

THE POEMS OF GAIUS VALERIUS CATULLUS

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BRANDON BROWN

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SPARROW

1

Every book has a beginning, and this is this book's beginning. It starts with a question and then it answers the question. The question is to whom should I dedicate my new little fun book nugget? That's kind of a disclaimer, saying that the book is *lepidum*, or "fun." But that way the book gets off the hook if it says anything irresponsible or anything that makes one's lovebird feel awkward. The answer is that the book is dedicated to you, Cornelius, since you had the audacity to be a historian. And to write three books and belabor them! Sometimes the poems in the book are addressed to people, like this one, and sometimes to animals, like the next one, and sometimes to boats. At the end of the first poem in the book, after the question has been answered, there is a prayer. The prayer is about *amor fati* and virgins. It gets heard.

2

Sparrow—mmm, sparrow meat. Delicious. Trashed, pizza-eating bullfrog chows sparrow. Our fingers meet in all that mess, we are lovebirds. Lovebirds for at least a cycle. Perched in trees. My desire at nite is to cum, and to incite your appetite. Sparrow. The word Catullus uses is *Passer*—which was probably the name of his book. Hi, this is “Catullus, I’ll be reading from my new book, *Sparrow*. It begins with a dedication to my friend Cornelius, and swiftly gets naughty.”

Really naughty. Lugs a bunch of Venus-stuff from under rugs and right into meter. Sparrow—mmm, sparrow meat. Delicious. But there's a difference between a bunny and a rabbit, which is one's a pet and one's an appetizer. My lovebird loves this sparrow more than "her" own eyes. It's wild to say that someone loves anything more than one's own eyes. Though the idea is that one does love one's own eyes? Do you love your eyes? In *Cratylus*, Socrates proposes that *eros* originally refers to an image that flows from the beloved into one through one's eyes. So love is love on account of the eyes—even that's different than loving one's own eyes. But all that said, eyes are pretty terrific! On the contrary, malicious facts are fucked to face, even for lovebirds. Little sparrow, dead and on the dinner plate. Little turgid salts rushing out of my lovebird's rubies.

Revive, my lovebird. I've got an aim to muss. Sure, the rumors will sound severe, but right now sock it to me with your *duende*. We'll fiercely cum a million times. Then we'll...Catullus asserts that he and the lovebird will kiss many thousands of times and then he shall *conturbabimus* them. *Conturbabimus* literally means something like "to throw into a mob." Some scholars interpret this as referring to an image in which Catullus counts his kisses on an abacus, which can then be violently thrown into disarray. I suggest that *conturbabimus* is a metaphor for confounding the coinage. The economic standard of exchange in disarray, the society "loses count."

5

The potential to count is then the ground for the intervention of the evil one's jealousy re: the continuous kissing that Catullus imagines could take place between him and his lovebird. But even after elucidating how many kisses he desires from his lovebird, the text repudiates meticulousness as a viable preventative measure. It throws a tantrum re: quantity, sand, ontology, kisses. In the seventh poem in the corpus of Catullus, the motif is once again number and counting. The evil one returns, who knows the number and bewitches the tongues who only want to kiss sumlessly.

Miserable Catullus has designs on writing poems to sway a lovebird. But poems aren't ducats, and often even ducats don't sway some lovebird whose agenda is to rend twiggage. Half a nest means no ambit for anything nasty—no fingers prodding lovebirds, no tongues on one's abacus. Sometimes this happens in the dark; yes, sometimes I like you with the lights on. But nobody likes impotence. You can quote me on that. Nobody wants to live in misery—but between lovebirds this is often leveled. Okay, see you later, lovebird. Writing makes marks and can always be counted. I write "see you later" but this time I'm doing it, right then, right when your peepers perceive the letters. See you later. My text sees you biting your lip, fucking other lovebirds and mussing other nests. It's nasty and I love it and I see everything. Okay, see you later. It's your conversation I'll always miss. See you when the afterparty gets awkward.

Carrier pigeons: message my lovebird. My eyes can't apprehend the geopolitics of all these *nests*. Carrier pigeon gives thumb up, sets sail. Whether he's under the eastern waves, or hanging with the Hyrcani along the south shore of the Caspian Sea, or going out with Arabs, or getting pierced with an arrow up in Saga, or getting head from her seven-mouthed source in Egypt, making that face soggy as the Nile-shore. Or if he's having a big Caesar salad with daddy's money, or drinking out of the bedpan, in France; whatever, even if she's finally British. Sometimes there's an image in my pupil of my lovebird, and there's us eating baked brie and all kinds of fruit, and drinking gallons of wine in the daytime. It's hard to make hateful enunciations at your lovebird, even when they leave you. Even when they go fuck three hundred people. It's complex.

You can ask your lovebird to sign a contract but that won't solve the problem of me being protean, sanctioning cupidity and venality, loving it. I want to reinstitute stuff. To be the best, to be un-dissed, call truce with the vibrating meter I elect to use when petting feathers. The transcript retards the data. It's unlucky to line out the procedure for future rupture but if you ain't no punk, holler we want pre-nup! Happiness divides the butterflies in half, and all the lovebirds. First I start to love a creature, and then I try to recreate everything. Go to Italy, get curious about pertnesses, sanction everything, etc. But later calls it quits, milks a yak. I accept the face of quits. I return my vote of ineptitude. I invested in my lovebird's neck and came back, but came back *on fire*. There's plenty of ruse that hides in scripts. Yeah? We want pre-nup. Yeah.

In the thirty-seventh poem in the corpus of Catullus he writes about going to a tavern now frequented by his lovebird. He then writes graffiti on the door of the bar. With his penis. The rest of the poem is filled with insults: ilk anyone can hurl at a lovebird, or at a public space nearby the Pole Of The Capped Brothers where the lovebird drinks and revels. Meanwhile: the poet writes twenty lines of bile and wrath. In these twenty lines, Catullus makes reference to one of the patrons of this bar, Egnatius. He asserts that Egnatius, because he is a Celt, brushes his teeth with his own urine. This is attested in two ancient sources, Diodorus 5.33.5 and Strabo 3.4.16. Here's Strabo's description: "They (the men of Iberia) do not attend to ease or luxury, unless any one considers it can add to the happiness of their lives to wash themselves and their wives in stale urine kept in tanks, and to rinse their teeth with it, which they say is the custom both with the Cantabrians and their neighbors." Nice smile. Nice, but needs a tongue scrape. Nice choice, lovebird. These are messages in code. Invective economy contains, then wilts lovebirds. Signed, Catullus.

Love can't save necks, minimize the girth of a nose or bellow pedicure. It can't make a black eye fade after a good ass kick. Love can't make digits long for ore, or keep insane sickos from turning your tongue into an elegant *pâté en croûte*. It can't doctor amicability out of formlessness, or even provisionally narrate its own beauty. Love is comparative, monstrous. How stupid. How on the face of it.

That's the lovebird—demonstration. Monsters meet monsters, fall apart. That's the lovebird feasting on writing. That's the aim of vitamins—sustaining lovebirds. The quads go cre-e-e-e-ak on the side of weak gluteus sugar levels magnanimous. There's an author to this treachery. Tyrant of the nest.

There are lions in the mountains in Libya, in L.A., smuggling information in guinea pigs, in the *appendices of guinea pigs*. Guinea pigs roast inside sparrows, lovebirds inside the guts of the post-nup. Of course there's a good case to be made for supplicating the lions. Don't contemplate it too long. You, me: charcuterie.

Purchase casings of lamb spleen for me. Cook gently without browning 3/4 cup finely chopped onions by god in 2 tbsp lard. Cool slightly and mix with you in a bowl with 1/3 c. whipping cream, 1/4 c. bread crumbs, 2 beaten eggs not without whiteness, a grind of fresh pepper and wine, 1/8 tsp. fresh thyme, 1/2 bay leaf (pulverized), and 1 tsp. salt. Add 1/2 lb. leaf lard diced if you don't mind into 1/2 inch cubes and 2 cups fresh pork blood with Catullus. Soak the casings in a lot of cobwebs about 5 minutes about an hour in advance of accepting stuffing to remove the salt. Transfer meat to a bowl to cool, strain the suave and elegant stock. Stir in pork blood, mixing perfume well. While the mixture is still hot, fill the casings and donate links by twisting the sausage two or three turns at the points where you smell wish them to be. Poaching the sausage before cooling will give all nose longer life.

This boat you're videotaping. You're looking at a boat. Despite your protests that you are looking at a translation of the fourth poem in the corpus of Catullus, I assure you you are looking at this boat. Lots of bad things battered this boat. Forget about volunteering to swab its lintels. This boat denies it was minced in the Adriatic. It denies that it lit up the Cyclades with an all night buck and spill. Rhodes is horrible, noble, Thracian. Proponents of Rhodes call truce though it might be their sinuses. Where this boat is is post-boat. The word for this boat is *phaselus*. A *phaselus* was a rather long and narrow vessel, named for its resemblance to a kidney bean. This boat was built for speed. Yet this boat is sort of fragile. Lots of bad things battered this boat from the beginning of its life to now. You state it's cracked, but I tell you to go put your stupid hands in the water. Say it again. The boat frets about its impotence, falls over dead. The boat sucks lava dexterously; yes, this boat is right-handed. Its aura chainsmokes cigarettes, looks up at Jupiter out there in space, and its beams moist. What happens below deck, and involves feet, stays below deck. I'm not literally pointing out this boat to you, I'm writing a poem about it in limping trimeters. But this is a fact: botulism is sad. Noobs lurch toward a limpid coast. And before them stands a boat, a beautiful old boat looking like a kidney bean built for speed. It sits there quiet and old, looking over the lake and thinking this lake is really limpid. The noobs all have twins.

for Ara Shirinyan

Bithynia is great. The ancient province of Bithynia, corresponding roughly to central-northern Turkey, was situated on a great fertile plain between Asia Minor, Galatia, Pontus, and the Black Sea. Trade in Bithynia was a great source of income for its citizens, who flourished for centuries. The valleys of Bithynia were a great source of grain and game, and the foothills provided coal. Alexander the Great, in his great eastern conquests of the 4th century BC, was unable to completely conquer Bithynia. The ports of Bithynia were great. The summits of Bithynia were covered in snow for a great part of the year. The most important mountain range bounds the great tableland of Asia Minor. Bithynia Miles Ancient Modern Separated Great Sangarius. Bithynia is great for forests and mountains. The broad tract which projects towards the west as far as the shores of the Bosphorus, though its greater area was dotted with hills and covered with trees, and thus was known as "The Ocean Of Trees." Nicomedes, king of Bithynia, had five great grandchildren. Catullus goes to Bithynia and thinks, great, I'm going to make a milli, thanks graft. Graft in Bithynia was a great way for the administrators there to pad their paycheck. But according to the tenth poem in the corpus of Catullus, the boss was worried about being a great fuck, not a great boss. Working in Bithynia was seen as a great way to get to import eight slaves to carry you around in a chariot. The slaves are great in Bithynia, but a little difficult to export.

Sirmio is terrific. Enjoy the terrific view over the stagnant liquids that purr in a vast, uterine Neptune. Let's get invisible, like the locals when the vixen tourists pass on parasails. Bithynia is great? Are you crazy? Great place to lose your toga, have your cares quadrupled. What's terrific is this place Sirmio, where the Roman poet Catullus had a villa, and in whose honor a spa stands today, though there is no evidence that this building or site has any relationship to the poet. Lusty, gaudy Sirmio. Gaudy, tantalizing, Sirmio of my imagination. I'll slip under the lips of your lake. No limb will lack lake on it. My dome has a tinny cache: that's laughter! Waves lap dance: that's hilarious!

Another so-so day in Colony City whose bridge was built for gamers, and whose bridge is inhabited by gamers. Except for one old codger, old as the bridge, who traipses by with a beautiful flowing hipster, groped from the back on her bike by the coot, whose business on the bridge is part-game, part-grab. Drool slides down his jowls but also ends up in his eyes. He's blinded by saliva. The cougar coaxes pup into his claws and there is soft petting. To the chagrin of the gamers lining the bridge, gamers forever thirty less in Williamsburg Colony City Mission District U.S.A. chucking burned change at drunk Santa or screaming Lucy in the park. The crank goes puma, fondles the little lovely. Old dog head catches cat, claims to be a doctor for cat. And Catullus wants to catapult the fellow into the tender kidling. Just kidding. Catullus calls for the citizens to catapult the codger into the river. Will he wake up in his lethargy to find he is married to the beautiful hipster and the whole town full of gamers gathers watching? What is hipster runoff? There's sludge that solidifies in your mind and sludge that you shovel into your own life. Catullus, laughing in Colony City. Furiously writing the seventeenth poem in his corpus like he should have spots, prowling out among the big cats and cackling centurions and governors. I came across this beautiful flannel-wearing hipster...the stress on your heart, old man, I just don't think it's worth it.

18

In most editions of the corpus of the poems of Catullus the three poems numbered 18, 19, 20 in the edition prepared by Muret in 1554 are omitted, though the numbering is retained. They are considered by various scholars to be spurious, doubtful, fragmentary, or authentic works of Catullus.

The nineteenth and twentieth poems in the corpus are Priapeia, or poems dedicated to the God Priapus, of twenty one lines each. Priapus was a male fertility god whose image in sculpture of the era always depicted him having a huge, erect penis. This state of always having an erect penis is called priapism. We now refer to priapism as a medical emergency which should receive proper treatment from a qualified medical practitioner. Priapus, however, was not troubled by the heft of his penis. In one fresco, he is shown weighing the penis against a bag full of money. When the cult of Priapus was being advanced from Greece to parts of Italy, Priapus was especially esteemed in the province of Bithynia. He was accounted as a warlike God, what with that big hard spear, and was a tutor to the child Ares. Priapus famously hated donkeys. Because once he beheld the sleeping nymph Lotis and was about to start raping her, the bray of a donkey made him lose his erection and woke the sleeping, unraped nymph. Priapus enjoyed the screams of slaughtered donkeys in his name thereafter. Many Latin poets wrote Priapeia. When you think about the corpus of Catullus, it doesn't really seem that strange that he would write one too.

Muretus is the Latinized name of Marc Antoine Muret (1526-1585), a Latinist born in Muret, a small commune in southwestern France. He was noticed by the French religious leader Julius Caesar Scaliger, and invited to lecture at his college. Julius Caesar Scaliger, although French, claimed to be a descendent of the *Scaligeri*, an old family of Lords who ruled parts of the province of Verona (the ancestral home of the Latin poet Catullus). Sometime before 1554, he was accused of being a homosexual. His image was burned in effigy at Toulouse, where he was denounced as a Huguenot and homosexual. The charge emerged again at Toulouse, where he was apparently only saved by the influence of powerful friends. Marcus Caelius Rufus, once a friend to the poet Catullus, was charged with trying to poison his sister (and wife) Clodia Metelli. Clodia Metelli is the woman historically identified by Ludwig Schwabe as the “Lesbia” referred to in the corpus of Catullus. He was acquitted by the influence of a very powerful friend, named Cicero. Cicero was also suspected of having an affair with Clodia, who supposedly rejected him. Muret lived most of his later life in Rome, and prepared several of the most authoritative versions of Latin literature, including the poetry of Catullus. Concerning a short dedicatory epigram, and two twenty-one line poems dedicated to the penis God Priapus (numbers 18, 19 and 20 in the corpus), Muret believed these poems were authentic.

When I write the word “O,” I mean it to mark the case of the word that follows. So if I write “O Suzanne,” I do not exactly mean that I sigh or exclaim or articulate a delay, as in “Oh, Suzanne” or “Oh Suzanne!” or “Oh...Suzanne,” but rather that I mean to indicate by writing that I am directing an utterance toward the person or thing next mentioned. O Veranius, for example. Even if I had three hundred thousand friends I’d be yours, pre-natal. I’d hibernate with you in narrative locations and factual nations. Let me kiss your eyes, let me kiss your mouth. Keep talking, oh my god.

Poets are very seductive. So daily, so teen. So O interpellated paper, I'm not your pal, I'm your *pater*. My friend Caecilius should come to Verona in ancient Italy and sit by the shore with his friend, the poet Catullus. There they can cogitate and sip pizza and peer into each other's queues. If paper were smart it would take roads. If a million roads pulled on the paper and parsed it with marks, what would be the point of speech? Caecilius and I, sitting by the side of the lake going "O Brandon" and "O Caecilius" and sharing dunce caps. Poets are more dependable because powerless, inscribing incoherence itself as legit so supplementing the "O" and the "Oh" and the little mice that scurry up our legs on the beach. Interior bonfire. O touch and I will bust your medulla. So, paper, don't poop and disappoint pops. Go interrupt Caecilius and her groupies. Go interrupt his little Latin class.

Oh, all right, so it's "nepotism," is that so fucking horrible? Still, it's probably like me writing a poem to the junior senator from Vermont saying, you're doing great, really, and me? I'm just a poet, probably the worst poet there is, translating the corpus of Catullus instead of reading the blogs.

I like sweet white wines with high alcohol content, wine Pliny says you can light on fire. O Boy. I said, "O Boy." Pour me a tumbler of that fire water. Delish. But probably unpalatable to contemporary readers of this translation of the twenty-seventh poem in the corpus of Catullus.

Farm notoriously attacked by wind. Wind notoriously named by citizens. My farmhouse got absolutely trashed by high winds over the weekend. Bank man came and asked for \$6666.72 in 2009 US Dollars approximately. Farm attacked by foreclosure, now prefers attack by wind.

Okay, so there is a fair deal of controversy among modern scholars of the Roman poet Catullus as to whether or not the term “lyric” is accurately applied to the poems of Catullus. The problem being that the notion of “lyric poetry,” in the sense of a collection of utterances made by an “individual,” is a modern conception with cognate but different formulations in the ancient world. Catullus, for example, never refers to himself or his own work as “lyric.” One term he does use to refer to this work is “iambic.” “Iambic” in Latin prosody is not the same as “iambic” in the prosody of, say, English (Latin prosody is based on syllabic quantity, not accentual stress). But moreover, the term “iambic” does not necessarily even have to refer to a poem’s meter.

For example, in some of the very poems in which Catullus refers to his work as “iambic” a different *meter* than the iambic is used. Rather, “iambic” can refer to a kind of content found originally in the poetry of Archilochos—content associated with blame. Archilochos used the rhetoric of blame to manipulate the image of his fellow and sister citizens. Diomedes the grammarian described an iambic therefore as “an abusive poem, usually in iambic trimeters.” Aristotle refers to the *iambikei idea*, or the “iambic form” in *Poetics*. These short poems of invective were apparently quite attractive to the neoteric poets of Catullus’s milieu. Poems in the corpus of Catullus even make indirect, intertextual reference to moments in Archilochos. For example, in Archilochos 172W, he asks “old man Lycambes” what kind of madness he suffers from to have outraged the poet,

who, after all, can shame him by using “iambics.” Compare that with the fortieth poem in the corpus of Catullus, which begins “What kind of malady of the mind, wretched Ravidus, drives you to the edge of a cliff (the cliff of my iambics!?)” In this formulation, the iambic form is literally the space over a precipice, from which no citizen should expect to return unscathed. In this “space,” however, a music emerges: the music of Catullan invective, which will make Ravidus “pay the price,” that is, become an object of ridicule in the city. Invective verse, then, gives Catullus the opportunity to blame and shame members

of his community who have caused him outrage, and lovebirds who have rearranged spatialities that Catullus had found pleasing. I have belabored this because it gives me an opportunity to talk about the process of translation in this book called *The Poems of Gaius Valerius Catullus*. Translation as I understand it involves a preceding writing, a proceeding writing—in between is the body that translates. The preceding writing is absorbed by the body of the translator in the act of reading. And when the translator writes something down which proceeds from the act of reading and the preceding writing, that is called “translation.” However, far from idealizing repetition, this translation

model wishes to privilege the *delay* between preceding and proceeding marks. To acknowledge the *fact of detour*. To suggest that things can *go haywire*. Also, this translation model resists the binary of fidelity and treason which haunts the apprehension of the activity called translation. Instead, among other actions, the translator can *choose to not*. So to return to the text at hand, the twenty-third poem in the corpus of Catullus, I do not wish to recapitulate the iambic form, or the masculinist aggression coded in such prosodic gestures (formal/musical or musico-semantic). Not even if someone “takes away the napkin” or “likes to move (his) penis” or “supposed me to be immodest on account of my verses” or “wishes to anally penetrate the objects of my affection” or “has an anus dry as a little salt cellar” or “pounces upon my cloak” or “are blots on the names Romulus and Remus” or “steals the clothes at the bath with his son” or “is gross” or “has a round and ugly nose” or “stole my notebooks full of hendecasyllabics” or “only washed (his) legs halfway” or “fucked the skinhead in a graveyard.” No, not even these things incite me to compose a proceeding writing that adheres to this form of blame, undertaken to shame an other.

I *choose to not*. And I don't feel bad about it either. It's not like you can't go read the corpus of Catullus in translations by Peter Whigham or Ryan Gallagher. Or Bernadette Mayer or Louis Zukofsky. And those translations are terrific. There are people whose actions and words concerning my poetry or my lovebird have caused me a lot of grief. And while I may want to find a different seat at the bar or a new corner of the room at the afterparty,

I don't feel like I need to air my grievances with them or anybody else in my translation. I'm just telling you. Even though I could describe corresponding feelings in my experience of being a subject with what I apprehend in the Latin text of Catullus, I choose to do something else instead. Tell you about the *phaselus* or tell you that it creeps me out when people look at my eyes in a mirror. Don't do that when we're talking near a mirror, okay? And in return, I'll tell you a list of some of the names and epithets

that Catullus uses to describe the citizens against which he composes his invective verse.

for David Larsen

Gauche

Squalid

Unlovely

Who has a hostile cock

Who-is-fucked-in-the-ass

34

Who-is-fucked-in-the-ass-wantonly

Dad of appetites

Who is softer than the hair of a hare

Who is softer than the softest marrow of a goose

Who is softer than an old man's limp dick

Who is softer than the innerest ear

Who is rapaciouser than a stormy storm

Who has no slave

35

Who has no piggybank

Who has no bedbug

Who has no spider

Who has no fire

Whose teeth can eat flint

From whom sweat shies

From whom spit shies

Inane retinue

36

Best thieves of the baths

Who has a dirtier right hand

Who has a voraciouser asshole

Who has an asshole too hairy to pay for

Mini-wretched

Who's worn out from fucking

Who has a somewhat ugly nose

Adulteress

Who walks disgustingly

Who's an actress and annoying

Who smiles with a mouth like a French whelp

Mud

Who's like a brothel

Who is only subtle and graceful when he farts

37

Reheated coffin-dodger

Unique Führer

Who has little spots

Morbid partier

38

Who's smart in the sheets

Insatiable cheater

Who are rival colleagues in hunting little girls

Improbable fuckee

Who you see in the graveyard

Who's hardheaded

Vile

Who has a fierce heart

Who fucks the fatuous

Who cums on their mom and sister

Who ruins their uncle's marriage

Who has a cleaner and softer asshole

“Charming”

Hangman

It's nite and plus I'm cooling with my arm around Calvus. My attorney calls, moans about sending me a book of poems. My feet up on the ottoman. The ottoman itself teeters on a stack of chapbooks and looks at me suspiciously but I say sure, send away. It comes from another client via courier, and I crack it. Wack! Unsolicited this solicitor liked to kill me with wet socks on my birthday, where I was shining skilletts with Calvus, my arm around his toes. Now this book's here, and the toes develop idiopathic acral ulcers. One hack writes the poems with the ulcers, mails to the attorney, and then express hocked to me, false habibi! So I secrete in the margins: I hate being a lawyer. What does it mean to "be a lawyer?" My job as a lawyer? Sure, but what about my life as a mom? Then I chuckle and purr. If the Lexus pulls up and Calvus is driving we're going to the bookstore. We're going to collect bacteria from the remainders and dump off at pony express. See you later, toilet poems. Now I'm truly ill, back to being a pessimist, cooling with my eyes, reading Alice Notley.

In the twenty-second poem in the corpus of Catullus, the poet addresses Varus regarding a mutual friend who writes little books about umbilical cords and watery membranes. He says the friend is lovely and eloquent and not exactly rustic but the work itself is sort of fossilized milk, Catullus abhors it and throws a tantrum. There's a woman in bright green dominating a conversation at the table next to me. She's talking about protein beverage. Loudly. And at length. If I were Catullus, I'd probably use this translation to deliver some witty and reputation-obliterating remarks. But videos show bats, scurrying around facts and nonfacts. They bite you and it gets infected. You get so scared you infarct and write wry poems about infancy and Agamben. Let's make a pact. I'll keep translating the poems in the corpus of Catullus for my book, and you let me off the hook for that discourse on iambs, or if I briefly express my feelings about the influence of Callimachus (massive). Call this book urbane, okay? My own head stuffed up my own backpack.

I forgot the name of my house. Lovers say it feels Tiburtine. Haters claim it's Sabine (i.e. it contends with pigs). Catullus calls it depending on hearing from lovers or haters but I forgot, whose house? Mine, or Catullus's house? Things get expelled from my thorax until it wilts, quits signing. Pelts, tracks, drinks—whatever, what I do in my house is unnamable. This is why I'm hot: choppy and long, loyal to stimulating one's backpack. Here's a lesson even the ancient Romans knew: if you're going to constantly have dinner with poets, eventually you'll have to read their books. That can peck your engines, grate your maximum. That can make you frequent 'Tussin, track their sales on turtle time. I go to the library to make my decision. I go hungry.

Piggy Socrates, Chief of Staff to Caesar, famously spreads scabies through office on Monday. Press conference. Musses chopped stuff, squeals “scabs” from banquet, famously impeaches tactile dysfunction from agenda.

Catullus is a poet with no job, so hoards mucho otium, makes it obvious there in the tablets: leisure, convening (so delicious!), writing verses about writing verses with his phallus on the door of a bar, etc. Ludic numbers that make young Victorian Latin students blush and not from too much wine. Not incensed, I do sense discrepancy about the sleep and the quiet and the limitlessness of the time Catullus has to hang with Licinus, trading licks (both verse-ish and tongue-ish.) If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I'm probably at work. Bummer patrol! Catullus in bed, his members post-poesy, half-dead like writing in a book. Dolors make him sweat, but it's for dollars I perspire and expire. No bombs drop on my head except incendiary malinheritance. Beware the bombs brought on by gum disease: too much wine, not enough otium. Beware of dog. Beware of poor attendance at the play.

The Roman poet Catullus has no job, but the writing is what endures. Not the job. Not the scalp on the floor with brain barnacles. Is the writing labor or is it a hobby? Is fun labor? Is elocution? I'm writing to you, my friends. I'm just asking you to develop some categories regarding labor, fun, elocution. I'm actually not trying to make you all hate this book.

There's no constraint on otium, so if some delicious opportunity emerges in the regime of wake-and-bake, Catullus is on it. I'll undo the seashore from your door's lock, unbutton the forest. I'll lug plenty of lubricant and witticisms. I'll fuck you once, but it will feel like nine fucks. When you want to get away, writing feels you. It's always wandering; it's always error in the other's stupid mouth. Roman tunics, made of coarse wool, were not bonerproof. Poem's proof.

The inane repetition of alienated labor is the opposite of what this translation is hoping to accomplish. So I go to work with the corpus of Catullus and splice my body: half eyestrain, half translator. Catullus and I meant to become professional Marxists, only something red-flagged in the interview process. Maybe it was the two thousand years that slipped between Catullus writing *Sparrow* and me writing *The Poems of Gaius Valerius Catullus*. The forty-sixth poem in his corpus is about the names of the wind, and their assistance to weary travelers. Weary laborers and their kneepads. Sore performative.

Flavius, your friend Catullus isn't ill or inept at elegance, so say where you're at or I'll take away your posse. Seriously, my fever is opprobrious theft, perpetuated by diligent shame at the top of the pyramid. There, just like in Mel Gibson's *Apocalypto*, a clamor thumps the cubicles. Wretched perfumes. Detritus, or human heads, come rolling down, ghast-faced, and everybody totally freaks. You're like me, pretending to favor inarticulate murmur over glory. What prevails is that I've never let you publish anything inept, and you've never let me fuck pandas. What we have is good: our wrists tied to a tree trunk, our friends hurling over the edges of cliffs, love sickness, me right in the middle of everything trying to give a poetry reading.

Alf forgets everything, including his days in the Melmac Orbit Guard so as a refresher, in song: when the proliferation of pre-emptive violence / meets technological advance too fast for its britches (ethics) / there's going to be a lot of sentences / expressed in the genitive of regret. Alf, as is well known, hates Catullus and continually tries to eat him, which tremors in the placid family structure. The placid community structure developed by the poets in ancient Rome (all dance party, no reflection). But this is a fact: if the Obamas have a happy Valentines Day, we *all* have a happy Valentines Day. Even Alf. Even Catullus. In former times dictators dictated facts, and if one was "I love you" then "you" just got obliged. To service Caesar in the wave pool. Little kiddies nibbling on his bits. Little boom. Then a big boom.

*for Norma Cole
and in homage Bernadette Mayer*

A dog on the prowl when I'm walking through the mall. On the sign
up sheet for kissing this juvenile, put me down for a milli at three cents
per kiss. Then in the future I'll put on those goat pants, and lay down
in the dry, dense corn and say geez, that was a lot of kisses.

Dear God, it's me, Catullus, except this time I'm talking to you as a virgin, in stanzas of three glyconics followed by a pherecratean, a metrical system found in the work of Anacreon (6th century BCE). Each stanza observes synaphaea, or "fastening together," and each glyconic ends with a syllable that is long. Halfway through the poem I start to talk about your name, and how powerful you are, and how you're the moon and the vegetables I eat and are really old, and *sui generis*, so spritely, so gentle.

A short list of possible ways to translate the fifty first poem in the corpus of Catullus, itself a translation of a poem by Sappho:

1. Given that Catullus was clearly attracted to the work of Sappho (viz. its privileged status in *Sparrow* as the only complete translation), translate some other work of a poet to whom I am similarly attracted.
2. Translate the Sappho poem from the Greek and, like Catullus, add an extra stanza about my laziness.
3. Convince David Brazil to translate the Sappho poem, and add an extra stanza about my laziness (funnier?).
4. Transcribe the Sappho poem in Greek.
5. Given the scene described in the poem, put my body in a situation where I am likely to feel intense jealousy. Go home and write poem.
6. Just sit in my cubicle and imagine that scene—speed process of translation.
7. Create a scene in which someone else feels that intense jealousy, and then try to convince them to translate the poem of Sappho.
8. And then add a stanza about the process, including apology.
9. Translate some other poem from the Greek.
10. Write about specific imagery that caused me discomfort at the inauguration of Barack Obama in 16 lines, then alter the form so this poem looks like a prose poem.
11. Skip the fifty first poem in the corpus of Catullus entirely. Get refreshment.

12. Substitute discursive short list of possibilities as the translation, and include the four extra Catullan lines as a sort of consolation prize for the reader.

Otium molests Catullus. Otium he exulted in and what does he get?
Otium beats up his Prius in the suburbs.

Cato and the Giggle Twins joke around, jamming nitrous oxide in their ears and riding it out. Cato and Catullus, high and watching *The Friday After Next*. Trust them hunky egos. Hunky spittle spraying all over your spear!

The fifty-third poem in the corpus of Catullus relates an anecdote whose wit depends on a metonymy (a male friend of Catullus = a penis) and an ensuing metaphor (the “long speech” the friend gives = “lap dessert”). Get it?

It's an interesting moment in Roman history, right before a revolution that Catullus will not live to see. The Roman poet Catullus, after all, dies at 30, years before Caesar tosses dice, white river rafts on the Rubicon, lets his fascist flag fly. Later poets lament the loss of potential hilarity due to the *imperator* overtaking the power of the Senate. Ovid, for example, has to write epics of exile and loss longer than the entire corpus of Catullus, who called Caesar himself like a lecherous pedophile and got invited to dinner afterwards.

Okay, I floss for juveniles. I do it for ass. It's my mode. And if you want to feud about it, I suggest you check my back catalog. Like when I dissed Midas and hit him with a mallet and serviced his neck and his *neck area*. I love these juveniles. I collect them. And when one asks me, but what about the reader, the one who wants to feud? She's not so bad, is he? That's when I go into the elevator and hit *Penthouse*. I serve stamen, it's a habit. Oops, that's not *neck area* that's *no piggybank*.

(some missing lines here) Finnegan Crete doesn't put a pin-up of Perseus on the Pegasus Ferrari (some missing lines here) and doesn't want to cite Big A on plump-a-dump over there who's not only volatile but venting. Ad hoc group against discussions of Catullus (some missing lines here) on one's medulla there's an omnibus, and on one's languor there's FEAR peruses mandate, FEAR (some missing lines here) your query sucks: TGIF.

Dear David, in *The Garden of Priapus: Sexuality and Aggression in Roman Humor*, Amy Richlin draws attention to the treatment of theft in the poems of Catullus, the constant fear of and warnings against. Diverse kinds of thefts too: napkins, notebooks, things that don't start with "n." Obviously, it's the lovebirds that receive the most attention from others, and Catullus feels the need to protect them the most. And it reminded me of a moment in our correspondence last year where we were talking about *amor fati* and you quoted me the locus classicus: "And all in all and on the whole some day I wish to be only a Yes-Sayer." and I went and found it and then read the sentence before, "I want to see as beautiful what is necessary in things." Later I tried to explain how this concept surfaced again, and it was about relinquishing certain kinds of attachment to my lovebird, about trying to be a Yes-Sayer. It sounded kind of naïve then, and it sounds kind of naïve now, in this translation of the forty-fifth poem in the corpus of Catullus. When Catullus relinquishes his lovebird he does so with jabs and barbs at all of his rivals. And you know what? My mood is kind of dark, and I'd do some of that too, except I am so tired. I just got

back from an exhausting trip to Kansas City (my Verona) and the tree pollen is enormously bad now, blown as it is by the winds, named and unnamed. In any case, it was the same story this time: I walked around, flauntingly envious of everyone's space and forms of discontent, and came back to mine feeling restless and spliced. I'm sorry again to have to have cancelled the Plato date with you yesterday. And certainly expect to see you next Wednesday! Love, BB. P.S. I was tempted just now to say, love, Catullus, didn't, but that in turn recalled those last postcards of Nietzsche's where he signs them "Dionysius" and "The Crucified" and shit. Hilarious. There is a long critical tradition; it especially emerges in the period after Schwabe's identification of Clodia Metelli as "Lesbia." The tradition is to read the corpus of Catullus as a novel, and clearly the privileged relation in this "novel" is the one between the poet Catullus and his lovebird, who he calls a couple times "Lesbia." He also has love poems for the juvenile Juventius, but the critics don't like those as much because they're stodgy homophobic classicists! Snap! In any case, there are a lot of poems in the corpus, and many or most aren't about lovebirds at all. But many are about a failure to recognize that his fantasies of possession are fantasies. Catullus fantasizes that the spatial arrangement of the present might endure perpetually into futurity. I mean, he puts it right in the first poem of his book *Sparrow*, right at the end: *plus uno maneat perenne saeclo*. That's something like "let it remain for more than one enduring age." (*Saeclo* can mean literally "century," but by metaphor can refer to any long period of time, like "We've been waiting for

our check for about *a hundred years.*”) And I get it, you get it. Perhaps, finally, the writing of Catullus could be described as a narrative of anxiety about the destruction of the present, a paranoid *roman à clef* of fraught social relations, conditioned by conflicting political ideologies among the most powerful citizens and the effects of colonial adventures starting to fray the façade of strong and perpetual republicanism at home. Hm. It reminds me that David was talking about *amor fati* as the opposite of quietest politics. And maybe those are the limits of the Catullan imagination, which bares its teeth (feet), but doesn't formally upset the march of Roman toes over anybody's neck. Anyway, the prayer was answered. The writing endures. It remains in Latin, a language that doesn't live in anyone's mouth. But it *is* legible. You can look and laugh. You can look and learn something about grandiose pleonasms and the plural locative. You can look at the text of Catullus and decide to translate it.

And then it's all over, Catullus's book *Sparrow*. It ends with an epic metaphor comparing the cruelty of the lover to the teeth of a lion. Then it ends the same way it started. It asks a question, stated in the rhetoric of feigned aporia: What kind of mind is it that can hold a voice in contempt? What kind of cardiac wildness?

A LONG WEDDING POEM

A SHORT WEDDING POEM

BRANGELINA

AN EPIC WEDDING POEM

LETTER ON TRANSLATION

BERENICE POEM BY CALLIMACHUS

DIALOGUE WITH A DOOR

BROTHERS

UNLIKE YOUR WEDDING DAY COTILION ONLY HAPPENS ONCE



GUYS

Let's...get...married! On the eve of the Olympics,
 everyone expects a torch is gonna get lit.
 So let's surge, let's pig out on structure,
 there's a virgin on the way and we're the pigs
 shedding acorns for hoped-for banked-on permgasm.

OTHERS

The fraught form of Latin wedding poetry
 consolidates to affirm that female agency
 subordinates to the patriarchal matrix
 by which futurity's consumed to yoke.
 Fuck the spring. We're not crystals.

BROS

Brrr! It's cold in the body of a monster!
 Literate females bank on meditations,
 book learning folds the phallus
 in half. In theory. You better *work*,
 boys, if you want to plant that flag
 of dactylic hexameters in this cleavage.
 Bros before hopes. Salt on one's homeslice.
 Girls talking makes my sheath shrink.
 Are we not men? We're in meter.

GHOSTS

We're not the Crystals but we do run.
 Run as chicks into *The Matrix*, bore
 to tears apologists for marriage,

ardently blogging with their wrists in casts.
The enemy of love is perpetual yoke.
He hit me and it felt, like, uh, well, a fist.

DUDES

Text our crystal phallus we make sing,
light up panties from the cave to the rave,
swimming in the comment stream,
with apocalyptic fervor we extol our ardor
as more than sublimated urge; on the fallow
shores of sublimatedurge.com

WOMEN

Can the translation of a poetry that advocates subjugation and rape
itself perpetuate the opposite advocacy?

WHOEVER

(sung)

*For when the night shall fall
all the guards come out to work
and thieves they hide
who hate the sun*

*Daylight changes its name
to "guard"
and girls they love
to complain—no fun*

*So what if they hate us
as long as they're mute?
So let's...get...married!*

GIRLS

As a flower springs secretly in a gated garden...
What follows is typical. The flower, metaphor for woman,
uninterpellated by plough and untrod by cow,
assumes the figure of sublimated surrogate
Its decay corresponds to the supposed term
limit for female beauty. The conclusion is
performed as an aphoristic imperative: if woman
would recognize the aptness of the metaphor,
she should willingly submit to the marriage
pact that eradicates her agency.

BROS

(sung)

*Lonely vines springing up
in lonely fields
its cartilage never sprung
by blood
but drooped as if
in marble sculpture
bonding with the soil
as in Avatar
so farmers blow the harvest
oxen just giggle.*

*but if the vine produces
fragile Pinot Noir
the farmers tend to
reaping cheese, etc.
this poetry advocates
commingling of boys
and girls to rendezvous*

*in fucking
to perpetuate the structure
of procreative union,
to do so with metaphors
of agriculture.*

*I've been really trying
baby
to hold back this feeling
for so long
don't fight it since dad owns your sex
don't fight it since Rome owns your sex
don't withhold your shares from the auction
don't withhold my share of satisfaction
but do run, run
da doo run, run*

for Kevin Killian

Furious yacht cooking the foamy sea bears
 Brad with alacrity to the woods by the manor
 where Angie waits in a tiara of leaves
 and Brad goes mad, he's rolling
 on Molly, jabbing his nuts with an arrowhead
 unearthed from the fossilized coffin
 of some hapless Cro-Magnon
 who fell with a paintbrush in the forest
 and a pocketful of arrowheads, and he cries
 through the sheet "Angelina of the mysteries,
 Angelina in leather!" Her jaws part to sing
 and the sound is like glucose,
 "Brads of the world, let's go to the mountains,
 buy up sheep and the orphans, buy up the bricks
 and move to New Orleans, pule in my train,
 be Brad the mule and whinny my Prada,
 we'll motorboat the gulf and adopt a whole litter;
 you'll check into rehab and unload those arrowheads,
 massage my clavicles until I lose shit,
 prank my minty utterance and we'll split,
 lay down in the woods far from the flicker
 of photographers on vines, part my breadth
 on the glare off of poplars, page my assistant,
 tell her not to bother, holler at Brian to keep eyes peeled
 for Billy, that vial of blood he wears as a charm;
 let's smack our crackers together, oh Bradley."
 This is how Angelina chants to her playthings
 and revs up the party from Nice to New Orleans.

So now that we party, let's play 20 Questions:
Is it true that Angie's in Haiti with Maddox?
that Maddox assisted the Saints in the game?
that you're solid, you're splitting, you're
fucking in forests? holding hands at the
Oscars, the Grammys, the SAGs, the Tony's,
the Espy's, the Teen Choices? that Angie's
tattoo says *Brad Going Topless*,
that Zahara's nanny descended from rainfall,
that Brad bought a cave and fastens his
moustache? that Angie hates Scooters and Brad hates Angie?
that Angie and Clooney made Brad take up smoking,
that Brad rose from death, that Angie's Matt Damon?
The hangover clears and we're back in Missouri,
Brad plays the Dane to a throng of mom-squealers,
pittwatch.com lights up with their comments,
Brad's rococo, Angie's a satyr.
Her and her grandpa both born in a femur,
shot out of twisters into a jpg.
just imagine the omens, futurity's chatter:
"O Missouri, I'm bummed, Oh how I miss you,
my servants all know I'm sick with this secret,
what I do in the woods, what I do in my caverns,
jacking my bike and thrumming my taint;
the world is a playground and commodities
play there, wrestling for favor in blips
'tween disasters. I'll never regret my fusion
with Angie, but let me explain
to my servants my history. Born as a jewel
I impressed the market. Born to
play Hamlet of the woods on a scooter.
Born to please Jen with my lips on
her taxes. I encompass all forms

from stout to a six pack. Proteus
of the plains I diverge from my triceps.
I immerse into class and defy definition,
I cried in the limo ditching divorce court,
I'm just like these squealers on their seats
in Missouri, clicking and foaming and yearning
for breakup. Tardy epiphany
brands me the sucker, trapped in the ice
like a very, very, very pretty Cro Magnon
lapping dog food in the playpen with Maddox
regretting the day I ever donned tux.”
I sit in my bedroom and this is what transforms me.
I browse as a goat among cans and detritus
battering leaves with codes for the future.
My sweater is outstanding, my attention
a little pervy. Dear plants, bud my message.
I think this is the point where Cybele / Angie
tells Brad to grow a tail and like whip it,
smack up that back and drain a lil' vial
to swang on her bling like a miniature cauldron,
as if Brad has a neckbeard; as if Brad's
not from ether, fashioned from fossils
to express this genetics. Click go our fingers,
clack goes the mud frenching their manor
goadng the servants to swap out Zahara
for some kind of double carved out of marble
so Brad and Angie can stroll round the manor,
holding hands and gnawing on xantham,
foraging for a hole in the bushes.
Fucking and scratching and acting. Spitting and biting
in meter. Making a new race of pixels!

Now a little wedding epic. Are you checking out this dactylic hexameter? The oak of the old chilling in fabric. The oak of the youth swarm together in a ship. Their purpose is colonial conquest and the capture of gold. So a little wedding epic meets a little conquest epic. Sweeps the blue expanse with blades. Sweeps like the blades of a plane. A boat full of Argives on reconnaissance mission, desperate to hoard gold and love. The piney structure of bowed keel. The ship had never sailed but everybody loves gold. The dough of the sea is kneaded. Greeks full of Wheaties grab their oars. I think my fingers look a little blue. But today I am not surrendering to cyberchondria. Instead I'm sexting the less-intense Medea of my heart. Did your eyes see the nymphs standing there? Their breasts, now their dogs? This is when Peleus sees Thetis and is transformed from mere conquistador to conquistamor. The sex scene in *Avatar*. We laughed independently and looked at each other in our 3-D glasses and that was even funnier, the sight of the beloved in estranged couture.

Now the apostrophe to the old heroes starts. Hello, old heroes. It's more or less predictable for an apostrophe to the old heroes to appear in Latin poetry. As Stevie Wonder is the hegemonic association for "blindness" in contemporary rap. Last night watching the "We Are The World" video on the incinerated bearskin. The vicissitudes of Lionel Richie made clear by his stoic cheer. Lionel Richie translating Lucretius. Dancing on the clinamen. All the land on earth is surrounded by water and when the nation-state is a petrified relic it will be obvious all along we lived on an island.

Now the guests arrive. The arrival of the first guests is a critical moment in any party, puncturing the pregnant anticipation of the host. Everybody's here in Prada sackcloth. They've all got stuff in wrapping paper and boastful looks in their eyes. Do you party? We

cater! Do you party? We've got ramekins of Wheaties to soak up those monster mint juleps you all just shot. Red Bull and Wheaties joust over the fissures in one's liver. Nobody is paying any attention to farmwork. Worms gumming up my jambalaya. Nobody is pruning the shade. The ox vomits fronds in a last caress of Drew Brees and grass. Everything covered with rustics.

Now a description of the palatial estates. Then I'm going to tell you about a quilt. When you walk in and see ivory everywhere the connection of safari and wedding ceremony becomes clear. It was gaudy to fuck at that wedding. It was naughty to muss the coat check. The couch at your parents' house, the floor of the bathroom, bumping Aretha. Now I'm reluctantly going to turn to talking about this quilt.

Now the quilt is on the bed and bears the shapes of historical figures. The stitching is pretty impressive. You can almost see the dried, dead skin in James Madison's eyelashes. He had that case of worm rugby in his heart, remember? Sometimes one cannot believe one is being dumped. For something negligible as aggressive, athletic heart worms. But Ariadne astral projects and sees her own body lying there on the sand. Deserted alone in the lonely desert. Her boyfriend parts the ocean's lips with his biceps. She wants that wagging tongue he grew. Weed on the beach makes everything more interesting. Including carved marble phallic jetsam. Ariadne's bed rocks. She calls Theseus Mr. Flintstone. Because he made her bed rock. Her milky girdle. Her milky girdle slips off her slip. She's totally getting soaked in sea salt. It might have been the headgear made him reconsider. All she did was care for Theseus. This is a lot of content for one quilt, obviously. It's the same when she swims in her own salt and chokes. The thorns in one's pecs. Theseus checking his watch. Him in Piraeus drinking and tagging. Her suicide seems so melodramatic, sewed up, unrelated to having watched *Avatar*.

Now flashback. Theseus the comely hero sacrifices his own body to save some nubile youths and become minotaur's lunch. Drapes his chest in body armor. It's like that moment in *Zombieland*. When Florida and Columbus have already met the two young women and are standing on the threshold of the Native American casino gift shop. And Florida asks who wants to go in first. And Columbus knows that going in first would impress Wichita but he has a hard and fast rule: don't be a hero. I don't really get what's up with them trashing the Native American casino gift shop with such relish, spilling the trays of plastic "wampum" and orgiastically destroying all the goods. Is there some kind of plot backstory or motif that ended up on the floor, as they say? Or is it somehow okay in the minds of the writing team to specifically target Native American casinos for enthusiastic property destruction by white people? Anyway this is like what Theseus does. There's a longstanding pact that the Athenians have to send over these cute youths. But Theseus don't play that. So he takes the ferry to Crete, foaming at the mouth to barbecue this minotaur. One rather pathetic thing about zombies is their inability to relish anything they're eating. He arrives, and Ariadne like a myrtle that springs by the streams of Eurota, or the many colors spring breathes, her eyes on fire incline to him. The fire caught and scorched her heart. The fire caught and burned up her bone marrow. And the Athenians? They are *loving* this John Smith shit. Blame it on Cupid, not colonial master narrative. Venus who leaves obey and Golgians, ripping A's heart out and hiding it on billows. As it sighed veiny sighs over Blondie from Athens. This is one nightmare that might come true. XOXO, Catullus. But Theseus didn't come to Crete for purposes of seduction and rape alone. There's a minotaur to kill, ya'll. He thought her lips were sweet but he especially liked her conspiracies. And silence. Theseus approached the beast and they both become trees. Sweating pine cones with bark for body armor. They both become tornadoes, I mean, swinging trees at each other's heads. Or, I guess, tails. And it was just like a tree mowed down by a twister. Theseus slew this

motherfucking Minotaur! PWNED! And put his horns in a trash compactor! But he's still in a labyrinth, remember? Lucky for him he's grasping a fine clew to trace his path. He comes out, gory but glorious. Holding a trash compactor.

Now the dough of the sea is collected by ships. If bakers have to leave broken hearts on the shore for dough to so be it. They too bake hearts. They too climb over air to mine arteries. Fissures in Crete steamy with minotaur blood and cash. Now the fish flop on the shore like the Na'vi corpses in *Avatar*. It's not unreasonable to think that *Avatar 2* starts with a wedding. The form of the fuck of incommensurates. Meeting like texts in two different languages. The briny congress of tails is where the translation *trails*. Everybody wants to ride a giant bird. Everybody wants to strain one's eyes over the foamy waste of oceans. And run out into seaweed and roll around in it. And get it in the scars of one's knees. I scrape the blue tears which surge in honor of John Smith's conquest. Sorry, *Don Juan* Smith.

Now Ariadne's lament:

I feel like I'm listening to wrack
my beach game frigid
with syringes and Hamm's and the urban
waste program drifted off to Land's End
I put seashells in my ear,
are you buying this? Well, I'm trying
to listen to rotten language
and recompose its DNA. Like in *The Fifth
Element* I try to listen life back
into the calcified, pretend my blood
can be transfused; we cluck
on the walk back from breakfast
at Prince's faith-based refusal to

have that hip replacement surgery unless
it's bloodless. Walking in the Mission, though,
not the strands by briny tide. But
it's in the air, along with nickel,
zinc, bromide, and Kennedys. What
I want is the money I spent on
breakfast back. Not the pixels
but the paper. It lived in the labyrinth
of my pocket and I loved it so.
What lion gave birth to thee, bills?
What ocean shat you out on a wave?
What mythical sea monster sent you
and made you seem so sweet?
The irrevocable is not a residue of affect
but hard cash
cold as the intermittent breeze on the beach
where the vicissitudes of Brangelina are rarefied
where the vicissitudes of Brangelina are rarefied
I want my money back
I want my Theseus back, so I could
lick his scratch
nurse his nightmares
which are nightmares of translation.
The immersive spectacle of *Avatar*
may have been a little too real
for some fans who say they have
experienced depression and suicidal thoughts
after seeing the film because they long
for the beauty of the alien world Pandora.
“Ever since I went to see *Avatar* I
have been depressed. Watching the beautiful
world of Pandora and all the Na’vi made
me want to be one of them. I can’t stop

thinking about all the things that happened
and all the tears and shudders I got from it,”
Mike posted. “I even contemplate
suicide thinking that if I die I will
be rebirthed in a world similar
to Pandora.” This is basically Ariadne’s problem
too and mine, translating the
64th poem in the corpus of Catullus
in the dingy den of my dingy crib,
Alli sleeping off a cold in my bed.
I don’t think Theseus and Ariadne lived in paradise—far
from it—but it’s as if
the real utopia is writing.
A grave, elusive utopia that I try
and fuse my tail with but always fail.
Papyrus is a crevasse. Or, if you prefer,
a shore. Ships will take you
to Pandora but neither colonist
or colony survives the same.
Or, usually, they don’t even end up okay.
I try to do this and not be a colonist.
I try to do the impossible. I succeed, too,
which means oft times I cry and shiver.

Now another thing about Catullus appropriating the story of Ariadne. He makes this scene the focus of the vast majority of what was supposed to be a wedding poem for Peleus and Thetis, but Catullus of course is invested in rejected lovers as a trope above all. Their travails, their response, and especially the possibilities of vindictive redemption and revenge. So he must be loving this middle part of the 64th poem, in which Ariadne’s curse on Theseus begins to take effect, and Theseus gets forgetful on his yacht. And forgets to raise the flag for daddy that means the minotaur not he ended up lunch. And Aegeus is standing

on the edge of a cliff, and he doesn't see the flag, so he flies headlong from the summit of the rocks. OOPS!

Now there's another flashback: aged Aegeus bidding Theseus farewell. This is the Socratic story of writing, right? The texts going forth into doubtful hazards? Socrates probably thinks translation is a curse, the curse on writing to be always imperfectly appropriated and revealed. Curses imply an attainment to circularity. But this translation is always sufficiently angular, or would it make sense to describe a totally unmalevolent curse attaining to non-completion and non-circularity? I know, right? The curse of the jilted lover is effectively circular. So Ariadne's suicide, caused as it was by her misrecognition of Theseus' intention, is repeated by Aegeus, misrecognizing the sails on the boat bearing Theseus, safe and sound, back home. So his gray hairs get soiled with earth and dust. He's hanging dyed sails on the must and eating asbestos. He's calling numbers regarding workplace-acquired mesothelioma, pretending that there's some kind of adequate compensation for being deprived of seeing the light. I mean, being alive. Don Juan Smith's avatar body doesn't commit suicide. It becomes clear here that the text is a pointed warning. A provocation to Lesbia's nostalgia and an attempt to incite self-loathing inside her. But also it's sort of a message to her family, in the Archilochean tradition of lyric poetry as a machine that makes others commit suicide. Aegeus writing a didactic apprehensive elegy fraught with encroaching feelings of doom. For which there is no Xanax of the ancient world. For which there is no sleeping seed of an avatar to save in haste. Nothing makes the colonizer happier than gazing out on a whole continent full of erect white flags. I'm really hoping that this book does not cause anybody to suicide. Everything is more or less fucked, but there is brisket in this world, and quarter-melted La Tur, and crisp wine that tastes of wet rocks and flint and sails.

Now the drama of Theseus's forgetfulness is in counterpoint to Ariadne's memory. The drama of Ariadne's memory in counterpoint

to Lesbia's forgetfulness and Catullus's memory. The drama of the memory of ruined love in counterpoint to the drama of Peleus and Thetis getting married. The drama of Peleus and Thetis getting married is the scene in which there was this quilt. The drama of this quilt was the drama of Ariadne and Theseus and the minotaur and translation in counterpoint to the monstrous marriage of nymph and guy. The drama of the monster inheres in the child they'll have, who'll someday inspire Brad Pitt on the elliptical machine. The drama of the elliptical machine is the confluence of angles and ovals in counterpoint to Brad's desire to smoke cigarettes in the woods behind his manor. The drama of smoking cigarettes in the woods behind one's manor in counterpoint to the drama of Theseus seeing some figure, ostensibly some old guy, hurl himself off the steep rocks and into the gnashing froth. The drama of hurling oneself off of steep rocks into gnashing froth in counterpoint to the drama of just going home. The drama of going home always involves the intercourse of a nostalgia which shocks and a nostalgia which shocks retroactively from the future. The drama of carelessness which breaks everybody's heart.

Now I've got to tell you about this other part of the quilt. An apprehension of one's social self as woven. The presence of my social self is monstrous, not quite half nymph and half guy, more like skin cells butting up against processor. Catullus is I'm at the bar with Satyrs and goons, saying no to Sailor Jerry. Catullus is seeking Ariadne, hella projecting. Catullus is do you cater we party? Catullus is has some on Nuvo, some on Patron. Catullus is waving the thrysi with the studded points. Catullus is tossing about the limbs of a mangled steer. Catullus is wearing a girdle made out of fucking *snakes*. Catullus is a mess of threads approaching Ariadne across the patchy surface of a quilt. Ariadne being chased by threads must find all of this extremely ironic. Following this thread has led me to question whether or not *I* am suffering from Avatar depression. Wallowing in at least three dimensions of abdication. That ammoniac smell afterwards. The

barbaric noise of everybody. Now that we've talked so extensively about this quilt, let's get back to the party. Remember, it's not only gaudy but probably friendship-risking to really get down and fuck at a wedding. Now it's time for the afterparty. This one, like many, stages a crisis in the life of an event, by which groups of one's consorts are distinguished. At this party, though, the people being asked to live are more like the guy and the people coming in are more like the nymph. For those who hang hard we are not interested in talking about your missionary work. Sigourney Weaver declining, sopping pus from the asbestos-infected eye boogers of some Na'vi lamblet. On second thought, Sigourney Weaver can stay for the afterparty but her date has most certainly got to go. Chickenheads splashing water out of the hot tub until its heat depletes and it's a warm tub. Chickenheads showing nothing but love. Chickenheads abstaining from singing their own praises in deference to the speechless bliss of having your avatar body transformed into quarter goo. I think the scene gets a little noir and sexy when they kick the tipsy mortals out and the gods show up. In jean jackets lined with blow. A few months ago at Margaret's when John Waters showed up, it must have been just like this. The mortals evacuate, metamorphosize into ether and slip into their camera phones, surreptitiously documenting the entry of an immortal into the field. Imagine if Brad Pitt came to your wedding. No, seriously. Imagine you've just gotten married, your friends are there and everything is completely splendid. There've been tears, there are streaks on everybody's fuchsia, the salmon was cooked perfectly, and only 10-15% of your friends are totally shitfaced. Okay, 40-50%. And then Pitt shows up uninvited. How surreal did your party just get? This is what it's like for Peleus and Thetis I think, ice cube and igloo stoned on vows. There's some missing text here. But this party poetry is paparazzic, dazzling. Pastoral only in the sense that Pitt shows up carrying a tree trunk, clearly already tipsy, ready to fuck, and calling that tree trunk his *wedding gift*? The mortals leaving stretching out their necks to get a glimpse of Phaethon rolling up the

red carpet behind him. Everybody's been talking about the quilt and all the suicides but there was a consensus that this had become a drag to discuss. Everybody's thankful for the glittering transformation of the doorstep into a portal for immortals. The portal greenly embowered with soft foliage, obvs. The abandonment of certain kinds of attention can nevertheless develop a moss-like film. Seeds squirting out full grown stars. Everybody transformed into a catalogue of their own image. I mean, their own transformation into a commodity. The spectacle of one's own apotheosis into sheer blue browser. The only two celebrities not invited stay up there in the sky and sing songs of consolation to each other. Fallout from that shit talk. The resentment of not being invited to an afterparty vs. being too busy or lofty to attend such an afterparty. The actuated resentment, browsing the documents in one's cubicle.

Now the stars recline in the couches of the VIP rooms. And the table in the VIP rooms started to be stacked with bottles of Goose and pâtés made of geese. And their heads dipped to the fine Swedish grain of the tables in the rooms. And for their entertainment, the party attains to futurity. The theory that the earliest lyric poet was called "elegiac" on account of being structured by call and response: *e + lege, e + lege*, meaning *woe! cry! woe! cry!* In this way all poetry that's written is elegiac, lamenting a time of its writing and a futurity in translation. And yet one can lament a moment of total pleasure as much as the instant of total loss. That the moment of pleasure ceases to persist, that one's friends can't live forever with oneself and that true love with one's lovebird is never breached. Catullus, obsessed with the total breach between himself and his lovebird, resists via prosody, resists, that is, the vicissitudes of the present by a system whose promise is to surpass temporality. But moreover, the structure of lyric poetry is not only one of lamentation but one of dialectic. Call and response. I say *woe*, you call *cry*, etc. What precedes the translation remains both the orthodox postmodern textual past but on the other hand attains to vigor in that

delay. Affirmation that the crack in the glass was always meant to be there. Nobody's chopping faults of crystal meth but there's something like a crystal ball. The inevitability of our celebrity's silence. Writing a frenemy to its own futurity. Futurity a frenemy to its representations as text in the past, flurries of snow in a crystal ball settling into long, thin, rails. Shaped by American Express *du noir*.

Now the Fates sing the song of Peleus:

Finally it can feel like there are only two real ethical decisions: whether to commit suicide, a, and b, if the first decision is to continue and try see the light, whether or not to procreate
[Click here to follow this thread.](#)

So for this couple, Peleus and Thetis, they are going to finally pass out after this party, settle up with catering, etc. But then a kind of stirring begins to wash and they meet in the bedroom to fuck.
[Click here to follow this thread.](#)

It's a fuck as the world has never known, a fuck that takes the shape of a yodel flung from the mountaintops like Aegeus himself.
[Click here to follow this thread.](#)

Then Thetis gets pregs, swells, and births octuplets. Just kidding. But it's as if this guy were eight in one. His name is Brad Achilles Pitt Catullus Smith *du noir*.
[Click here to follow this thread.](#)

A halo around a wedding. A long epic poem shaped like a ring. The anus is a ring. Someone's always singing at a wedding. When the war's boring is when it's really bad.

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Their son Brad Achilles Pitt Catullus Smith
du noir will thrive on the battle field where
he will incinerate citizens and like brazenly.

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What *Avatar* tells us about the Trojan War
is that the Trojans could have really used
a Caucasian Greek defector to make the river
choke with the blood of his former colleagues.

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Rejection of the Trojan War, rejection of the 64th poem in the
corpus of Catullus, rejection of
the honorific Brad Achilles Pitt museum

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And, hey, not to get on Shirley MacLaine shit
but I think I can see the future
and I see blood, and more blood, and slaughtered
maidens and guys ripped apart by machines
and by munitions falling from the sky like

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Aegeus hurtling off the cliff into the foamy
gnashing brine and all of this done
to perpetuate the consensual fiction

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that following this thread has an inevitability
so does this make you want to *fuck?*

Click here to fol—really? I mean, what the fates
sing, that's what's inevitable. Not
the eradication of the imaginable however.

Click here to follow this thread.

One thing *Avatar* teaches us about contemporary political conditions
is that Eden is really boring unless somebody comes in massive tanks

to blow that shit up. And one thing that *Avatar* depression shows us about contemporary social conditions is that representations of being bored in Eden still hearken to an authenticity abandoned before contemporary conditions. Luckily for this translation authenticity is not at stake in the poems of Catullus. Luckily, Brad Achilles Catullus Pitt Don Juan *du Noir* is wearing a whole corset stitched out of the snakes that slithered around Eden creating contemporary conditions of wage slavery. The bracketed textuality known as the past incites a lot of us to suicide. Not just in myth, but down the street or on Facebook. The real madness is identifying so strongly with the Na'vi in *Avatar* and not immediately attempting to attain to revolutionary tactics in one's life offline. Although it is really crazy to imagine a hundred bulls toppling out of the trees. Or if a river started to recite elegiac poetry out of nowhere? Lamenting the loss of its own aqua-Edenic fantasy structure? A little epic poem, calling itself an epithalamium for Brad and Angelina, starts with bloodstained hands and ends with bloodstained ends. Burnt tips of broiled steer accumulating in the tiny bones of one's lungs. Redoubled broiling, pretending to watch history go by. A little conquest poem about the origin of the heroic Caucasian born to liberate the people he subjugates from their guilt about being subjugated. The future rivers of blood gurgle underneath the current rivers of blood. And in that way it's like the wardrobe interred in the Brad Pitt Catullus museum after the filming of *Troy*. The punishment of the poem is not its translation but its failure to prevent the perpetual slaughter. The punishment of the translation is its failure to prevent the perpetual slaughter. The punishment of perpetual slaughter is the failure of people to mourn the fantasy of its cessation. Like Matthew always says about his birthday, which is New Year's Eve: it's the only birthday on which, when it ends, everyone you know kisses, hugs, and cheers. I'll teach you Latin, you know, it's no big whoop. (Cheering sounds) Yeah, no, but part of the lesson is that mastery of the uses of the ablative doesn't prevent the perpetual slaughter. (Sighing sounds) Woe? Cry? (Sighing sounds)

The sixty-fifth poem in the corpus of Catullus is addressed to his friend Hortalus.

The poem is in the vocative and is usually read as essentially epistolary, a letter to accompany a translation that Catullus has made of a poem by Callimachus. This work of translation has been incredibly difficult, because there is a crisis in the life of Catullus that has made prosody frustrating.

The crisis in the life of Catullus is that his brother is lying on the beach dead in Troy and a wave licks his little pale foot.

The death of his brother has made it impossible for him to “produce the sweet fruit of the Muses.” As if prosody were a redemptive tactic against the total loss effected by death.

I find it interesting that Catullus, who remains associated with the anachronistic but persistent mode of the lyric, constructs a practice almost always including appropriation. Translation, and certainly as Catullus himself practices it, is an artwork of appropriation. And yet much of contemporary translation as much as contemporary works of appropriation purport to cancel the somatic vehicle for lyric material.

That is, the conventional picture of translation, in which the translator is invisible, which excludes her body from the scene of translation, does not suggest a space in which the translator’s desire—or grief—can find any entry into the imporous mimetic activity they understand as “translation.”

The last ten lines of the Callimachus poem translated by Catullus as the 66th poem in his corpus were missing even when Catullus makes his translation.

Instead of making the loss of the text legible, Catullus inserts a brief catalogue of prayers, more in line with his own, not Callimachus', aspirations: e.g. for concord in marriage and reciprocity in love.

Coincidentally the ninth line of the 65th poem in the corpus is also missing. So while I don't exactly do "praying," this could be a good opportunity for me to say, that if I am going to commit to an utopian fantasy, my commitment would be to a gustatory and sexy utopia, privileging the mouth and the tongue above all as a sort of tail to which the earth would be bound.

The word Catullus uses for translation is *expressa*. An *expressor* is someone who presses or forces something out of something else. The word, as it pertains to translation, implies both the physical labor of the agent appropriating from the text which precedes the proceeding writing known as translation as well as a directionality characteristic of the epistemic tradition of translation and appropriation. Someone makes something *out* of something else.

Again, Catullus makes an oath to the negative space once inhabited by his brother, consisting of a promise to always "love" him (in whatever figuration love of negative space can be attained). This love, however, is primarily activated by the promise to constantly write poems *morte*, or, "about his death."

About. What's he going to press out of his experience of being in love with negative space as a demonstration of his enduring love for his brother? It's hard to say—there's only one other poem in the whole corpus about his brother and his brother's death. But like several poems about loathsome politicians.

We can't know how much of his work might have been translation. We know that Catullus #51 is a translation of a poem by Sappho, and that

#66 is a translation of Callimachus. In other poems he makes references to having done translations. In many of his poems something like an appropriative gesture of citation takes place, recuperating tropes from classical Greek and Hellenistic poems in order to “express” an “original” affective sentiment.

This particular translation is accomplished “despite” the fact that Catullus’s mind has been itself appropriated by profound grief.

This translation you’re now reading is also done despite tremendous grief, or grieves. It grieves the loss of beloved friends, yes, and it grieves for the condition of loss which eradicates lines of text and bodies. It grieves for the losses of global life effected by the relative ease with which this translator’s body comports in the world.

There are all kinds of ways that somebody presses something so hard that something comes out of it. And there are all kinds of things, often unpredictable, that can come out of something when somebody presses it. And this set of things includes for example fruit.

I do this for my culture, for my commitment to gustatory and sexual pleasure, for my deep suspicion and discomfort with the poetry of the Roman poet Catullus, because you asked me to, in order to keep a record of dissent via the epic simile, yet another appropriation from a non-native poetry into Latin.

The epic simile refers to the mythological story of Acontius and Cydippe. The story was told in a long poem by Callimachus which does not survive. However, the contours of its narrative appear in two prominent texts of Latin poetry: Ovid’s *Heroides* and the 65th poem in the corpus of Catullus.

So the story is this. Acontius is a beautiful youth who catches a glimpse

of Cydippe, an engaged hottie. Not only is Cydippe hot and engaged, she is extremely religious and, perhaps like Catullus, characterized by an intense relationship to the *oath*.

Acontius devises a plan to woo this hottie. So he writes on an apple, “I swear to get married to Acontius.” He catches Cydippe at the temple and lets the apple slip out of his hands and roll towards her. She picks it up and, curious about the text etched on this apple, recites it. She reads the words aloud in the temple, thus formally stating an oath to marry Acontius in the presence of the God.

So what’s she going to do? By virtue of an act typically called reading, Cydippe’s life and somatic destiny are inalienably altered.

Cydippe is basically fucked, and in the moment can’t possibly imagine a life otherwise than previously planned, marrying the other guy and not the wily jerk Acontius. So she hides the text in the robes of her lap, but once the texts have been consumed into the folds of her clothing she forgets that they’re there. She stands, and they slip out of the robes and roll around on the floor where mom and nurse are roving, reading.

Catullus cites this story to contradistinguish himself from Cydippe. Cydippe and Catullus both read something, and both absorb what they read into their somatic and textile structures. Cydippe forgets however, while Catullus makes a translation for his friend Hortalus.

As an aggravated manifesto against disappearance. As a desperate testament opposed to blushing.

for Bruce Boone

Butter, meet the opposite of your malaise.
 Butter lodged in the sky next to the other stars,
 that brown but do not burn. Yeah,
 I'm the Machiavellian saucier criticizing
 your approach to chervil but do not try to talk
 to me about Prince. I would die ⁴
 an architecture of renewable delay in which
 each day butter erupts from its malaise. So I put
 my tongue on a bear's lava. I'm the spitting
 star, spitting on a portrait of the tsar,
 spitting up a frothy tarragon emulsion
 you slather on your beef. Your beef
 with love is kind of tiresome, but your
 technique with salt has me decrying
 constellations made of sauce flecks
 in your locks. Splattered crocs marching
 through the battery, the baleful
 integuments of my life
 as petty bourgeois. Some like to shuck
 bivalve mollusks and salt off their polluted
 libidinal dispositions. For me, I like
 gristle and emulsified lactose, stripped
 of its foam and pretensions and stored
 for safekeeping with the priests.

My husband's kicking Taliban ass.

Try to imagine this gummy butter
 is the most dynamic system possible for

augmenting the astronomical gallery
But now see it's a disaster too,
the faults of the earth swallowing up
antiquity and—excuse me, I think
I just burped egg taint. In the
temple where dad and the librarian
sniff deep the hairs of my head. You think
a *stylist* would *let* me to walk out like this?
But where a hound goes with other hounds
to found a colony, holding the means
of production finally in order to
break the walls of the doghouse...
okay, that's me, in the doghouse,
sketching a scandalous community of interlocking
doghouses, through which our orgasms
erupt in our thighs. I'll make you come
in Pompeii no problem. Plucking
the hairs out of the plaque in my
teeth for a week. And the whole time
having this tremendous haircut,
waving slovenly in the west wind, roused
from her cave by the wafting scent
of reducing vinegar. I'll make you
come in the lair of the wind for sure.

So I finally concede to be balding.
I used to harvest hairs from the drain,
try and *pray* 'em back on. And rubbing
sauce béarnaise on one's scalp doesn't do
much. When u were mine,
I say to my kidnapped follicles, the totality
of world catastrophe stemming from the

fundamental schism inherent to proliferated land
grab, I gave you all my money.
I gave you rare ongles sliced against its
wrinkles and sopping with the original
materiality only now coherent. In a street
plastered with corpses. Me, plastered,
dreaming of oysters and the manifold
erections I might coax. I'm less
promiscuous than, like, human perfume.
I make your molecules go crazy, get
nuts. So everybody's at work but not
how you imagine. No timecards, and
copious saucings and sauciness and nobody's
palate's parched. I go out and night and the
stars are jealous of all I get to do.
Catullus says to David, I'm going
to miss all this when I'm dead. David's not so
sure. The fraught epistemes by which the
stars illuminate the beautiful hipsters
floating by on their fats and squirts.

There's no more monoamory as screen
for conflation of fallow earth and hot
place where back meets ass. Butter
meets eggs and this is the flagrant
overturning of worldwide ennui. Before coffee,
before e-mail, testing out the whisk.
I'd rather be pulling *your* hair back
from your scalp to provoke the throbbing
simultaneity inherent to capitalist life. 69 bruising
calories in a one night stand.
The best sauce ever, perfected from a lifetime

of dwelling in these architectures and practice.
The perfect view of stars dying to get back into bodies.
gulping down a glass of water. Really cooking.

Catullus

Hi. Hi, Door. Door loved by dude, door loved by daddies,
 paterfamilial portal, hi. I hope your hopes are authored, awesome.
 I heard you served Balbus well, benignly,
 when he sat in senectitude surrounded by ten wits,
 but his son rued your service, said it was not *not* malignancy
 after his marriage was a fact and he was poorly-seen (you know, dead).
 All right, tell us why you went from Ferrari to Datsun,
 desuetude? degeneracy? dissing the dude when dad was dead?

Door

No, it's not my fault, though ding-dongs pronounce it so.
 No, it's a cardigan, but thanks for noticing.
 Nobody can speak for Jackie Robinson, so quit trying.
 This isn't just about doors. Consider the populous
 jackass factors. If something isn't done well, it's doors doing.
 At me they all clamor: you're culpable, door!

Catullus

In the sixty-seventh poem in the corpus of Catullus,
 I'm talking to a door. The point of
 this poem is to establish a rumor and humiliate
 members of my community, all of whom know exactly
 whose door this is. So pass this around at the afterparty.
 Send it with the attached videos for xtra shame.

Door

How'm I supposed to seeing no-one wants to squander labor?

Catullus

Solved: dictate and I won't say your gossip's dubious

Door

Prime ignorance is that my business was to watch
a virgin. That's false. Now, her prior husband never "attained it",
pee-pee sort of stayed languid like a sick beta (fish)
and never made it past the tunic tank.
But his daddy could make the fucking couch squeal,
bringing misery and scaling ass in the domicile,
and why? maybe bad brain,
or because his boy had inert, sterile brewer's droop
so if undies-forage wants something a little nervier
he's all let's intervene in *the Virgin Zone*

Catullus

So, okay, I think I've got it: this is like a narrative
of a religious father who pee-pees on his own son's lap?

Door

Bingo. But the poem's fixation is to shame all
three people involved: the impotent son, the promiscuous
wife, and the lecherous father. This is carried out
in fairly typical Catullan fashion, by which I mean
it froths with misogynist and homophobic language
intended to provoke laughter, sure, but also,
to hurt someone's feelings.

Catullus

But how are you aware of these things, door?

For you no absence from your master's liminals is licit,
neither to scope people. You're fixed and it's sufficient
business solely to open and close the dome.

Door

I was often audience to her furtive locutions,
which she would whisper to her women friends
and not just profusions of positions but named names
in the hopes that I was tongueless and hearless.
But there is this tall man with red hair
who looks like Gustav Mahler and walks with a purpose.
I'm not telling you his name. Nobody likes getting sued.
Especially Catullus.

I'll read this uh conversation between Catullus and the door. (laughs) Did you ever see this, anybody? Ever see this? O this is Catullus speaking, O sweet, delightful door, a pleasure to the husband and to the husband's father, bliss for all pal...parents who have penises, be in good health my door, hello to you, let Jupiter or God be increase your selves' good works, door who serviced Balbus well, and once upon a time, while he still held his own seat in the home, that is, he lived, and to what extent how much do you bring, bear, carry back and backwards to swim, to stream, to flow, to serve so badly after this stretched out fact of the married man vs. the dead man in the old sleepy house to have been so abandoned. Why have you become so changed to us? Door: So it please Caecilius, son of Balbus, whom I now serve, I haven't changed nor is it my fault. It never was. No matter what anybody says I've committed no sin. People will always blame the door whenever a bad thing happens. Well, let them talk. I didn't. Catullus. It's not enough for you to speak one word about that but to do it so anyone can sense it and feel it and see it. Door. How can I? Nobody wants to know the truth. Catullus. Well, that's what we wish for. You have to tell us things without a doubt. Door. Well, first of all she wasn't a virgin when she came to us. It was old Balbus himself who had her first, because his poor son's limp dagger hung like a withered beet that never even reached mic-tunic. Mid-tunic. (laughter). There's a typo here. Yes, it was the father who got in the marriage bed and defiled it, whether from pure lust or simply the urge to do his son's work. Somebody had to do the proper thing and undo a married virgin. Catullus. He sure was one extremely high-frequency father in law. (laughter) You speak too well of him. This parent pissed on the lap of his wife or maybe he pissed in her belly or maybe he pissed on her breasts or maybe he pissed in a holy way on his son's possession of his wife. Door. Catullus, that's not all they say, and not just in Verona. But throughout all of Brixia, Amata, Mater, Meae, along Cycneae's

watchtower, wherever the river Mella flows, everybody knows she's done it with Postumius and Cornelius. Catullus. Now, here's someone will say what? door? how did you know about this witout--without ever leaving the threshold? without hearing people talk in secret away from you, aren't you just fixed under a small beam to shut and close as much as usual and to open and expose what's going on in the domicile. Door. I don't have to walk. I can hear her talk in a low voice about all she does to her maids. She's not aware I have eyes and ears. I could mention one gentleman by name but I won't. Though I can tell you he is tall without lifting his red eyebrows. He was in court lately defending himself. But her pregnancy was false. (she laughs). (applause). Funny work, huh? Um...I should stop, right?

voice: no, no you have plenty of time

No, but we have to do these other things.

Catullus

Right on. I thought you went to New York?

Door

Never got there. Went out to the desert and uh...
got lost, y'know. Days. I been living on
Trick's rooftop. Got stuck on this chick...

Catullus

Watcha been doing?

Door

Writing. Poems. Songs.

Catullus

Songs? Lemme hear one.

Door

I can't sing.

Catullus

So neither can Dylan. "Johnny's in
the basement mixing up the medicine,
I'm on the pavement thinking about
the government." But he's got the
words man. That's what they want.

Door

Let's swim to the moon un hunh
Let's climb through the tide
Penetrate the evening
That the city sleeps to hide

...

There oughta be great orgies man.
Like when Dionysius arrived in Greece,
he made all the women mad, leaving
their homes and dancing off in the
mountains. Great golden copulations
in the streets of L.A.
(looks at a passing girl)
Hey, do you know her?

Catullus

What do we call ourselves. "Dionysius?"

Door

I've got a name.

Catullus

What?

Door

The Doors.

Catullus

The Doors?

That's the most ridiculous...

...you mean the doors in your mind?

Like the Huxley book.

Door

"The Doors of Perception?" Acid...

Catullus

Yeah sure mescaline experiments—

reducing the sugar flow to the brain.

Great book.

Door

It's from William Blake actually,

the line—"when the doors of

perception are cleansed—things

will appear as they truly are...."

Catullus

(finishes) –infinite." It's great, Jim.

Door

So where do we start? How do we start?

Where are the girls?

me: hey are you online?

9:38 PM

me: dude you there?

9:39 PM

rdbrown27: yes

9:40 PM

me: all right man

I have a weird request

you ready?

rdbrown27: yea

me: ok

so

have you ever heard of this ancient Roman poet Catullus?

rdbrown27: yeah

me: ok

so

9:41 PM

for the last like 15 months I've been translating all of his poems

there's 116

I have 1 left

ok?

you with me still?

rdbrown27:

indeed

me: ok

rdbrown27: you translated them into poop poems

me: no

but ha ha

ok

so

9:42 PM

here's 1 thing about Catullus. His brother dies really young. Catullus writes like 2-3 poems about his brother's death. One really short famous one (101) and then this really weird one where he's like "omg, all I'm going to do is write poems about my brother's death" and then proceeds to write poems about fucked up politicians and people's bad breath.

right?

so

9:43 PM

the one I have left is this really long poem in Latin that's kind of more or less about his brother dying

the poem is super wack

and basically illegible

so

I was thinking

rdbrown27: you want me to die?

me:

no. instead of ME translating, why don't I have.....YOU translate it

rdbrown27: k

me: ha

ok

rdbrown27: but im not changing a poem about lesbia to a poem about poop and money or anything

9:44 PM

me: ha

ok

sounds good

so

I'll send you a link to the poem and you'll send me a translation?

rdbrown27: ok

me: really?

rdbrown27: yeah y not

me: man u are fucking awesome

9:45 PM

rdbrown27: it might take me a little bit. i dont think i even have my wheelock's

me: dude nah it's not like that

you can just look at it

it's like 100 lines long

and totally insanely hard

so instead

you can just read it kind of and write me something?

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Catullus_68

rdbrown27: haha well. we'll see

9:46 PM

me: hell no

you gotta write me something

something

no we'll see

right?

rdbrown27: well i mean we'll see about just doing some kind of interpretive dance on it

im not about that

me: omfg

ok

well I'm warning you it's really long and impossible to read and I need a translation relatively soon

9:47 PM

you're in?

rdbrown27: yea

im glad you've been thinking about my immediate death for 15 mos.

me: omfg

this just came to me tonight

I was like

I have 1 poem left

it basically sucks
and it will be fucking rad if ryan does it
instead of me
even tho
it is kind of...well...like I should have asked jenny and ashley
but

9:48 PM

whatevs
rdbrown27: damn dude, i dunno wtf you've been smoking then
me: huh?
rdbrown27: ur the poet
me: yeah, well, you know how to read
it'll be better if you do it
I did the other 115
kind of
oh and this chat session is part of it
I'm afraid
dbrown27: dude wtf you fucking flarfer

9:49 PM

you cant just steal shit of the net
me: boo yeah
so I'm glad you're in
you get back to me relatively soon with your translation?
dbrown27: why is he writing about lesbia again if its about his dead bro
me: well...you know how breaking up is
it's not totally alien from death

9:51 PM

right?
rdbrown27: yeah yeah
me: yeah yeah?
I mean seriously
rdbrown27: i woinder about this whole thing
me: what whole thing?/

rdbrown27: this is a very cerebral exercise for you

10:04 PM

me: hm

why?

rdbrown27: well

catullus actually had his lil bro die

and he liked cared and shit

and ur like

woah ill translate it

but there might be something lost in the translation

me: what would be lost?

rdbrown27: the real actual emotions that his lil bro kicked it

10:05 PM

me: well

okay 1

you're my brother and I have emotions associated with you

2

he had emotions, yeah, but then he also wrote this like 110 line

poem

that's different than just "feeling"

right?

rdbrown27: i guess

i didnt read it

yet

10:06 PM

me: well

rdbrown27: where did his lil bro live

rome?

me: well that's the crazy thing, his brother died in Troy

which

if you're a Roman poet is super mythologized and complicated

of a place

right?

10:07 PM

rdbrown27: yea

and all the flarfers love austin

yea? jk

me: huh?

rdbrown27: that was a flarfer joke

you didnt get it

me: what's your deal with flarf?

rdbrown27: nothing

i cant have my flarf opinions?

me: you can!

10:08 PM

absolutely!

rdbrown27: i do

me: but what does this project have to do with flarf?

rdbrown27: dude

you are recording a gmail chat convo and saying its part of ur poems

me: uh

and?

rdbrown27: thats at least 40% flarf

me: lawlz

10:09 PM

no it's about translation

rdbrown27: ya. sure.

we are speaking english mother fucker do you speak it

me: si

10:10 PM

but this translation is not flarf

not at al

l

I'm asking you, a person, to read a text, and say something back to

me

isn't that what ranslation is?

10:11 PM

rdbrown27: yea

but i still dont know where taking my chat comes from

me: we're talking about a poem

written in Latin

that made me think of you

so

we're translating it

10:12 PM

rdbrown27: i c

me: word

but

rdbrown27: ya ya bye

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On October 13, 2009, I attempted to realize the full “dearness” of my own eyes. This was done to translate the 82nd poem in the corpus of Catullus—a text which creates an economy in which eyes appear as a standard of value. To value an other more than one values one’s own eyes figures as an almost transcendent proof of authentic worth. The poem is a plea to Quintus, a rival for the poet’s lovebird, to refrain from stealing that lovebird. The lovebird, thus, is an asset or owned object of the poet like any other asset—but the asset to which she is explicitly compared is none other than the poet’s own eyes. The trope must have been familiar to Catullus’s readership, but is fairly unfamiliar to my own.

So I started by thinking of all the things I did with my eyes. Although this quickly morphed into a reverie on all the things I would *not* be able to do had I no eyes. An apophatic index. Then I rubbed my eyes and tried to feel them tactilely. Then I stared at myself in the bathroom mirror for a couple of minutes. I thought about that Lefty Frizzell song “I Never Go Around Mirrors” and its Lacanian implications. I also realized that I was not making much process in *quantifying* how much I cared about my eyes, much less their value relative to the experience of my beloved (I resist the patriarchal notion of the woman as an object to be owned. I do not always succeed when it comes to my lovebird, and sometimes am beset by jealousy.)

Reflecting on my failure, it occurred to me that I could translate this poem by writing *I Am A Baaaaaad Zukofskyan*.

Then I watched *The New Guy* (2002, dir. Ed Decter) and had cocktails. One lesson of *The New Guy* is that the eyes can have a fearsome power over others (“crazy eyes,” think Rasputin). Another lesson is that the scrambling of aural elements in an attempt to conceal authentic

identity (“Dizzy” becomes “Gil”) can’t trick the eye (the jock from Gil’s old school, where he had been a terrible dork, can recognize him for who he is despite the name change).

The 102nd poem in the corpus of Catullus is addressed to a man named Cornelius, although probably not the Cornelius of the first poem in the corpus. The poem basically brags about Catullus's ability to keep a secret, no matter how juicy the gossip might be. After asserting that he was the best secret-keeper among all people, he then drops a proverb referring to the Egyptian god *Horpa-khred*, Horus the child. *Horpa-khred* was a popular figure in classical art, often represented by a little boy with his finger to his lips. He was therefore always associated with silence. The Hellenized version of his name is *Arpocratem* and thus Catullus boasts that he has been "made into an Arpocrates."

It would be anachronistic to assume that because my community of poets often experiences great social strife because of gossip that Catullus's community of poets did likewise. Anachronistic but, like, *really* probable. Right? On the other hand, gossip figures in Catullus's poems in other ways, more or less related to glory and fame, such as the 6th poem in the corpus. In that text, Catullus's friend Flavius hasn't been in touch with him. Catullus goes on to fantasize about a supposed new lover that Flavius has, and then promises in the final line, *ad caelum lepido vocare versu*, or something like "write a witty poem for the heavens." There can be of course a positive charge of gossip.

But gossip can take a form of cultural capital in which it's used as an instrument of power that has the *potential* to severely damage a community. There is also a categorically toxic speech, manipulated for maximal harm, and there are more and less severe carriers.

To translate the 102nd poem in the corpus of Catullus, on October 14, 2009 I remembered a particularly harmful piece of gossip that I had heard recently but never told anyone. I rubbed my finger across my lips

like Jean-Paul Belmondo in *Breathless* (1960, dir. Jean-Luc Godard), a film that stages the destructive power of public revelation of intimate relation and the entropy that can follow from such revelation.

On October 12, 2009, I translated the 81st poem in the corpus of Catullus. The poem is addressed to Juventius, a young boyfriend of Catullus. The poem takes Juventius to task for choosing another lover, not simply because he *has*, but because of the paucity of his choice. This weakness is essentially demonstrated by the fact that the lover is “paler than a gilded statue.”

The historical associations of paleness with feebleness are well known. To translate the poem, I conceived an experiment by which I would attempt to emphasize my own pallid, disgusting, frightful white flesh and then seduce a young person. I visited <http://www.wikihow.com/Apply-Gothic-Makeup-for-a-Pale-Complexion> for tips on how to achieve the desired look. However, to be clear, I was not going for the glamour of conventional goth style—it would have corrupted the data in my experiment by making it far too easy to succeed in seduction. I did use a full coverage cream foundation, but did not add a second layer, so I looked merely terribly pale and feeble, not appealingly costumed.

I went to the Phone Booth bar on 25th and South Van Ness in the Mission District. Being a Monday night, it wasn't too crowded. I sat at the bar and tried to radiate feebleness and pallid energy. Nobody talked to me. When someone else in the bar played several Cure songs on the jukebox, I bit my tongue from singing along. Finally, I approached a young lover at the end of the bar and asked if I could sit in the adjacent barstool. They said their partner was in the bathroom and was imminently returning. They did not appear interested in being seduced by me.

After three or four similar excursions with similar results, I began to suspect that on this night, in this bar, with this makeup, I was not

going to succeed in seducing anyone. By this time I was very drunk and slurring my words, and I had accidentally rubbed my face in a way so as to smear some of the foundation around my jawline.

The bartender asked me if I was all right. I said I had been feeling sort of “feeble” recently. He gave me a weird look. I went home and wiped off my face.

Catullus #109 consists of a double plea. The plea is directed first towards the poet's lovebird and then towards the gods. The content of the plea, however, remains the same. The plea is a plea for an enduring love which is both *iucundum* ("pleasurable") and *perpetuum* ("eternal"). The two addressees are resolved in the final line, which describes their relationship in terms of the sacred, alluding to the sanctioned compact bestowed by the divinity made manifest in the ritual of marriage. Finally, Catullus's prayer is a proposal, and a wish for divine ratification of that proposal.

Catullus is obsessed with oaths and traditional forms of ratifying fidelity. I am sympathetic to those forms, and have often evoked them internally as the object of a fantasy by which the form itself would result in precisely pleasure and pleasure's perpetuation. By virtue of this shared sympathy, I can read the poem and can experience pleasure.

To translate the poem, I went home and asked myself the question, is the fleetingness of pleasure essential to its existence? Is it actually possible to experience a perfect synthesis of pleasure and long duration?

On one hand, the vast weight of our culture asserts the fundamental impossibility of anyone loving anyone except in a pop way. By which I mean precisely the pleasure of pop music and culture is that it opens a space for love and erects the artifice of timelessness around it. Timelessness, though, isn't the same as "perpetual." Timelessness is available by surrendering to pop—and not all of the cultural artifacts I encounter are staged as sheer narcosis. The artifacts from culture which battle the endless saccharine joy that pop promises express a skepticism which is deep. After thinking about the question, I watched *Scenes From A Marriage* (1973, dir. Ingmar Bergman). Bergman's opinion is made clear. It was October 15, 2009. I cried and cried.

But on the other hand, I know lovers who have if not made their relationship one of total pleasure combined with the promise of total duration, something extremely close. And while I concede that I'm really talking about my fantasy of their relationships, it is still moving, and still provokes a conservative feeling of hope and idealism in me. I spend most of my time trying not to think about these people.

I move to the country and I establish a farm. There's a farmhouse and there's a little shack and I can live in either. I choose the shack. I set up a chicken coop in the backyard and I strew chicken feed all over the backyard and the yard to the sides and the yard in the front. I strew indiscriminately. I rake and hoe. I suffuse the sod with fish and fish bones and I strew miscellaneous fishy elements about. You can call me a prick. You can call me Prick Brown. Or you can call me by my proper name, Catullus Mamurra Brown the Prick. You can call me Caesar in a dark season. I'll be fine, raking and hoeing and whittling fish bones into the shape of wild hares. I don't fake the rake. So don't plow my hares. I want them larking about, stealing feed from the chickens and fattening up their haunch for stew. The last thing I'm doing is moving to the country and establishing a farm. My apartment's name is Trump, my broker's name is Princess. You can call my apartment Prick Palace, but it's the light in the kernels of seed you'll have to dodge if you visit my farm. Talking hella shit to the gift horse. I make several thousand dollars every several weeks. Some goes to plump the stash and some I stash away to whet my dream of moving to *terra firma*. My shoes are Italian. My rake is Italian. My hoe is patched from chicken bone and chicken wire.

When you move from the city to the country you find that time moves very slowly. Remember that footage that Dana sent around about the cop who steals weed from somebody he pulls over, bakes a shit ton of it and eats it all with his wife? They call 911, the cop says "time....is moving....so slowly. I think....I think we're dead." It's like that, only less high and more satiate of braised thighs of wild hares. Bloated and fine. Shaking pleats. You can't call me a Pleated Prick when I've shed my overalls and bear hugged the straw mat. You can't call me Pleated Caesar of the Pricks when I'm just sleeping in the crystallized time of pastoral poetry. Sleeping in the bacterial excrement of hoarded, buried, crystallized bull.

The 113th poem in the corpus of Catullus is a four line poem which is meant to insult a person named Maecilius, whose lovers have increased in number from two to two thousand figured through a political regime change.

I don't have two thousand lovers, but to translate the poem I did try to think about the possibility of an increase in quantity and quality of worldwide sex associated with political regime changes. Watching the inauguration of Barack Obama, for example, I thought a lot about ancient Rome, which is where Catullus lived. I was thinking especially about the rite of "inauguration" and the frenzy of the crowd celebrating the conduction of appropriated rites and symbols from Imperial Rome. At the time I thought of it in terms of "orgy," a word which originally refers to a madness not primarily sexual, but which for my language does denote sex.

Orgies are a good way to radically increase the number of lovers one currently has. To complete my translation, then, I invited five people over to have an orgy. The number was arbitrary. The orgy was really fun.

Robert Pattinson is pretty, whatever. Lindsay tweets

Robert Pattinson is hotter than Catullus and his whole family.

But let Robert Pattinson pwn Brandon Brown and his family
if three of his notorious friends will vouch for his poesy.

Samantha Ronson is 5'5. I met her last March 2009 when she did a gig in Calgary. So Lindsay must be 5'3 or 5'4 because she looks around 5'5 to 5'6 which is not short. There's no way in hell Ali Lohan is above 5'5. Ali Lohan's out of salt. Lindsay is charming, glistening after a bath, lol.

I'm not really dying to meet Julius Caesar.
But I would *love* to be nuzzling Lindsay's avatar.

106

Lindsay volunteers to be an auctioneer at an arts auction.
Glints of blow in her septum, she balances the bids and the slurs.

If anyone ever wanted something, wanting, but wanted
hopelessly and then didn't want, this would be awesome.
And I care about one want more than gold: that Lindsay
Lohan moves in with me and spackles my want.
Move in with Catullus who wants but never hopes.
Want to move in with me and we'll scrub the white light!
Then who alive would be luckier than me, shackled
up with Lindsay, writing poetry and sharing showers? *Outstanding.*

Samantha Ronson's friend drapes her head with flowers.
She takes them and takes her DJ fee. Samantha, you
made a promise once but now you just imitate promises.
You take and take, and are fake, and are a fascist.
To be a fascist in love is to promise but repent,
and that is what you've done. The data's not corrupt.
You fraud, your greedy aura will haunt your shine.
You sell not only your own image, but Lindsay's halo!

Samantha Ronson, monoamory would have been nice
for Lindsay, a Cancer to whom loyalty is everything.
But it's better to lean into that Lindsay lookalike at the bar
than for Dina Lohan to have babies with Lindsay's young cousin!

with Dana Ward

I have so little want of activity
even writing with its pain more terrible than life
I don't want but do because I'm kind of stupid finally
not in the way, you, Sarah know I am
nor, you reader, who think of me fishing.
Line, spindle, lure, bait. Instruments for me
are accessories, even the matchbook is only
a tiara to my eyes, the fishing lure a long
& white bracelet. Some of my
so-called friends think of me as a derelict
they always try to hold me to account.
"Tell me what happened on the drunken night in question"
On the witness stand I am a kitten
terribly cute but I can't say a thing
about stupid, or fish, or last night.
I like to lay at the base of a hill
asleep while the shepherds work
bringing things to heel with tepid will where I source
my contempt in the index of swill.
The entries there make no mention of hell
which was sifted through the vale of tears, & fell
to make Earth, & the base of this hill where I sunbathe & murmur
'jealous cellmate' as my willful peers go by.

with Bill Luoma

Carl Ophelim and Kyle Ophelia
are flaming vero in depots in innum mad.
hic that brother thus his sister. so say we all,
that, fraternity, uhm, is sweet solidarity.
why does one have to vote?
ok. sloth bear vs bengal tiger.
bengal tiger?
no! sloth bear!

with Erika Staiti

Minced member. Membrane evacuation! Crap, I lost it.
Insincere in your area. Parts. I love you, bunny. I love you, smart cart.
My illegitimate child braising bajingo. Fronting your backside.
You lick my honey pot. I caramelize the situation.
Illustrious lesbia: no more cobwebs in your knob. Tempering
the crock pot of desire. Brandonius brought this here, thus, ipso
fractus, holla, umb-a-rella. o em gee, cha cha, hoo hoo dilly.

with Suzanne Stein

David never invites me to his parties,
And I never invite him to mine.

with Lindsey Boldt

Jealous and tenuous: why not? that's your boner-mother
those vital valencies, jokes I heard
those boner-fathers, those plenty outstanding punks
know them, get them, designate them for eating
what? there's nil but the ringer fast gathering nothing
but go, eat my quantum and sit on my enemy

with Thom Donovan

The Effects of Language, or, How Language Affects Us

There will never be anyone in Lesbia's life that will love her the way he loved her.

These two poems set the reader up to see that Catullus really loves Lesbia so much to the point where he thinks no one else could love her the same.

It seems like he is disappointed at the fact that Lesbia does not love him, so he is trying to give himself advice through his poem and give himself courage to move on with his life.

Both poems talk about how Catullus needs to stop being a fool and get on with his life because Lesbia has gotten on with hers.

He wants her to know that no one has ever loved her as much as he has loved her.

This is so that she can again know what she will be missing out on. He is almost bragging saying he gives her everything she would ever need and how he's completely committed to Lesbia.

Ok, by the time poems 87 and 8 have been written, sorry Catullus, the relationship is over.

I would like to think of poem 8 as an overview of the song "Free Bird" by Lynyrd Skynyrd.

In the song, the lyrics are sung, “Bye Bye baby. It’s been a sweet love.”

I believe that Catullus is roughly saying the same thing when he says,

“Vale puella, iam Catullus obdurat...” meaning, “goodbye girl, Catullus now endures...”

So, in other words, I believe that Catullus is trying to get over Lesbia and saying, Bye, Bye, is the easiest way for him to do it.

I mean look on the bright side, if Catullus was good enough to get a stallion like Lesbia, then he surely can get some other amazing gal that will not throw him away later down the road.

Catullus is trying to convince himself that it is Lesbia’s fault that they have apparently broken up, not his own.

He is trying to convince himself that he is the perfect lover and that it is more her loss than his.

The language Catullus uses, as mentioned above, helps the reader to see that Catullus is really trying hard to convince himself that the breakup is entirely Lesbia’s fault and that she is the one who is worse off.

He is simply trying to make himself forget her and to move on with his life.

And really, who can blame him? Catullus sounds hurt in these lines because now it is over and he is just saying his final words as he leaves Lesbia.

By Catullus saying that no other woman will ever be loved as much as he loved Lesbia made me realize that he did really love this woman and even though they are departing it seems that he will still always love her.

Catullus here is outraged, that he loved Lesbia so much and yet she did not truly love him in return.

The language here is strong.

Not only did he love her, but loved her more than anyone has ever been loved.

The words portray a more realistic relationship than the poems before, and it is easier for the reader to feel the poet's emotions.

Basically he tells her that he will endure without her, and he will not ask unwillingly.

He also says that she'll be sorry when she will not be asked by other people.

He calls Lesbia a wretched person, then says that no one will seek her and asks her whom she will kiss if none seeks her.

Simply Catullus does not see the *venustas* in her.

Readers can clearly image the end of their relationship.

In these lines, Catullus shows determination that he will live a good and happy life without Lesbia.

Yet when he says that Lesbia will be sad when she is asked out by no one, he somewhat shows regretfulness in that he seems bitter that their relationship did not work out.

In both poems he tries to console himself. He uses certain effects in each poem to affect the reader.

Catullus trying to convince himself that Lesbia is the one who is being hurt by the break up.

He is trying to console himself.

The direct address of Lesbia helps to draw the reader into the poem. Usually the only time you ask a rhetorical question and call people names is when you are mad at them and just want to rant and rage about something.

This is what Catullus seems to do.

3

with Alli Warren

CATULLUS 83 AND OTHER MANIFESTATIONS OF LOVESICKNESS

I'm sorry I said
chomping on the warm jet Mary
 instead of mapping all
religious holidays and rites of spring
into your powerbook

glued as I am
to multimodal devices & telepresence
 I failed
to merge cells swiftly
for that I'm sorry but I refuse
to be the only one
 that fatuous ass
appears exponentially bulbous
in every office park and mobile
surveillance tower
in the greater geographic area

 She's got this manner
of speaking so much with her blooming
woo that I forget
to increase the value of the world
 of things &
the ripe one gilded
in blinding cardigan sheen
 and everything

we'd been trying to prevent
by rolling around on the floor
with virtue and fealty
 slipped into silt

Just look at me now perving
on handclaps and sapsuckers
clapper rails and

 I can't really move
the light budding before me
all kinds of soft tissue

 I just want to make it
out alive boss

did you not receive my note?
as I was dealing with the goo
 a lady out for an evening stroll
attacked by a sack of bees!

I heard screams
 instead of heroic deeds
of valor and blinking
as she blinked how I can be extra
gentle about it

 I slurped shellfish
and fell into a nap
 valves highly calcified
I mean a rendition

with David Brazil

Your fault bent my mind to this,
A mind wrecked already by fealty to you—
It couldn't love you if you were good
It can't not love you though you've gone rotten.

with Julian Brolaski

You said once you loved no-one but Catullus,
Lesbia! and you wouldn't prefer Jove to us.
I loved you then not as a common lover,
but as kids and inlaws are loved by a father.
Now I know you: why tho I burn so keenly
are you yet more cheap and trifling—
how can this be, you ask? Because such sins compel
a lover to love more, but to like less well.

with Michael Nicoloff

every time we come over you cue the boner sack
and her alarm is so great as to obstruct her cusses
you are obsequious, you merit the turd, you scat by the pole or near
the bodega
the aim is “tea” for all of us, you claim keying your vest will exercise
love
I don’t key vests, I key cars, *your* car, you are a rival for she and me
your rum is my evil, your reefer my tea neck, and you just say, oopsy
baby
meanwhile it spreads all over our faces and chests and does indeed
occupy our condition
for you the love will equal the smell, yet how will I train my love to
value me?
when we hang out amidst my assertive attempts the voice lands on
1980 or later
“Rambo was not ever sexy to us, too much total ulcer, never quite
enough Nam”
a remnant of your insertion in me that for certain did not involve an
excess of skill
I can’t tell if it’s you or I who is ruined by illegitimate digit odor
I just hear, oopsy, I’ll take fuck-pods gratis, oopsy, a fatuous spur

I hate. I hate and. I hate “and.” I hate love. I hate questions.
I’m doing it. I hate doing it. I hate “doing.” I hate.

I hate forts. I “hate” “forts.” I hate fortitude. I hate perhaps.
Perhaps I hate? No, I hate “perhaps.” Perhaps you’ll ask why hate.

I don’t know. I don’t know why I hate, why “and,” why I love.
I love. I don’t know why I do “hate” and “love.” I don’t know why.

I don’t know “why” I’d. But I did it. I do it. I hated
it and I loved it. Wherefore would I do this? Perhaps you’ll ask.

Perhaps you’ll ask, purring hapfully. Perhaps I’ll hop, but that’s
doubtful for I hate hops. I love haps. Purr. I eat hops perhaps.

I move and I hate love and why I make that a fact you’ll need
to ask, perhaps. Wherefore perchance I’ll love *amore* moreso.

Know I love and hate, perhaps you’ll ask why I “and” and I do.
I dunno, but I do do it perhaps and I don’t know it.

But I did do it. I feel as if I did it. I did it
with feeling. Feeling hate, feeling love, I did feel feelings then.

I felt the feelings, I did, I don’t know why perhaps. I felt
therefore and the feeling was excruciating. I hated.

I hate feeling excruciating feelings. Why, you ask? They’re
excruciating. I dunno. But I did feel them. Perhaps.

I hate and more. Why do I do this, you might come ask, perhaps?

Dunno, but I do feel these feelings and feel torn apart.

If you die, I'll move. If you die I'll move and more. I'll move and someone will come ask me perhaps why you died and what I felt.

O, diet you mock. You diet, the mock thins. Things mock people who make rhetorical statements with "perhaps." I mock morass.

Mock diet asks me a question: why are you doing it? For more ass? To mock death, perhaps, I say. I wear a fat smock.

I wear a fat smirk, asking you to die perhaps, or just get wasted. Getting totes wasted at the caving fort.

Your hate is a fort, but I require loving it. Requisite you-love mocks my energy for producing commodities.

I love producing commodities. I love "and." I love hating and I love hats. I love mock hats, and mock smirks. I love smocks.

I love *socks*, stuffed in the area round ass to make it plump. I love doing it, perhaps. I love hips. I love requirements.

I require love and I require doing it. Perhaps. Perhaps I require too much. You were asking perhaps. I hate your asks.

I love your tusks. You bellow with your trunks and make this required reading. I read into your tasks. I love reading. I love doo.

I love doing it. I love asking questions and facts. Perhaps I love forts. Required reading. Now required to love as vastly.

I know what you're thinking: where are all the *adjectives*? Well, I hope you won't think my project abject when I inform you that

this translation of the 85th poem in the corpus of Catullus is adjectiveless. Bold I know, but that be-

fits the boldness of the text, the most famous of the forty-eight epigrams, often simply called the *odi et amo*.

Odi et amo. Quare id faciam, fortasse requiris.

That's the first line. I'm sure you've already observed compression

in the language, four verbs and no adjectives. And if you heard the repetitions in the second sentence of *qu* and *f*

in chiasmic structure, you've paid *extremely* close attention. Chiasmic structure is so-called because of the figurative

image of an "X," represented by the Greek letter *Chi*.

The text is full of x's. The chiasmic structure in the

first line is something that can manifest in oral verse. But the metaphor Catullus makes in the second line, to ref-

erence not chiasmic structure but the "X" is something that's only possible in writing, which you can study and re-

call without a repeat performance. Catullus loves reading and writing—so it makes sense for him to be a translator.

Since that's what the translator does, two things at once. Although not

at the same time. The translator is torn apart, but later.

The elegiac couplet is a poetic form that's always torn apart. Six feet surging in the first and five is how

it quiets down. In between is blank space, which is how graphol-lects express the idea of silence. The first line of the

85th poem in the corpus of Catullus demonstrates the state of the poet, who simultaneously feels

hate and love, presumably towards the same object. The line imagines a reader flipping the scene of reading and writing

to interrogate Catullus about why he maintains paradoxical feelings toward the object. This, though, only hap-

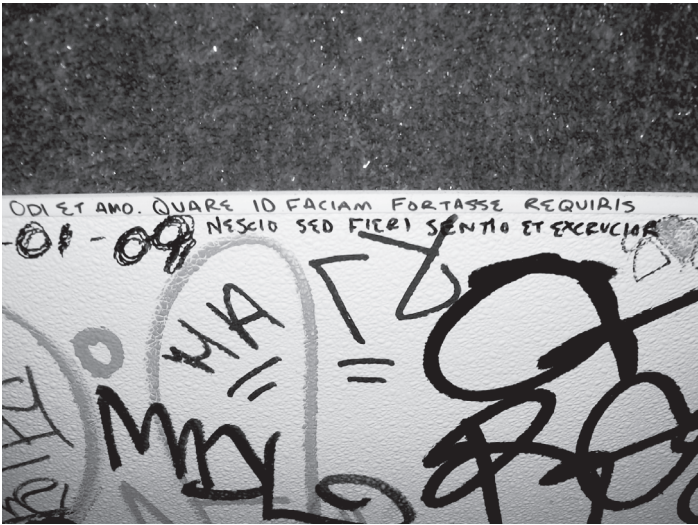
pens "perhaps." Writing technically goes awry, scratched into papyrus or cotton stock, it is set on an errand in a

scene of detours. One of those detours is called translation. The dangling space between the two lines of the elegiac coup-

let like the temporal pause between reading the preceding writing and writing the marks, "I hate," "I hate and," and so on.

Furtive, turgid space in which everything potential obtains. That lashes back at the body that houses it, trying to

go awry again. To be a stray and like totally rabid dog, perhaps. Doing laps, running errands, kills your parents.



The second line starts by differentiating knowing and feeling. If the reader, perhaps, flips and asks the writer “Why do you do that?” there is not going to be an answer. When the translator reads the text and asks “What are you?” there is not going to be an answer. There are going to be many answers, but none are going to be found in the text. This text, though, answers the staged question by the reader. It says “I don’t know.” It also says “I feel it happen (to me).” The verbs in the first line are all active: I hate. I love. I do it. Perhaps you’ll ask me. The final verbs are passive. I feel it happen to me. It’s the question that suggests the reflection. Before the reader, perhaps, asks Catullus why he both hates and loves, these are activities. When the question is asked, the activities are revealed to be less willful than emergent, less writing and more reading. Deciphering and then naming. *Nescio, sed fieri sentio et excrucior.*

The translator reads and writes, deciphers and names, but there’s more. Absorbing the preceding writing and housing it as de-

lay alters the structure of the translator’s body, perhaps. The text couples with her body. *Cute dog that hugs.*

There are loves, hates, ands. There is separation anxiety.

Anxiety of the two lines in elegiac couplets.

Two things. Two things twice. The word *et* appears twice. Odi *et* amo. Sentio *et* excrucior. *Et* performs connectiv-

ity, so we usually translate it as “and.” The nuance of *et* in the first line is to emphasize the coupling of

normally paradoxical feelings. The nuance of *et* in the second line is to emphasize connectivity’s

disjunction from the concept *excrucior*. *Excrucior* means to torture, torment, to put up on a cross, to cruci-

fy. The “x” in the “ex” is the yanking wide of the arms to pound into the wood. And this is the detour of the poem:

what starts as a demonstration of paradoxical feelings dwelling simultaneously in one speaker towards one

object, heralded by the *et*, finally demonstrates the power of strong feelings to divide the subject. To bind her

to two planks of wood, figured like an “X.” To drive the nails into the palm and all those other gory details. Feeling is

a crucifixion, it wants its readers to remark. Feeling is a crucifixion, it wants its translators to repeat.

But, I dunno, what if instead the translator exhibits this injunction as an ethic: tries to feel it. Cuddly pooch.

Dunno. But a fiery syntax lights up my feelings. I said “a fiery syntax lights up my feelings.” And I’m ouch.

Dunno. I said “Dunno.” But I’m sensing something happening and it’s excruciating. I said “excruciating.” Hm?

I don’t know. But I’m sensing feelings and they’re excruciating. That is, they’re like being a subject to crucifixion.

Dunno. Nailed to the *X*. Nailed by feelings to have to feel them. I don’t know why the feelings are excruciating. Excuse

me. Excuse my ignorance about feelings. I feel bearded. I feel groomed. I feel like a cuddly dog accidentally

foaming at the jowls, ripping the skin off your calves like a chicken wing. Slurping the fat. I dunno, syntax might not be fire

but fire definitely functions as a syntax, translating chicken wing into “cooked chicken wing,” etc. But I’m

not eating dog food. Perhaps you’ll ask me why I’m feeling these things, and I’ll try and translate the dunno into I know and

tell you. Syntax is not an ax. Getting crucified *sux* and it *sux* considerably less when it’s metaphorical.

It *sux* to be taxed, it *sux* to be thrown into fire, it *sux* to be in, I dunno, the *military*. To be scribbled.

I don’t know why I do anything. Why I always say “*sux*”

write elegiac couplets or translate Catullus.

Cedar Sigo writes me two e-mails expounding the death of his landline. Two texts to mean the same thing, but the second time

with feeling. Sentences on fire. I said “Dunno. Sentences on fire, I felt them.” I felt it happening. Perhaps. I happed

to play NES cause, fired, I sent texts and got crunk. Got crunk, I dunno, what else do you want me to feel or do? Why do

you always come to me with questions, why do you always “suggest readings,” why do you suck, why are you dangling there

like the second line of an elegiac couplet? Dunno?

I said, this Senator is on fire! Sorry, no, that’s just my

love. That’s just my “I hate.” Requisite remorse after rubbing the recital all kinds of wrong ways. No Senators are on

fire. Then again, if perhaps you were to ask, is anyone on fire, I would say “Dunno.” If you feel like you’re on fire

you’re on fire, perhaps. On pyres hips burn and melt, the fat slurped up by dogs and crows below. I get crunk with Cedar Sigo, play

NES, I dunno, what do you want me to do? I call you on your landline, I call you like I’m Catullus, confused,

ambivalent, uninterested in your fucking questions.

Like I’m nailed to the X. I dunno...*I feel like I'm on X.*

On Rufus

Goddamn it Rufus. Fucking Rufus. Rufus! So Rufus and I, we were friends. Friends in the name of credit—friends who made an oath to recognize bullion as the means by which value's construed. Friends who dealt bullion at each other and swore to do so until the end of time. You think your friends are frustrating? Try being friends with *Rufus*. I'm a *magna cum laude* from Brown and while I've got a lot of pixels jitterbugging on the ATM screen, I'm still left with the problem of vacated credit thanks to Rufus. It's like Rufus opened up my torso and sliced thin lines in my gall bladder, so the fluid would seep and toxify my blood and cause me to suffer a slow and excruciating death. That's Rufus for you, always upsetting categorical determinants of exchange. Rufus. Pffff. He ripped me off, became my blood brother and then disowned me and all my blood, borrowed my copy of *Arcades Project* and bailed, etc. Ouch! Ouch! If it weren't corny I'd say *Alas! Rufus!* but it's corny so I'm saying *Ouch!* Friends who went to school together at Brown should simply make a promise to stack bullion and honor that bullion. In other words, there are two kinds of fluttering that intestines can do: the kind that shovels off reams of silk and cash, and the kind that *Rufus* practices: that pest of goodwill! That fucking asshole!

On Rusticity

There are dichotomies of concepts that are hugely important for the Roman poet Catullus and his coterie. One very important binary expresses the difference between *urbanus* and *rus*. Catullus and his gang name themselves the “New Poets” and terrorize rival poets and lovers in the poetry scene in Rome. They insist upon their own “urbanity,” which indeed means both that the poets are accustomed to city life (especially Roman life) and that they therefore possess characteristics of “manner,” “refinement,” etc. To be “rustic” is, for example in the 22nd poem in the corpus of Catullus, to be *infaetus*. That is, it’s not simply that the opposite of the urbane is considered backwards, unrefined, etc; to be rustic is to be offensively gauche, boorish, etc. I have always suffered from terrible anxiety about performing my rustic upbringing in urbane situations. This started when I was fifteen and started attending high school in Kansas City, only eighteen miles but radically different ecologically from the small country town I was raised in. I spent summers on my grandparents’ farm, catching catfish out of the pond and watching them twitch to death in a bucket. I was made to take paper towels by the roll and wipe the afterbirth off a shivering calf, while my grandfather shat behind a tree and hoarsely called for me to save some of the paper towels for him. When I started spending time in the city, I was afraid of being recognized as a rustic in the midst of such urbanity as I saw around me. I turned to literature to educate myself in sophistication. I blushed when the word “hankering” came out of my mouth until it was to my immense relief fetishized and celebrated by the urbane and jovial friends around me. This anxiety has not gone away—it even emerges in this translation of the 84th poem in the corpus of Catullus, which intended to self-deprecatingly sublimate that anxiety.

On The Nose

I send the text of my translation of the poems of Gaius Valerius Catullus to the lovebirds of my rivals and they all write with the same question: what is up with all the *noses*? There are many things in the text of Catullus that do not appear in my text, and *vice versa*. For example, nowhere in my text do you find mention of *Eurotas*, the main river that runs through Sparta. And it would be difficult to recall even obscure reference to getting high and playing Nintendo with Cedar Sigo in the Latin text of Catullus. But there *are* many and various kinds of noses in his text. However, the nose in his text often doesn't finally attend to the nose, but rather the mouth. The mouth is a portal through which things enter and from which things emanate. For Catullus, the mouth is that portal whose emanations and admissions are most liable to incite feelings of pleasure and disgust. And because Catullus is far more likely to be expressing disgust with someone than pleasure, the mouth is often admitting and emanating that which disgusts him. The main things that go into mouths and cause Catullus to be disgusted are genitals. The main emanations that disgust him are smelly breath, verbosity, mispronounced aitches, and glimpses of the teeth. The nose, I know you are aware, can only physiologically be responsible for discerning some of these things. Still, although the meaning of the fifteen words that make up the 112th poem in his corpus is extremely controversial, I'm persuaded by the interpretation that the couplet essentially is describing a politician in Rome who is distinguished by two aspects of his oral apparatus: a lot of empty rhetoric exits his mouth, and a lot of genitalia enters his mouth. Dude's name is *The Nose*.

On The Question Can The Dead Be Affected By The Signs Of The Living?

Dear Parker, the letter would go, thanks for writing me that letter before you died. I still keep it in a manila envelope in my room and I have never let anybody read it, not even my lovebird. Remember when you and Micah were in a threesome with that accordion player? That's what I would say to you today—other days there would be a lot to say that's not about the threesome with the accordion player. I would write "Dear Parker," but unlike Aristotle I don't believe that the dead are capable of recognizing any of the signs I might produce in their direction. That is, I can say "Dear Parker" all I want, yet I do not credit that interpellation of any kind occurs. Catullus, I think, is a skeptic too, but in the 96th poem in his corpus the text does consider the idea. His friend Calvus, a poet in his coterie, wrote a famous elegy for his dead lovebird Quintilia. The poem is staged as a conversation between Calvus and Quintilia's spirit in which he, among other things, admits that he had many affairs. The multitude of the affairs, according to Ovid, is expressed in a multitude of meters. That's pretty great, right? I'm sure there would be a way to have a conversation about both Calvus's terrific device of polymetrizing a confession about polyamory and that outstanding threesome. That's how we talked, huh, dear Parker.

On Loving Someone Too Long To Stop Now

Nobody likes to look at themselves in the mirror and think, “How pathetic...” Nobody liked to do this in ancient Rome and nobody likes to do this now. Nobody likes momentum that causes them to feel out of control of their own agilities. Nobody likes gum disease. Nobody likes having to admit that their beloved, if they had ever loved them, no longer loves them. I’ve been loving activity too long to stop doing it now. I’ve been loving the residual aromas of industrial strength adhesive. I’ve been loving my own agility and my image in the mirror. I’ve been loving salt and vehicles for salt. I’ve been loving salt and vehicles for salt. How pathetic to gum the interim for too long to stop now. Wheeee...nobody bedecks the hippocampus with heavy, deep snorts of glue, too sopping with glee to stop now. Wheeee...nobody bedecks the intern with pathos for too long to stop now. Catullus, Rilke, and like infinite self-help manuals agree, *you must change your life*. It’s not—it’s never too late to stop now.

On Which Animals I Concede Which Body Parts

To the greedy vulture soaring above the forests, with their highly corrosive stomach acids capable of digesting hog cholera and botulism, I give you my tongue. There are several colleagues and former lovebirds who, it's true, have treasured various mobilities of that muscle, but upon my death I concede it be cut out and given to vultures. This might be best accomplished by simply leaving my tongue on the forest floor where these raptors are known to hunt. My eyes should be removed and given to ravens, who with their adaptability to a great variety of climates and ecosystems, should be fairly easy to find. You will want to keep the eyes fairly far away from the tongue, so that a vulture doesn't accidentally get one of the eyes too. I should be gutted thoroughly and my offal left in a place where starving dogs can glut their lacks to total satisfaction. As for the rest of my carcass, once the tongue and eyes and intestines have been removed and left in the proper places for the proper animals to feed, this should be given to hungry wolves. Remember a wolf is never a dog.

On It Just Not Being Good To Arrange Incestuous Relationships

Okay, so you've got two brothers. One's single, and one is married to a yawping hottie and together they are raising a tweener. It might occur to you that since everybody spends a lot of time together and gets along, it's a good idea to hook up your single brother and your married brother's hot wife. It might also occur to you, on the chance that she or her husband doesn't really jump at that idea, to hook up the single brother with the tweener, who undoubtedly looks up to him as an uncle. No matter how good of an idea this seems, it is just not good to arrange incestuous relationships. Take that incest literally or apply it to family members by marriage as you will. The chances of incestuous relationships working out in almost any culture influenced by Western antiquity (which includes the Roman poet Catullus) are basically nil. What's worse, as is well known, often in these situations when the real entropy starts to matter it's the *matchmaker* that's put at higher fault than even the participants. It doesn't matter that you yourself are attractive, reasonable, and come from a decent amount of money. It's still never a terribly good idea to arrange incestuous relationships in your family or in anybody's family. I know you have two brothers. Yes, I get it, I hear you, one's single. Sigh.

On How Bad This Person's Breath Is and Teeth Are

Woah, this person's breath is unbelievably fucking bad. It's like fresh diarrhea riding along his every exhalation. OMG my fiancé has horrible breath and it makes my stomach turn every time I smell it, which is often. He has gone to the dentist but what can I do because I'm pregnant and he's always in my face and I smell everything. I can't tell whether it's an asshole or this asshole's mouth that's making this smell, but the asshole is definitely the smarter of the two because while assholes aren't supposed to have teeth, mouths are. And this one *don't*. OMG this person's mouth is like a mule's asshole leaking Extra Value Meals. If you're going to eat Extra Value Meals with no teeth it's going to cause gingivitis that reeks like the grossest thing you can think of. I love him sooo much and he's hot in every single way. I know it "doesn't matter" that Robert Pattinson has such bad teeth and yes I *would* lick his dirty asshole or his mouth I don't care which.

Nine Translations for the Flarf Anthology

I stole a kiss from you while you were playing, sweet little Juventius,
a kiss sweeter than sweet ambrosia.

It's true, I was punished. For a long hour,
as I recall, I was crucified on a massive cross,
and although I apologized, and cried so many tears,
I could not remove myself from your ferocity.

While this was going on, you put a lot of water on your lips
and wiped them with all your fingers,
so nothing that came out of my mouth would remain
as if my spit was like the urine of a wolf.

Moreover, you swiftly delivered me miserably into heartbreak,
so that I was crucified again and again,
and that kiss? It was transformed from ambrosia
to an herb more bitter than even...*a bitter herb*.

Since, then, this is the penalty you impose on my pathetic love,
fuck a ring, kiss my sack you neo-Gestapo wheat paste.

(5% FLARF)

I surreptitiously grabbed a lick from you during toy-time, Juventius
a kiss sweeter than sweet ambrosia.

But oh! how it made me hurt afterwards. For one long hour,
I remember, I was crucified on a massive cross,
and although I apologized and cried many tears,
reindeers take massive beatings and I'm rolling.

Meanwhile you suck on a douchebag and lick your lips
and scrub them clean, so that none of my tears linger
as if my spit was like the urine of a wolf.

Moreover, you swiftly delivered me miserably into heartbreak,
so that I was crucified again and again,
changing my feelings about the kiss. That's not ambrosia,
that's the bitter Muslim going to stone your ass in a heartbeat.
Stone your ass without due process. So if that's what I get for love,
I'm never going to surreptitiously grab a lick later.

(18% FLARE)

If R. Kelly can drain his hose on a juvenile, then I can kiss you
and chow on Payday bars. My Pokemon cards are a little slick.
Your dad caught you and your puny, huh? Sick! I'm amped,
let's crucify some of these critters in the native fauna. R. Kelly's dog
runs loose at a cricket match. I cried *a lot*
but could not remove myself from your ferocity.
Meanwhile, you clean up your mouth. You use a lot of water
and the backs of all your fingers,
so that none of my bodily fluids would besmirch you
as if my saliva was like the bodily fluid of a she-wolf.
And then you give me over to the Gods of awful love
and those Gods torture me in every way
so the kiss feels like it was turned from ambrosia
into the bitterest substance known.
If this is the penalty that one pays for stealing kisses,
I am not going to steal kisses ever again.

(24% FLARF)

Oh *SHIT!!!!!!* I...I think I just kissed my fucking *sister!*
A kiss sweeter than the sweetest of ambrosia.
And I didn't do it with impunity, nah. For a long hour
I was put up on a cross and made to remember it.
Sucking on a bag of cigarettes and having to wipe
off the tar-sploooge drying in my eyelashes. My sister
a wild beast of a kisser, gnawing on my eyelids like a
Payday bar. The removal of fluids from her mouth
was very thorough, so that not a molecule remained,
as if my saliva was the urine that squirts out of a wolf!
And then I was betrayed by my lover, to heartbreak,
heartbreak versed in every mode of torture and pain.
The kiss was no longer like sweet ambrosia.
My sister's tongue was sort of bitter tasting.
My sister is a cruel master, wringing my pathetic little worm
until I writhe. Evil, feral, wolf sister. Perfect sister.

(39% FLARF)

I pocketed a kiss, you dumb ass fucking iceberg:
I'm suave. I'm douche. Basically I'm ambrosial and I swallow.
This was not done without punishment. In *Xena, Warrior Princess* Xena has to swallow nectar through a tracheotomy. Sorry about that. None of the tears can palliate the ferocity with which you nail me.
At the same time, you're cleaning up your lips, disemboweling a kitty cat and flossing with its guts so none of my rosy nectar stays on your septum. Touché.
Ouch! My spit's like a wolf's urine? Snap! Burned me!
Lucy Lawless comes in the face of a double amputee and *I can't stop watching it*. It's excruciating torture, turns every heaping spoonful of ambrosia that I've foraged into a kiss sopping with what leaks out of Lucy.
This is the punishment for bummed out proponents of tolerance.
I'm never putting my mouth on anything ever again.

(44% FLARF)

I stole something from you, honeyish Juventius.
It was reindeer diarrhea squirts of Hormel “no bean.”
There were consequences. And for one long hour
European sea squirts do me dirty like I’m Jesus Christ
and it wasn’t possible for me to stir your heart with tears
or for you to hump this antelope! Please, *please* hump this antelope.
Meanwhile, you started to clean your lips with different kinds of waters,
reindeer chili that stains your teeth
so you couldn’t contract anything that left my mouth,
like I’m squirting wolf cum instead of reindeer diarrhea!
What’s worse? You made a festival out of my misery,
rubbing my nose where “the kiss is the deepest”
and it changed the ambrosial, for me anyhow,
into an elaborate body painting: me fucking you on a marshmallow.
And it’s because you’ve determined this punishment for love
I’m seriously going to fuck you on a marshmallow on my torso.

(50% FLARF)

Oh I am *so* dumb I think it just brushed up against my pancreas.
Sweet—I'm getting reamed by the R. Kelly of reindeers.
It's punishment. It's not boring. It's lasting, like, an hour.
Suffice to say I think I'll remember this one, hobbling out
to the yard to have a little cry and crucifixion fantasies
like which is worse, riding a reindeer's dick or boar gore?
I can't really dig dual sphincterotomy with a needle knife:
there's not enough water or fingers in the world.
And if nothing that leaks out of me ends up lingering on your lips,
don't blame me if the reindeer pimps you out to muff dive wolves.
It's bad enough you gave me to a reindeer. It's bad
enough that it's lasting an hour. This is not fun.
Spoiling ambrosia the residue of bleeding sphincterotomy,
splatter sweet and creamy ambrosia on my colonic walls.
Bitter? Gulp—this reindeer is getting into it! It's true love.
This is what I get for shoplifting in Singapore?

(68% FLARF)

Little kids squirm in Santa's laps and make Santa's worm squirm.
Extracting XMAS slime from Santa's sack. You're the reindeer
that likes to party down with Santa. For an hour
I'm STUCK in FINLAND, crucifying sea gulls, smearing their
egg sacs on my labia. Fisting Santa in a toga until little
tears peel and make his whimpers moist. The whimper of
a wild boar in the woods with a trapped paw, *that's what I
make elves do*. You can see Kaffeklubben Island from here,
you can see me wiping residual spermatozoa, phagocytized
and phagocytized all night at the filth international.
What's worse is how you fist and then abandon me,
leave me in a jacket of slime and crucifuck me
until I'm jello. Jello and bananas. Jello and oranges. Jello and
cream that curdles even in the subfrigid temperatures
of Santa's workshop. I'm not saying you have to love me.
I just don't think you should be around children.

(81% FLARF)

I think I'm going to steal my boyfriend's foreskin,
I think I'm going to cum in this ambrosia. Bon appétit!
The bees make honey with impunity. I usurp its use,
pursing my pussy lips and slurrrrrp. I think I got this
possum pregnant. Is it possible to get a possum pregnant?
I want a Blow Pop. I think this is what Jesus felt,
chilling out up on that cross with the two dudes next to him
wondering which is worse: to get fisted by Santa
or to *not* get fisted by Santa. I think I saw you wipe
your mouth with a wetnap and I think that was the wetnap
I use to sop cum in between the pews. Don't stop.
Settle down: I don't want my sentence shrunk. Give me
all six strokes and a healthy huff of butane. I see my flesh
fly off and it's kind of, I don't know, trippy. I think
I'm going to cum. I think Drew Gardner is addicted
to smoking weed. I'm hella joking, bro, be cool.
I'm hella joking about putting my snake on Mrs. Claus,
but I've made empty promises before...*natch!*

(99% FLARF)

74 In the last forty eight poems in the corpus of Catullus, a disproportionate number concern one member of Catullus's community, a person named Gellius who scholars generally agree is probably L. Gellius Poplicola. Gellius was a politician who came from a family of politicians. Some contend that he is the Gellius who was accused by his father of sleeping with his stepmother. Timothy Wiseman, however, suggests that this is unlikely, since the elder Gellius was praetor as early as 94 BCE, that would make the son approximately 60 years younger than his father. What's more likely, according to Wiseman, is that the younger Gellius was the grandson or nephew of the elder. In any case, it is important for reading these poems in the corpus of Catullus to note that Gellius comes from a family infamous in Rome for sexual trespasses.

Reading them all together, a narrative is legible in these texts. The first Gellius poems perform a catalogue of invective concerning his sexual behavior. There is a range to the invective: as with much in the invective economy in the poems of Catullus "passive" sexual activity provides much content. But the dominant theme in the universe of scorned sexual acts, at least as it pertains to Gellius, is incest. **80** The poems suggest that Gellius fucks his aunt, uncle, sister, and finally his mother (with whom he has a child).

In line with the tactics of invective verse from its beginning in the Greco-Roman world (Archilochos), Catullus very often provides a reason for activating his virulent prosody against someone. Sometimes, it is true, it feels as if the figure set up for ridicule or abuse is totally imagined or staged. But in some ways the real effective power and residue of these prosodic actions depends on the person named or alluded to in the poem being a member of the poet's community or social world.

The first seven poems in the Gellius cycle do not spare him abuse, far from it. But a provable reason isn't given until the penultimate poem

of the cycle. In this text, we learn the reason for Catullus's rage. Gellius was bound to Catullus by *coniunctio*, which is in between a bond of coinhabitation in a coterie and something like "friendship." **88** It is clear that Catullus understands an ethical code inherent in the concept, a code which Gellius has clearly broken. The bond was trespassed when Gellius established himself as a rival for Catullus's lovebird.

The translator fantasizes about the possibility that Catullus and Gellius had face to face confrontations, that the *agon* was performed as epistolary negotiation, or even that perhaps Gellius has "A Catullus Cycle." In the case as it stands, what we have are nine poems by Catullus frothing with articulated wit and overdetermined scorn. The incest charge is brought to its comic extension when Catullus asks, in feigned ignorance, "why would you go after *my* lovebird? She's not, after all, *a member of your family!*" Of course it's finally kind of banal, right? Anyone who has ever lived in a coterie knows that ethical codes never exist. They appear in theory, and they usually emerge when something occurs that confuses the bonds of friendship, community, and coterie.

Of course this is finally kind of banal, right?

90 In translating the first sixty poems of Catullus, one of the translational techniques I applied to the text was to enact a resistance to the invective economy which is central to those texts. But as a sort of homage to that economy, and in an action which compromised my own poetics, I included a list of various epithets Catullus used to describe the various citizens whom he wished to humiliate or blame. I constructed the list on the model of David Larsen's *Names Of The Lion*, itself a translation of the Arab grammarian al-Husayn ibn Ahmad ibn Khalawayh.

To translate the epithets, I sat at the kitchen table in my apartment and poured a glass of white wine. I smoked an American Spirit Ultra

Light and gathered source materials to aid in the translation. I mined the texts of Catullus 1-60 which I had identified as strictly belonging to the genre of invective verse. After drawing a list, I approached the translation of each term in a structural fashion. I considered the term in the context of the poem first; then consulted a special lexicon for the poetry of Catullus; then other and wider-ranging Latin dictionaries at my disposal. **91** Occasionally I followed up on citations of the term in other authors. I then attempted, à la Larsen but with far less rigorous scholarly acumen, to present the epithets accurately, but out of context, that itself being the strategy of ibn Khalawayh.

I based the length of my translations on the poems which I had identified as belonging to the genre of invective verse. So, for example, my translation of the thirty-fourth poem in my book, since the original poem had 8 lines, I listed eight epithets. In the final poem of this series, the final epithet on my list was *carnifex* or “hangman.” However, I added one further epithet to my list: “Bald Predator.”

The epithet “Bald Predator” did not correspond to any epithet in the Latin of the poet Catullus. It “could have,” by which I mean that in the invective economy of the text of Catullus one finds both a strong fear of others “stealing” his beloved and a tendency towards mocking physical attribute. But this point is only slightly germane. **103** I wrote the last epithet as a punctuative, petty, resentful phrase with reference to something happening in my own life. Which was that my relationship with my lovebird was an awful mess, and this was partly caused by another member of my coterie seeming to establish himself as a rival.

In other words, while playfully compromising my own politics and conscious desires for poetry, I was not able to resist assuming the very invective economy I sought to criticize. What’s worse, as was pointed out to me by both my lovebird and my rival, the epithet I

construed, “Bald Predator,” suggested a misogynist reading of the triangle, in which the helpless, naïve woman was pursued by the dynamic, agile man.

For years I had been writing about translation, attempting to reconstitute the body of the translator into the process known as translation. What happened to me there at that kitchen table, was something a little different: translation *changed my body*. My articulated politics, hopes, desires clashed with the physical gesture of writing, itself totally shaped by the forms and vocabulary of the Roman poet Catullus. **105** It’s true that the writing which proceeds from the preceding writing does so *via* the body of the translator, but that body is not left intact. This should be obvious—but again it was only in a moment of ecstatic crisis that I could understand it.

The last poem in the cycle of Gellius poems is also the last poem in the corpus of Catullus. In the poem, Catullus states that he had tried to improve the bad feelings between Gellius and him. The gesture he had made was to translate archaic poetry. So Catullus translated works of Callimachus and sent them to Gellius. However, the tactic failed, and Gellius in this final poem is said to still be “hurling arrows” at Catullus’s head. The people reading this text whose states murder people around the world should flinch at this stated power of poetry.

Catullus tried to repair a toxic social bond by being a translator. But it doesn’t work. Finally, Catullus determined that his “prayer” for appeasement has been in vain and that Gellius was therefore sentenced, by this very concluding epigram, to be *fixus* and *dabis supplicium*. **115** *Dabis supplicium* signifies that Gellius would be paying some sort of penalty. *Fixus* is more difficult to express. It could refer to the fact that the penalty itself had been “set” or “fixed.” It could also refer to the “arrows” of Gellius, in which case *fixus* would appropriate a military metaphor to mean that one had been “stopped there” or “fixed” by a

missile. Or it could refer to the writing itself, which by being “set down” or “fixed” constitutes a penalty into perpetuity for Gellius to pay.

Indeed, with that reading, the final poem of the corpus of Catullus resembles the first one. The first poem offers a prayer for the book to survive into the future. The final poem reiterates that desire, for the possibility of that perpetuity. Although a perpetuity achieved at the cost of equally perpetual damage to the social.

Of course, that being said, the question of whether or not the last poem in the corpus of Catullus is in symmetrical relation to the first is controversial. **116** In fact, there is no knowledge of how the final forty eight poems in his corpus were collected and arranged, and by whom. It could have been the Roman poet Catullus—but there is no certainty about that.

Still, the formal gesture of ending a book which begins with a formal dedication to a friend and ends with an inverted dedication to an enemy, both depending on kinds of prayers, is compelling. Moreover, many Roman poets finished collections by discussing or describing their own poetics, so the reference to translating Callimachus and the notion of “piercing” someone with iambs is not out of place.

As for this translation, I crouch down with Lindsay Lohan and read the poems of Catullus. We alternate between foam flecking out of our mouths and interminable laughter. A little dog at our sides guards this behavior. Cameras flash. The Cadillac croaks with the weight of our aesthetics. My headphones caving in. I move apartments, I watch the films of Ingmar Bergman, I leak and err. All of it goes into the text. Stars are blind. Towns *are* money you fucking diabolical Swede! When I say “towns” I always *mean money*.

NOTES

67

These three translations were made for a performance at Small Press Traffic in September of 2009. The first represents a sort of conventional approach to translating the text, the second is a transcription of an audio recording of Bernadette Mayer reading her translation of the text, and the third is a collage translation using as a source text the screenplay from *The Doors* (dir. Oliver Stone, 1991).

69, 98, 95, 70, 70, 107, 73

These translations were made by doing a sight-read translation from the Latin on my lunch break, then e-mailing the text from my Hotmail account to my Gmail account, and transcribing the ads that appeared alongside the content. These are the texts the bots in my Gmail account translated

104

Dana Ward produced this text. I gave the following instructions for translation: “My instructions for your translation are to hang out with Sarah during the translation. Ask her how her day was. Incorporate imagery and language from that discussion into the translation. Then consult this: <http://www.kansascity.com/news/reader/story/847169.html>.”

100

Bill Luoma produced this text. I gave the following instructions for translation: “My instructions for your translation are to translate this poem as taking place inside a gymnasium, in 8 lines. Try to use the phrase ‘burning loins.’ Please consult this during your translation: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ScXLHgPcZuc>.”

94

Erika Staiti produced this text. I gave the following instructions for translation: “My instructions for your translation are to make two lists, one of every polite way of referring to genitalia, and another for kinds of cooking methods (saute, roast, etc.). Translate the poem then into a short paragraph using as many of the words as you can.”

92

Suzanne Stein produced this text. I gave the following instructions for translation: “My instructions for your translation are to translate this poem, highlighting the interpretation of fierce negativity as the sign of sexual attraction. Consult the following: <http://www.partnertherapy.com/node/822> AND <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FIUv3dOBbCk>.”

89

Lindsey Boldt produced this text. I gave the following instructions for translation: “My instructions for your translation are to translate this poem into a ‘Titties for Lindsey’ poem.”

87

Thom Donovan produced this text. I gave the following instructions for translation: “My instructions for your translation are to, while translating the poem, do a google search on ‘fedora’ and to consult p. 160 of Balzac’s *The Wild Ass’s Skin*. Translate the poem into a prose paragraph.”

75

David Brazil produced this text. I gave the following instructions for translation: “My instructions for your translation are to translate this poem primarily as a short paragraph diagnosing and analyzing the word ‘desistere’ in line 4.” David’s translation is made of a sheet with

this text, as well as two artifacts in the shape of made books. One book is bound with a clip, the other with a martini olive spear bedecked with red hearts.

72

Julian Brolaski produced this text. I gave the following instructions for translation: “My instructions for your translation are that it ought to be in a rhyme scheme of your choosing, and strongly emphasize/ diagnose the gesture by which the lover proclaims to prefer the beloved to God.”

72

Michael Nicoloff produced this text. I gave the following instructions for translation: “My instructions for your translation are to translate this poem in terms of one of its main contentions, that bad body odor could be contagious. The translation should be short, and in verse.”

