

\* A MESSAGE FOR LESBIA

Furi et Aureli, comites Catulli,  
sive in extremos penetrabit Indos,  
litus ut longē resonante Eoā  
tunditur unda,

5

sive in Hyrcanos Arabasve molles,  
seu Sagas sagittiferosve Parthos,  
sive quae septemgeminus colorat  
aequora Nilus,

color = stain

sive trans altas gradietur Alpes,  
Caesaris visens monumenta magni,  
Gallicum Rhenum, horribile aequor ulti-  
mosque Britannos,

10

omnia haec, quaecumque feret voluntas  
caelitum, temptare simul parati,  
pauca nuntiate meae puellae  
non bona dicta:

15

cum suis vivat valeatque moechis,  
quos simul complexa tenet trecentos,  
nullum amans vere, sed identidem omnium  
ilia rumpens;

20

nec meum respectet, ut ante, amorem,  
qui illius culpā cecidit velut prati  
ultimi flos, praetereunte postquam  
tactus aratro est.

velut = just as

aratro = plow's share

<sup>1</sup>Eastern

<sup>2</sup>seven-mouthed

\* TO A NAPKIN THIEF

Marrucine Asini, manu sinistra  
non belle uteris, in ioco atque vino:  
tollis lintea neglegentiorum.  
Hoc salsum esse putas? Fugit te, inepte:  
quamvis sordida res et invenusta est. invenusta = uncool 5  
Non credis mihi? Crede Pollioni  
fratri, qui tua furta vel talento  
mutari velit; est enim leporum  
differtus puer ac facetiarum.

Utroc = use, w/obj

Salsum = clever

sordida = sordid

furtim = theft

differtus = filled

Quare aut hendecasyllabos trecentos  
exspecta, aut mihi lintheum remitte,  
quod non (me movet aestimatione)  
verum est mnemosynum mei sodalis.

300

10

Nam sudaria Saetaba ex Hiberis  
miserunt mihi muneri Fabullus  
et Veranius; haec amem necesse est  
ut Veraniolum meum et Fabullum.

15

<sup>1</sup>use w/it

<sup>4</sup>repeat 'amen'

<sup>5</sup>from 'amo'

<sup>2</sup>does not move me with value (not worth much);

<sup>3</sup>lat. reference (as a gift)

\* INVITATION ≠

Cenābis bene, mi Fabulle, apud me  
[pāucis, si tibi di favent, diebus]—  
si tecum attuleris bonam atque magnam  
cenam, non sine candida puella  
et vino et sale et omnibus cachinnis;  
haec si, inquam, attuleris, venuste noster,  
cenabis bene; nam tui Catulli  
plenus sacculus est aranearum.  
Sed contra accipies meros amores,  
seu quid suavius elegantiusve est:  
nam unguentum dabo, quod meae puellae  
donarunt Veneres Cupidinesque;  
quod tu cum olfacies, deos rogabis,  
[totum ut te faciant, Fabulle, nasum.]

cachinnus = laugh

5

arana = cobweb

merus = pure

10

olfacio = smen

<sup>1</sup>in return

<sup>2</sup>or if anything

mnemosynum = keepsake

sacculus = purse

Suavius = pleasant

and careless of his love. The poem is usually understood as a final repudiation of Lesbia. A persistent problem in its analysis has been the relation of the first three stanzas to the final two: what does the elaborate catalog of places have to do with the message for Lesbia?

*Meter:* Sapphic strophe (see appendix B).

1 *comites* is ironic, to judge from the poet's treatment of Furius and Aurelius in other poems (see appendix A). They are despised errand boys (like Hamlet's Rosenkrantz and Guildenstern), addressed with elaborate civility in four stanzas.

2 *sive* begins a romantic catalogue of places where Furius and Aurelius will be his *comites*: whether he goes to India, or Hyrcania, or Arabia, etc. *penetrabit*: Catullus refers to himself in the third person.

3 *ut*: where (as in 17.10). *Eos* is the adjective, with *unda*: the Eastern wave, named after the dawn goddess Eos.

5 *Hyrcanos*: the Hyrcani lived along the south shore of the Caspian Sea. The Arabas (acc. pl.) are moles by virtue of their luxurious exports.

6 *Sagas* are the nomadic Sacae of northern Iran. The Parthians bordered the Roman Empire on the east in Asia Minor; their archery rendered them especially dangerous to the Romans.

7 The Nile is called *septemgenitus* because of its seven mouths, which colored the nearby sea with its muddy waters.

10 *visens* is the iterative (*video, vis- + -so > viso*), going to see the *monimenta* of Caesar's recent exploits in Gaul and Britain: the Rhine, the *horribile aequor* (either the Rhine or the English Channel), and the Britons. Since these incursions happened in 55 B.C., we have a *terminus post quem* for this poem. This is the only passage where Catullus makes honorific mention of Caesar whom he had formerly lampooned. See appendix A, Caesar.

11 *horribile aequor*: Haupt's emendation for the manuscript's *horribilesque*. Two elisions speed up Catullus' catalogue near its end.

11-12 *ulti*: *mosque* is hypermetric (see appendix C), perhaps to add more haste to the end of the catalogue.

13 *omnia haec*, obj. of *temptare*, closes off the catalogue which occupied the first half of the poem.

14 *caelitum* (gen. pl. of *caeles*) is stately and archaic, like "the heavenly host."

15 *meae puellae* recalls the happier days of 2.1 and 3.3-4.

17 *moechis*, adulterers, breaks the pattern of lofty language set in the first four stanzas.

18-19 *simul trecentos ... identidem*: disgusted exaggeration. She not only embraces 300 at a time, but she exhausts them, "breaking" their *ilia* or loins again and again. For the use of 300 as formulaic for any large number, cf. 12.10, 29.14, 48.3. The last syllable of *omnium* is hypermetric.

20 *ilia rumpens*: cf. 80.71, *rumpit ... ilia*.

21 *respectet*: hortatory or jussive subjunctive, as on line 17. She is not to count on his love any longer.

22 *qui*, etc.: his love is compared to a wildflower casually appropriated by a passing plow. *occidit*: pf. of *cado*, *prati ultimi*: gen., at the edge of a field; the *ision* of *prati* is hypermetric.

24 *tactus* emphasizes how easily Lesbia's callous promiscuity has destroyed his feelings of love: just a touch was enough. Her *culpa* has all the compassion of an iron plow.

## 12

A piece of occasional verse, ostensibly to embarrass Asinius Marrucinus (see appendix A) for filching a napkin of sentimental value. The main purpose, though, may have been to pay compliments to Pollio (6-9), Fabullus, and Veranius, and the napkin thief gets off with a lighter rebuke than the one served up to Thallus in poem 25.

*Meter:* hendecasyllabics.

1 *sinistra*: the hand used in dirty work.

2 *belle*: the dim. again, as in 3.14; *ioco atque vino*: hendiadys, as in 50.6, *per iocum atque vinum*.

3 *tollis*: lift, a thinly veiled euphemism for "steal"; *lintea*: any linens, identifiable from the preceding line as table napkins. All Europeans ate with their fingers until the introduction of forks in the 15th century.

4 *salsum*: in 10.33 Varus' lady friend is rebuked as *insulsa*, stupid. Its opposite here is "clever."

*Fugit te* leaves the subject unexpressed; cf. 10.29 *fugit me ratio* and the colloquial ellipsis "You're out of it."

5 *quamvis sordida*: as tacky as you like, i.e., extremely shabby or sordid. *invenusta* (cf. Eng. "uncool") was likely a popular term with Catullus and his circle of Roman sophisticates: it appears three times in Catullus, *venustus* seven times.

8 *mutari velit*: Pollio would like (potential subj.) his brother's *furta* changed or undone even (intensive *vel*) at the cost of a talent (abl. of price), which is a lot of Greek money.

9 *facietiarum*: gen. with word of plenty, *differtus* (stuffed). Pollio is a man of real wit (*facietiae*), who knows that swiping napkins is a poor excuse for a joke.

10 *hendecasyllabos*, the satirical policemen of high society, nearly personified here, are fully personified in poem 42.

12 *aestimatio*: value, as regularly in legal Latin. Before machine looms, any woven fabric was quite expensive. Cf. introductory notes on poems 25 and 33.

12-13 *non ... verum*: the conjunction is stronger than *sed*: To the contrary, it's a souvenir... *mnemosynum*, a Greek word found only here in Latin, was no doubt a fashionable loan word in Catullus' circle. Catullus and the *poetae novi* generally avoided language borrowed from Greek.

14 *sudaria* applies to any napkins or handkerchiefs used to wipe away sweat (*sudor*). *Saetaba*, the adjective, from Saetabis (mod. Jativa) in Tarraconensis (cf. mod. Tarragon), where the Spanish produced the best linen in Europe.

15 *muneris*, for a gift, is a dative of purpose in a double dative construction (see appendix C).

16 *anem*: *neccesse est* often governs a subjunctive result clause without *ut*.

15-17 *Fabullus et Veranius, Veraniolum*: See appendix A. Catullus repeats the names with affectionate emphasis, altering the order for variety and adding a diminutive suffix, Veranius baby. Fabullus is the dim. of Fabius (cf. *faba*, "bean").

## 13

Catullus half-jokingly invites Fabullus, perhaps recently returned from Spain (see poem 12 and appendix A), to bring a date to a dinner party. Pleading poverty, he promises to supply everything but food, wine, wit, and a *caecida puella* to provide entertainment. Eleven elisions give the poem a casual rapidity.

*Meter:* hendecasyllabics.

1 *apud me*, like French *chez moi*, is idiomatic: at my place.

2 *paucis ... diebus*: the vagueness of the invitation is part of the joke, as is the parenthetical

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