POVERTY AND POETIC RIVALRY IN CATULLUS
(C. 23, 13, 16, 24, 81)

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In memoriam Arthur R. Marsilio.

ABSTRACT

Catullus claims that he and 'Furius' suffer from poverty. Indeed, poverty and hunger are key themes in Catullan poetry. This paper explores the provocative connections between the themes of poverty, sexual longing, and poetic creation in Catullus. The intriguing juxtaposition of poem 23 on the impoverished Furius and poem 24 on Furius' desire for Catullus' Juventius demonstrates how Catullus enacts a sexual and literary rivalry with the poet Furius Bibaculus.

In his poems Catullus contrasts his own poverty with that of a man he addresses as 'Furius'. While scholars recognize the significance of poverty as a conventional situation of poets,¹ they neglect the important themes of poverty and hunger specifically in Catullus. In fact, only Richlin and Peek discuss these themes in any detail.² While Richlin does reveal the complex imagery of food and hunger in the Catullan poems, she does not fully examine the links Catullus exploits between poverty, sexual longing, and poetic concerns. Peek argues (89) that in Catullus 21 'hunger does not stigmatize Aurelius as poor or a parasite but rather as a promiscuous sodomite.' Peek examines Aurelius' ravenous hunger and Catullus' response to it within the traditional Roman view of masculinity, which associates hunger principally with excessive sexual desire and not with real or imagined poverty.³

¹ The theme of the impoverished poet was already well established in the Greek literary tradition. See for example Thgn. 351-53, 649-52, 668-70; Hippon. 42-44 Dg; Ar. As. 931-35.
³ Peek (note 2) is surely correct when he states that, although Catullus links Aurelius and Furius in poems 11 and 16, they are separate personalities and are treated differently. As Peek argues, Catullus vilifies Furius and Aurelius in different ways and employs esuriens differently of each: esuriens in poem 23 denotes Furius' poverty while
This paper intends to advance the understanding of the themes of poverty, sexual desire, and poetic creation and their interrelationship in Catullus’ poems and to shed light upon the problematic identity of Catullus’ Furius and Catullus’ relationship to him.

No critical consensus resolves whether Catullus’ Furius can be identified as Furius Bibaculus or Furius ‘Alpinus’. Furius may have been the author of an epic poem as well as a writer of invectives and epigrams. Scholiasts identify the contemporary poet whom Horace accuses of bombast (Serm. 2.5.40-41; nicknamed ‘Alpinus’ in Serm. 1.10.36) as Furius Bibaculus, the author of an epic poem on the Gallic War. Rudd thinks Furius Bibaculus and Furius ‘Alpinus’ are two different people, for a neoteric poet such as Bibaculus is not likely to have composed a historical epic as ‘Alpinus’ supposedly did. Based on the testimony of ancient sources, however, Lyne does identify Furius Bibaculus with the epic poet Furius ‘Alpinus’, although he separates Furius Bibaculus from the neoteric movement. If Rudd is correct that there are two poets named Furius, then Jerome’s date of 103 BC must belong to the epic poet Furius ‘Alpinus’ and not to Furius Bibaculus whom many connect to the neoteric movement. However, if Furius Bibaculus is the same person as Furius ‘Alpinus’ and is also a member of the circle of poetae novi, then we must assume that Jerome’s date of 103 BC is about twenty years too early. Courtney soundly concludes that ‘there are no grounds for supposing that Jerome has confused two Furii, one born in 103 and the younger Bibaculus, and for attributing the Annales Belli Galli to the elder on the supposition that Porphyrio and [Acro] have fallen into the same confusion.’ In what follows we argue that Bibaculus and ‘Alpinus’ are the same person, and that Bibaculus was both a writer of epigram in the manner of the poetae novi and a writer of epic in the traditional Homeric and Ennian style.


7 In agreement are A.L. Wheeler, Catullus and the Traditions of Ancient Poetry (Berkeley, Los Angeles, & London 1934) 78 and 258 n. 45; and Courtney (note 6) 200. Courtney states: ‘We should think of Bibaculus as one on the fringes of the “new” poets; his oeuvre does not include that mark of the thorough Callimachean, a miniature epic, and Horace calls him pingui tentus omnia, which means that he was παχύς, in the Callimachean code the opposite of λείπτος.’
Furthermore, important clues in Catullus’ poems 16, 23, 24 and 81 identify Catullus’ Furius as Furius Bibaculus.

In poem 23, Catullus attacks Furius as a man without material possessions:

Furius,
cui neque servus est neque arca
nec cimex neque araneus neque ignis,
verum est et pater et noverca, quorum
dentes vel silicem comesse possunt,
est pulcre tibi cum tuo parente
et cum coniugis lignea parentis.
nec mirum: bene nam valetis omnes,
pulcre concupisset, nihil timentis,
non incendia, non graves ruinas,
non facta impia, non dolos veneni,
non casus alios periculum.
qui corpora sicciora comus
saepe magis aridum est habetis
sole et frigore et esurtione.
quare non tibi sit bene ac beate?
atque a te sudor abest, abest saliva,
mucusque et mala pituita nasi.
hanc ad mundiensem adde mundiorem,
quod culus tibi purior salillo est,
nec toto decies casas in anno;
atque id durius est faba et lupillis,
quod tu si manibus teras fricessque,
non umquam digitum inquirare posses.
hac tu commoda tam beata, Furius,
noli spernere nee putare parvi,
et sestertia quam soles precari
centum desine, nam sat es beatus.⁸

Furius, you have neither slave nor moneybox
nor bug nor spider nor fire,
but you do have a father and a stepmother, whose
teeth are able to chew through even flint.

It is fine for you with your father
and with your father’s wooden wife.
No surprise: for you all have good health,
you digest excellently, and you fear nothing,

⁸ All quotations of Catullus refer to the critical edition of D.F.S. Thomson, *Catullus* (Toronto, Buffalo & London 1997); all English translations are by the authors with Nicole Reiners.
not fires, or ruinous collapses,
10 or wicked deeds, or plots of poison,
or other dangerous events.
Besides, you have bodies drier than horn
or whatever is even more dehydrated
from sun and cold and hunger.
15 Why then shouldn't you be well and happy?
You have no sweat, no saliva,
no mucus and no evil nasal phlegm.
Add to this elegance something even more elegant:
your butt is cleaner than a little salt cellar,
20 you shit not ten times in a year,
and it is harder than beans and lupins,
and if you rub and crush it in your hands,
you would never be able to stain a finger.
These are rich advantages, Furius,
do not scorn them or think little of them,
and stop your constant begging for that loan
of a hundred thousand, surely you are rich enough.

While the impoverished Furius 'has neither slave nor moneybox nor bug
nor spider nor hearth fire', he does possess two things: a father and a step-
mother, who are hungry enough to eat stones and who, like Furius, have
extraordinary digestive systems.\(^9\) Without food, money or property, the
family lacks the standard worries of the propertied class: fires, collapsing
houses, violent crimes and plots of poison.\(^10\) They also possess bodies dehy-
drated from sun and cold and hunger. Catullus asks Furius: 'Why then
shouldn't you be well and happy?' Here the poet puns on the Latin
\textit{beatus},
which implies both 'happy' in enjoying life and 'well-off' in financial
prosperity. Thereafter, Catullus turns to Furius alone with a detailed descrip-
tion of Furius' absence of bodily fluids, one sign of good health (on the
authority of ancient testimony).\(^11\) There follows an even more graphic

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\(^9\) C.J. Fordyce, \textit{Catullus: A Commentary} (Oxford 1961) 152, has suggested that, in his
repeated use of the phrase \textit{cui neque servus est neque arca}, Catullus playfully quotes
Furius' own description of his dire condition and then humorously exaggerates
Furius' claims with the phrase \textit{nec cimex neque araneus neque ignis}. Catullus has wittily
raised the poetic stakes on Furius: Furius is not only without slave and moneybox,
but he is also so poor that he cannot even attract bugs and spiders. Catullus' poem
26 attributes Furius' poverty to a huge mortgage.

\(^10\) Juv. \textit{Sat.} 3.190-202 provides a vivid description.

634 L: \textit{Persae propter exercitationes pueriles madem eos sunt consuci} corporis siclatem et
description of the cleanliness of Furius'culus, which is purior salillo, 'cleaner than a little saltcellar'. These are rich blessings that Furius should not dismiss, Catullus says ironically. This sets up the poet's final coup de grâce. Furius should stop begging Catullus for a loan of 100,000 sesterces because Furius is already beatus ('happy' and also 'rich') enough in his lack of food and possessions.  

Initially, the poem seems to be an elaborate joke on Furius' financial state. However, provocative evidence suggests that Catullus is constructing a literary rivalry with Furius Bilaculus. In this complex poem, poverty and hunger represent things that Catullus rejects, a view expressed consistently in other poems (e.g. 21, 24, 26, 28, 47, 89). Richlin has also connected poverty and hunger with the misuse of food and the consumption of non-foods in poem 23. Thus, Furius and his parents are so burdened by penury that their teeth can chew through flint. Moreover, Richlin has argued that Catullus links images of 'food out of place' to bad poetry by others. For example, bad literature is 'poison' at 14.19; a bad speech is also 'poison' and 'unhealthiness' at 44.12; the bad poet Suffenus is a 'goat-milk'er' at 22.10; and Volusius' annals will be suitable for wrapping mackerel at 95.8. Hallett agrees with Richlin's theory: 'such associations suggest that Catullus employs the decomposition of food, and the use of food in places linked with decomposition, decay and filth, to symbolize the negative (and perhaps anal) aspects of poetry-writing much as he employs erotic pleasure and physical perpetuation to symbolize the positive (and thus oral and genital) aspects.' Curiously, Catullus employs this image of 'food out of place' in poem 23, where Furius' culus is 'cleaner than a little saltcellar'. These and other insinuations indicate Catullus' pursuit of a literary rivalry with Furius.

Catullus' emphasis in poem 23 upon Furius' dryness is actually an attack on Furius' literary deficiencies, for the terms the poet employs to describe Furius' condition are used elsewhere in Latin literature of speech and literary style. As Richardson has argued, 'dryness to the Romans was an indication of good health and physical toughness, but it was also a sign of simplicity,'

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12 The reader does not have to assume that Catullus' claim of Furius' poverty must be historically truthful. What matters is that, in the world of the poem, Furius is clearly impoverished. As Quinn states (note 11) 160: 'clearly Furius is being got at, his domestic circumstances misrepresented or exaggerated.'
13 Richlin (note 2) 358-60.
14 Richlin (note 2) 359-60.
ignorance, and lack of feeling." Indeed, Catullus claims that Furius and his family have bodies that are 'drier than horn' (siccora ornus, 12) or 'whatever is even more dehydrated from sun and cold and hunger' (aut sicut magis aridum est habens / sol et frigor et esuriatione, 13-14). The OLD reports that siccor is used of speech and style that is unadorned or dry, which can be viewed as either a virtue or an excess. Moreover, aridus can refer to speech or style that is austere or dry and in literary contexts aridus is most often negative in tone. In Catullus' poetry, aridus has a more complex significance. An ambiguous use of aridus is found in Catullus 1.2: Cui dono lepidum novum libellum / arida modo pumice expolitum? ('To whom do I grant a neat new little book, just now polished with dry pumice?'). Most read this poem as a programmatic demonstration of the aesthetic qualities of Catullan verse. Catullus' little book of poems is polished with dry pumice, which is used to smooth the ends of the papyrus roll. The phrase arida pumice is all the more striking because of the poet's unusual treatment of pumice as feminine. As it applies indirectly to Catullus' own poetry, the 'dry pumice' is the instrument by which Catullus' book roll and verses are 'polished', for it removes the rough edges of the papyrus roll and the poetry. By contrast, Catullus in 23.13 employs aridus directly to convey Furius' dryness in his physical body and his literary style. In its only other occurrence in Catullus, aridus in 48.5 is as complex as it is in 1.2. In poem 48.5-6, Catullus states that kissing Juvenius' eyes three hundred thousand times would not be enough for him, 'not if the crop of our kissing were thicker than dried ears of corn' (non si densior aridis aristis / si nostrae seges osculatioris). The rich agricultural imagery that ends the poem is enhanced by the phrase aridis aristis, a striking doctrina suggesting the etymological connection of aridus and arista. Thus, Catullus' appropriation of the adjective aridus in poems 1 and 48 in order to characterize his own poetry and his own love enable him to extract a fuller and

16 Richardson (note 11) 98.
18 See, for example, Cic. De Orat. 2.159 (asserting that the Stoic doctrine does not help the orator): et genus sermonis efficit non liquidum, non fusum ac profusum, sed exile, aridum, conscient ac minium; Sen. Ep. 75.3: Non mithraea te in tana esse et arida sola, quam de rebus tam magnis dventur, neque enim philosophia ingenio renuntiat; Tac. Dial. 19.3: et quidquid alium aridissimis Hermagno et Apollodori libris praeceptum, in honore erat.
19 On the use of the feminine form arida, see Thomson (note 8) 197.
20 Quinn (note 11) 89: 'the connotations of aridus as a description of style ('dull', 'lifeless') suggest the paradox 'dull grind produces bright verse'."
more complex range of meanings from aridus. In fact, Catullus’ uses of aridus in poems 1, 23 and 48 suggest the distinctions between Furius’ and Catullus’ poetry. Furius’ poetry is dry, unsophisticated and devoid of wit and taste, while Catullus’ poetry is polished, sophisticated, witty and amorous.

Catullus also stresses that Furius is without sudor and saliva (16). The OLD records that sudor may be used as the symbolic ‘sweat’ produced by toil in literary or other pursuits. This figurative use of sudor might easily be associated with the words labor and laboriosus applied in literary contexts. Catullus in 1.7 describes Cornelius’ carta as laboriosa (‘laborious’) as well as doctae (‘learned’) and in 50.14 illustrates how his own labor (‘work’ and ‘suffering’) generates poetry. Therefore, in Catullus the terms labor and laboriosus are used in literary contexts to stress that the composition of good poetry requires wearying work. Furius lacks sudor, which is figuratively the ‘sweat’ needed to create good poetry. Furthermore, while the literal meaning of saliva dominates our reading, its context invites a secondary interpretation, for Furius’ lack of saliva implies his want of taste as well as his want of sal. In fact, Catullus often uses sal and its adjectival forms salsus, salsa and salsum to contextualize witty speech or persons. For example, in 13.5 Catullus requests Fabullus to bring sal when he comes to dine; in 14.16 Catullus addresses his friend and neoteric Calvus as sal for sending him books authored by dreadful poets; in 12.4 Asinius’ habit of stealing napkins is not salsum; in 16.7-8 Catullus’ defence against the attacks of Furius and Aurelius includes the statement that when his verses (versiculi) are molliculi ac parum pudici, they are full of sal and latus. Therefore, Furius’ lack of saliva connotes both his physical and literary dryness.

Catullus concludes in 23.18 that Furius’ dryness is proof of munditiis (‘cleanliness’). However, the poet offers greater proof of munditiis in his remark that Furius’ culus is ‘cleaner than a little saltcellar’ (pulior salillo, 19). Once more, Catullus cleverly exploits the literary as well as the literal meaning munditiis means both ‘cleanliness’ and ‘elegance or refinement of

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21 Hor. Ep.2.1.168-70: Creditur, ex medio quia vo amorevit, habere / sudoris minimum, sed habet sordidum tanto / plus oneris, quanto vere minoris; Cic. de Orat. 1.257: ac stilus ille tue, quem tu vere decebat, perfectum dicendo esse ac magistrum, multo judicium est.

22 Quinn (note 11) 90: in Catullus 1.7 laboriosus ‘suggests going out of one’s way to make work for oneself.’

language. Catullus’ statement about Furius’ munditiae is ironic: while it literally attests to the advantages of Furius’ physical ‘cleanliness,’ it simultaneously mocks his pretensions in claiming his ‘elegance’ in literary style. Without wit, literary taste and hard workmanship which are all necessary for the creation of excellent poetry, Furius cannot convince the discerning Catullus that his poetry has ‘elegance.’ Conversely, Catullus’ graphic description of Furius’ want of bodily fluids and hardness (and purity) of excrement serves as an ironic declaration of his own ‘elegance of language’ (munditiae) and as a brilliant display of urbanitas.

Therefore, Catullus’ comments about Furius’ cleanliness are actually humorous attacks on Furius’ lack of wit and literary taste, particularly because he fails to comprehend the wit and sophistication of Catullus’ verses.

This interpretation of Catullus 23 finds the poet exploiting both literal and metaphorical meanings of the terms siccus, aridus, sudor, saliva and munditiae in his abuse of Furius. Scholars have successfully used a similar approach in exploring the language of poem 13, an invitation poem addressed to Fabullus. Fabullus is invited to dine at the home of Catullus, who makes the poet’s traditional apology for his poverty (nam mi Catulli / plenus sacculus / est aranearum, 7-8). Fabullus will dine well if he brings with him ‘a good and large dinner, not without a pretty girl and wine and wit and all the laughs’ (bonam aequa magnam / anxam, non sine candida puella / et vino et sale et omnibus cachinnis, 3-5). In spite of his poverty, Catullus himself will give in return ‘pure love’ (meros a mores, 9) or ‘something even sweeter and more refined’

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24 Examples of munditiae (or munditias) in its literary sense are: Cic. Orat. 79 (of a true ‘Attic’ orator): elegantia modo et munditia remanebit, sermo purus est et Latinus; Hor. Ep. 2.1.157-59: sic hortialis ille / defluxit numerus Saturnius, et grave virus / munditiae populoque, Quint. Inst. 8.387: Nam ipsa illa idolo et simplex et inadvertata habet quendam purum, quidem illum in feminis amat, ornatum, et sunt quendam velit et tenui diligentia circa proprietatem significatam munditiae; Gel. N.A. 123.1: cum multa quidam venustate atque luce atque munditiae verborum; Gel. N.A. 10.3.4: brevitatis sem et venustatis et munditiae orationis est, quidis haberi fere in comodarum festivitatis solo; Gel. N.A. 10.24.2: Divae ellam Augustae, linguae Latinae non nesci munditiaeque partes suae in sermonibus sectator.

25 E. Gowers, The Loaded Table: Representations of Food in Roman Literature (Oxford 1993) 243, also notes Catullus’ urbanitas in poem 23: ‘Urbanitas is not simply refined and rarefied wit: it is also, in Catullus’ hands, the ironic juxtaposition of obscenity (bad taste) and neat composition (good taste).’ On urbanitas, see especially E.S. Ramage, Urbanitas: Ancient Sophistication and Refinement (Norman, Okla. 1973).


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He will provide ‘perfume’ (unguentum, 11) given by Venuses and Cupids to his girl. One smell of this unguentum will prompt Fabullus to ask the gods to make him ‘all nose’ (totum...nasum, 14). Gowers has convincingly argued that Catullus 13 deliberately creates ambiguity and that we can extract physical or metaphorical meanings from its vocabulary without having to reject either.27 The actual ingredients of Catullus’ dinner party have been seen as metaphors for poetic style. For example, candida puella is both the ‘beautiful girl’ and the plain style of rhetoric; salis is both ‘salt’ and ‘wit’; mens amores are ‘pure love’ and ‘pure love poems’; suavis and elegans connote literary stylistics; unguentum is a reference both to Lesbia’s beauty and to the source of Catullus’ poetic inspiration; nasum is both the ‘nose’ and a metaphor for critical judgment.28 Gowers argues that there is a gradual movement within the list of ingredients from the substantial, which is the dinner itself (bonam atque magnam / cenam, 3-4), to the symbolic and elusive, which is the ethereal unguentum that appeals to all the senses. Furthermore, Catullus distinguishes between what Fabullus will bring, the bona atque magna cena, the candida puella, the vinum, the sal, and omnis cahinii, which are the essentials of the meal or poem, and what Catullus will give in return, mens amores and unguentum, its intangible essence. Catullus operates in a similar manner in poem 23, balancing the literal and the metaphorical, the real and the intangible.

The hostility between Furius and Catullus, then, is partly literary. Indeed, Catullus establishes Furius’ lack of sophistication in poem 16 by accusing Furius and Aurelius of misinterpreting the verses of his ‘kiss’ poems literally. By implication, all readers of Catullus should beware of literal and oversimplified interpretations of the poet’s verses. Catullus abuses and ridicules Furius for lacking the wit and sophistication possessed by other members of the neoteric circle. By ridiculing them, Catullus links Furius and Aurelius as readers of his poetry. Their misinterpretations indicate that they are also literary critics of Catullus.

Paired with poem 23, Catullus’ poem 24 continues the theme of Furius’ poverty and enlightens the complicated relationship between Catullus and Furius:

O qui flosculus es laventorum,
non horum modo, sed quot aut fuerunt
aut posthae alii erunt in annis,
malem divitas Midae dedisses
5 isti, cui neque servus est neque arca,

28 Bernstein (note 26) 127-30.
quam sici te sineres ab illo amari.
'quid? non est homo bellus\textsuperscript{27} inquies, est:
sed bellu huic neque servus est neque arca.
hoc tu quam lubet alicie eleveaque:
10 nec servum tamen ille habet neque arcam.

O you who are the little flower of the Juventii,
not only of these, but of all who were
or will be in years to come after this,
I would prefer that you had given the riches of Midas
to that man, who has no slave or moneybox,
than allow yourself to be loved by him.
'How is that?' 'Is he not a stylish fellow?' you will ask. He is:
but that stylish fellow has no slave or moneybox.
Dismiss it and make light of it as much as it pleases you:
still he has neither slave nor moneybox.

The subject of poem 24 is Juventius, who is Catullus' love. Catullus expresses his jealousy of Juventius' other admirer. This same jealousy occurs in poem 81, which also focuses on Juventius. Catullus does not name his rival for Juventius' attentions; he is nevertheless identified in poem 24 by Catullus' description of the rival as a man \textit{cui neque servus est neque arca} (line 5; repeated with slight modification in line 8): the very same Furius who in poem 23 has 'neither slave nor moneybox'. Catullus thus objects that the penniless Furius is an unsuitable lover for Juventius. The identity of this Juventius is unknown. Neudling suggests that he may belong to the aristocratic Roman family the \textit{Iuv
ti}i (of Etruscan origin).\textsuperscript{29} Furius, a \textit{homo bellus} who moves in polite society, is nevertheless unworthy of the company of Juventius.\textsuperscript{30} It is more likely, however, that 'Juventius' is a pseudonym.\textsuperscript{31}

Catullus' address to Juventius in 24.1 as the 'little flower' (\textit{flosculus}) conveys his protectiveness of Juventius.\textsuperscript{32} In this same poem Catullus connects Furius' poverty with his sexual desire of Catullus' own love Juventius. Catullus' objections to Juventius' choice of the poor Furius as a lover, then, are grounded in social, financial and sexual concerns. The poet may also

\textsuperscript{29} On the \textit{Iuventii} see C.L. Neudling, \textit{A Prosopography to Catullus. Iowa Studies in Classical Philology} 12 (London 1955) 94-96.
\textsuperscript{30} On the significance of the term \textit{bellus} in Catullus, see Krostenko (note 23) 268-76.
\textsuperscript{31} A supposition supported recently by D. Mulroy, \textit{The Complete Poetry of Catullus} (Madison 2002) 21. For a different view, see C.W. Macleod, 'Parody and Personalities in Catullus (Catullus 50, 55, 58b, 24, 15, 21, 23, 16, 11, 89', \textit{CQ} 23 (1973) 297.
\textsuperscript{32} Quinn (note 11) 164.
object to Juventius’ preference for Furius on literary grounds. Catullus states that he would rather Juventius had given the ‘riches of Midas’ (divitiás Midás, 4) to Furius than allow himself to be loved by Furius.33 Taken literally, the allusion to Midas reads simply: Juventius should give a lot of money to the poor Furius rather than sex.34 We think, however, that Catullus’ allusion to Midas in poem 24 is more provocative. Catullus’ reference to Midas in poem 24 provides further evidence of the literary rivalry between Catullus and Furius. As told by Ovid (Metamorphoses 11.146-193), Midas is wealthy because of his golden touch but he is also a boorish and unsophisticated judge in a musical contest of Pan and Apollo. Ovid relates that Pan boasted of his musical talent with the pipes and dared to slight Apollo’s music as inferior to his own. Pan foolishly entered into a contest with Apollo at which Tmolus served as the judge. When Pan played a song on his rustic pipes he charmed Midas with his rude song. Apollo then skillfully played his lyre and his sweet song captured Tmolus, who then ordered Pan to accept defeat. Only Midas disapproved of this judgment in favour of Apollo. Therefore, in punishment for his dull ears and lack of artistic sensitivity the god gave Midas the ears of an ass. While Catullus’ mention of Midas in poem 24 appears to link the king’s wealth with the (supposed) wealth of the noble Juventius, it might also characterize Juventius, like Midas, as a poor judge of artistic talent. As Midas revealed his lack of taste and his poor judgement by preferring the rude music of Pan over the charming and sophisticated music of Apollo, so Juventius shows his lack of taste and his poor judgement in preferring the impoverished, witless and untalented poet Furius over the witty and sophisticated poet Catullus. This concern over poetry in poem 24 is consistent with the criticism of Furius’ lack of sal expressed by Catullus in poems 16 and 23. Furius’ poverty is both financial and literary, for he has nothing to offer Juventius or his fellow poets (as evident in his repeated and urgent appeals for a loan from Catullus, 23.26-27). In contrast, Catullus proclaims his own differing poverty in poem 13, which, in spite of his few material possessions, still offers divine unguentum and meros amores.

Catullus employs the Midas theme again in poem 81:

Nemone in tanto potuit populo esse, Juventi,
bellus homo quem tu diligere inciperes,

33 Quinn (note 11) 164, points out that the story of Midas and his wealth were proverbial in the Greek tradition but they appear in Latin literature for the first time here.

34 See McLeod (note 31) 298: ‘the hyperbole mallem divitiás Midáe dedisses (line 4) does not literally mean that Juventius has a lot of money to give, but emphasizes his crime against economy.’
praeterquam iste tuus moribunda ab sede Pisauri hospes inaurata pallidor statua,
qui tibi nunc cordi est, quem tu praepone nobis audes, et nescis quod facinus facias?

Among so many people, Juventius, could you not find even one stylish man whom you could start liking except that guest of yours from Pisaurum's dying seat, paler than a gilded statue,
who now has your heart, whom you dare to prefer to us, unaware of what an outrageous deed you are committing?

Juventius' guest from moribund Pisaurum is described in line 4 as inaurata pallidor statua ('paler than a gilded statue'). Catullus amusingly implies that Juventius' touch, like Midas', has not generated the warmth of passion but has instead transformed his hospe into a pale, deathly figure as stiff and frigid as a gilded statue. Catullus' provocative linking of Juventius and the Midas theme in 24.4 (mallem divitiis Midae dedissis) and 81.4 (inaurata pallidor statua) has gone unnoticed by scholars. Furthermore, there are other verbal and thematic connections between poems 24 and 81 that identify the hospe of poem 81 as Furius and continue the themes of poverty and poetic rivalry between Furius and Catullus. At first, Jerome's statement that Furius Bibaculus came from Cremona seems to indicate that, if Catullus' Furius is Furius Bibaculus, he cannot be Juventius' suitor from Pisaurum in poem 81. Meanwhile, it is possible to see in Pisauri (3) and inaurata (4) punning references to Aurelius. In spite of these considerations, there are important clues in poem 81 that identify the hospe as Furius (Bibaculus). First, the man from moribund Pisaurum in poem 81 is a bellus homo (2), recalling the phrase homo bellus in 24.7 which probably refers to Furius. Moreover, Juventius' guest in 81 is contemptuously referred to as iste tuus (3), which echoes the scornful isti in the phrase isti, inique servus est inque arca in 24.5 that describes Furius. Coming from the declining town of Pisaurum, Juventius' suitor in 81 is poor like the impoverished Furius in poems 23 and 24. Compared to a gilded statue, Juventius' guest in 81 is pale, stiff and frigid while Furius is without proper nutrition and bodily fluids in 23.

The phrase moribunda ab sede Pisauri in 81.3 has attracted special attention. Immediately following the colloquial iste tuus (3), the phrase moribunda ab sede

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35 R. Ellis, *A Commentary on Catullus* (Oxford 1876) 363, notes that statua has the notion partly of stiffness, partly of inanity, and partly of frigidity.
36 Thomson (note 8) 508.
Pisauri (3) abruptly shifts the tone of the poem into the high style with a parody of epic or tragic diction. The second phrase describing Juventius’ guest, inaurata palludior statua (4), also has a majestic tone. Skinner has concluded: The pompous and affected phraseology of the entire couplet, apart from the first three words, satirizes the pretensions of Juventius’ admirer. The showy, elevated diction employed by Catullus to describe Juventius’ hospes recalls Horace’s mockery of Furius as pingui annus omnis (Serm. 2.5.40–41): Furius is ‘stuffed with fat tripe’ as a bombastic writer of traditional epic. Horace satirizes this same Furius, nicknamed ‘Alpinus’ in Serm. 1.10.36–37, where he ‘murders Memnon’ (ingulat dum Memnona) in an epic poem about the killing of Memnon by Achilles, and he ‘misshapes the muddy head of the Rhine’ (defingit Rheni luteum caput). Horace makes two witty puns: Furius’ bad style ‘murders’ (ingulat) the content of his epic on Achilles and Memnon and ‘bottles’ (defingit) the head of the river-god by making it muddy in his epic Bellum Gallicum. In fact, Horace’s parody of the inflated epic style of Furius accords well with Catullus’ mock-epic and tragic language when describing Juventius’ guest in poem 81 and hints that Catullus’ Furius is the same man mocked by Horace for his literary pretensions: Furius Bibaculus. As a writer of traditional epic in the grand style, Furius would be treated with disdain by Catullus, whose own epyllion (poem 64) was composed in accordance with Callimachean artistic principles. Furthermore, Juventius shows in poem 81 the same inability to distinguish surface charm from inner substance as he shows in poem 24: the man who is attractive to Juventius as bellus is actually a pale stranger from a decaying and distant town. Juventius’ failure to judge genuine quality and substance is revealed in the image of the gilded statue to which Juventius’ lover is compared: both the lover and the statue are grand on the surface but insignificant in substance. In poem 81, Catullus, is once again mocking the poverty, lack of

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38 See especially M. Zicári, ‘Moribunda ab sede Pisauri (Nota a C. 81)’, S’Oliv 3 (1955) 57–69 (= Scritti Catulliani, Urbano 1978, 187–99); Quinn (note 11) 416; J. Ferguson, Catullus (Kansas 1985) 269; Thomson (note 8) 508–09; Krosienko (note 23) 274; M.B. Skinner, Catullus in Verona: A Reading of the Elegiac Libellus, Poems 65-116 (Columbus 2003) 102. Catullus’ moribunda has an epic ring, and the phrase moribunda ab sede Pisauri is similar to Verg. Am. 3.687 angusta ab sede Pelori and may be a parody of its source, perhaps early tragedy (Thomson suggests Accius).

39 Skinner (note 37) 102.

40 For interpretation of Horace’s quotations of Furius, see Courtney (note 6) 197–98.

41 Courtney (note 6) 200, thinks that Catullus 11, which is addressed to Furius, could be sarcastically referring to Bibaculus’ Bellum Gallicum in the poem’s third stanza: sive trans alas gradatuer Alpes, / Caesaris visum monumenta magni, Gallicum Rhenum \*horsildasque\* alta; / mosque Britannas.
literary taste and stylistic pretensions of his rival, Furius, who is nevertheless favoured by the naive Juventius over the witty and sophisticated Catullus.

Catullus’ conflicts with Furius on both sexual and literary grounds are in striking contrast to his close relationship with fellow poet Licinius Calvus portrayed in poem 50. Catullus describes a playful and stimulating afternoon of writing verses with Calvus. Both poets agree to be *delicati* (3), which means ‘charming’ or ‘sophisticated’ but additionally suggests ‘risqué’. The two poets play at composing *versiculi* in different meters (*scribens versiculums interque nostrum / ludebat numem modo hoc modo illuc*, 4-5), where the *versiculi* are ‘scraps of verse’ (as in 16.3 and 16.6). Catullus and Calvus cap each other’s verses over laughter and wine (*reddens munia per locum atque vinum*, 6), and Catullus departs from the encounter inflamed (*incensus*, 8) by Calvus’ ‘charm’ (*hpom*, 7) and ‘wit’ (*fantiusque*, 8). This positive and erotically stimulating encounter with Calvus has often been read as a vibrant statement of the neoteric literary program. Meanwhile, it simultaneously places the sexual and literary activity of Furius in a distinctly negative and unproductive light.

Calvus and Catullus improvise *versiculi* together in poem 50, but Catullus’ own sexually charged *versiculi* are misinterpreted by Furius and Aurelius in poem 16. In poem 16, Catullus had claimed that his *versiculi* (when they are *molliculi ac parum pudici*, 8) possessed *sal* (‘wit’) and *hpom* (‘charm’); in poem 50 it is the *hpom* (‘charm’) and *fantia* (‘wit’) of Calvus that arouse Catullus sexually. As we have seen, Furius is without *sal*; he has neither wit nor taste. Most significant, the encounter of Catullus and Calvus is one of give and take, a mutually satisfying and fulfilling exchange of literary creation. This mutuality is absent from Furius’ activities, since his financial and literary poverty prevent him from offering anything meaningful to Juventius or to his fellow poets. Thus, Catullus condemns Furius’ desire for Juventius because no mutually pleasurable or fruitful exchange can exist between Juventius and the impoverished Furius, who fails to comprehend the wit and sophistication of Catullus’ poetry. Conversely, Catullus’ capacity to improvise *versiculi* with Calvus is a pleasurable and sexually arousing experience. Unlike the dry, witless and impoverished Furius, Catullus is a worthy companion for

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42 Quinn (note 11) 237.
43 Quinn (note 11) 238, objects to the repetitions of *lusimus* (2) and *ludebat* (5), but Hallett (note 15) 396-97, argues convincingly that the repetition of *ludere* stresses the erotic playfulness of the meeting of Catullus and Calvus.
45 Calvus’ ‘wit’ (*sal*) is also attested in Catullus 14.16, where he is addressed as *salus* for sending Catullus books composed by inferior poets like Suffenus, the subject of poem 22.
both Calvus and Juventius. Finally, the unequal relationship between Furius and the highly desired Juventius ultimately can produce nothing positive or enduring. In contrast, the mutual and erotically pleasurable meeting with Calvus ultimately produces, through Catullus’ labor (14) and dolor (17), something lasting – poem 50 itself.46

Using the conventional theme of the penniless poet, Catullus illustrates the extreme poverty of Furius, who is poor in material possessions as well as in the literary gifts of wit, good taste, and refinement. Catullus’ poems satirize Furius as all show and no substance: he is a homo bellus in the eyes of Juventius, who cannot discern Furius’ failings of character and artistic merit, and he has claims to literary ‘elegance’ (munditiis) even though his poetry lacks the essential aesthetic qualities and the painstaking labor and craftsmanship that define the poetry of Catullus and his neoteric colleagues. The poor Furius sexually desires Juventius as Juventius is attracted to him, but the lovers are mismatched because Furius has nothing to give to Juventius. Furius’ repeated entreaties for a loan from Catullus (23.26-27) reveal that Furius also has nothing to give to his fellow poets. While Catullus confesses to his own extreme poverty in poem 13, he, unlike Furius, offers something valuable in exchange: poetry that is witty, refined and amorous. By displaying his own literary munditiis in the Furius and Juventius poems, Catullus bests his rival Furius in poetic composition and wit.47

46 See the important work of M.B. Skinner, Catullus Passer: The Arrangement of the Book of Pygmies: Poems (New York 1981) 84-85. She argues that in poem 50 Catullus is compelled to withdraw within himself and undergo no little effort in order to transform the afternoon’s ephemeral versicula into an enduring poema which will stand as the public profession of his sensibility.' See also Hallett (note 15) 397-98, who discusses the significance of Catullus’ figurative use of labor in 14 (‘the struggles of childbirth’) and dolor in 17 (‘the pangs of labor’) in poem 50. Hallett concludes (398): ‘with such figurative language, therefore, Catullus seems to suggest that poem 50 itself seeks to lengthen, strengthen and add seriousness to his and Licinius’ union, much as the birth of offspring does to that of the couple celebrated in poem 61.’ On poem 50, see also the valuable comments of Fitzgerald (note 3) 110-13.

47 We wish to thank the editor and the anonymous referees for their careful reading, insights and helpful suggestions and criticisms, which have greatly improved this article.

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Acta Classica is published annually by the Classical Association of South Africa. The journal has been in production since 1958. It is listed on both the ISI and the SAPSE list of approved publications.

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