

Catullus' Juventian Cycle
and Human Sexuality

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I. INTRODUCTION

Gaius Valerius Catullus, an upper-class Roman poet of the first century B.C., redefined poetry in his day. Catullus, along with a small group called the *neoterics* or the "new poets", interjected subjectivity within their poetry and included themselves and their experiences in poetry.

Catullus was one of the first of this group. His great impact on poetry is in part due to his use of obscene language, sharp attacks on the recipients of his verses, and the radical break he had taken from traditional poetry of the Roman second century and earlier. Horace and Virgil, were great poets then and now; their method was closer to historical reporting, whereas Catullus included personal feelings in his poetry. Although this did not necessarily make him a popular poet of the time, there is no doubt he helped to cause a revolution within Roman Literature.

As stated, some of Catullus' poetry includes obscenities and many of these are highly sexual. Thus it is within the framework of Catullus' poetry that one can begin to ascertain certain notions of his attitudes toward sexuality. Through his use of the "stern old men", the obsessive relations he desired with a certain woman, or the youthful male with whom he sought *multa basiorum* "many kisses", Catullus gives us three distinct attitudes toward sexuality. Although Roman sexual terminology and ideologies are starkly different from ours, Catullus defines much of that sexuality. It is through his use of technique, and word choice, as well as characters, that Catullus reveals part of the Roman world, specifically its views and attitudes toward human sexuality.

II. CATULLUS: BIOGRAPHY

What is generally known about the ancient poet has mostly been gathered from his poetic works. There is little else available from other authors of his own time or of later ages. This is possibly an indication of his popularity or lack thereof, or shows how comfortable or uncomfortable others were with his works. Catullus states his poems are *nungae*, mere "trifles", keeping in line with most other poets' downplaying the importance of their verse. There is reason to believe Catullus had a small audience; this would seem the result of his own intentions being contrary to the needs of his audience (Martin 10-11).

Catullus was born some time around 87 to 84 B.C.; the exactness of his dates are contested. Jerome sets Catullus' death sometime around 57 B.C., but there is enough evidence to set the date of birth closer to 84 B.C. (Merrill xiv) and his death closer to 54: he died about age thirty. It is likely that Catullus came from an aristocratic merchant family. One can ascertain this from the social mobility he enjoyed in addition to the education he received in Rome, the educational capital of his day. He also "owned a villa at Sirmio" (Merrill xvi). One may also see the wealth of this man from his ease in including Caesar and other popular people of the time in his verse, even though that verse might be crass and scandalous toward these high political leaders. Roman poets of the first century were not usually thought of not as independent of the legislators and senators. Rather poets were dependent on the senators and legislators to uphold the values of the time, and to shape the Roman community (Martin 12).

From the shifts which occur in his poetry, we know of three major shifts that occurred in his lifetime:

(1). The obsessive relationship he forms with a woman he meets in either Verona or Rome, whom he comes to identify as 'Lesbia' in his poetry. This name is thought to be a pseudonym possibility (her real identity being that of Clodia Metelli) to protect her real identity as a married woman. Since Catullus places her in a love affair with himself, the punishment for such an offense for both involved could be quite severe (Martin 43).

(2). The next major event one can gather from his verse is the time he spent in Bithynia in politics. This was time he had to spend away from Rome and the woman with whom he was infatuated. Catullus grew tired and disenchanted with politics and wanted to write about people not landscapes (Small 76). He came to prefer poetry and he would develop a very strong talent in this.

(3). One final event which seems to have made a heavy mark on his poetry was the death of his brother, the only relative ever cited in any of his poetry. It is thought that Catullus developed the relationship with Juventius, a young man of the *Juventii gens*, clan of the Juventians, sometime around or just before his brother's death. As was sometimes the case, Catullus could have taken Juventius under his wing as a protégé. All through Catullus' love episodes, he is quite troubled by losing Lesbia's love for other suitors, by Aurelius' lust for Juventius, by Furius' lust for Juventius, and by Ravidus' love for Juventius. Catullus has a terrible fear that his loved ones will betray him and leave him for others. This sense of betrayal and need for commitment shines forth in his *Libellus*.

III. LIBELLUS

Catullus' *Libellus*, "little book of poems" consists of 113 poems all of varying lengths. This text comes to us through a codex that was found sometime in the 1300's, known as the *Codex Veronensis* also (V) (Martin 31-32). The text of all of the poems selected for translation come from E.T. Merrill's edition. Most of these poems come from the Juventian cycle, which Merrill cites as 15,16, (?), 21,24, 40, (?), 48, 81, and 99 (Merrill 34). Also included are two other poems which relate to the themes of love and human sexuality. These are poems 2, the *Passer* or "Sparrow" poem, and 101, in which Catullus laments the death of his brother.

There are also two other poems, 23 and 26, which Merrill says are part of the Juventian cycle. Because the themes covered in these do not relate as well as the others, or the themes included are already covered in the other poems, they are excluded from this analysis. One note: the ordering of the poems has been a topic of debate. Some translators hold the idea that the order we have them today was the order Catullus intended. No matter: there is little to show the poems are chronologically in order.

IV. SELECT POEMS FROM THE *LIBELLUS*: TRANSLATION AND
COMMENTARY

-2-

Passer, deliciae meae puellae,
Quicum ludere, quem in sinu tenere,
cui primum digitum dare adpetenti
Et acris solet incitare morsus,
Cum desiderio meo nitenti
Carum nescio quid libet iocari
(Et solaciolum sui doloris,
Credo, ut tum grauis adquiescat ardor,)
Tecum ludere sicut ipsa possem
Et tristis animi leuare curas!

...

Tam gratum est mihi quam ferunt puellae
Pernici aureolum fuisse malum,
Quod zonam soluit diu ligatam.

Sparrow, darling of my girl,
with whom she is accustomed to play, whom she accustomed to hold in
her fold,
to whom attacking she is accustomed to give her fingertip (as you peck)
and to excite sharp bites,
when it is pleasing to my gleaming darling to play

dear something or other (games)
 (And it is a little solace for her pain of love,
 I believe, so that her sad ardor may rest);
 Oh, that I could play with you just as she herself
 and lighten the gloomy cares (of my heart)!

...

It is (i.e. would be) as pleasing to me as they say
 the gold apple was to the dangerous girl (Atalanta)
 which loosed (her) girdle too long bound.

Because of its charm and many subsequent speculative studies,
 poem 2 is one of the most famous from Catullus' book. It is also said to
 have been "very famous in Antiquity" (Jocelyn 441). The poem begins
 with the word *passer* which is either in the nominative or vocative case;
 most editors take this to be the vocative case (Phillimore 217). This
 identifies the sparrow as the tool through which Catullus is to share his
 feelings for his love, presumably Lesbia. But who/what is this sparrow
 supposed to represent? Catullus goes on to identify the sparrow as the
deliciae, "darling", of my girl. *Deliciae* is used here as a term of
 endearment. In lines 2-4 Catullus sees his lady holding and playing with
 the pet sparrow. Some have decided that the sparrow might be another
 suitor, with whom Lesbia is interested. But it would seem that if this were
 the case, Catullus would not spare this suitor from attack. Catullus would
 slight him with what he commonly called his *iambi* or iambic verse.

Then in verse 5 he says *desiderio meo nitenti*, a phrase which has a
 few classicists up in arms as to how this is correctly translated. This use of

the word *desiderio*, shows "a passionate desire for something once before enjoyed"; and *nitenti*, "of seductive beauty" (Merrill 4). So, it is quite possible to assume the relationship broke up for one reason or another before this poem was written. In any case, this desire to reunite proves this to be a poem of amorous pursuit.

In v.6 Catullus recognizes that his *puella* needs relief for her love pain and in the lines that follow on v.6 he notices his own need for relief. He sees how Lesbia's play with the sparrow lightens the gloomy cares of her mind; but again, referring to previous lines, Catullus clearly urges Lesbia to get back together with him. While urging her to join him he says her ardor is being relieved, but his *tristis curas* "gloomy cares" (v.8-10) are not easily forgotten, possibly implying that he has suffered the greater from their break-up (Small 33).

After v.10 a problem arises, for some translators believe there exists a lacuna, a break in a poem. The switch in mood from the subjunctive *possem* to the indicative *est* could imply a lacuna (Brauwinch 350). In the lines that follow v.11-13 the myth of Atalanta and the golden apple are referred to. If the poem is to be read as a unified whole, a review of the myth of Atalanta would be helpful. A woman who was attracted to unnatural things, like hunting, or going hiking through the woods, "male" things would be challenged to a race which would "loosen her girdle". She would challenge her suitors to a foot-race, knowing full well she was the fastest runner. Ultimately, she was challenged to a foot-race in which the competitor/suitor prayed for assistance and Aphrodite gave the young suitor a beautiful apple to trick the Atalanta with. While in the foot-race Hippomenes (the suitor) dropped the golden apple in front of her feet.

Atalanta stalled to pick up the apple, rendering her second across the line (Hamilton 245).

In vs.11-13, it seems the allusion to this myth likens the sparrow, which *deliciae mea puella* plays with, to the golden apple which Atalanta's last suitor placed in front of her as they raced, the race that ultimately saw her girdle loosened, a metaphor for the loss of her virginity. So it is that Catullus would enjoy playing with her sparrow as Atalanta seemed to desire the golden apple, for as we know, the story of Atalanta prior to her *zonam soluit* (loosened girdle), it became apparent that she desired unnatural practices. These unnatural practices could include fellatio, according to Giangrande (Jocelyn 430). Whether these last three lines were ever intended to go at the end of poem 2 will never be known. Martin believes they belong in poem 14, but if they belong on the end of poem 2, Martin's idea that the "apple is linked to the idea of erotic fulfillment" (Martin 126) is quite intriguing. With that mentioned, it seems probable that Catullus' allusion to the story of Atalanta shows his desire to be the sparrow.

Here is another interesting point, v. 9 has Catullus asking "if only I could play with you", "you" referring to the sparrow. Then we can take the last three lines, 11-13, as being Lesbia's response as an affirmation, as Atlanta has affirmed Hippomenes taking her in marriage (Kent354).

The *passer* poem has been a poem of much speculation, from Genovese, who observes Catullus' 'sparrow' "is actually a male organ" (Jocelyn 426), to Voss' additional comments that the poem 2 is on the topic of "self-manipulation" or masturbation (Jocelyn 429). He postulates that the writing of the poem provides relief or pleasure for Catullus, "the same

degree of pleasure as the sight of the genitals of Hippomenes gave to the hitherto virgin heroine Atlanta" (Jocelyn 429).

One other analysis from Giangrande suggests that Catullus' poem 2 is a case against masturbation. He emphasizes the fact that Atalanta really deplored *fututiones*, "vaginal penetration", and practiced unnatural sexual practices. The point of this analysis is that in the myth of Atalanta, the apple stands for *fututiones*, so when she is tricked, even though Atlanta hates vaginal penetration, she still picks up the apple, even though she still hates it (430). Each of these analyses offers some interesting speculation, some more relevant than others. But in essence, poem 2 emphasizes the deep love Catullus feels for Lesbia, and how he yearns for her.

-5-

Viuiamus, mea Lesbia, atque amemus,
 Rumoresque senum seueriorum
 Omnes unius aestimemus assis.
 Soles occidere et redire possunt:
 Nobis, cum semel occidit breuis lux,
 Nox est perpetua una dormienda.
 Da mi basia mille, deinde centum,
 Dein mille altera, dein secunda centum,
 Deinde usque altera mille, deinde centum,
 Dein, cum milia multa fecerimus,
 Conturbabimus illa, ne sciamus,
 Aut ne quis malus inuidere possit,

Cum tantum sciat esse basiorum.

Let us live my Lesbia, and let us love,
and rumors of the more stern old men
all together we can value these as a penny!

Suns are able to fall and return;
By us, when once the brief light has set,
night must be one perpetual sleeping.

Give me a thousand kisses, then one-hundred,
then another thousand, then a second hundred,
then straightway another thousand, then one-hundred.

Then, when we have achieved many thousands,
we shall confuse them, lest we know (how many)
or lest anyone evil be able to look at us with ill will,
when he (reference to stern old men) knows there have been so many
kisses.

Catullus exhorts Lesbia with the opening line, where to live and love are treated as equal. His is a plea in the subjunctive mood, which adds to the urgency. Then, in the following line, the poet tries to comfort Lesbia from worrying about the *senum severiorum*, the "stern old men", who are probably the "censors of the young" (Merrill 13), those who feared "displaced passions." Catullus is telling Lesbia to forget the past and the future but live for now. He tells her those "stern old men we can value as a penny". Which shows Catullus' contempt for the wisdom of the age. "In

a larger sense the old men stood metaphorically for the traditional values, for they were the *senes*, "sensible" ones (Segal 289).

Catullus continues with striking images of light and darkness, of the continuity of day and night, until that one brief light has fallen, night is perpetual-- no return. The urgency with which Catullus speaks is because of death. If the lovers are kept from the frenzy of passion, they shall wither as the *senum seueriorum*, "more stern old men" the prudish men of society (Small 290). Catullus says it doesn't matter what everyone else thinks; its just "you and me". At least, he hopes it shall be just the two of them, for earlier in poem 2 there was speculation Lesbia might have another mate, as the "sparrow" indicates.

From the emotional intensity of v.7 Catullus' pleading for Lesbia to give him an innumerable amount of kisses to the point that "they" lose count, both the lovers as well as the *malus*, "evil ones", who may look on them with envy.

It is curious why Catullus chose to vary the kisses by first placing the large number, then alternating other odd numbers for the effect of keeping track, but finally either through mixing of the numbers, or because the passion becomes too much they '*conturbabimus* ', "throw into confusion", the number of kisses (Levy 222).

-15-

Commendo tibi me ac meos amores,
Aureli. veniam peto pudentem,
Vt, si quicquam animo tuo cupisti
Quod castum expeteres et integellum,

Conserues puerum mihi pudice,
 Non dico a populo: nihil ueremur
 Istos qui in platea modo huc modo illuc
 In re praetereunt sua occupati;
 Verum a te metuo tuoque pene
 Infesto pueris bonis malisque.
 Quem tu qua libet, ut libet moueto
 Quantum uis, ubi erit foris paratum:
 Hunc unum excipio, ut puto, pudenter.
 Quod si te mala mens furorque uecors
 In tantam impulerit, scelestes, culpam,
 Vt nostrum insidiis caput laccessas,
 Ah tum te miserum malique fati,
 Quem attractis pedibus patente porta
 Precurrent raphanique mugilesque.

I commit to you me and my affections,
 Aurelius. I seek a modest favor,
 that, if you have desired anything with your heart,
 which you might seek out innocent and untouched,
 guard my boy decently,
 not I say from the general public: we fear not at all
 Those who pass in the street going at one time here at
 another there busy in their own affairs;
 but in truth I fear danger from you and your penis hostile
 to boys good and bad.

Move that (quem, penis) where it pleases you, how it pleases you,
 As much as you wish, when it will be ready outside your doors;
 This one (Juventius) I exclude, as I think modestly.
 But if an evil mind and senseless fury
 shall compel you into such great guilt, Wicked one,
 that you challenge my chief interest (*caput*, head) with treachery,...
 Ah, then you (are) a miserable man of bad fate,
 Whom, with feet having been drawn up and gate open,
 radishes and sea mullets will run through.

This is one of a number of invective or threatening verses against Aurelius. It appears that Catullus is jealous of the time Aurelius is spending with his beloved Juventius. By the tone of Catullus' threat there is little doubt that Catullus' *veniam pudentem* "modest favor", is authentic. Skipping to the last two lines, one can visualize the severity with which the charge of "keeping your hands off my young beloved" takes. Catullus has now let Aurelius know the punishment for such an offense.

The poem turns from asking a favor to a direct attack/threat toward Aurelius. Catullus begins the poem mildly but by line 9 he mentions Aurelius' *pene*, "penis", illustrating the sexually promiscuous activities Aurelius is known for. In vs.11-12, Catullus shows us a man who has no regard for others, and doesn't care who he has sex with. The *Quem* which begins v.11 refers to Aurelius' penis (Garrison 104). Then, in v.12, we are to imagine the *quem* "penis" to be *paratum*, "prepared", or "ready outside your doors". This Garrison says Catullus means as a warning that Aurelius should only do his thing outside, away from his young lover.

In v. 13 Catullus tells Aurelius he mustn't touch Juventius. However, Catullus, knowing Aurelius' nature and Juventius' attractiveness, goes on to let Aurelius know that even if his passions get out of control, if he touches his man, he is destined to be punished. He describes the punishment as being hung upside down and tortured, with radishes and mullets (Mediterranean fish) run through his *patente porta*, "open port", or anus. This was a very severe punishment, one with much humiliation involved. Wiseman says Catullus chose this threat to keep Juventius for himself because he felt responsible for him (Wiseman 11).

-16-

Pedicabo ego uos et irrumabo,
 Aureli pathice et cinaede Furi,
 Qui me ex uersiculis meis putastis,
 Quod sunt molliculi, parum pudicum.
 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,
 Non dico pueris, sed his pilosis,
 Qui duros nequeunt mouere lumbos.
 Vos quod milia multa basiorum
 Legistis, male me marem putatis?
 Pedicabo ego uos et irrumabo.

I shall snag and gag you,
 Aurelius you fag and Furius you queer, you
 who have thought me from my light verse
 (because they are overly delicate/effeminate), to be too little chaste.
 For it is fitting for the upright poet himself to be
 chaste, but it is not necessary for his light verse (to be chaste);
 which verses just precisely have wit and charm
 if they are racy and somewhat indecent,
 and because they are able to incite tinglings,
 not I say of the young but of those hairy guys
 who (without such stimulation) would be impotent (are not able to move
 their loins)
 You, because you read my many thousands of kisses,
 you have thought me not exactly a man?
 I shall snag and gag you.

Catullus' poem 16 has left many baffled by the subtlety of the
 introductory and concluding lines. These begin and end with *pedicabo et
 irrumabo*, which can be translated to mean "I shall snag you and gag you".
 Or, in other words, "I shall 'screw' you and force oral rape onto you". The
 word 'screw' implies a force which mutilates and pushes its way in.
Irrumabo was seen to be "the most contemptuous" of sexual assaults, for it
 was customarily thought prostitutes and the like were the only ones
 engaged in such behaviors (Wiseman 11). Therefore, in these first two
 lines Catullus means to demean Aurelius and Furius. He not only uses
 the verbs but distinguishes in the next line between the two of them, one a

catamite; one lacking in virility. Such a one is envisioned as a homosexual who enjoys oral sexual practices. And the other is a *pathicus*; one who submits to insemination or anal penetration with that same sense "as a woman"(Grant 1272).

The poem is written to Aurelius and Furius, and all those who question the chastity or masculinity of the *pium poetam*, "upright poet". Apparently Catullus' virility has been questioned regarding his '*milia basiores*' "many kisses" in poems 5, 7, and 48 (Martin 79). In their judgment Catullus' poems are too delicate, and he is forced into defending himself so as not to seem effeminate.

Ultimately though, this poem is a plea for the freedom to write the way Catullus sees things. This is the ancient's version of the "freedom of speech"; in this Catullus makes the most remarkable case defending both his poetic style and his body of poems. He removes most responsibility for the verse from himself and says it is the responsibility of the audience for the interpretation. Just because he writes about scandalous and sexual material, this does not excite him. Thus he is still able to write to provide material, for those men who were not stimulated in their present state. So he believed he provided a service and he was able to write about what he chose.

-21-

Aureli, pater esuritionum,
Non harum modo, sed quot aut fuerunt
Aut sunt aut aliis erunt in annis,
Pedicare cupis meos amores.

Nec clam: nam simul es, iocaris una,

Haerens ad latus omnia experiris.

Frustra: nam insidias mihi instruentem

Tangam te prior irrumatione.

Atque id si faceres satur, tacerem:

Nunc ipsum id doleo, quod esurire,

Ah me me, puer et sitire discet.

Quare desine, dum licet pudico

Ne finem facias, sed irrumatus.

Aurelius, father of all hungers,

not of these now only, but how many either were

or are or shall be in other years,

you desire to screw my affections (boyfriend).

And not secretly: for as soon as you

are together, you joke together,

clinging to his side you attempt everything.

In vain! for if you are plotting against me,

I'll touch you first with oral rape.

and if you were doing this in satisfied state, I would be silent;

now this very thing I lament, because, woe to me,

my boy shall learn to hunger and thirst.

Wherefore stop, while decency permits,

so that you do not bring it to an end, but "gagged".

Yet another of the invectives against Aurelius, threatening him that if he shall lay a finger on the poets *amores* 'affections' (boyfriend), Catullus shall be forced to orally rape him. Catullus labels him *pater esuritionem*, "source of all hunger/thirst". Garrison labels this a "mock honorific" (Garrison 106), for in using *pater*, Catullus seems to indicate the wisdom which a parent would possess but turns and uses the word as hunger or deprivation. This gives the impression that Catullus is something of a mendicant, one who has nothing and cannot give anything. Catullus resents Aurelius and is quite upset at his coming onto Juventius. He uses *Haerens*, "clinging to" him, and *omnia experiris*, "attempting everything", indicating the unsuitability of Aurelius to be a father (or lover), definitely unfit to be with Juventius (Small 56). This poem most probably was written after poem 15, so apparently 15 didn't scare Aurelius away. Poem 21 is a final attempt by Catullus to put Aurelius back in line.

In v. 2-4 the method Catullus employs is the same as he uses in poems 24 and 49. These verses emphasize the permanence of what Catullus says in the first verse. Catullus means that Aurelius has always been poor, of a different class, and shall always remain in this condition, with a sexual desire that cannot be sated.

-24-

O qui flosculus es Iuuentiorum,
Non horum modo, sed quot aut fuerunt
Aut posthac aliis erunt in annis,
Mallem diuitias Midæ dedisses
Isti cui neque seruus est neque arca,

Quam sic te sineres ab illo amari.

'Quid? Non est homo bellus?' inquires. Est:

Sed bello huic neque seruus est neque arca.

Hoc tu quam libet abice eleuaque:

Nec seruum tamen ille habet neque arcam.

O You who are little flower of the Juventii,
not only of these, but also how many have been
or how many shall be later in other years,

I would prefer you to have given the riches of Midas
to that one to whom there is neither servant nor money chest,
than that you were allowing yourself to be loved by that one.

"What?" you will say, "Is he not a stylish man?" He is
But this stylish fellow has neither servant nor money chest.

dismiss it and downplay it all you like
but however the fact remains that that one has neither slave nor money
chest.

Once again, Catullus continues to mock Furius because he is not
worthy of Juventius. If poems 23 and 26 had been included, we would see
the same idea. Although Furius is not mentioned by name in the poem,
he is the one implied. In any regard, Catullus tries to explain to the young
man that Furius is not worthy, for he has neither money nor slave.

Catullus makes reference to the Furius as *homo bellus*, "handsome
or stylish man". But Catullus continues, saying something to the effect "he
has nothing you want". The allusion to Midas and his wealth is that

Furius is as poor as Midas was rich (Garrison 108). Then, with *bello huic*, there is a note of sarcasm with the author saying something to the effect "neat guy but no money". The importance of this phrase cannot be emphasized enough, since Catullus mentions it three times.

Catullus' intention in writing this poem seems to be to urge Juventius, the *flosculus Iuuentiorum*, "little flower of the Juventii" not to get involved with Furius and all not worthy of him. The use of *flosculus*, possibly referring to the youthful man's innocence, virginity. This was a common image used in referring to a woman about to be deflowered. Catullus is very concerned for the young man. From what can be gathered Catullus is used to having an easy life. He obviously wants wealth for his young beloved. But then, is he suggesting there are others who could be worthy of Juventius' love other than himself? It can't be said for certain. One thing is certain from this poem: Furius is not worthy. Does Catullus want Juventius all for himself?

-40-

Quaenam te mala mens, miselle Rauide,
 Agit praecipitem in meos iambos?
 Quis deus tibi non bene aduocatus
 Vecordem parat excitare rixam?
 An ut peruenias in ora uulgi?
 Quid uis? qua libet esse notus optas?
 Eris, quandoquidem meos amores
 Cum longa uoluisti amare poena.

Whatever evil intent drives you, poor little Ravidus,
 headfirst against my iambic verse

What god, not a good advocate of you,
 is going to stimulate a senseless quarrel?

Or (can it be that you did this) to come to the mouth of the multitude?

What do you wish? Do you wish to be known in any possible way?
 You shall be (known), since with a long punishment you have wished to
 love my boyfriend.

Catullus continues with his invectives. In this poem, as in all the others, Catullus is upset about someone pursuing his beloved, though Catullus takes a slightly different approach in his threat. The choice of *meos amores* "my affections", in the masculine would seem to bespeak Juventius, but there are some who say *meos amores* stands for Lesbia (Small 52). Here Catullus does not have Ravidus performing or seeking *pedicare* "anal penetration" with the youth, but Catullus has found out that Ravidus *uoluisti amare meos amores*; he "wished to love my boy".

The poem doesn't say anything about Ravidus' wealth or lack thereof. Catullus questions why Ravidus would love his own beloved. Apparently, Catullus expects Ravidus to know that Juventius is his. Catullus seems to say "you know what powers I have"; he almost seems to have sympathy for the man by using the words *mala mens* "demented rage" which imply insanity or maybe a moment of passion (Small 52). The fact that Catullus does not bring in foul words in order to prove the point of Ravidus' actions against him says something about their relationship or possibly that Catullus respects Ravidus' intentions but is disappointed in

them. Could they have been friends? Maybe Ravidus was another of the poets of his time, one against whom Catullus would compete or share his poetry, but also one who did not share in the extreme poverty that Furius and Aurelius had.

-48-

Mellitos oculos tuos, Iuuenti,
 Siquis me sinat usque basiare,
 Vsque ad milia basiem trecenta,
 Nec unquam uidear satur futurus,
 Non si densior aridis aristis
 Sit nostrae seges osculationis.

Your honeysweet eyes, Juventius,
 if anyone allows me straightway to kiss,
 all the way to three hundred thousand kisses I would kiss,
 and not ever would I seem to be going to be full,
 not if the crop of our kissing
 should be more closely packed than the dry ears of grain.

A poem addressed to the young man Juventius, poem 48 shows the deep desire Catullus has for a committed intimate friendship. As in poem 5, Catullus explains to Juventius how he desires many kisses. He desires so many as the small grains one would see in a field of dry ears of grain.

The way Catullus says "If anyone allows me straightway to kiss," is another way of saying "if you would let me, but until you say it, I will not":

and it is in this desire that the poem creates a tension aiming toward a climax. Yet poem is unresolved; Catullus is able to streamline his feelings but one never knows if he is ever satisfied.

-81-

Nemone in tanto potuit populo esse, Iuuenti,
 Bellus homo quem tu diligere inciperes
 Praeterquam iste tuus moribunda ab sede Pisauri
 Hospes inaurata pallidior statua?
 Qui tibi nunc cordi est, quem tu praeponere nobis
 Audes et nescis quod facinus facias.

Could there have been no handsome young man, Juventius, in so great a
 people

whom you would have begun to care for,
 except that your guest-friend from the dying town of Pisaurum,
 paler than a gilded statue (i.e. sickly looking),
 who is now dear to your heart, whom you dare to prefer to us
 and don't even know what deed you do?

Directed to Juventius, this poem aims to criticize his choice of a
hospes inaurata pallidior statua friend-companion more pale than a
 gilded statue. The reader is to imagine a "sickly looking fellow", or at
 least sick looking to Catullus. Catullus encourages Juventius: "might there
 be someone in all the populace who might interest you more, a pleasant

young man". This sounds as if he is encouraging the youthful man to continue pursuing some other *bellus homo*. E. J. Merrill says *bellus homo* "refers to mere superficial attractiveness" (Merrill 47).

Finally, after blaming all those whom Catullus saw as pursuing his youthful man. Catullus, maybe because he didn't know the stranger, addresses this to Juventius. It seems this was a man to whom Juventius was attracted. But Catullus charges the man to be effeminate, ultimately not fitting for Juventius. Is there anyone as qualified as Catullus to be the boys suitor.

His use of *quem...Audes et nescis...facinus facias* implies that the young Juventius should be smarter than to flaunt this other man in front of Catullus. The simple fact that the boy might prefer another is bad enough. The poem ends with *facinus facias* and *nescis* indicating that Juventius doesn't even know what deed he has done.

-99-

Subripui tibi, dum ludis, mellite Iuuenti,

Sauiolum dulci dulcius ambrosia.

Verum id non impune tuli: namque amplius horam

Suffixum in summa me memini esse cruce,

Dum tibi me purgo nec possum fletibus ullis

Tantillum uestrae demere saeuitiae.

Nam simul id factum est, multis diluta labella

Guttis abstersisti omnibus articulis,

Ne quicquam nostro contractum ex ore maneret,

Tanquam commictae spurca saliua lupae.
 Praeterea infesto miserum me tradere Amori
 Non cessasti omnique excruciare modo,
 Vt mi ex ambrosia mutatum iam foret illud
 Sauiolum tristi tristius elleboro.
 Quam quoniam poenam misero proponis amori,
 Nunquam iam posthac basia subripiam.

I stole from you while you play, my honeysweet Juventius
 a kiss sweeter than sweet ambrosia.
 But I took not without punishment; for I remember for more than an hour
 I was attached upon the highest point of a cross,
 while I was purifying myself to you, yet am not able to take away
 any little bit of your savage anger by any tears.
 For at the same time it was done, you washed your lips clean
 with many drops, and wiped them off with all your fingers,
 so that not anything contracted from my mouth would remain,
 just as if it were the filthy saliva of a urine smelling prostitute (she-wolf).
 Moreover, you didn't cease to hand over me to hostile love/amor and
 torture me in every manner,
 so that that (i.e. kiss), changed from ambrosia, was now more grim than
 bitter hellebore.
 Since you put forth this penalty for my pitiful love,
 never hereafter shall I steal kisses.

After addressing Juventius in poem 48 speaking about how he desired a kiss, he has finally stolen one, a kiss he sees as sweeter than sweet ambrosia, food of the gods. This line about ambrosia bespeaks the immensity of Catullus' desire for such a kiss.

In the opening line we see Catullus using the affectionate phrase *mellite*, a sign of affection given exclusively to Juventius. "Honeysweet Juventius", Catullus uses "honesweet" and "ambrosia" to describe Juventius. Since these are both particular kinds of sweets Catullus likens Juventius to an "edible delicacy" (Martin 140).

But these opening lines turn dreadful as Catullus reveals the grilling he receives as a result of the kiss. Catullus is given the ultimate punishment, crucifixion, a punishment of thieves and murderers. Apparently, while Catullus was on the cross, the young man clears his mouth, as if he has been contaminated. It seems Catullus felt his and Juventius' relationship had progressed enough that Juventius was ready for a kiss. It is quite possible Catullus uses the kiss to illustrate sexual intimacy or maybe Juventius' readiness for an exclusive relationship. But the young fellow is not ready for this. In fact the dramatic scene of Juventius cleansing the inside of his mouth shows the maturity of the relationship. Apparently Catullus was ready for the intimacy, but Juventius was not.

Is Catullus is upset. He receives the treatment of a criminal when he expresses his insatiable love. Yet he begs apologies from Juventius when the young man pulls back. Juventius is trying to wipe Catullus' saliva off his mouth as if it is a prostitute's. This image is given as prostitutes were not thought to be the most clean people. There could also be some significance with the use of the word for prostitutes because

it is known that they were regarded as likely to perform *irrumare* . It seems Catullus' use of *lupae* is to emphasize that he thought their relationship was more than that of a prostitutes.

Then in vs.11-12, Catullus says that the even though Juventius is exceedingly harsh, his actions excite Catullus to desire the young man even more. What kind of an author is Catullus, to desire one who does not reciprocate his kiss? He is enthralled and captivated by this young mans beauty. But why? This man has put him upon a cross, insulted him by acting as if Catullus was a whore. Is this common for Roman men to be so engrossed with another person as not to be dissuaded when they show contempt. Since Catullus was under thirty he had time to find another lover. So there must have been something which Catullus found appealing about Juventius.

-101-

Multas per gentes et multa per aequora uectus
 Aduenio has miseras, frater, ad inferias,
 Vt te postremo donarem munere mortis
 Et mutam nequiquam adloquerer cinerem,
 Quandoquidem fortuna mihi tete abstulit ipsum,
 Heu miser indigne frater adempte mihi.
 Nunc tamen interea haec, prisco quae more parentum
 Tradita sunt tristi munere ad inferias,
 Accipe fraterno multum manantia fletu
 Atque in perpetuum, frater, aue atque uale.

Carried through many nations and through many seas,

I come, Brother, to these pitiful rites for the dead,
 So that I might present you with the final task (gift) of death
 and that I might speak in vain to your mute ashes
 Since fortune took you yourself away from me,
 Alas, pitiful brother taken undeservedly from me!

Now however in the present situation, accept these things to which by
 ancestral customs have been handed down by sad duty for the rites of dead,
 receive these things then, much flowing with a brother's weeping
 (lamenting),
 and forever, Brother, Hail and Farewell!

This poem finds Catullus lamenting the death of the only relative he includes in his poetry. Suddenly, unexpectedly, his brother had been, it seems, taken while he was serving overseas. The poem expresses the sadness our author has for being away when his brother died and was buried, and so in the poem performs the burial observance rites.

Catullus uses *frater* all of three times to allow us to feel the emotional intensity. All three uses are in the vocative case, direct address. There is an irony in his using direct address when the brother he is addressing is dead. After viewing poem 5, the poem of the perpetual dark night representing the eternity of death, Catullus still follows the ancient custom and offers up sacrifices, gifts of honey, wine, milk, and flowers (Garrison 160). And yet when he does this, he does it with tears.

He loves his brother for he has traveled a long distance to deliver these ancestral rites (Small 72). All this traveling just to deliver rites of the dead! He not only delivers the rites, but in line 9 we observe Catullus

becoming choked up and crying. This style of very intense emotional outpouring is not seen anywhere else throughout the majority of ancient poetry. When Catullus is about to leave he uses the phrase: *Ave atque Vale*, "Hail and Farewell". In this situation he just arrives says his hello and must leave for the pains he feels.

V. CONCLUSION

After viewing a selection of Catullus' poetry, many of the sexual overtones found throughout Catullus' poems become readily apparent. It also becomes possible to see the three ranges toward attitudes of sexuality presented in Catullus' *Libellus*. In the sampling above, one can see the variety of relationships Catullus desired or was currently involved in with both men and women.

To understand the poems correctly, one must understand the differences which exist between our modern understanding of sexuality and ancient Roman ways of viewing what we today term homosexuality, bisexuality, and heterosexuality. The Roman ideal was to repress sexual impulse, so that the needs of the state came before individual relationships. A man, the only free member of the Roman citizenry, was not to lose control of his passions; "strict physical and psychological control" was of the utmost importance (Skinner 65). Thus, loyalties were not split when it came to sending troops out to conquer or to defend on behalf of the state. If the romantic relationship was not as passionate as the man's passion for the state, then he would be more willing to defend the state and not just his loved ones.

In a relationship, to show tenderness toward the other was to risk being labeled effeminate, or lacking in manly virility. In writing his poetry, the legislators expected Catullus to defend the ideal of "manly deportment" (Skinner 65). But if we read his poetry we see exactly the opposite: unquestionable emotion and sentimentality with morals laced between.

The Romans tended to label a relationship based on the dominance and submissiveness of its participants, or as Wiseman states "penetrating or being penetrated" (Wiseman 10). There were three different modes of sexual intercourse: *pedicare*, "anal penetration", *futuere*, "vaginal penetration", and *irrumare*, "oral penetration" (10). The free man was never to be the passive partner; such a position was the "womanish" position (Skinner 65). With this in mind, was homosexuality or bisexuality practiced in the ancient world, or was every Roman male following the rule of "manly deportment"? There is reason enough to believe that simply because norms existed to the contrary, a free man did not necessarily choose to take the passive role in sexual encounters. What must be realized however, is that the Romans did not identify sexual identities based on the sex of the partners; rather, what was important was the dominant and submissive positioning of the partners in the relationship (Wiseman 10).

It appears from the sexually explicit language of poems 15, 16, and 21 that Catullus has no problem voicing what appears at first to be a homoerotic threat. But are such homoerotic images that telling of Catullus' lifestyle? As already noted, poem 16 is more of an attack against "the critical habit, common in antiquity... of drawing inferences about an

author's character from his choice of literary material" (Skinner 66).

Poems 15 and 21 are both threats against men who desire Catullus' young male companion. The charges he makes against them are made out of fear for their abuse of his beloved young friend. In poem 21 specifically Catullus is worried that Aurelius' desire to *pedicare* with Juventius shall leave the youth empty. Catullus recognizes Aurelius' lack of any depth of relationship or commitment, and he sees Aurelius using Juventius for his selfish sexual pleasure and spoiling the boy for himself.

In poems 2, 5, and possibly 40, Catullus appears to be in a relationship with a woman, and is apparently attracted to her. The urgency with which Catullus desires a relationship makes one wonder, "what is his hurry?" In poem 5, Catullus explains that they only have but "one brief light", while the sun will rise and fall again. He adds that once their brief light will set, "night will be one perpetual sleeping"; this emphasizes the inevitability of death, even though Catullus is under thirty years of age. Catullus is infatuated with this new lover; he pleads in line seven for "one-thousand kisses", and repeats this request, asking for varied numbers of kisses. The exaggeration in number and intensity for shows clearly that the young poet was in love or lust.

Poems 2 and 5 clearly show Catullus' desire for a relationship with Lesbia, but does Lesbia feel the same way? In poem 2, her attention seems to focus on the bird, rather than Catullus. From the way she is distractedly playing with the bird it looks as though she could live without Catullus. It seems that with the exhortation in the opening lines of poem 5, *Viuamus atque amemus* "Let us live and let us love", he has regained her attention, and he goes on to defend his statement against possible attacks from the

elders. Is she interested? This question is never explicitly answered. It is known that Catullus continued to write poetry to Lesbia. Classicists seem to be content with the explanation that the name "Lesbia" was given to protect the woman Clodia. But there remains the question of why Catullus would not name directly a woman lover, while his poems to Juventius reveal the more controversial identity of his *amores* to be of masculine gender..

The three ranges of attitudes toward sexuality evident are is rather descriptive. Catullus uses the invective poems to describe the homoerotic experience; his Lesbia poem, if written to a woman, shows the heterosexual experience; and the poems detailing his more mutual relationship with Juventius reveals another homoerotic relationship. The poems to Juventius show his desire for sexual intimacy with a man, much like the commitment he wanted from Lesbia. The threatening verse shows what he will do to protect his suitor, even though the man has not committed to anything. In poem 99, even when the boy has thoroughly punished our poet for stealing a kiss, Catullus still desires Juventius all the more.

If Catullus achieved anything in his work, he successfully interjected his life experiences into poetry for the first time. It is amazing how this man was able to defend himself within his poems (i.e. poem 5). In addition to these remarkable accomplishments, Catullus to be able to record the times with respect to cultural norms toward sexuality gives us a better identification of the Roman world. No matter how we read Catullus we should keep in mind he is writing in a world very different from ours, he is writing to his own world of Rome which is "rather different from the old-fashioned frontier providence where he grew up" (Wiseman 129).

Catullus uses an intense emotional style inviting or insulting others to persuade them to action. Oftentimes the poetry poses a question or a suggestion. We don't know whether these questions or suggestions ever are answered. One thing we do know is that Catullus' style represents a kind of contradiction. He uses verse which is full of sexual suggestion and innuendo in order to reject the moral standards of his time, yet he calls his potential suitors to fidelity. He didn't believe in the self-interest that characterized his time, there is some other authority he had to answer to. This other authority is faith and commitment to his passionate lover, but he expects this to be a mutual passion. Sadly, we don't know if he ever was able to achieve such a partnership.

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