

Catullus 23 as Roman Comedy*

SHAWN O'BRYHIM

Franklin & Marshall College

SUMMARY: In c. 23, Catullus refuses to give Furius a loan because he considers his friend to be “fortunate enough” in his impoverished state. Although this poem appears to be no more than a sarcastic response to Furius’s request, it contains numerous parallels to Roman comedy. Catullus uses comic themes to portray Furius as the penniless lover familiar from Plautine comedy. At the same time, he subverts these themes in order to deprive Furius of a happy outcome to his love affair.

C. 23 IS ONE OF THE MOST NEGLECTED POEMS IN THE CATULLAN CORPUS. Although it occasionally receives attention as part of a cycle dealing with Furius and Aurelius, Catullus’s rivals for Juventius (c. 15, 21, 23, and 24), it is rarely accorded close scrutiny in its own right.¹ In this poem, Catullus turns down Furius’s request for a loan of 100,000 sesterces on the grounds that he is happy enough without it: his father and stepmother are healthy, his family fears no disaster, he exudes no bodily fluids, and he rarely defecates. Numerous parallels with Roman comedy suggest that Catullus based c. 23 upon a stock theme from the stage: the young lover’s quest for money to obtain his beloved. While this is not surprising given his use of comic themes elsewhere, Catullus turns the typical plot of Roman comedy upside down in this poem by inverting traditional elements from the stage.²

* I would like to thank Paul Allen Miller, Zachary Biles, and Sean O’Neill for their valuable comments on earlier versions of this paper. All translations are my own.

¹ Németh 33–41 and Godwin 139 interpret the poem as a parody of Stoicism, Richlin 359 notes that “these bad characters ingest anti-foods, and not only excrete but excrete perversely,” and MacLeod 299–300 argues that Catullus is “constructing an elaborate fabric of parody and then, in the last two lines, neatly dismantling it.”

² Quinn 1973b: 220–37 discusses the comic tone of poems 1–60, while Skinner 298–305, Newman 33–36, Thomas 308–16, Goldberg 475–89, Wray 166, and Nappa 54–55, 72–75,

Most of c. 23 is devoted to a recital of the consequences of Furius's poverty. Not only does he lack a slave or a strongbox, he also has "neither bedbug nor spider nor fire" (1–2).³ This implies that he has no bed, no rafters, and no hearth. In short, Furius is homeless and, therefore, ranks among the poorest of the poor. While most Romans would consider this a deplorable situation, Catullus encourages Furius to count it as a blessing because, he says, homelessness brings freedom from the cares that plague those who have property: fire, collapse of the home, and nefarious attempts by relatives to collect a premature inheritance (Ellis 79). But the benefits of penury do not end here. Since Furius and his family have no home, they must live outdoors, where hunger and exposure to the elements have made them dry, a condition that has had a salubrious effect on their digestion. In light of the substantial benefits that poverty has given him, Catullus advises Furius to stop asking for a loan because he is "fortunate enough" (27).

Catullus's reason for refusing to make the loan has nothing to do with his assessment of Furius's happiness. His true motivation becomes clear in c. 24, where he repeatedly expresses his disappointment that Juventius would give his love "to a man who has neither a slave nor a strongbox" (24.5, 8, 10). Since these are the same words used to describe Furius in c. 23, there can be little doubt that he is the pauper who has attracted Juventius's interest in c. 24.⁴ There is little hope that this relationship—at least as Catullus portrays it—will succeed because Furius and Juventius occupy different positions in

and 160–61 concentrate on comic elements in individual poems. See also Holzberg 38, 43, and 90. For comic themes in elegy, see Barsby 135–57, Fear 217–40, and Myers 1–21. McKeown 71–84 detects the influence of mime on elegiac poetry, while Wiseman 183–206 argues that Catullus wrote for the stage. For poverty in general as a source of humor, see Watson 1995: 293–94.

³The repetition of this phrase at 24.5, 8, and 10 suggests that Catullus was echoing Furius's original complaint. For the lack of a slave as an indication of poverty, see Lucil. 278 Warmington. See also Baehrens 162, Riese 46, and Fordyce 73.

⁴Dettmer 48, Syndikus 165–66, Krostenko 271n90, and Wray 73. Cf. c. 81. These two poems, then, are companion pieces that depict Catullus's feelings of jealousy toward Furius, the object of Juventius's desire, just as c. 15 and 21 express similar feelings about the intentions of the poverty-stricken Aurelius toward the boy. See Dettmer 48. For Catullus and Juventius, see c. 15, 21, 23, 24, 48, 81, and 99. Ellis 76 and 82 suggests that "Furius seems to have offended the poet by associating too freely with the young Juventius (XXIV), and it was this probably which occasioned the present attack." Martial (1.92) may have interpreted the situation in this way in his adaptation, which is a conflation of c. 23 and 24, although it also contains elements of c. 15 and 21. For the pursuit of Juventius by both Furius and Aurelius, see Thompson 256–57 and 264–65. Note that Richardson 103 and MacLeod 298–99 liken Aurelius to the comic parasite.

the social hierarchy. While Catullus describes Furius as a pauper, he implies that Juventius belongs to the social elite when he praises the boy as “the little flower of the Juventii, not only of these now, but as many as either were in the past or will be in the future” (24.1–3).⁵ If Furius were to have any chance at a relationship with Juventius, he would need to improve his social standing with a substantial infusion of cash. Significantly, the 100,000 sesterces that Furius requested from Catullus was the financial prerequisite to holding municipal office, which was one path to social acceptability (Plin., *Ep.* 1.19.2; Ellis 81). Without it, Furius would be unworthy of Juventius’s love because of his inferior status.⁶ This is exactly what Catullus implies at the end of c. 24 (9–10): “Shrug off and dismiss this as you please. / Nevertheless, that man has neither slave nor strongbox.” By refusing to provide the loan, Catullus aims to doom the nascent love affair between Furius and Juventius before it can develop further.

All of this talk of Furius’s poverty is, of course, to be taken no more seriously than Catullus’s assertion that his own purse is full of cobwebs in c. 13.7–8. Elsewhere, he describes Furius as his *comes* (11.1), a critic of his poetry (c. 16), and the owner of a villa (c. 26).⁷ This has led some scholars to suggest that he was no insignificant pauper, but none other than Furius Bibaculus, a neoteric poet from Gaul.⁸ Be this as it may, Catullus is not attempting to render an accurate accounting of Furius’s financial resources in c. 23 and 24. Holzberg argues that this description of Furius’s poverty is an exaggeration that serves to depict Catullus’s rival for Juventius’s love as someone who cannot afford to engage in pederasty (Holzberg 103–4). According to Syndikus (163 and n18), this type of exaggeration was common in invective poetry “as a humor-

⁵ See also Ausonius (*Ep.* 10.73), who describes Aeneas as *flos flosculorum Romuli*. It is generally agreed that Juventius belonged to a distinguished family from either Tusculum or Verona. See Arkins 107 and Thompson 264. Note also the reference to the *gens Iuventia* at *CIL* 12, 1322 and the discussion by Neudling 163–64.

⁶ Arkins 112. Cf. Ferguson 54 on c. 15. 6–8: “Catullus has no more to fear from the man in the street in relation to Juventius than from the sparrow in relation to Lesbia; they, literally, are in a different class.”

⁷ For Furius’s status, see Holzberg 104 and Syndikus 163. The poem about his villa is problematic. Although the manuscripts contain different readings for 26.1 (O has *vestra*, while G and R have *nostra*), all editors except Kroll 48 have accepted *vestra*, which indicates that the villa belonged to Furius, not Catullus.

⁸ Ferguson suggests that c. 26 alludes to a poem by Furius Bibaculus (recorded by Suet., *Gram.* 11) in which he describes Cato’s sale of a villa to pay his debts. For the problem of identifying Furius Bibaculus, see Green 348–56, Neudling 94–96, Rudd 289–90n52, and Loomis 112–14.

ous means to provoke laughter at the object of ridicule lampooned in this way." Therefore, Catullus's description of Furius's poverty is a trope, one that is especially prominent in Roman comedy, where a lack of cash separates a penniless youth (the *adulescens*) from his lover, who is usually a prostitute.

If Furius plays the part of the *adulescens* in c. 23 and 24, then there should be a *meretrix* to serve as his love interest. While Juventius seems an unlikely candidate because of his status, Furius's request for a loan of exactly 100,000 sesterces suggests otherwise. In three poems (1.58, 3.62, 11.70), Martial speaks of the purchase of "pleasure boys" (*pueri delectati*), whose primary function was to satisfy their masters sexually. In each case, they sold for the exorbitant price of 100,000 sesterces. An example nearer the time of Catullus involves Marcus Antonius, who bought a pair of handsome boys from a slave dealer for 100,000 sesterces each, which the triumvir considered a very high price (Plin., *Nat.* 7.56). The emperor Elagabalus (HA, *Elagabalus* 31.1) was said to have spent the remarkable sum of 100,000 sesterces for a female prostitute as did the pimp in the *Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri* (33). It appears, then, that 100,000 sesterces was the stock price for choice prostitutes, male or female, in Latin literature from the 1st century B.C.E. to the 6th century C.E., a price that could be paid only by the very rich. Similarly, the stock price for female *meretrices* in Roman comedy is 20 minae, a huge sum that the *adulescens* cannot possibly afford.⁹ Therefore, by choosing 100,000 sesterces for the loan that Furius requests, Catullus is not merely substituting a Roman measure of value (sestertius) for the Greek one (mina) found in Roman comedy. He is also equating Juventius with the *puer delectatus* and the comic *meretrix*, both of whom are out of the price range of Furius, the poverty-stricken *adulescens*.¹⁰

If Juventius enjoyed elite status in Roman society, it may seem improper for Catullus to depict him as a prostitute, all the more so because it was a prosecutable offense to encourage an aristocratic Roman youth to play the subordinate role in a homoerotic encounter (Fantham 78–81; Williams 96–124).¹¹ The seriousness of this crime is illustrated by a number of stories in Valerius Maximus (6.1.5–12), where men of different stations were hauled into court for attempting to seduce innocent freeborn boys. However, Juven-

⁹ E.g., Pl., *As.* 89, *Mer.* 429, *Ps.* 51–52, and *Truc.* 645–62. A few, however, sell for 30 or 40 minae, perhaps to emphasize their extraordinary value. See Duckworth 275–76.

¹⁰ Neudling 163–64 suggests that Silo in c. 103 was acting figuratively as Juventius's pimp.

¹¹ Arkins 104–8 argues that the Juventius poems are innocent literary exercises modeled on Hellenistic precedents, so "the boy's sensibilities did not have to be protected by the use of a false name."

tius, unlike these boys, was linked sexually with many men: Furius (c. 24), his guest from Pisaurum (c. 81), Catullus (c. 48), and possibly Aurelius (c. 15 and 21). Such promiscuity puts him on the same level as Lesbia, whose numerous affairs led Catullus to describe her as a common prostitute (c. 58). Since boys who behaved in this way removed themselves from the protection of the law (Valerius Maximus 6.1.10), Juventius's behavior disqualifies him from the protected status accorded to Roman boys of good character and allows Catullus to cast him in the role of the comic prostitute. Although females play this part in extant Roman comedies, Plautus alludes to boy prostitutes in *Truculentus* (149–57). They are described in the fragments of the Atellan farces of Novius (fr. 19–21 Ribbeck), and they were the main love interests in the *comoediae togatae* of Afranius, which were set in Italy (Quint., *Inst.* 10.1.100).¹² Therefore, Catullus's decision to portray Juventius as a prostitute is consonant with the traditions of Roman comic theater.

Since Furius has no money of his own with which to acquire his lover, his most obvious source of funds would be his father. Unfortunately he, too, is poor (Baehrens 162). At first glance, this seems to be a deviation from Roman comedy where the father has sufficient cash to pay for his son's lover, but refuses to provide the requisite funds either because he disapproves of his scandalous waste of money or because he wants her for himself (Pl., *Cas.* 47–66; *Ps.* 415–42). However, by making the father of Furius poor, Catullus may be suggesting that Furius's prodigality has brought about the impoverishment and homelessness of his family.¹³ This is the situation at the beginning of Plautus's *Trinummus* (12–13; 107–32), a comedy that was still known at the time of Catullus.¹⁴ Here, an undisciplined young lover named Lesbonicus (131) has run through the family estate. As a result, his father has been forced to go abroad to trade in order to recoup the family fortune. Thereupon, Lesbonicus sells the family home, moves into a shack, and promptly squanders the profits from the sale of the house on expensive food and prostitutes (402–17; 641–78; 750–51; 1085). Matters have become so grave, Lesbonicus says, that his father will be forced to live outside when he returns from his trip (423).¹⁵

¹² For the penurious *adulescens* in Roman comedy, see Duckworth 236–42 and 273–77. See Williams 19–27 for pederasty in Rome during the 3rd and 2nd centuries B.C.E.

¹³ For the connection between sexual promiscuity and financial prodigality, see Edwards 173–206.

¹⁴ For references to Plautus's *Trinummus*, see Cic., *de Orat.* 2.39.17 and *ad Brut.* 1.2a.2.8 along with Var., *L.* 7.3.57 and 7.4.78. However, Catullus may have been working from a general theme rather than a specific play.

¹⁵ This is a bit of an exaggeration, for the family still owns some land outside the city (508).

To make matters worse, his loss of the family fortune has brought a concomitant loss of status that makes Lesbonicus uneasy about betrothing his sister to a rich suitor (451).

The family of Furius is in much the same situation. They have no money, they are homeless, and Furius cannot have a romantic relationship with Juventius because of his socio-economic status. But whereas Lesbonicus's father eventually recovers his fortune, Furius's father remains poor, thereby removing a potential source of funds for his son's amorous exploits. Even worse, hunger and exposure to the elements have made his father "drier than horn" (12–14), a condition that the Romans considered an indicator of good health and a factor in longevity.¹⁶ While this may be good for the father, it is a stumbling block for Furius as the comic *adulescens*. Since the father of comedy was typically a blocking character who sought to thwart the plans of the *adulescens*, the prolongation of the life of Furius's father would not have augured well for his affair, no matter what his financial situation.

This state of affairs would have been exacerbated by Furius's stepmother. The *noverca* was a difficult and unsympathetic figure in Latin literature.¹⁷ Watson (131–34) argues that the evil stepmother, who appears in so many declamations, may have originated in the *comoedia togata*, whose fragments indicate that the *noverca* was a fairly common character. Her absence from surviving *comoediae palliatae* is surely due to chance, for Jerome (*Ep.* 54.15.4) says that extremely cruel *novercae* appeared frequently in mime and comedy. At any rate, Plautus's *Pseudolus* (314–15) contains what may have been a proverbial statement to the effect that stepmothers had absolutely no interest in solving their stepsons' financial problems. This suggests that Furius's stepmother would have been a further hindrance to his plans, especially since she is just as dry and healthy as her husband (23.6) and, therefore, potentially just as long-lived.

Although Furius cannot count upon his father as a source of cash, there were other ways to obtain the money. The comic *adulescens* could generally rely on a crafty slave to trick someone out of the funds needed to purchase his lover (Duckworth 249–53, 274–75). Unfortunately, this avenue is also closed to Furius because Catullus deprived him of a slave in the first line of c. 23. With nowhere else to turn, his only option is to follow the lead of his comic counterpart and seek a loan from a moneylender.¹⁸ In general, the

¹⁶ Cic., *Sen.* 34 and *Tusc.* 5.99, Plin., *Nat.* 31.102, and Mart. 12.32.7.

¹⁷ E.g., Hor., *Ep.* 5.9 and *Carm.* 3.24; Verg., *Ecl.* 3.33, *G.* 2.121, and *A.* 8.288; Ov., *Met.* 1.147.

¹⁸ E.g., Pl., *As.* 248. A moneylender plays a small part in Plautus's *Epidicus* (627–46) and is a main character in *Curculio*.

moneylenders of Roman comedy are unscrupulous individuals who are so greedy that they are more than willing to make risky loans to penurious young lovers even though the *lex Plaetoria* invalidated contracts with men under the age of 25.¹⁹ Catullus, however, refuses to play this role. He declines to make the loan to Furius, thereby cutting off the final source of funding open to the *adulescens*. In the process, he manages to avoid a problem frequently encountered by the comic moneylender: the near impossibility of collecting on a loan from a penniless youth who could not even manage to pay the interest on a loan, much less the principal.²⁰

It is this predicament that lies at the heart of the most puzzling part of c. 23: Furius's infrequent defecation. Having said that Furius is as dry as his parents (23.5–6 and 12–14), Catullus goes on to specify the benefits of his desiccation: he produces no sweat, no saliva, and no mucus. Since these fluids are associated with *sal*, one of the words used to describe the wittiness of Catullan poetry, Richardson (98) suggested that Catullus is implying that Furius lacks good literary taste.²¹ While this may have been true of Furius in general, it is more likely that the mention of sweat, saliva, and mucus in this poem serves as a crescendo to the most striking consequence of Furius's dryness: his infrequent evacuation of feces that are harder than a bean or pebbles, do not soil his anus, and would not stain his fingers if he were to handle them (20–23). While Catullus sarcastically describes this as “excellent digestion,” Furius's constipation and production of hard, dry feces are in reality symptomatic of dehydration, a condition implied by the verb *concoquere* (8), which not only means “to digest,” but also “to cook by removing moisture.” Exposure to the elements due to their homelessness has left Furius and his family desiccated (14). As a result, their teeth are so dry and hard that they can chew stone (4), their bodies are drier than horn (12), Furius's stepmother is “woody” (6), and Furius himself produces feces that are as hard as rocks (20–23). Thus, poverty, dryness, and infrequent defecation are closely linked. Such a relationship also exists between the cognates *concoquere* (“to digest” and “to cook by removing moisture”) and *decoquere* (“to boil off liquid” and “to squander”), where the elimination of moisture through the process of

¹⁹ Pl., *Most.* 557–58 and *Cur.* 371–79. For the *lex Plaetoria*, see Pl., *Ps.* 286–305 and *Rud.* 1381–82.

²⁰ See Pl., *Most.* 532–653, where a moneylender has made a loan to a young lover and, having refused to accept immediate repayment of the principal, duns him for the interest.

²¹ For dryness and lack of sophistication, see Pl., *Mil.* 647–8, Suet., *Gram.* 4, and Gel. 14.1.32.

digestion is a metaphor for the absence of money. Furius, then, cannot produce feces/money because he is devoid of liquid/bankrupt.²² Since bankrupts were generally considered disreputable individuals (Crook 363–76), Furius is no more worthy of Juventius than Catullus's other rival for the boy's affections, the bankrupt Aurelius (c. 21).

This equation of feces and money finds support in the metaphorical uses of bodily evacuation in comedy. In Aristophanes' *Acharnians* (6), Dikaiopolis expresses his delight at seeing Kleon vomit up five talents, while Demos in *Knights* (1147–49) describes how he forces elected officials to vomit up all they have stolen. Similarly in Plautus's *Curculio* (688), Therapontigonus says to the pimp who owes him 30 minae, "hurry and hurriedly vomit up the silver" ("argentum propere propera vomere"). While vomiting can produce silver, defecation is always associated with gold. In Aristophanes's *Frogs* (483), Xanthias shouts "O golden gods" when Dionysus soils himself. Similarly, the chorus in *Peace* (1175–76) says, "if he ever has to fight in the purple cloak, then he'll steep it in Cyzicene dye," which surely refers to the color of the electrum coins for which Cyzicus was famous (Olson 1999 *ad loc.*). And in *Acharnians* (82), an ambassador says that the Persian king "shit for eight months upon the golden mountains." As Olson explains, "in a society where very little meat is eaten, faeces are normally a brownish yellow-orange... the point being that the King's 'golden mountains' are actually large piles of human shit" (Olson 2002: 97–98).²³ The link between feces and wealth also appears in Martial's description of the extravagance of Bassa (1.37): "you receive the burden of your stomach in miserable gold and it does not shame you / Bassa, and you drink from glass. Therefore, you shit at greater cost" ("ventris onus misero, nec te pudet, excipis auro, / Bassa, bibis vitro: carius ergo cacas"). These lines are problematic because of the ambiguity of *onus ventris*, which can mean either "excrement" or "undigested food."²⁴ Howell identifies the gold object as a chamber pot, so the *onus ventris* it receives must be feces.²⁵ However, the symmetry of *excipis auro* and *bibis vitro* suggests that the gold implement

²² Perhaps he, like the *adulescens* of comedy, has spent all his money on prostitutes. See Pl., *Truc.* 712, where a maid advises a prostitute to drain her client. The verb used for this action is *exinanire*, which means to empty, especially by draining or drying out. Cf. Plin., *Nat.* 8.134 and 26.57 along with Sen., *Ep.* 108.16, where the verb *exinanire* is associated with urine, mucus and sweat. Gel. 3.3.5 says that desiccation and hunger were linked in Plautus's *Boeotia*.

²³ See, however, Henderson 190, who dismisses "Freudian connections between gold and the excremental processes."

²⁴ Cf. Plin., *Nat.* 8.97 and Suet., *Cal.* 58.1.

²⁵ Howell 187–88 and the parallel at SHA, *Elag.* 32.2.

is a plate and that the *onus ventris* is food. Still, whether Bassus eats from a golden plate or receives his feces in a golden chamber pot, the point is that he defecates at great expense. Although his feces have no intrinsic value, they are symbolic of his wealth.

The link between feces and gold in these passages suggests that Furius's infrequent defecation is a metaphor for his diminished ability to produce gold. Here, as in comedy, this interpretation depends upon the color of the coin. The sestertii that Furius sought to borrow were made from orichalcum, which appears slightly golden when newly minted and, after a time in circulation, changes to a rich brown color. Although the Catullan metaphor is subtler than those employed by Aristophanes, the similarity between sestertii and feces, especially hard feces, is clear when the durability and color of the metal are taken into consideration. Given that the diet of the impecunious Furius was surely a poor (i.e., meatless) one and that he had no sestertii to pay off a loan, it is possible that his infrequent defecation is a metaphor for his inability to produce the coin required to pay off the loan he requests from Catullus.

In Martial's adaptation (1.92) of c. 23, the penurious Mamurianus "shits not once," presumably because he has no money to buy food or drink:

Saepe mihi queritur non siccis Cestos ocellis,
 tangi se digito, Mamuriane, tuo.
 non opus est digito: totum tibi Ceston habeto,
 si dest nil aliud, Mamuriane, tibi.
 sed si nec focus est nudi nec sponda grabati
 nec curtus Chiones Antiopesve calix,
 cerea si pendet lumbis et scripta lacerna
 dimidiasque nates Gallica paeda tegit,
 pasceris et nigrae solo nidore culinae
 et bibis immundam cum cane pronus aquam.
 non culum, neque enim est culus, qui non cacat olim,
 sed fodiam digito qui superset oculum.
 nec me zelotypum nec dixeris esse malignum.
 denique pedica, Mamuriane, satur.

Cestos often complains to me with tearful eyes
 That he's being touched by your finger, Mamurianus.
 There's no need for the finger. Take all of Cestus for yourself,
 If you lack nothing else, Mamurianus.
 But if you have neither hearth nor the frame of a bare cot
 Nor the broken cup of Chione or Antiope,
 If a patched yellow mantle hangs from your loins
 And a Gallic jacket covers half of your buttocks,

And you're nourished only on the stench of a foul kitchen
 And you drink dirty water head down with a dog,
 It's not your asshole (for it's not an asshole that shits not once)
 But your remaining eye that I will dig out with my finger.
 You will say that I am neither jealous nor ill disposed.
 In short, sodomize, Mamurianus, while full.

Catullus is more specific: Furius does defecate, but no more than ten times per year ("nec toto decies cacas in anno"). His reason for specifying this particular number stems from the method by which Romans repaid loans.²⁶ The upper class usually paid large debts through a banker (*argentarius*), while smaller sums were taken from personal funds kept in a strongbox at home.²⁷ Since Furius has neither a strongbox nor a home, he certainly has no account with a banker. Therefore he, like the *adulescens* of comedy, has no resources from which he could repay either the principal or the interest on a loan from a *danista*. If the evacuation of hard, dry feces is a metaphor for producing gold coins, then Furius's inability to defecate even ten times per year symbolizes his inability to produce sufficient funds to pay twelve monthly installments of interest.²⁸

The themes of c. 23, then, appear to have originated in Roman comedy. Catullus portrays Furius as the comic *adulescens* who cannot obtain money for his beloved from his family. Since he has no cash and no crafty slave to help him obtain it from another source, he must resort to the services of a *danista*. When Catullus rejects this role by refusing to make the loan, he deprives Furius of the final source of money available to the comic lover. The last lines of c. 23, "do not reject such fortunate benefits as these, Furius, and do not think them insignificant...for you are fortunate enough," ("haec tu commoda tam beata, Furi, / noli spernere nec putare parvi...nam sat es beatus") are a sarcastic version of the words that the rich Megadorus speaks to the poor Euclio (Pl., *Aul.* 187): "by Pollux, if your mind is content, you have enough because you are living well" ("pol, si est animus aequus tibi, sat

²⁶ Ellis 80 links *nec toto decies cacas in anno* to the old Roman year of ten months. *Contra*, Baehrens 165.

²⁷ For banking during the Republic, see Barlow 55–213. For the charging of interest, see Andreau 90–99. The use of bankers is reflected in Roman comedy when pimps visit the forum to pay out a large sum or when young men borrow money from bankers to buy their lovers. See, for example, Pl., *Ps.* 1230 and *Epid.* 627–46. Donatus, commenting on Terence's *Adelphoe* (277), contrasts payment through a banker (*in foro de mensae scriptura*) and from a strongbox (*ex arca domoque*).

²⁸ Baehrens 165 takes this too literally. For a more figurative interpretation, see Fitzgerald 263n75: "he will no more get the loan than he could ever soil his hand by rubbing his own excrement."

habes, qui bene vitam colas"). Thus, Catullus has inverted the themes of Roman comedy so that Furius, the young lover, cannot succeed in obtaining his beloved, thereby leading the reader to expect that this affair will end before it even begins. But the play is not over. It continues in c. 24, where Catullus criticizes Juventius for giving his love to the penniless Furius. Macleod (297–98) linked this poem to Lucian's dialogues (*Dial. Meret.* 6 and 7) in which bawds admonish young prostitutes to have intercourse exclusively with men who are willing to pay the highest price.²⁹ The same situation occurs in Plautus's *Asinaria* (505–44), where a bawd tries to dissuade her daughter from loving an impecunious *adulescens*. Her efforts are fruitless because the prostitute, like Juventius, has already fallen for the young man and there is nothing that can change her mind. Catullus, who refused to help Furius by playing the part of the comic *danista* in c. 23, seeks to hinder him again in c. 24 by adopting the role of the comic bawd. But like his counterpart in *Asinaria*, it is unlikely that he will be able to do anything to stop the affair.

Nappa (161) noted that it is not unusual for Catullus to take "some of the recognizable characters of comedy...and set them in motion without allowing the resolution of the comic finale." Many have recognized this pattern in c. 8, where the typical ending of comedy is withheld so that Catullus, who plays the part of the *adulescens*, cannot be with his lover, Lesbia.³⁰ The poet employs the same pattern in c. 23, where he modifies or eliminates those characters that could supply the funds necessary for the success of the love affair, thereby blocking the expected resolution of the comic plot. Nevertheless, he is not able to keep the lovers apart. No matter how he tries to manipulate the outcome of his play, Catullus cannot stop love—or the traditions of Roman comedy—from winning out in the end. The penurious *adulescens* and the *meretrix* are together in c. 24, but how they will manage to stay together without the requisite funds is a question that Catullus's play does not attempt to answer. Indeed, Catullus loses control of the play in c. 99, the last of the Juventius poems. Here, he steals a kiss from Juventius *dum ludis*, which can mean either "while you were playing" or "while you were taking a part in a play." The boy wipes it away immediately "as though it were the filthy spittle of a pissed-on hooker" ("tamquam commictae spurca saliva lupae"). Since the verb *meiere* ("to urinate") frequently signifies ejaculation, Juventius's violent reaction to Catullus's saliva (9) suggests that this "pissed-on hooker" had fellated someone (Arkins 115).³¹ Thus, Catullus is forced to take the

²⁹ For elements of New Comedy in Lucian, see Anderson 52 and Branham 144–45.

³⁰ See Skinner 298–305 for the fullest discussion of the debt of c. 8 to comedy.

³¹ This finds support in the fact that the Romans condemned both female and male fellators and insisted that they should not be kissed because of their impure mouths. See Williams 197–99. For *meiere*, see Adams 142.

part of the prostitute in this play, the very role that he had given to Juventius earlier. Since Catullus can no longer choose his own role much less those of the other players, his only option is to withdraw from the production: "never again after this will I steal kisses" (99.16).

WORKS CITED

- Adams, J. 1982. *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary*. Baltimore.
- Anderson, G. 1976. *Studies in Lucian's Comic Fiction*. Leiden.
- Andreaeu, J. 1999. *Banking and Business in the Roman World*, trans. Janet Lloyd. Cambridge.
- Arkins, B. 1982. *Sexuality in Catullus*. Hildesheim.
- Baehrens, A. 1893. *Catulli Veronensis Liber*. Leipzig.
- Barlow, C. 1978. *Bankers, Moneylenders, and Interest Rates in the Roman Republic*. PhD Diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
- Barsby, J. 1996. "Ovid's *Amores* and Roman Comedy," *Leeds International Latin Seminar* 9: 135–57.
- Branham, R. 1989. *Unruly Eloquence: Lucian and the Comedy of Traditions*. Cambridge, MA.
- Cairns, F. 1974. "Some Observations on Propertius 1.1," *CQ* 24: 102–7.
- Crook, J. 1967. "A Study in Decoction," *Latomus* 26: 363–76.
- Dettmer, H. 1997. *Love by the Numbers*. New York.
- Duckworth, G. 1952. *The Nature of Roman Comedy: A Study in Popular Entertainment*. Princeton.
- Edwards, C. 1993. *The Politics of Immorality in Ancient Rome*. Cambridge.
- Ellis, R. 1889. *A Commentary on Catullus*. Oxford.
- Fantham, E. 1991. "Stuprum: Public Attitudes and Penalties for Sexual Offences in Republican Rome," *EMC* 10: 267–91.
- Fear, T. 2000. "The Poet as Pimp: Elegiac Seduction in the Time of Augustus," *Arethusa* 33: 217–40.
- Ferguson, J. 1985. *Catullus*. Lawrence.
- Fitzgerald, W. 1995. *Catullan Provocations: Lyric Poetry and the Drama of Position*. Berkeley.
- Fordyce, C. J. 1961. *Catullus: A Commentary*. Oxford.
- Gamel, M. K. 1998. "Reading as a Man: Performance and Gender in Roman Elegy," *Helios* 25: 79–95.
- Green, E. 1940. "Furius Bibaculus," *CJ* 35: 348–56.
- Godwin, J. 1999. *Catullus: The Shorter Poems*. Warminster.
- Goldberg, S. 2000. "Catullus 42 and the Comic Legacy," in E. Stärk and G. Vogt Spira, eds. *Dramatische Wäldchen: Festschrift für Eckard Lefèvre zum 65. Geburtstag*. Hildesheim. 475–89.
- Henderson, J. 1990. *The Maculate Muse: Obscene Language in Attic Comedy*. Oxford.
- Holzberg, N. 2002. *Catull: Der Dichter und sein erotisches Werk*. Munich.
- Howell, P. 1980. *A Commentary on Book One of the Epigrams of Martial*. London.
- Kroll, W. 1959. *C. Valerius Catullus*. Stuttgart.

- Krostenko, B. 2001. *Cicero, Catullus, and the Language of Social Performance*. Chicago.
- Loomis J. 1969. "M. Furius Bibaculus and Catullus," *CW* 63: 112–14.
- MacLeod, C. 1973. "Parody and Personalities in Catullus," *CQ* 23: 294–303.
- McKeown, J. 1979. "Augustan Elegy and Mime," *PCPS* 205: 71–84.
- Myers, K. S. 1996. "The Poet and the Procureess: The *Lena* in Latin Love Elegy," *JRS* 86: 1–21.
- Nappa, C. 2001. *Aspects of Catullus' Social Fiction*. Frankfurt am Main.
- Németh, B. 1971. "Notes on Catullus, C. 23," *AClass* 7: 33–41.
- Neudling, C. 1955. *A Prosopography to Catullus*. Oxford.
- Newman, J. K. 1983. "Comic Elements in Catullus 51," *ICS* 8: 33–36.
- Olson, S. D. 1999. *Aristophanes: Peace*. Oxford.
- . 2002. *Aristophanes: Acharnians*. Oxford.
- Quinn, K. 1973a. *Catullus: The Poems*. 2nd ed. London.
- . 1973b. *Catullus: An Interpretation*. New York.
- Riese, A. 1884. *Die Gedichte des Catullus*. Leipzig.
- Richardson, L. 1963. "Fvri et Avreli, comites Catvlli," *CP* 58: 93–106.
- Richlin, A. 1988. "Systems of Food Imagery in Catullus," *CW* 81: 355–63.
- Rudd, N. 1966. *The Satires of Horace*. Berkeley.
- Segal, E. 1987. *Roman Laughter: The Comedy of Plautus*. 2nd ed. Oxford.
- Selden, D. 1992. "Caveat lector: Catullus and the Rhetoric of Performance," in R. Hexter and D. L. Selden, eds. *Innovations of Antiquity*. New York. 461–512.
- Skinner, M. 1971. "Catullus 8: The Comic Amator as Eiron," *CJ* 66: 298–305.
- Syndikus, H., 2001. *Catull: Eine Interpretation, Erster Teil: Die kleinen Gedichte (1–60)*. Darmstadt.
- Thomas, R. 1984. "Menander and Catullus 8," *RhM* 127: 308–16.
- Thompson, D. F. S. 1997. *Catullus*. Toronto.
- Watson, P. 1995. *Ancient Stepmothers: Myth, Misogyny and Reality*. Leiden.
- Watson, L. and P. 2003. *Martial: Select Epigrams*. Cambridge.
- Williams, C. 1999. *Roman Homosexuality: Ideologies of Masculinity in Classical Antiquity*. Oxford.
- Wiseman, T. P. 1985. *Catullus and His World: A Reappraisal*. Cambridge.
- Wray, D. 2001. *Catullus and the Poetics of Roman Manhood*. Cambridge.