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Contrast in Catullan *Carmina*: Seeing the World through Love and Hate

Gaius Valerius Catullus (84BCE - c. 54BCE)¹ was a poet during the late Roman Republic who wrote verses on a variety of topics, usually if not always under the guise of a particular poetic persona. While this persona is widely considered especially relatable, almost timeless in its ability to portray emotion, it is not the same as Catullus himself, nor does it necessarily hold the same beliefs as him. The Catullan persona seemingly contextualizes his whole life through stark contrast; most specifically, he has chosen to view his life through the contrasting lenses of love and hatred. He both cherishes and contemns Roman masculinity and his friends and even himself within it, his muse, and his romantic and sexual partners. However, these ostensible binaries are ultimately problematized by their mixture. While love and hate are contrasting emotions, their extreme nature is a commonality; they do not act as a single switch, flipping from one to the other as a light turns on and off, but rather as two sliding scales situated next to each other. Their intensity makes it far easier to bridge the gap between them; thus it is easy to find oneself both loving and hating something, just as Catullus does. His stark contrast is then rather an exploration of the gray areas between such supposedly black and white spaces, and ultimately it is his explorations that both bring about his most profound works and ultimately belie the false dichotomy that Catullus himself presents. There is no such stark contrast to love and hate and Catullus only presents them as opposites for poetic purposes. If these binaries are as mixable as Catullus shows through his works regarding Roman masculinity, his

¹ Skinner, 2007, 2-3.

friends, his muse, and his lovers, then they aren't a binary at all. Catullus chooses to present them as such for the purpose of pointing out the inanity of binaries both in emotion and societal convention. We will consider this in Catullus' invective, occasional, and romantic poetry, looking first at the poetry regarding masculinity, Roman masculine friendship, and his view of himself within that masculine system, followed by the poetry regarding his muse, Sappho, and finally ending with consideration of his poetry regarding his romantic and sexual partners Lesbia and Juventius.

Catullus has a complicated view towards Roman masculinity because he both finds it restrictive but appreciates the ability to build one's personality within the system. We see these differing opinions on Roman masculinity in *carmina* (poems) 16 and 11, with both showing a preference for either embracing or rejecting Roman gender norms; moreover, each *carmen* (poem) in and of itself problematizes this idea. *Carmen* 16 embraces the competitive nature of masculinity but invokes Priapic tradition in order to make this competition comedic, while *carmen* 11 rejects and disdains the conquering nature of masculinity, metaphorically considered imperialistic, in favor of being feminine. Nevertheless, the Catullan persona still believes himself to be masculine in his moral superiority. We start with *carmen* 16, lines 1-4 of which are below:

*Pedicabo ego vos et irrumabo,
Aureli pathice et cinaede Furi,
qui me ex versiculis meis putastis,
quod sunt molliculi, parum pudicum.*

I will rape you anally and orally,
Pathic Aurelius and unmanly Furius,

who think me, from my little poems,
since they are a little soft, insufficiently chaste².

Carmen 16, in which Catullus lambasts his friends Aurelius and Furius for criticizing his poetry and threatens them with violent oral and anal rape can be read as a straightforward assertion of Catullus' masculinity over that of his peers. He remarks that while yes, he has poetry that is soft, he is in fact hard, and he will prove that to Aurelius and Furius through sexual violence enacted upon them. Certainly this is a deliberate act of competitive masculinity against his friends, since the system of Roman masculinity is so inherently dependent on competition that to be manly one must put down other men. Catullus therefore refers to Aurelius as *pathice*, ("pathic"), and Furius as *cinaede*, ("unmanly")³. He seemingly embraces the vicious nature of Roman masculine competition, putting down his friends and asserting his own masculinity vehemently such that they can never again deny the fact that he is their better, that he is more masculine than they are. They doubted his masculinity, so not only will he sexually assault them and turn them into what they believed him to be, passive and soft, he will do so in the most socially disgusting way possible: *Pedicabo ego vos et irrumabo*. The Romans had a specific social regard for the cleanliness of one's mouth, and to write such a threat of oral rape being subsequent to anal rape would absolutely sully the mouths of his former friends, turned enemies⁴.

² Unless otherwise specified, all Latin translations are my own.

³ Skinner, 1997, 134-35.

⁴ Fletcher, 2017, 489.

This system of competition, however, is one which routinely grates on Catullus, as demonstrated in various poems of his. For example, in 7 he regards the idea of counting and *negotium*, and by extension the idea of comparison and thus competition, as a poor decision, which will be expounded upon later in the thesis. Additionally, the idea of *negotium* was closely associated with masculine identity, and therefore associated with competition⁵. We can see that while he does choose to compete against Aurelius and Furius in this poem, he does so in a much more ironic way than one would initially read, because he dislikes competition. To describe how the poem is ironic, we must first consider the poetic persona in which it is written. It was a common practice for Roman poets to adopt a persona under which to write their poetry, such that we cannot necessarily connect the poet with the expressed feelings within the poetry⁶. The practice also allowed poets to explore other points of view beyond their own. Catullus typically writes under a Catullan persona; the persona and the poet have the same name but not necessarily the same personality, nor are they necessarily the same person (though their shared name and the persona's relatability make it easy to conflate the two). This poem, however, is not written in the Catullan persona at all; it is written with Priapic persona, consistent with the Priapic tradition of hypersexuality in poetry and storytelling⁷. In reading it as a Priapic verse, the entire poem is rendered a parody, a joke about the insecurity of the entire system of one-upmanship that is the Roman masculine hierarchy. The extremity of his threat (*pedicabo ego vos et irrumabo*) is in fact comedic in its grandiosity. It can be read as even further comical if one reads the threat with a

⁵ Wray, 2001, 147-48.

⁶ Garrison, 2012, xiii.

⁷ See further on the Priapic tradition: Uden, 2007.

conjoining sense instead of a sequential one: “I will rape you anally and orally [at the same time].” The ludicrousness of this impossible threat extends its farcical nature, and is programmatic of Priapic poetry, denoting that this is in fact the intended method of reading the poem⁸. Catullus dons the mask of Priapus, the phallic god of garden protection and all things sexual, or that of one of his priests, by writing of extremely obscene and comic sexual violence. He does this in order to make specific social commentary on the competitive nature of masculinity: he considers it to be insecure and hypersexual, and as such, effeminate. In the greatest twist of all, Priapus, the hypermasculine deity, is himself a *cinaedus*⁹. So, Catullus shows a clear disregard and derision for Roman masculinity by taking it to its most extreme and exposing it for its femininity.

In *carmen* 16, Catullus joking embraces Roman masculinity in order to make joking commentary against it. In *carmen* 11, he begins the poem presenting himself as masculine, even epic, as he and his friends Aurelius and Furius (presumably before he threatened them with programmatic Priapic poetry) journey through the world and experience the wonders of Roman imperialism in the form of monuments to Gaius Julius Caesar’s Gallic and Britannic campaigns: *Caesaris visens monumenta magni,/ Gallicum Rhenum, horribili aequor uli-/ mosque Britannos* (“looking at the monuments of great Caesar, the Gallic Rhine, the rough sea and far off Britains”, 11.10-12). From the companionship and loyalty towards his friends presented in this poem, we can infer that he loves them here, adding the context that he both hates his friends, as seen in the above portion regarding *carmen* 16, and he loves them, seen here. In this poem we can also

⁸ Uden, 2007, 13.

⁹ Uden, 2007, 9-10.

understand the imperialism alluded to in the mention of Caesar's monument to be a metaphor for Roman sexual conquest, and therefore masculinity, for we see sexually charged language in even the first stanza, lines 1-4:

*Furi et Aureli, comites Catulli,
sive in extremos penetrabit Indos,
litus ut longe resonante Eoä
Tunditur unda,*

Furius and Aurelius, friends of Catullus,
whether he will penetrate into the furthest Indians,
where the shore by long-resounding Eastern wave
is pounded,

The erotic diction which Catullus employs here, *penetrabit* ("he will penetrate") and *tunditur* ("is pounded"), shows a clear desire to present the poem as sexually charged. The eroticization of the poem points to the sexual nature of the imperialistic project of Rome, as it penetrates other regions and kingdoms¹⁰.

He notes the achievements of the conquering Gaius Julius Caesar in the form of a monument and speaks of far-off lands because they have been laid low by the Roman imperialistic agenda. In the final two stanzas of the poem (11.17-24), however, he breaks away

¹⁰ Greene, 2006, 56-57.

from this epic journey and speaks to his lover, Lesbia. Or rather, he has his friends serve as his messengers to her, carrying his hate-filled words. As such we see an example of Catullus using his love to dispense his hate, a theme which will also be touched on later in this thesis. In these last two verses, Catullus completely unwinds all the seeming praise of Roman conquering actions by comparing his lover to the imperial project¹¹. He details her monstrous sexual activity, having sex with three hundred men at once and *identidem omnium/ ilia rumpens*, (“continually wearing out all of their groins”, 11.19-20). She is not a woman but a creature of sexual destruction and domination. Greene argues that Catullus points to her as a metaphor of the Roman conquering of all the far-off lands he himself toured with Aurelius and Furius because Lesbia is voraciously dominating increasing numbers of sexual partners just as Rome is, to Catullus, voraciously conquering new lands¹². Through this metaphor, he asserts that to conquer is not to be masculine, but to once more be so hypersexual as to become effeminate in lacking self-control.

Catullus presents himself as a master of control, albeit in an unusual simile, in the final stanza of *carmen* 11, lines 21-24.

*me meum respectet, ut ante, amorem,
qui illius culpa cecidit velut prati
ultimi flos, praetereunte postquam
tactus aratro est.*

¹¹ See Greene 1998: 18-36; 2006: 49-64.

¹² Greene, 2006, 56-58.

nor may she look back, as before, at my love,
 which by her fault has fallen just as
 the flower of the furthest field, after it is touched
 by the passing plow.¹³

The notion that Catullus is a flower carries with it a gendered idea that we can understand if we read from the corpus of the Greek poet Sappho, Catullus' inspiration. Οἶαν τὰν ὑάκινθον ἐν οὔρεσι ποίμενες ἄνδρες,/ πόσσι καταστείβοισι, χαμαι δ' ἐπιπορφύρει ἄνθος. ("like the hyacinth in the mountains that shepherd men with their feet trample down and on the ground the purple flower", cf. Sappho fr. 105B). Greene asserts that Sappho and other ancient authors use flowering imagery to represent feminine sexuality and a female world as a whole, as is evident in a reading of the above Greek text as being a simile for a young woman's virginity being "trampled" by men via a sexual relationship¹⁴. Catullus has no qualms about presenting his love in such a feminine manner, almost mirroring his lover being presenting in such a hypermasculine manner. He has flipped the gender spectrum on its head and proceeds to do so further when one considers the masculine qualities that his love's flower has. The flower is steadfast and stalwart, remaining in place, if not fully within the "field", metaphorically Roman manhood, then at least on the outskirts of it. Catullus is, after all, against the notion of submitting fully to Roman social ideals regarding masculinity. The unwavering nature of the flower speaks to its self-control,

¹³ Sappho, translation by Carson, 2002, 215.

¹⁴ Greene, 2006, 61-62.

literally rooted in place. Moreover, the flower has a moral superiority over the *praetereunte tactus*, the “passing plow” that Greene argues represents Lesbia and Roman imperialism in its aimlessly destructive and conquering behavior. The plow is directionless, just passing by, and it is not even in control of itself as it runs over this flower. The flower stands defiantly against a plow that it cannot possibly overcome, and yet it stands nonetheless. The imagery calls to mind stories of heroic last stands and noble sacrifices, of spitting in the face of the enemy and refusing to live on one’s knees, but instead dying on one’s feet. The flower is reminiscent of Polybius’ account of Horatius at the bridge, dying in a final display of enmity towards his enemies¹⁵. Horatius would smile upon such a noble flower. The ability of that flower to stand tall and fully in control of itself shows a far greater moral superiority to the directionless, destructive plow.

The final stanza echoes Sappho, and in joining himself with an erotic poet like Sappho, Catullus explores a masculine nature that does not exclude a more feminine self. To put it another way, he meshes the two gender representations together, with a largely masculine presentation that still includes some elements of femininity, elements which hold him back from unbalanced hypermasculinity. It also connects him with the tradition of describing soldiers as flowers dying in a field, and with the empowering ability to explore his masculinity in avenues other than violent, conquering sex¹⁶. In presenting such opposing forces to his readership, Catullus shows that the Roman imperialistic expansion, as well as its leaders, including Gaius Julius Caesar and Mamurra (both discussed in other Catullan poetry¹⁷), are soft, effeminate, and

¹⁵ Polybius, *Historiae*, vi. 55.

¹⁶ Greene, 2006, 61.

¹⁷ cf. Catull. 29.3, 41.4, 43.5, 57.2.

thoroughly unmasculine in their attempt to be hypermasculine. Meanwhile, true masculinity is the ability to control oneself over all else, which Catullus does within his feminine flower form. As Catullus shows himself as a real example of masculinity, we can see that he does in fact respect the idea of masculinity in general, but not of Roman masculinity because of its excessive competition and conquering.

It is for this reason, his disregard and distaste for Roman masculinity, that we also see within Catullus a fervent desire to escape. As we have previously discussed, Catullus loves and hates his friends and even Lesbia because they lie within the boundaries of Roman masculinity; he sees them as competition (16) and Lesbia as a voracious sexual monster (11.17-24). But one other main character lies within the realm of Roman masculinity, and that is Catullus himself. Catullus wars within himself because of his relationship with masculinity. For this reason we see Catullus search for an escape while both loving and hating himself at the same time.

Catullus' love for himself is documented in how he writes about his own poetry. Metapoetically, whenever Catullus writes about his own poetry, he is in fact writing about himself. We can see a prime example of this in how he portrays his poems in *carmina* 12 and 42. In *carmen* 12, we see Catullus threaten a man with writing poetry about him: *Quare aut hendecasyllabos trecentos/ exspecta, aut mihi linteum remitte* ("Therefore expect either 300 hendecasyllables, or return to me the napkin", 12.10-11). This is Catullus' weapon, his wit and wordsmithing; his threat is not bodily injury, but reputational harm. He is proud of it that his poetry has the power to effect change in the real world. The same hendecasyllables are called upon in poem 42, where Catullus writes: *Adeste, hendecasyllabi, quot estis/ omnes undique, quotquot estis omnes.../ Persequamur eam et reflagitemus*. ("Come, hendecasyllables, as many as you are from all sides, however many you all are... Let us pursue her and demand it back.",

42.1-2, 6). Here Catullus wishes to harass a woman who has stolen a notebook of his, and he chooses to do so with as many verses as possible. Catullus' pride in his poems and thus his self-love is evident, especially through meiotic phrases, belittling his own work as *quidquid hoc libelli/ quaecumque* ("whatever of this little book of whatever kind", 1.8-9) and himself as *tanto pessimus omnia poeta* ("as much the worst poet of all", 49.6) to in actuality aggrandize himself.

But for Catullus, there must be balance, and as such, though he builds himself up, he also lays himself low. In *carmen* 8 he weeps for himself, *Miser Catulle, desinas ineptire* ("Wretched Catullus, you must give up playing the fool", 8.1) and he continues that theme in further poetry, as he routinely situated himself in the position to be made fun of or pitied (10.27-34; 13. 7-8; 51; 58; 99; 109). He truly is wretched as he exhibits such stark hatred for himself. This is especially true in *carmen* 51, because he is pressured by a societal audience to reject the one thing in life he treasures, *otium*, leisure and the lifestyle of a poet. This will be explored further in my discussion on Sappho and Catullus' adaptation of her fragment 31. He desires to escape the binary of Roman masculinity, but cannot, finding himself torn between the duty-free life of a leisurely poet and the duty-filled life of a Roman businessman.

Catullus' disregard for Roman masculinity is further displayed by his poetic sparring matches with his poet friends like Licinius Calvus and Gellius. In Roman masculinity, to be the penetrator and not the penetrated was the most important thing; who you penetrated was deprived of their masculinity. Oliensis argues that writing poetry to or about another person could be seen as penetrating them, and having a poem written to or about you could be seen as being penetrated. This is because the poet, much like the penetrator, has power over the subject of his poetry. As such, when Catullus participated in sharing poetry with Licinius Calvus and Gellius, he is enacting a turn-based sexual metaphor in which each poet penetrates the other, and

then vice versa, much like later poets like Propertius and Horace who would often write reciprocal poetry with their patrons, and in doing so put themselves both in power over and alternatively under the power of those patrons. Exploring this alternative avenue of masculinity problematizes the nature that Catullus necessarily both hated and loved Roman masculinity, because it shows him as appreciating masculinity but disregarding Roman interpretations of it; it serves as a good example of his more complicated, nuanced relationship with masculinity more than simple hatred and/or love. Furthermore, the idea that he necessarily hates and/or loves all of his masculine friends as a result of his mixed feelings towards Roman masculinity is complicated by further considerations of them. Masculinity is a driving factor towards loving or hating in some cases, such as the lack of masculinity and self-control present in the napkin thief in *carmen* 12, but not in others, as his invitation to Fabullus for dinner in *carmen* 13 has nothing to do with masculinity. On the whole though, we can read each friendship as containing either love, hate, or both, as he loves Gellius in their amorous poetic playing (116), loves the poetry of charming Licinius Calvus (50), hates the uncouth nature of the napkin thief Asinius Marrucinus (12), and hates the lack of civility present in Suffenus and Arrius (22, 84).

To further the proposal that the Catullan persona sees the world through the lenses of love and hate, we must next consider the impetus for Catullus' writing poetry in the first place: his muses. While both his beloved Lesbia and the Greek poet Sappho of Lesbos could be considered his muses, this portion of the thesis will be discussing the poetic inspiration that Catullus draws from Sappho, and how he holds conflicting feelings towards her. After all, one cannot discuss Lesbia without discussing that preeminent Lesbian, Sappho. The order of this paper will reflect that. Catullus both loves and hates Sappho, for while she is his muse and an artistic inspiration, she stands above him, which Catullus cannot abide. He is jealous not only of

her poetic ability, but the popularity of her poetry, and all her accolades and acclaim that he wishes were his too. Finally, he envies her for the lifestyle and worldview he supposes she lives within.

Taking inspiration from the birthplace of his poetic muse, Sappho, Catullus names his love Lesbia, after the island of Lesbos, and as such we can very easily infer that he in some way loved Sappho, most probably in a reverent sense¹⁸. Praise and love for Sappho is not a particularly new idea; she was a powerhouse of poetry in her time, and for generations after she has been considered extremely influential. The philosopher Plato refers to her as the tenth muse (*Ant. Pal.* 9.506), with Antipater of Sidon (*Ant. Pal.* 7.14), Dioscorides (*Ant. Pal.* 7.407.1-4), and Propertius (*Prop.* 2.3.13-20) corroborating such a view, so Catullus' appreciation for her poetry is understandable¹⁹. However, he goes beyond appreciating her and attempts to adapt her verse in his *carmen* 51, to mixed results. Though he employs Sapphic stanza and a reference to Sappho in *carmen* 11, *carmen* 51 is a direct adaptation of her work, her poem 31, and as such reveals much more about Catullus' feelings towards her than *carmen* 11 does. Strangely enough, considering his complex feelings towards Roman masculinity, the most glaring difference between the two works is that Catullus adds an additional stanza at the end, lines 13-16:

Otium, Catulle, tibi molestum est:

otio exsultas nimiumque gestis:

¹⁸ For more information on the different possible reasons behind Catullus naming his lover Lesbia in his poetry, see Gram, 2019.

¹⁹ Gram, 2019, 97-99.

*otium et reges prius et beatas
perdidit urbes.*

Leisure, Catullus, is troublesome for you:
in leisure you revel and excessively are you eager:
leisure has destroyed both kings before
and blessed cities.

He writes this stanza to talk about how he ought not to seek out troublesome leisure, how he ought to live within the confines of Roman *negotium*, business, synonymous with Roman societal values of masculinity and self-control. Here we see Catullus try to embrace an industrious way of living, not by discussing its positive attributes, but by decrying a leisurely lifestyle as being one lacking in self-control and one destined to be destroyed. However, it is this very leisurely life that Catullus most ardently wishes for, and it is that leisurely life that he believes Sappho to live in, inciting jealousy against her.

In adding this stanza, he is refuting the original work as a work produced in a life of *otium*, leisure, thus asserting that he believes Sappho to live within that lifestyle and to operate within that world view. Perhaps Catullus thought that since Sappho was Greek, and a woman, she did not face the same troublesome requirements as Catullus himself does; she was, in his mind, free from the competitive struggle and rat race of Roman masculine social dynamics. This is evidenced by his addition of this stanza calling out the previous as leisurely; such a thing would not be necessary unless he considered the previous few stanzas and the poem that they were adapted from to have been full of *otium*. We have seen Catullus in previous *carmina* think

of himself as uncomfortable within these confines, have seen him consider them to be a poor joke, to the degree that he mocks such a way of life, but here he defends it because it is the only “civilized” step he has over Sappho. He believes that she has what he wants: a life of *otium*, so he must pretend to revel in a life of *negotium*, so that it is not apparent to his readership just how much he would love to live and love like Sappho. The ideal Roman man would see a life of business as infinitely more worthy than a life of leisure, and while Catullus does not feel the same way, as made apparent in *carmina* 5 and 7, he wishes to be viewed as feeling that way by his peers. He does not yet live free of the trappings of Roman gender norms, and as such he cannot endorse Sappho’s supposedly leisurely lifestyle. He must instead uphold that Roman view of preferring *negotium* so that he can be considered by his peers as better than Sappho, as having improved her writing by injecting it with the values of Roman manhood.

Another distinct difference between Sappho’s work and Catullus’ interpretation of it is their focus. Sappho, in fr. 31, chooses to focus on the woman for whom she is writing the poem. She describes an anonymous lover to that woman and how much he must be like a god, to have access to the beauty of that woman. Sappho then goes on to describe what the woman’s beauty does to her, which will be discussed later in the paper (cf. Sappho fr. 31.5-16). Catullus has a subtle but significant difference in focus. Sappho describes the anonymous lover as if he could be anyone, “whoever he is” (cf. Sappho fr. 31.3), it did not matter to her. To Catullus, the man remains nameless but the insinuation that he does not matter is removed, replaced instead by the assertion that that man is special, as seen in the opening stanza of Catullus’ *carmen* 51, lines 1-4 below:

Ille me par esse deo videtur,

*ille, si fas est, superare divos,
 qui sedens adversus identidem te
 spectat et audit*

That man seems to be equal to a god to me,
 That man, if it is allowable, seems to surpass the gods,
 Who sits opposite you
 Who looks at you again and again and hears you.

Catullus' repetition of *Ille...ille* ("that man...that man") anaphorically gives that man much more of a presence in the poem, and much more power over the poet as a result, being described by Catullus in stronger terms than Sappho. That man is not only, as Sappho also says "[seeming] equal to gods" (1), but he is, in line two, "if it is allowable, seem[ing] to surpass the gods" (51.2). To Catullus, that man is the perfect masculine example, a paragon of Roman virtue, and by his final call to action to himself at the end of the poem quoted above, we know the image of this paragon affects Catullus deeply. He yearns to be like that man, and yet still yearns to be like Sappho, able to brush away whoever that man is in order to focus further on love, a life full of happiness and leisure, and freedom from social confinement.

Additionally, it is worth noting that Catullus' poetic interpretations of the remaining stanzas of Sappho 31 have their own variations and differences. Primarily, in Sappho 31, the poet experiences a fainting spell; she is grabbed hold of by her body's reactions to seeing her love and then goes into a possibly orgasmic near-death experience: *έκαδε μ' ἴδρως ψῦχρος κακχέεται, τρόμος δὲ/ παῖσαν ἄγρει, χλωροτέρα δὲ ποίας/ ἔμμι, τεθνάκην δ' ὀλίγω 'πιδεύης/ φαίνομ' ἔμ'*

αὔται· (“and cold sweat holds me and shaking grips me all, greener than grass I am and dead—or almost I seem to me”²⁰, 16-20). Catullus, while wholeheartedly unafraid of writing sexual poetry, finds himself unwilling or unable to include this within his translation, instead including his own invented stanza regarding leisure as described above. This is his poem regarding self-control, so it is unbecoming to include such a possibly scandalous episode.

Furthermore, Sappho’s descriptions of what seeing her love does to her, being unable to speak, feeling fire under her skin and being unable to see or hear, are all poetically pleasing and understandable to the reader. They are simple and evocative ideas that call to mind within the reader the feeling of uneasiness and excitement of seeing one’s love. Their simplicity is to their benefit, but Catullus believes himself to be a better poet. He needlessly complicates them, showing that he has an artistic ego that he needs to satisfy, a self-consciousness in the face of Sappho’s simple brilliance²¹. Comparing the third stanzas of each poem, we can see Catullus’ vainglorious complications in Sappho 31. 9-12 and Catullus 51. 9-12.

ἀλλ’ ἄκαν μὲν γλῶσσα ἔαγε, λῆπτον
 δ’ αὐτίκα χρωῖ πῦρ ὑπαδεδρόμηκεν,
 ὀπάτεσσι δ’ οὐδ’ ἔν ὄρημ’, ἐπιρρόμ-
 βεισι δ’ ἄκουαι,

no: tongue breaks and thin

²⁰ translation by Carson, 2002, 63.

²¹ Greene, 2007, 140.

fire is racing under skin
 and in eyes no sign and drumming
 fills ears,²²

*lingua sed torpet, tenuis sub artus
 flamma demanet, sonitu suo
 tintinant aures, gemina tegentur
 lumina nocte.*

but tongue is stupified, under limbs
 a fine flame flows down, ears ring with their
 own sound, with a twin night
 are eyes covered.

He cannot see because a “twin night” covers his eyes instead of “no sign” coming to Sappho’s, and his ears “ring with their own sound” instead of Sappho’s ears filled by “drumming”. Catullus’ hyperbole is nonsensical, and it in fact greatly changes the meaning of Sappho’s original work²³. In Sappho’s 31, her heart is stolen from her chest and she experiences her body reacting to that theft, to that heart wrenching love. Her simple language pulls the reader into her sensations without being distracting or detrimental to the meaning of the poem. Catullus,

²² Translation by Carson, 2002, 63.

²³ Greene, 2007, 139-141.

though, in his pleonastic hyperbole, declares that *omnis sensis* are stolen away, “all senses”. If all of his senses are stolen away, then his next stanza is pointless, because he cannot feel anything. To Sappho, her body reacts and she feels it all, but Catullus’ exaggeration means that he renders his own next stanza moot. She is wracked by the presence of her love, and Catullus practically disappears. To add to this, all of his possessive pronouns within that next paragraph are implied, meaning that he is so detached from his body that he will not write “my tongue is stupefied”, only that *lingua sed torpet*, (“but tongue is stupefied”) (51.9). Catullus completely changes the meaning of Sappho’s work as in her poem, her body goes through a process at the end of which she emerges as almost dead, and recognizes such within herself, but in Catullus’ interpretation, seeing Lesbia dissolves him, and he is not returned from that state. We leave the lover Catullus at the end of his third stanza, a pile of senseless body parts, and then a separate part of Catullus, his Roman sensibilities, admonish him and advise him away from a life of leisure. Sappho survives her experience, if only just, but Catullus disappears, having been destroyed like the very kings and blessed cities he warns himself about in the last lines of the poem.

Finally, let us not forget how Catullus spoke of Lesbia in *carmen* 11, the only other surviving poem of his that uses Sapphic strophe. In employing Sapphic meter and referencing fr. 105B in comparing himself to a flower, Catullus subtly transforms Lesbia, his lover, into a double metaphor. She still represents Roman imperialism, as previously discussed, but she also represents Sappho in this specific instance. Lesbia’s actions as she embraces three hundred adulterous lovers at once are a metaphor for the overwhelmingly positive reception of Sappho’s poetry. As mentioned previously, she was considered the tenth Muse, divinely inspired and

divinely capable, with her face even minted on coinage²⁴. How could Catullus, a mortal man, compare? She looms impossibly large in the Roman poetic tradition of Catullus' day; just as Lesbia looms over her lovers and conquers them all, so too does Sappho's ability conquer Catullus' own²⁵. To combat this and save face, he attaches her to Lesbia, whom he presents as a monstrous adulterer. His jealousy of her poetic prowess and popularity propels him towards hatred.

Catullus also finds that his love life is fraught with the same kinds of love and hate that encompass the rest of his life. In the cases of both Lesbia and Juventius, two of Catullus' lovers, the poet writes verses that describe them as worthy of love, affection, and noble courting, and also worthy of slander, reviling, and disgust. The vicissitude of his attitudes towards them, his objects of affection and enmity, produces a convoluted narrative of paradoxical self-loathing and self-aggrandizement, as well as a complicated ability of the poet to use hatred and love to express their opposite, primarily through the redirection of that emotion. In the context of Lesbia, Catullus shows the most obvious disdain and obvious affection, whereas his feelings toward Juventius are more prevalent in his interactions with rival lovers, not the young boy Juventius himself.

Catullus is largely considered a vivid poet, bringing to live raw emotion in such a way that modern readers still find his works to be both moving and recognizable, seeing within Catullus the same emotional struggles that plague them today²⁶. His persona is the most

²⁴ BMC, 200, 169.

²⁵ Thorsen and Harrison, 2019, vii-viii.

²⁶ Garrison, 2012, xiii.

believable²⁷, and we may see Catullus' explicit expression of these emotional struggles in his *carmen* 85:

Odi et amo. Quare id faciam, fortasse requiris.

Nescio, sed fieri sentio et excrucior.

I hate and I love. How do I do this,

I know not, but I feel it happen and I am tormented²⁸.

The plainspoken nature of his cry of anguish is heart-wrenching, and it is this cry that details his feelings toward his love, Lesbia, most plainly. It is something that he cannot control, and, as previously discussed, control is ostensibly the most important part of being a man in late republican Rome. Lesbia is essentially a trigger for him, acting as a catalyst for a disruptive outburst of undisciplined, emotional turmoil that is inconsistent with the Roman ideals of masculine self-governance. The poem itself is built with a sense of balance, with the chiasmic sounds of q and f in *Quare id faciam, fortasse requiris* in line 1 and a juxtaposition between active and passive voice, but the overall theme of the poem is imbalance and the pain that comes from it. It represents what he believes Lesbia has robbed him of; the ability to write a symmetrical and measured exploration of his feelings and the control to employ that ability. After all, it is that same emotion of love that he proclaims in *carmen* 51 takes away all his senses

²⁷ Gaisser, 2009, 46.

²⁸ Translation influenced by D'Angour, 2019, 157.

and that he therefore safeguards himself against (51.13-16). He cuts himself off from further exploration of the effects that love has on him with the final stanza on 51, but here he succinctly describes those effects; no longer are his senses stolen, they are instead inflamed and war within him.

In inducing violent emotions within Catullus and thereby provoking him further beyond the bounds of Roman masculinity, Catullus considers Lesbia herself to be wanton and indecent, because she is the cause of his own immoderate emotion. Even though she is not a man, she still operates within their world, being considered by Catullus as practically a man for her masculine, conquering nature, as previously discussed in considerations on poem 11. Catullus later praises her as if she were a man in 72: *Dilexi tum te non tantum ut vulgus amicam,/ sed pater ut gnatos diligit et generos*. ("I have loved you not as much as the commoner his girlfriend, but as a father loves his children and sons-in-law", 72.3-4).

This raises Lesbia up socially, endowing her with the authority and influence of a man, showing not only that Catullus believes her to be more than just an ordinary woman, but also exemplifying the power dynamics between the two lovers. Catullus argues that their relationship is not simply sexual in nature, as Catullus perceives Lesbia to see it. Catullus' stark contrast written between these two opinions on his and Lesbia's relationship shows devotion from his side, not hers, and as such we can understand Catullus to believe that he is the more devoted of the two (72.3-8). *Dicebas quondam solum te nosse Catullum,/ Lesbia* ("You were once saying that you knew only Catullus, Lesbia", 72.1-2); while Lesbia "knows" him in the sexual sense, Catullus believes their love to be more spiritual, a noble love of a father to his children, or even a love which he would later wish to make into an official covenant by marriage, as seen in poems 87 and 109 using the terms *foedus* ("covenant", 87.3; 109.6). The unfortunate problem for

Catullus is that his relationship with Lesbia is not an equal covenant; Oliensis argues that it is the *amicitia* (“friendship”) of a patron-client relationship, with Lesbia as the patron and Catullus as the client²⁹. In Roman patronage, a patron has significant political and social power over their client because the patron has something the client wants. Usually this is money, but in the case of Lesbia, it is love. While Catullus can treat her however he wishes in his poetry, asserting a pseudo-dominance in calling her mean names and treating her as his lesser, Lesbia still has the most power over him because she can withhold her love from him³⁰. Thus, Catullus paints himself as being in an unequal relationship with Lesbia because she has, as his love, a greater influence over him than he has over her. In imparting unto Lesbia the nature of a domineering woman (11.17-24), we see that Catullus, as previously stated, compares her to the hypermasculine, hypersexual and therefore effeminate, imperialistic agenda of the Roman republic. He compliments her and insults her, calling her manly but in the worst way, expressing not only his conflicted feelings towards Lesbia, but confirming his feelings towards Roman masculinity.

Lesbia is the subject of a number of poems of love and hate within Catullus’ body of work. The worldly, raw nature of these emotional verses starkly contrast with Catullus’ poem 45, in which he discusses an idyllic relationship. In this poem, Catullus introduces a pair named Acme and Septimius, faithful lovers who are blessed in their happiness and happy in their souls’ communion: *mutuis animis amant amantur* (“they love and are loved of the same mind”, 45.20). In effusive and affectionate terms throughout the poem, we can infer that this is Catullus’ ideal

²⁹ Oliensis, 1997, 152-153.

³⁰ Oliensis, 1997, 153.

form of love— mutual and caring. Looking to his relationship with Lesbia, then, is a hard turn. What we see in that case is a petty, toxic relationship filled with strife and insecurity. We can compare poem 45 and the Lesbia poetry in three ways: the difference of origin, as seen in the naming of Acme, the difference of distance, and the difference of exclusivity.

Lesbia and Acme are two very different partners, though their names would not suggest it. With Lesbia stemming from the island of Lesbos and Acme stemming from the Greek *ἀκμή* meaning bloom, prime, or zenith, one could easily mistake the both of them as being Greek women³¹. However, Lesbia is in all likelihood a pseudonym for a Roman woman, and so here we see the first stark differences between the two examples of love. Catullus' pairing of the names Acme and Septimius together, one overtly Greek and the other overtly Roman, shows an almost syncretic love, one that is not weakened by cultural differences, but in fact strengthened. Through the poetic bringing together of opposites, Catullus displays a love that defies boundaries and exceeds expectations. Meanwhile, one of the problems between Lesbia and Catullus is that they are both Roman, both saturated in Roman social values, and as such they are predisposed by societal convention to stay away from the ideal life of *otium* that Catullus desires. Specifically, Lesbia is predisposed away more than Catullus, showing that she is a Roman woman through and through. This is evidenced by her participation in the system of *negotium* in *carmen* 7: *Queris quot mihi basiationes/ tuae Lesbia, sint satis superque*. ("You ask how many kissifications of yours, Lesbia, are enough and more for me."³², 7.2) By her very asking for clarification of how many kisses Catullus wants, Lesbia asserts herself as being within the

³¹ LSJ, s.v., *ἀκμή*

³² Translation influenced by Garrison, 2012, 98.

system of business much like the old men and other businessmen that Catullus rebukes in *carmen* 5: *rumoresque senum sevirorum/ omnes unius aestimemus assis!* (“and all the rumors of the rather severe seniors let us appraise at only a penny!”, 5.2-3). The two poems, 5 and 7, are connected by a theme of counting. Additionally, to call back to *carmen* 11, Catullus considers her to be hypersexual, consistent with Roman hypermasculine figures like Caesar and Mamurra. Acme is much more like Catullus’ other muse, Sappho, because she is Greek and therefore outside of the system of Roman *negotium* and masculinity, and as such he presents her in a positive light, calling her *fidelis Acme* (“faithful Acme”, 45.23).

There is also the difference of distance. In poem 45, Septimius claims that he will love her such that he would readily face death in Libya and India in lines 3-7.

*ni te perdit amo atque amare porro
omnes sum assidue paratus annos,
quantum qui pote plurimum perire,
solus in Libya Indiaque tosta
caesio veniam obuius leoni.*

if I do not love you desperately and if I
am prepared to henceforth love you constantly for all our years,
as much as he who can love the most,
alone in Libya and in sweltering India,
the green-eyed lion shall I come upon.

In poem 11, Catullus tries his hardest to leave Lesbia behind by venturing far off into distant lands of the Arabs and the Britons (11.5, 12). Both men introduce a theme of distant and foreign lands because of their partner, but while Septimius does this to express his love, Catullus does this to avoid his lover. Septimius compares his ability to love to that of one's ability to live and withstand the scorching sun. His ability to love is proof of his strength, and his willingness to die if he does not in fact love her is further proof of his devotion (45.3-7). Meanwhile Catullus has the furthest thing from devotion, fully abandoning his partner to go adventuring with his two friends because he finds her to be too sexual and far too promiscuous, actively blaming her: *nec meum respectet, ut ante, amorem,/ qui illius culpa cecidit velut prati/ ultimi flos* ("nor may she look back, as before, at my love, which by her fault has fallen just as the flower of the furthest field", 11.21-23). And it is in that same poem, *carmen* 11, that we find Catullus using his love as a tool of hatred, broadcasting his love for his friends and his happiness at going on an epic journey with them in order to emphasize his hatred for Lesbia³³. Septimius is a reflection of the nobility and loving kindness that Catullus cannot deliver to Lesbia; he is too wrapped up in his hatred for her. While Septimius loves Acme and repeatedly presents his utter devotion to her (45.2-7), Catullus presents devotion to his friends to intentionally neglect Lesbia, and then proceeds to insult her (11.13-24). The difference of the poetic use of a distant land displays the difference in attitudes of the male partner, and we see there that Catullus is sorely lacking in comparison to Septimius. Catullus can bemoan his poor relationship with Lesbia, but if he were to stop considering how much Lesbia and Acme are different and start to think about how much

³³ For the purposes of this paper, I will be working under the same assumption as Greene, 2006, that in *carmen* 11 Catullus is referring to his lover Lesbia, even though not by name.

he and Septimius are different, he would not bemoan thinking himself faultless, and would instead find that his own attitude towards Lesbia and their relationship is at least partly to blame. The fact that Catullus loves Lesbia even though he knows she is bad for him displays a severe lack of self-control. Meanwhile Septimius is the paragon of self-control, proclaiming that he will allow himself to die if necessary to prove his love for Acme (45.3-7).

Finally, the biggest difference between the relationship presented in poem 45 and the relationship presented in Catullus' Lesbia poems is their exclusivity. Consider lines 21 through 24 of *carmen* 45:

*Unam Septimius misellus Acmen
mavult quam Syrias Britanniasque:
uno in Septimio fidelis Acme
facit delicias libidinesque.*

Poor little Septimius prefers Acme alone
to Syria and Britain:
the faithful Acme in Septimius alone
Finds pleasure and desire.

Catullus emphasizes the exclusive nature of their love with polyptoton in lines 21 and 23, *Unam Septimius misellus Acmen... uno in Septimio fidelis Acme*, pointing to the fact that each finds pleasure and happiness with only the other. Moreover, this love is reciprocal and equal, with Septimius and Acme both finding the same satisfaction in the other. Catullus and Lesbia,

though, are not so exclusively presented as loving only each other. Catullus has other lovers throughout his life, specifically Juventius but also another woman named Ipsitilla (32), and there are insinuations that he desires other friends of his like Licinius Calvus (50). However, we cannot know whether these relationships were contemporaneous with his relationship with Lesbia, so Catullus was not necessarily unfaithful. It is certain, though, that Lesbia was. This is evidenced by Catullus' mention of her husband (or at the very least, her man) in *carmen* 83: *Lesbia mi praesente viro mala plurima dicit* ("Lesbia says many bad things to me with her man present", 83.1). Moreover, Catullus points to her having an extreme surfeit of sexual partners, including her own brother (79) and random passers-by on the street (58) in Catullus' verses. Nor was the relationship between Catullus and Lesbia equal. As previously discussed, it was more akin to the patronage system than any reciprocal love. Comparing the two relationships, the blessed union of Septimius and Acme seems downright sacred when positioned against the toxic, paradoxically loving and hating relationship of Catullus and Lesbia. Even metapoetically, Acme embraces Septimius, seen in *Unam Septimius misellus Acmen* ("Poor little Septimius prefers Acme alone", 45.21), whereas Catullus can never embrace Lesbia fully because he finds her to be too sexual, too dominant, too distracted by her other relationships, and too indecent, and thus opening both her and him up to the rest of society for public shaming and scrutiny³⁴.

This comparison of the relationships held between Septimius and Acme and Catullus and Lesbia sheds a significant amount of light on how Catullus views his relationship with Lesbia himself. When he writes a poem describing the ultimate love, he makes no effort to make the characters seem like himself and the object of his affection. Catullus is overtly aware that his

³⁴ Gaisser, 2009, 13.

relationship with Lesbia is unhealthy, remarking repeatedly on her adulterous behavior (11.17-22; 51.1-4; 58; 79.1-2; 83) and how the word of a woman cannot be trusted (70.3-4). It goes back to the feeling of a lack of self-control, as Lesbia lights a fire within him such that he cannot escape her, no matter how hard he tries. His attempts to throw his lot in with his friends in poem 11, his attempts to convince himself to leave her and move on in poem 8, his attempts to make himself disgusted at her sexual nature like poems 58 and 79, all of these fall short as, time and time again, he writes poems of love about her.

Catullus' other important intimate relationship is with Juventius, a younger male lover. He is much like Lesbia in that Catullus both delights in him and disdains him, though the delight is much less obvious. This is evidenced by three poems about Juventius, (15, 21, 23) in which he barely featured at all, with the poems instead focusing on rivals for his attention and affection³⁵. By putting priority not towards enjoying Juventius, but keeping him, we see Catullus as not delighting in Juventius so much as delighting in having Juventius to himself. As such, Catullus displays a unique perspective of love that is consistent with his love of Lesbia: that it requires that you hate other people. Catullus jealously fends off other suitors away from Juventius, as seen in *carmina* 15, 21, 23, 24, and 81. First, Catullus insists that his former friends turned rivals back away from his young lover, and then Catullus warns Juventius against these rival lovers, using his close relationship with the boy to attempt to persuade him not to love anyone else. The competitive spirit of Roman masculinity rears its ugly head once more as Catullus writes invectives to try to keep his friends away from Juventius. While much of the hatred that

³⁵ For the purposes of this paper, I will be writing under the same assumption as Gaisser, 2009, 61, that Juventius is the unnamed lover Catullus speaks of in *carmina* 15 and 21.

Juventius inspires within Catullus is directed outwardly at these other rival lovers, some of it is directed towards Juventius, as seen in 81 and 99. Additionally, we see the quality of love between Catullus and Juventius in poem 48, which we can compare with Catullan love of Lesbia.

Catullus employs protective hatred (15, 21, 23) against those who would wish to have Juventius for themselves, namely Aurelius and Furius, the same men that he takes on an epic journey and threatens with oral and anal rape (11, 16). Here, he divides them up, for the first time considering them as individuals instead of a pair and comes after them for their specific flaws and behaviors. In *carmen* 15, we see Catullus pleading with Aurelius to leave his young lover alone, to spare Juventius from his over-active penis, a penis which is *infesto pueris bonis malisque* (“dangerous to good and bad boys”, 15.10). In doing so, Catullus berates Aurelius for having a hypersexual nature, once again seeing him as unmasculine. This time, however, Catullus is not the one to have made him so, as he is in *carmen* 16.1-2 where Catullus threatens to make Aurelius pathic. This hypersexual nature is once again linked with a lack of the virtue of self-control, a virtue which Catullus begs from Aurelius, *Veniam peto pudentem* (“I ask a modest favor from you”, 15.2) so that he can leave Juventius with him without being afraid of Aurelius coming onto Juventius sexually. Amazingly, this message is written twice, with the same intent being penned into an entire second poem in *carmen* 21, emphasizing just how much Aurelius is a horny individual who cannot control himself, or rather, just how much Catullus thinks of Aurelius as such. Through emphasizing this nasty view of Aurelius, Catullus is also strengthening the idea that Juventius is just the opposite: a pure boy. To Catullus, Juventius is young and innocent, and the dichotomy between lecherous Aurelius and sweet Juventius emphasizes the aspects of Juventius that Catullus seems to be most interested in, his youth and naïveté. This is evidenced when Catullus calls him in poem 24 *qui flosculus es Iuventiorum*

(“you who are a little flower of the Juventii”, 24.1). Calling him a little flower shows that Catullus sees Juventius as the bloom of youth, beautiful and delicate. The poet also strengthens this view by reasoning with Aurelius in poem 15, requesting only this one boy to be spared because surely Aurelius, too, has had something *quod castum expeteres et integellum* (“which you might have desired pure and untouched”, 15.4). In attempting to reason with Aurelius before simply accusing him of being a defiler, we even see a rare moment of empathy from Catullus. Perhaps since Juventius is younger, Catullus, though he later admonishes it in Juventius himself, has adopted a portion of his lover’s naivete, his pureness? His relationship with Lesbia is poor because she had significant agency as a wealthy adult, so since Juventius is a more easily controllable and therefore less threatening partner, Catullus represents him as pure. Finding that purity, Catullus attempts to keep it (and by extension, Juventius) to himself, to the exclusion of any rivals like Aurelius.

Catullus’ second poem entreating Aurelius to stop hounding after Juventius (21) is a much more abrasive verse, starting the poem off with an insult and keeping the same tone through the rest of it. He names Aurelius *pater esuritionum*, (“father of appetites”, 21.1), which both insinuates that Aurelius is insatiable in his sexual appetite but also that Aurelius is poor and unable to afford food. In either case, Aurelius would be an unfit lover for Juventius, who is pure and requires financial care as a youth. Catullus then, once more, asserts his own masculinity over Aurelius by threatening him with oral rape if he does not leave Juventius alone. While the focus of *carmen* 15 is primarily to protect Juventius, *carmen* 21 is much more about the desire to punish Aurelius for his unseemly leering and pursuit of the young lover. Catullus’ protective hatred puts within his hands the power and inclination to threaten his former friend.

Furius also receives the ire that Catullus directs towards rivals for Juventius' love, but the ire comes in a very different way. With Aurelius, we see Catullus directly threatening acts of sexual assault. Perhaps this is a case of tailoring to one's audience, because Catullus sees Aurelius as such a promiscuous person. In the case of Furius though, the protective hatred comes as a pejorative poem regarding Furius' financial status. In poem 23, Catullus ruthlessly mocks Furius for being poor, saying that for him *neque servus est neque arca*, ("there is neither slave nor coffer", 23.1), establishing a theme that will come into play in poems 24 and 81 as well. Furius' inability to care financially for Juventius marks him as equally unfit to be a lover as Aurelius. The theme of Furius' poverty is continued in *carmen* 24, repeating the early-used line *neque...arca* (24.5) to make it very apparent that even though he does not directly reference Furius, the poem is about him.

Catullus presents his relationship with Juventius as healthier than that of his relationship with Lesbia, though this could very well be because it is less discussed, or because Catullus is in the position of power in this relationship. In *carmen* 48, we see Catullus happy, kissing Juventius countless times just as he requests from Lesbia (5, 7, 48). Catullus has usurped the role of the dominant lover, taking over the position which Lesbia holds over him and lording it over someone else. To complicate matters further, this may have been because Juventius was a slave. Being a young male who was not a citizen, there is a possibility that Juventius was such, in which case Catullus' dominant position could not have been questioned, nor even consented to. That said, we cannot know for certain. In his previously discussed relationship with Lesbia, she is too dominant for Catullus to feel free; she is a sexual monster, and he is just another man she has broken (11. 17-20). Here, Catullus can be happy because he is not dependent. By gaining

control over his lover, he gains freedom for himself, removing himself from under the thumb of another.

More than this, Juventius has an outlook on life that Catullus would do well to learn from. Catullus, though he works to avoid it, is ultimately torn as to whether he ought to live a life of *negotium* and business, or a life of carefree freedom, disregarding business in *carmina* 5 and 7, but embracing it in *carmen* 51. It is this business and *negotium* that Juventius disregards in poem 24, but Catullus does not appear to recognize it. Catullus comes into the poem blustering about the riches of Midas and how poor Furius is and therefore how poor of a partner he would make for Juventius, but here, Catullus has fallen into the very behavior which he early desires to avoid. In *carmina* 5 and 7, Catullus actively works against a system of currency and counting: *rumoresque senum sevirorum/ omnes unius aestimemus assis!* (“and all the rumors of the rather severe seniors let us appraise at only a penny!” 5.2-3) and *quae nec pernumerare curiosi/ possint nec mala fascinare lingua*. (“so that neither the curious can count, nor the evil tongue curse.” 7.11-12), and yet in *carmen* 24 this has switched. In 24, Catullus praises the very life of money and business he repudiates in *carmina* 5 and 7. Perhaps Catullus has become an opportunist and will choose to cling to the system of business in the case that he can use it to insult a rival lover. A further leap in logic that I would propose is that Catullus does not slip back into the field of *negotium* accidentally but does so in order to heighten the naivete and even brilliance of Juventius. When Catullus tells Juventius that Furius would not make a fine partner because he is poor, Juventius’ response, per Catullus, would be *Non est homo bellus?* (“Is he not a fine fellow?”, 24.7). This shows that it is Juventius who disregards *negotium* and money in favor of character, not impressed by participation in a system of business which he does not participate in because of his youthful age. Previous indications of Juventius as pure and innocent (21.4-5, 24.1)

show that Juventius may be a mouthpiece for Catullus' ideas of morality, and the poet may have chosen to emphasize Juventius' alternative masculinity by presenting an argument for Juventius to fight against.

Though the relationship between Catullus and Juventius appears healthier than that between the poet and Lesbia, it is by no means entirely healthy. In poem 99, for example, Catullus steals a sweet kiss from Juventius that turns bitter in his mouth upon the realization that Juventius did not want the kiss, nor did he hold back from making that known to the poet (99.7-20). With a simple kiss, Catullus sends Juventius into a fit of tears, emblematic of Juventius' disdain for Catullus' actions. In the same language as when Catullus lambasts a napkin thief in his poem 12, Catullus then lambasts himself for being a thief, saying that: *Verum id non impune tuli*, ("I did not steal this unpunished", 99.3). This punishment that Catullus receives, whether justified or not, is that the relationship between the two has been altered by his hasty decisions, and the power dynamics of their relationship are laid bare. Catullus, in his ardor, has embittered the previously saccharine characteristics of his relationship, and by the end of the poem he recognizes the lesson in that; Catullus swears never to steal a kiss from Juventius again. But the bitterness cuts two ways. Not only is Juventius bitter against Catullus for kissing him without consent, but Catullus is bitter against Juventius because of his harsh punishment. Catullus seethes, angry that his wretched love is not pitied by his lover, only scorned and penalized. Catullus, having believed himself in a position to be vulnerable with Juventius, is immediately and unpleasantly informed that is not the case, and he resents Juventius for that revelation of a lack of care. Worse than this, though, is that Juventius shames Catullus for his rash and lovesick actions, and Catullus, in lambasting himself, can be seen as feeling ashamed of said kiss.

In comparing the two loves of Lesbia and Juventius, we see the return of a struggle arise within Catullus. His refusal to pursue a functional and happy relationship is once again indicative of a sense of self-loathing, for he is well aware of what a healthy relationship would look like as seen in poem 45, but he simply chooses to pursue other, more toxic avenues. Or rather, he cannot control himself away from such avenues. Multiple times throughout his oeuvre we see Catullus speaking to himself, primarily to admonish himself for a weakness of spirit (8.1; 51.13-16; 76.10). These series of dialogues from the poet to his persona, or perhaps contained within the poet to himself, show the breakdown of the Catullan character as he is reduced to multiple voices inside his own head³⁶. In *carmen* 8 we find a voice encouraging Catullus in the third person. The voice begins the poem by gently suggesting to Catullus that he quit acting like a fool with Lesbia, done so in the jussive subjunctive *desinas ineptire* (“you must give up playing the fool”, 8.1) so as to not scare him away with swift demands. But by the end of the poem, the voice calls out to Catullus in imperatives: *At tu, Catulle, destinatus obdura*. (“But you, Catullus, be determinedly firm.”, 8.19). While Catullus is the recipient of the voice’s advice, he is also the author of the voice, and as such we see that Catullus wants to be able to dictate his own life and control himself, but he requires more encouragement. By writing a voice to encourage himself instead of simply leaving the voice internal, he brings to life that voice, endowing it with a more permanent nature. Now, he does not just have fleeting thoughts about how to live well; he has written himself instructions and advice. This is the help he so desperately requires to bring himself to a healthier state of mind and being. The voice healthily warns against courting Lesbia any further in *carmina* 8 and 76, urging Catullus to live closer to

³⁶ Greene, 1995, 77.

the values of Roman masculinity. The same voice lives in poem 51, telling Catullus to disregard *otium* (51.13-16). This voice, this outcry, is Catullus warring with himself, a man trapped by feelings of duty and feelings of desire, caught in the binary net these two obligations weave.

Catullus writes a binary into his work to point out the incredulity of living in a binary world. His entire attitude towards Roman masculinity is evidence of that, as he rejects and embraces aspects of both genders. Even in his discussions of the Roman masculine system, he regards hypermasculinity as being effeminate in and of itself in its lack of self-control, as evidenced by both his comparing Roman masculinity to a lustful woman in 11.17-24 and in his introduction of Priapic humor in 16.1. Thus the imposition of a binary like masculine: feminine is laughable and worthy of commentary in poetic verse. Catullus considers his spectrumized, non-binary feelings towards Roman masculinity by presenting these feelings as fighting within but against a binary, as he struggles with his own reception inside the confines of that system and as a result lashes out against his friends and loved ones in invectives and competitive speech. He presents himself as both uber-masculine in 16.1 and the flower of femininity in 11.23, but with each presentation hiding within itself a shard of the opposite; the uber-masculine is fragile in its insecurity and effeminate in its fervor, and the feminine flower is nobly masculine in its standing up to an enemy it cannot best. He continues this trend of presenting things belonging in a spectrum as being binary in his feelings towards his muse, Sappho. Complicated feelings are pushed down to make way for simplistic thoughts of being both viciously, hatefully jealous of her and her perceived lifestyle, and also being inspired by her. He furthers this narrative by pulling in his romantic and sexual partners and his feelings towards them, characterized by loving and loathing, but also by using those same emotions as tools to present their opposites. Loving one to the exclusion of another imparts a sense of hatred towards the excluded (11) and

hating a rival shows love towards the object of desire (15, 21, 23). Thus, the binary of love and hate being opposites is problematized as being limiting even to their expression, since the use of one can express the other. Finally, he characterizes his feelings towards himself and his body of work as binary, when the truth of the matter of his own feelings towards himself could not be further from the case.

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