CATULLUS AND HORACE” FROM *FORMAL FIELD OF KISSING*



only the manners of centuries ago can teach me
how to address you my lover as who you are
O Sestius, how could you put up with my children
thinking all the while you were bearing me as in your mirror
it doesn't matter anymore if spring wreaks its fiery
or lamblike dawn on my new-found asceticism, some joke
I wouldn't sleep with you or any man if you paid me
and most of you poets don't have the cash anyway
so please rejoin your fraternal books forever
while you miss in your securest sleep Ms. Rosy-fingered dawn
who might've been induced to digitalize a part of you
were it not for your self-induced revenge of undoneness
it's good to live without a refrigerator! why bother
to chill the handiwork of Ceres and of Demeter?
and of the lonesome Sappho. let's have it warm for now.

Gratia:

Don Yorty worked with me on all the Catullus poems and though we often made separate translations, I consider all my translations to be collaborative works with Don. When we did Catullus #67, I translated the Catullus voice and Don the voice of the Door. Thanks to all my teachers: Sister Immaculata, Sister Aloysia, Sister Felician, and especially Julia Budenz with whom I studied Greek for the first time and who held onto my translation of Horace's 4th Ode until I was old enough to read it. And thank you, of course, to Rosemary Mayer for having the best dictionaries, knowing what the frank language of the Greek and Latin poets really means, and for colluding with me about words and syntax ad infinitum. Salvete!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS TO *FFK* |

Online resources

[PennSound recordings](#)

[Podcast on Mayer and Catullus](#)

Website: <https://www.bernadettemayer.com/>

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