years after his arrival in Rome, at the end of the third century B.C.). Indeed, this dating seems to be confirmed by the profile of the play, which is commonly believed to have closely followed the Greek model. Finally, the parody-allusion testifies the wide success of this tragedy among the coeval public, proving it was well known and appreciated by the theatre audience. That is why Plautus chose to imitate this work, drawing such a peculiar element from it.

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SCORTUM DILIGIS: A READING OF CATULLUS 6

The canonical interpretation of Catullus 6 characterizes the poem as a 'playful',[1] 'occasional'[2] piece between friends—gossipy Catullus (some commentators compare c. 67) tries to extract details of his friend Flavius' latest affair. Ferguson's comments are typical: to him, this piece is '... clever, friendly, not to be taken too seriously ...'.[3] But more careful attention to the wording of the poem will not allow so light-hearted an interpretation. Rather, Catullus 6 is an attack on a woman whose details are lost to us, but presumably known to Catullus and his readers. The insults are, it is true, encapsulated within the playfully indirect form of a 'hackneyed genre'[4]—the sympathetic, or nosey, outsider inquiring into a friend's love life—but the poem's true intentions lie in the startling directness of the insults, which force our attention away from the surrounding frame and onto the woman herself.

At its beginning, Catullus 6 is tactfully indirect. Apparently coy, Catullus suggests in lines 1–3 that Flavius would be talking about his latest amour to him were she not 'gauche and inelegant' (*illepidae atque inelegantes* in line 2). But in lines 4–5, Catullus abandons this indirection and appears to be telling Flavius directly what kind of woman Flavius is in love with; note the emphatic *verum* beginning line 4 ('the truth is ...').[5] She is *nescioquid febriculosi/scorti*—'some kind of fever-ridden slut'. The strength of this phrase ought to be noted. Morgan pointed out that the only known occurrence of *febriculosus* before this is in Plautus' *Cistellaria* at 406 to describe common whores (as to its literal meaning, Morgan supports an earlier view that it refers to someone who has malaria).[6] Morgan does acknowledge that this word is 'much harsher than customarily admitted' but counter-intuitively suggests that its shock value 'rivets the reader's attention on the lines which immediately follow', referring to the witty bedroom scene at

[1] Cf. M. Skinner, 'Semiotics and poetics in Catullus 6', *LCM* 8 (1983), 141 2, at 141: 'Certainly the piece is playful in tone ...'.

[2] D. Thomson, *Catullus* (Toronto, 1997), 221: '... this occasional piece removes us temporarily from all deeper and more personal feeling'.

[3] J. Ferguson, *Catullus* (Lawrence, KA, 1985), 25.

[4] M. Skinner (n. 1), 141. On the ubiquity of the topos, she cites Catullus 55, Propertius 1.9, Horace *Odes* 1.27 and 2.4, and in Greek, *A.P.* 12.71 and 134 [Callimachus] and 135 [Asclepius]. See also A. Wheeler, *Catullus and the Traditions of Ancient Poetry* (Berkeley, 1934), 227.

[5] *Verum* often connotes a strong turnaround or change in tone in Catullus; cf. 10.31, 15.9, 26.4, 76.14, 99.3.

[6] M. Morgan, '*Nescio quid febriculosi scorti:* A Note on Catullus 6', *CQ* 27 (1977), 338 41, at 339.

lines 6–11.[7] Surely it rivets attention onto itself and onto what it purports to describe: the girlfriend.

Scortum itself is shocking, and deliberately emphasized through enjambment and alliteration (***nesc**io ... febriculosi/**sc**orti*). This is the only time it appears in Catullus' poetry;[8] in comedy, it tended to refer to undifferentiated harlots (as opposed to the noun *meretrix*, referring to specific prostitutes), but elsewhere it was most commonly used as abuse, in which case, although not a vulgarism, it had a strong emotive force.[9] This makes the word with which it is juxtaposed, *diligis*, all the more surprising.[10] In Catullus, the verb *diligere* is used to indicate a deeper emotional bond to a lover, rather than a merely sexual one;[11] this meaning is perceived most clearly in poem 72, in which Catullus says that he has loved (*dilexi* at 3) Lesbia not only as a common man does his girlfriend (that is, in a sexual sense), but also as a father loves (*diligit* at 4) his sons and sons-in-law. The very concept of loving a *scortum* is oxymoronic—note the contrast drawn in Plaut. *Truc.* 678: *uel amare possum uel iam scortum ducere*—but Catullus' use of the emotive *diligere* makes the juxtaposition particularly pointed. In this serious context, then, *hoc pudet fateri* in 6.5 is, I suggest, less likely to refer to a bashfulness in kissing and telling than as an insult to the girl, intending to ascribe to Flavius the kind of shame Catullus expresses of himself in his meditations on cruelly misguided love, c. 75 and 76.

The next section, 6–12, mirrors the same movement (indirection then abrupt directness) that we observed in lines 1–5. The complexity of Catullus' use of his models in lines 6–11 ought to be noted. It has previously been observed that Catullus is here adapting a Hellenistic motif whereby a lover is described by way of the after-effects of love;[12] so, for example, Asclepiades in *A.P.* 12.135 describes Nicagoras' tears and unhappy eyes and the wreath on his head slipped out of place, all of which betray that he is in love. But look more closely at how Catullus' remodelling accords with the themes of the poem: he not only transfers the description of the lover to an inanimate object but also transforms the conventionally amatory motif into a purely sexual one—so, the tottering bed betrays not that Flavius is in love but rather that sex has taken place.[13] This is a continuation of the *scortum diligis* motif, an implied contrast between love and mere sex. Meanwhile, Catullus, despite his indirection, maintains the air of condemnation by giving his application of the motif a further, forensic twist. To describe the tottering of the bed (at 11), he uses the word *inambulatio*, which, in the technical language of oratory, refers to the orator's walking up and down the *rostra* (cf. Cic. *Brut.* 43.158 and *Auct. Her.* 3.15.27). Combined with the elaborate (rhetorical?) sound-effects, well analysed by Tracy,[14]

[7] Morgan (n. 6), 341.

[8] The diminutive form *scortillum* does appear elsewhere (10.3).

[9] See J. Adams, 'Words for 'prostitute' in Latin', *RhM* 126 (1983), 321–58, at 325–6.

[10] The juxtaposition is also noted by H. Rohdich, 'Liebe, Gesellschaft, Dichtung: Catull c.6', *A&A* 46 (2000), 116–23, at 117.

[11] Nielsen ('Catullus c.6: on the significance of too much love', *Latomus* 43 [1984], 104–10, at 107) reads against the Latin here. She says that, even though 'elsewhere in Catullus (72.3, 76.23) the verb connotes a fuller relationship between lovers', in this case, '*diligere* qualifies ties that are carnal'. Why should it have a different meaning here?

[12] So, W. Kroll, *C. Valerius Catullus*[2] (Leipzig, 1929), ad loc., Wheeler (n. 4), 227, and Morgan (n. 6), 340.

[13] Cf. *Epod.* 12.11–12. Furthermore, the evidence of vigorous sexual activity (that is, the shaken state of the bed) extends the pejorative characterization of Flavius' *amour* as a *scortum*, since, according to Catullus' contemporary Lucretius, vigorous movement during sex was the habit of *scorta* (4.1274).

[14] See S. V. Tracy, '*Argutatiinambulatioque* (Catullus 6.11)', *CP* 64 (1969), 234–5.

Catullus seems facetiously to create an image of the inanimate objects of the room engaged in courtroom condemnation of the sex which has taken place. It should also be noted, though, that in doing so Catullus is accentuating an undertone of condemnation which is already a common element of the original Hellenistic motif, especially when it is applied to women. So, for example, in *A.P.* 5.175 (Meleager), a poem which bears considerable similarities to our own, the speaker notes of his love that her hair has been scented (line 2), her head is bound in a garland (4) and all her limbs are tottering from the wine (6). The speaker concludes that she is in love, but his observations are not, as with those poems about men, part of friendly jest, but in condemnation of this woman, since they prove that she has broken her 'oath' to him (1).

In this context, *attritus* in 10 (applied to a pillow) may be significant. The technique here is a similar one to that in c. 17, in which, as Niall Rudd argued in a classic article,[15] Catullus uses words and images in the description of inanimate objects (the bridge and the town) to add to our understanding of the poem's central protagonists (the inept husband and his young wife). The verb *tero*, from which *attritus* is derived, is at times used in a sexual context as a euphemism for various sexual acts,[16] but specifically seems to have connoted excessive or threatening sexuality. So, at *Anthol. Lat.* 148.8 (148 Riese = 137 SB), the same compound is used of the sexual action of a man penetrating a mare, and at 3.20.6, Propertius uses *tero* in his suggestion to a woman that her man is probably having sex with another woman.[17] Often, moreover, *tero* seems to have been used in connexion with excessive or threatening female sexuality. In Lucretius 4.1127, the verb is used of women's expensive garments worn away by love-making, amidst a famous passage detailing the damaging physical and economic effects on men of falling in love. Most damningly, in Propertius 3.11.30, an elegy on the power of women over men, *tero* is used of the threatening Cleopatra, who is 'worn away' through sex with her slaves.[18]

These overtones of a negative sexuality subtly foreshadow the very blunt condemnation of line 12. Ostensibly, of course, this line continues the conceit of the first three lines, encouraging Flavius to speak up about his sexual misadventures. But the real force of the line lies in Catullus' use of *stupra*.[19] Originally denoting any public disgrace or disgraceful act, *stuprum* came to refer to unlawful sexual intercourse between citizens. Elaine Fantham comments: 'Most uses of the noun *stuprum* in Republican authors treat it as either a form of corruption or violation of the passive partner by the penetrator, or (where the passive partner is held up for reproach) of

[15] N. Rudd, 'Colonia and her bridge: a note on the structure of Catullus 17', *TAPA* 90 (1959), 238–42 = K. Quinn (ed.), *Approaches to Catullus* (Cambridge, 1972), 129–35.

[16] See J. Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary* (London, 1982), 183–4 on the use of *tero* and its compounds in a sexual context.

[17] Note also Petronius 81.6, in which *attero* is used bitterly of the sexual excess of a former love with a new boyfriend, and Juvenal 9.4, loosely of the oral sex of a prostitute in his satire on a situation of excessive sexuality. In these examples the overtone of femininity (see following) may also be in play.

[18] Cynthia's ghost also uses it in the sexual, threatening end to Propertius 4.7, of 'grinding bone upon bone', when she alone will hold Propertius after his death (at line 94).

[19] *Nil stupra ualet* is an emendation (for the manuscript *in ista preualet*) but an extremely likely one. Most editors (including Ellis, Quinn, and Thomson) have favoured this reading, and it is easy to see how by false word division and a confusion between *in* and *ni* the corruption could have occurred. Archibald Allen ('Love Awry in Catullus', *Maia* 34 [1982], 225–6) rejected the emendation, though, commenting: '*stupra* surely is a shade too strong, too moralistic for the context'—which is, I think, exactly the point.

self-corruption ...'; [20] of its forcefully condemnatory tone, she writes: '*Stuprum* is not used to describe the speaker's actions or those of his friends, even when the term has become approximate with overuse'.[21] The elliptical syntax of the line, too, seems to draw attention to the condemnatory sentiment as much as it can; so, rather than *nil ualet stupra tacere* or the like, Catullus writes *Nam nil stupra ualet* as a stand-alone phrase, and only after this sentiment has been voiced does he add *nihil tacere* to complete the line and continue the topos of the friend's silence.

But the poem's loudest reprobation of Flavius' alleged amour comes in line 13. To my mind, ascribing to Flavius *latera ecfututa* simply cannot, in a Roman context, constitute, as Nielsen suggests, Catullus 'commending Flavius on his masculine powers, and on his lack of sexual inhibition'.[22] It is by no means assured that in a Roman context a lack of sexual inhibition would indeed have connoted masculinity,[23] but, in any case, this interpretation ignores the passive force of *ecfututa*; Flavius has himself been sexually exhausted by this woman, and such suggestions of female sexual voracity are never complimentary in Catullus. In fact, this line seems closer in spirit to Catullus' abuse of Lesbia through allegations of a lack of sexual inhibition; compare for example, 11.17–20 (note especially *ilia rumpens* at 11.20, a not dissimilar anatomical detail to *latera* at 6.13).[24] The primary obscenity (the first of the collection) is also a shock, demanding attention.[25] If the poem was truly as friendly as commentators have made out, it is hard to see what it is doing here; all of the other five instances of *fut-* verbs in Catullus appear in poems of abuse,[26] so the presence of such a verb here with an entirely different connotation would be quite remarkable.

Line 14 pulls us back, for the end of the poem, into the lighter, superficial world of neoteric judgements on art/lifestyles with which Catullus 6 began. In the past, commentators have been too keen, I think, to read the last three lines as entirely determinative of the meaning of the poem. As with c. 22, the central, forceful, poetic thrusts of Catullus 6 unfold throughout the body of the poem, and the ending is rather ambiguous and subtly ironic. Catullus urges Flavius to speak up about 'whatever he has, of good or bad'; of course, the rest of the poem makes clear that Catullus knows exactly what Flavius 'has', and it is all bad, but this is pretended civility which prepares us for the joke of the final two lines.[27] The reason is, he says, that he wants to immortalize Flavius and his lover in verse, but these last lines are clearly disingenuous for three reasons: first, the hyperbolic *ad caelum* is ridiculously high-sounding and

[20] E. Fantham, '*Stuprum*: public attitudes and penalties for sexual offences in Republican Rome', *Echos du Monde Classique* 10 (1991), 267–91 at 270.

[21] Ibid., 271.

[22] Nielsen (n. 11), 109.

[23] The connotations of male sexual voracity seem to have depended on the context and who was being described. One must weigh up instances of men boasting about their own stamina (Cat. 32.7–8, Ovid *Am.* 3.7.24–7) and pulling power (Prop. 22A), with that rhetoric of abuse which links other men's sexual insatiety with effeminacy, on which see Cat. 57.8–10 and C. Edwards, *The Politics of Immorality in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge, 1993), 81–7.

[24] Cf. Adams (n. 16 at 141) on Cat.11.20: 'this use of *ilia* is not unlike that of *latus* above' [citing Cat. 6.13]. Cf. also Cat. 80.7-8, in which the *rupta ilia* of *misellus Victor*, like the bed in 6, shout out (*clamant*) about Gellius' debaucheries.

[25] Cf. T. Wiseman, *Catullus and his World: A Reappraisal* (Cambridge, 1985), 141: '... the vulgar phrase comes as a shock, and probably came as a shock to Catullus' contemporaries too'.

[26] *diffututa* (29.13); *confutuere* (37.5), *defututa* (41.1), *futuit* (71.5 and 97.9). One exception could be said to be *fututiones* in 32.8; though this is a magniloquent neologism with, arguably, a different tone.

[27] The *quidquid* + partitive genitive construction can connote irony (56.3) or contempt (37.4); both of these may be felt here.

incongruous, and not meant to be taken seriously;[28] secondly, the point of the line is in *lepido*, which, in pointed contrast to lines 2 and 14, only goes to prove that Catullus possesses the social grace which Flavius' girl sorely lacks. Thirdly, as others have pointed out,[29] it is Catullus 6 itself that is the 'charming verse' of which Catullus speaks in the last line. Flavius and his lover have indeed been immortalized, but the terms of their immortality are surely not what they would have wished.

Without delving into the mire of biographical criticism, it is nevertheless possible to sketch the shape of the situation constructed by the text. Is Catullus attacking Flavius? Flavius hardly figures here at all; compared to the ostensibly similar Catullus 55, all of the matters which Catullus criticizes can be sourced back to the girl and her corrupting influence. So, then, the target is Flavius' girl. We ought furthermore to reject those who take Catullus at his word and suggest that this girl was actually a low-class whore.[30] Why so forcefully call a spade a spade? The emotive force of the language here (*diligis*, *stupra*, *ecfututa*) suggests something more. Rather, by comparison with poems such as c. 37 and c. 58, in which the high-class Lesbia is abused by being likened to a common prostitute, we see that it is more likely that Catullus is launching an attack on whatever high-class woman Flavius is in love with, but, in an example of the witty indirection and sophistication that characterizes *lepidus versus*, he does so through the 'hackneyed motif' of the man inquiring about a friend's new love.[31]

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TIBULLUS 2.1.45–6 AND 'AMPLIFICATORY PLEONASM'[1]

aurea tum pressos pedibus dedit uua liquores
mixtaque securo est sobria lympha mero.

'Then the golden grape gave liquids trampled under foot, and sober water was mixed with ... neat wine'. I have omitted *securo* from the translation. Commentators give *securo* an active sense, 'freeing from care', and (like *OLD* 2c) associate this passage with two in which the adjective describes the waters of Lethe (Virg. *Aen.* 6.715 *securos latices*, Ov. *Pont.* 2.4.23 *securae pocula Lethes*).

That wine gives freedom from care is a poetical commonplace (*Cypria* fr. 18 West, Alc. 335, 346.3 LP, Thgn. 883, Pind. fr. 124.5, Eur. *Cyc.* 172, *Bacch.* 280–1, 381, 772, Hor. *Carm.* 1.7.17–19, 1.18.3–4, 2.11.17–18, 3.1.41–4, 3.12.1–2, 3.21.14–17, 4.12.19–20, *Epod.* 9.37–8, 13.17, *Epist.* 1.5.18, 1.15.18–19), reflected in Tib. 1.7.39–40. But wine which gives freedom from care is wine made safely drinkable

[28] For a similarly disingenuous promise of poeticized catasterization, cf. L. Watson, *A Commentary on Horace's Epodes* (Oxford, 2003), 542 and 562–3 on Hor. *Epod.* 17.40ff.

[29] See Morgan (n. 6), 341; Skinner (n. 1), 141; Nielsen (n. 11), 110.

[30] It is unlikely, at this point of the development of the word, that *stupra* (line 12) would have been used of a low-class whore anyway; the word was usually used of more shocking and improper intercourse than merely that between a man and a prostitute. See Fantham (n.20).

[31] I would like to thank Dr Lindsay Watson and Ms Frances Muecke for their helpful criticism and personal encouragement.

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