

## 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 a 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,<sup>1</sup> they neglect the important themes of poverty and hunger specifically in Catullus. In fact, only Richlin and Peek discuss these themes in any detail.<sup>2</sup> 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.'<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 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. *Av.* 931-35.

<sup>2</sup> A. Richlin, 'Systems of food imagery in Catullus', *CW* 81.5 (1988) 355-63; P.S. Peek, 'Feeding Aurelius' hunger: Catullus 21', *AClass* 45 (2002) 89-99.

<sup>3</sup> 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 *esuritiō* differently of each: *esuritiō* 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.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> 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 Furi, one born in 103 and the younger Bibaculus, and for attributing the *Annales Belli Gallici* to the elder on the supposition that Porphyrio and [Acro] have fallen into the same confusion.'<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup>

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in poem 21 it denotes Aurelius' carnal desire and not his poverty. On the connection of hunger and lust in poem 21, see also D. Konstan, 'An interpretation of Catullus 21', in C. Deroux (ed.), *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History* (Brussels 1979) 214-16; and W. Fitzgerald, *Catullan Provocations: Lyric Poetry and the Drama of Position* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London 1995) 65.

<sup>4</sup> N. Rudd, *The Satires of Horace* (Cambridge 1966) 289.

<sup>5</sup> R.O.A.M Lyne, 'The Neoteric poets', *CQ* 28 (1978) 171 n. 13.

<sup>6</sup> E. Courtney, *The Fragmentary Latin Poets* (Oxford 1993) 200.

<sup>7</sup> 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 omaso*, which means that he was *παχύς*, in the Callimachean code the opposite of *λεπτός*.'

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:

Furi, **cui neque servus est neque arca**  
nec cimex neque araneus neque ignis,  
verum est et pater et noverca, quorum  
dentes vel silicem comesse possunt,  
5 est pulcre tibi cum tuo parente  
et cum coniuge lignea parentis.  
nec mirum: bene nam valetis omnes,  
pulcre concoquitis, nihil fimetis,  
non incendia, non graves ruinas,  
10 non facta impia, non dolos veneni,  
non casus alios periculorum.  
atqui corpora **sicciora** comu  
aut siquid magis **aridum** est habetis  
sole et frigore et esuritione.  
15 quare non tibi sit bene ac **beate?**  
a te **sudor** abest, abest **saliva**,  
mucusque et mala pituita nasi.  
hanc ad **munditiem** adde **mundiorem**,  
quod culus tibi **purior salillo est**,  
20 nec toto decies cacas in anno;  
atque id durius est faba et lupillis,  
quod tu si manibus teras fricesque,  
non umquam digitum inquinare posses.  
haec tu commoda tam **beata**, Furi,  
25 noli spernere nec putare parvi,  
et sestertia quae soles precari  
centum desine, nam sat es **beatus**.<sup>8</sup>

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.  
5 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,

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<sup>8</sup> 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.

10 not fires, or ruinous collapses,  
 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 saltcellar**,  
 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,  
 25 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.<sup>9</sup> Without food, money or property, the family lacks the standard worries of the propertied class: fires, collapsing houses, violent crimes and plots of poison.<sup>10</sup> They also possess bodies dehydrated 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 *beatus*, which implies both 'happy' in enjoying life and 'well-off' in financial prosperity. Thereafter, Catullus turns to Furius alone with a detailed description of Furius' absence of bodily fluids, one sign of good health (on the authority of ancient testimony).<sup>11</sup> There follows an even more graphic

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<sup>9</sup> C.J. Fordyce, *Catullus: A Commentary* (Oxford 1961) 152, has suggested that, in his repeated use of the phrase *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 *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.

<sup>10</sup> Juv. *Sat.* 3.190-202 provides a vivid description.

<sup>11</sup> K. Quinn, *Catullus: The Poems* (London 1970) 163, cites Varro in Nonius Marcellus 634 L: *Persae propter exercitationes puerilis modicas eam sunt consecuti corporis siccitatem ut*

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.<sup>12</sup>

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 Bibaculus. 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.<sup>13</sup> 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-milker' at 22.10; and Volusius' annals will be suitable for wrapping mackerel at 95.8.<sup>14</sup> 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.'<sup>15</sup> 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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*neque spuerent neque emungerentur*, while L. Richardson, 'Furi et Aureli, comites Catulli', *CPh* 58 (1963) 106 n. 17, cites Pliny, *Nat.* 34.8.65.

<sup>12</sup> 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.'

<sup>13</sup> Richlin (note 2) 358-60.

<sup>14</sup> Richlin (note 2) 359-60.

<sup>15</sup> J.P. Hallett, 'Catullus on composition: response', *CW* 81.5 (1988) 399-400.

ignorance, and lack of feeling.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, Catullus claims that Furius and his family have bodies that are ‘drier than horn’ (*sicciora cornu*, 12) or ‘whatever is even more dehydrated from sun and cold and hunger’ (*aut siquid magis aridum est habetis / sole et frigore et esuritione*, 13-14). The OLD reports that *siccus* is used of speech and style that is unadorned or dry, which can be viewed as either a virtue or an excess.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, *aridus* can refer to speech or style that is austere or dry and in literary contexts *aridus* is most often negative in tone.<sup>18</sup> 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 *pumex* as feminine.<sup>19</sup> 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.<sup>20</sup> 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 Juventius’ 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 aristas / sit nostrae seges osculationis*). The rich agricultural imagery that ends the poem is enhanced by the phrase *aridis aristas*, 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

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<sup>16</sup> Richardson (note 11) 98.

<sup>17</sup> Dryness in excess: Tac. *Dial.* 21.7 (of Asinius): *Pacuvium certe et Accium non solum tragoediis sed etiam orationibus suis expressit: adeo durus et siccus est*, Gel. *N.A.* 14.1.32: *Haec nos sicca et incondita et propemodum ieiuna oratore adtigimus*.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Cic. *De Orat.* 2.159 (asserting that the Stoic doctrine does not help the orator): *et genus sermonis affert non liquidum, non fusum ac profluens, sed exile, aridum, concisum ac minutum*, Sen. *Ep.* 75.3: *Non mehercules ieiuna esse et arida volo, quae de rebus tam magnis dicuntur, neque enim philosophia ingenio renuntiat*, Tac. *Dial.* 19.3: *et quidquid aliud aridissimis Hermaiorae et Apollodori libris praecipitur, in honore erat*.

<sup>19</sup> On the use of the feminine form *arida*, see Thomson (note 8) 197.

<sup>20</sup> 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.<sup>21</sup> 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' *cartae* as *laboriosae* ('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.<sup>22</sup> 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 *salse* 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 *lepos*.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, Furius' lack of *saliva* connotes both his physical and literary dryness.

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

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<sup>21</sup> Hor. *Ep.*2.1.168-70: *Creditur, ex medio quia res arcessit, habere / sudoris minimum, sed habet comoedia tanto / plus oneris, quanto veniae minus*; Cic. *de Orat.* 1.257: *ac stilus ille tuus, quem tu vere dixisti, perfectorem dicendi esse ac magistrum, multi sudoris est.*

<sup>22</sup> Quinn (note 11) 90: in Catullus 1.7 *laboriosus* 'suggests going out of one's way to make work for oneself.'

<sup>23</sup> T.P. Wiseman, *Catullan Questions* (Leicester 1969) 9-13, demonstrates how the Catullan key words *lepidus*, *salsus*, *venustus*, and *facetus* and their opposites 'embody the social and literary ideals of the poet and his friends.' See also R. Seager, 'Venustus, lepidus, bellus, salsus: Notes on the Language of Catullus', *Latomus* 33 (1974) 891-94; and most recently B. Krostenko, *Cicero, Catullus, and the Language of Social Performance* (Chicago & London 2001).

language'.<sup>24</sup> Catullus' statement about Furius' *mundities* 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' (*mundities*) and as a brilliant display of *urbanitas*.<sup>25</sup> 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 *mundities* 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.<sup>26</sup> Fabullus is invited to dine at the home of Catullus, who makes the poet's traditional apology for his poverty (*nam tui Catulli / plenus sacculus est araneorum*, 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 atque magnam / cenam, 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 amores*, 9) or 'something even sweeter and more refined'

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<sup>24</sup> Examples of *munditia* (or *mundities*) in its literary sense are: Cic. *Orat.* 79 (of a true 'Attic' orator): *elegantia modo et munditia remanebit, sermo purus erit et Latinus*, Hor. *Ep.* 2.1.157-59: *sic horridus ille / defluxit numerus Saturnius, et grave virus / munditiae pepulere*, Quint. *Inst.* 8.3.87: *Nam ipsa illa ἀφέλεια simplex et inadfectata habet quendam purum, qualis etiam in feminis amatur, ornatum, et sunt quaedam velut e tenui diligentia circa proprietatem significationemque munditiae*; Gel. *N.A.* 1.23.1: *cum multa quidem venustate atque luce atque munditia verborum*; Gel. *N.A.* 10.3.4: *brevitas sane et venustas et mundities orationis est, qualis haberi ferme in comoediarum festivitatibus solet*; Gel. *N.A.* 10.24.2: *Divus etiam Augustus, linguae Latinae non nescius munditiarumque patris sui in sermonibus sectator*.

<sup>25</sup> 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).

<sup>26</sup> See especially W.H. Race, 'Odes 1.20: An Horatian Recusatio', *CSCA* 11 (1978) 179-96; M. Marcovich, 'Catullus 13 and Philodemus 23', *QUCC* NS 11 (1982) 131-8; W.H. Bernstein, 'A Sense of Taste: Catullus 13', *CJ* 80 (1985) 127-30; and Gowers (note 25) 229-44.

(*quid suavis elegantiusve est*, 10). 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.’<sup>27</sup> 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; *sal* is both ‘salt’ and ‘wit’; *meros amores* are ‘pure love’ and ‘pure love poems’; *suavis* and *elegans* connote literary stylishness; *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.<sup>28</sup> 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 *omnes carchinni*, which are the essentials of the meal or poem, and what Catullus will give in return, *meros 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 Iuventiorum,  
 non horum modo, sed quot aut fuerunt  
 aut posthac aliis erunt in annis,  
 mallet divitias Midae dedisses

5            isti, **cui neque servus est neque arca,**

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<sup>27</sup> Gowers (note 25) 230.

<sup>28</sup> Bernstein (note 26) 127-30.

quam sic te sineres ab illo amari.  
 'quid? non est homo **bellus**?' inquires. est:  
 sed **bello huic neque servus est neque arca.**  
 hoc tu quam lubet abice elevaque:  
 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  
 5 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:  
 10 **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 *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 *Iuventii* (of Etruscan origin).<sup>29</sup> Furius, a *homo bellus* who moves in polite society, is nevertheless unworthy of the company of Juventius.<sup>30</sup> It is more likely, however, that 'Juventius' is a pseudonym.<sup>31</sup>

Catullus' address to Juventius in 24.1 as the 'little flower' (*flosculus*) conveys his protectiveness of Juventius.<sup>32</sup> 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

<sup>29</sup> On the Iuventii see C.L. Neudling, *A Prosopography to Catullus*. *Iowa Studies in Classical Philology* 12 (London 1955) 94-96.

<sup>30</sup> On the significance of the term *bellus* in Catullus, see Krostenko (note 23) 268-76.

<sup>31</sup> A supposition supported recently by D. Mulroy, *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)', *CQ* 23 (1973) 297.

<sup>32</sup> 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' (*divitias Midae*, 4) to Furius than allow himself to be loved by Furius.<sup>33</sup> Taken literally, the allusion to Midas reads simply: Juventius should give a lot of money to the poor Furius rather than sex.<sup>34</sup> 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, Iuventi,  
**bellus homo** quem tu diligere inciperes,

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<sup>33</sup> 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.

<sup>34</sup> See McLeod (note 31) 298: 'the hyperbole *malem divitias Midae 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 pallidior statua,**  
 5 qui tibi nunc cordi est, quem tu praepondere 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,**  
 5 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 pallidior 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 *hospes* into a pale, deathly figure as stiff and frigid as a gilded statue.<sup>35</sup> Catullus' provocative linking of Juventius and the Midas theme in 24.4 (*mallem divitias Midae dedisses*) and 81.4 (*inaurata pallidior statua*) has gone unnoticed by scholars. Furthermore, there are other verbal and thematic connections between poems 24 and 81 that identify the *hospes* 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.<sup>36</sup> Meanwhile, it is possible to see in *Pisauri* (3) and *inaurata* (4) punning references to Aurelius.<sup>37</sup> In spite of these considerations, there are important clues in poem 81 that identify the *hospes* 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, cui neque servus est neque 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*

<sup>35</sup> 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.

<sup>36</sup> Thomson (note 8) 508.

<sup>37</sup> *Pisauri*: H. Dettmer, *Love By the Numbers: Form and Meaning in the Poetry of Catullus* (New York 1997) 189; *inaurata*: 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.<sup>38</sup> The second phrase describing Juventius' guest, *inaurata pallidior 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.'<sup>39</sup> The showy, elevated diction employed by Catullus to describe Juventius' *hospes* recalls Horace's mockery of Furius as *pingui tentus omaso* (*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 Memmona*) 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 'botches' (*defingit*) the head of the river-god by making it muddy in his epic *Bellum Gallicum*.<sup>40</sup> 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.<sup>41</sup> 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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<sup>38</sup> See especially M. Zicari, 'Moribunda ab sede Pisauri (Nota a C. 81)', *SOlív* 3 (1955) 57-69 (= *Scritti Catulliani*, Urbino 1978, 187-99); Quinn (note 11) 416; J. Ferguson, *Catullus* (Kansas 1985) 269; Thomson (note 8) 508-09; Krostenko (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. *Aen.* 3.687 *angusta ab sede Pelori* and may be a parody of its source, perhaps early tragedy (Thomson suggests Accius).

<sup>39</sup> Skinner (note 37) 102.

<sup>40</sup> For interpretation of Horace's quotations of Furius, see Courtney (note 6) 197-98.

<sup>41</sup> 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 altas gradietur Alpes, / Caesaris visens monumenta magni, Gallicum Rhenum / horribilesque† uli- / mosque Britannos.*

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'.<sup>42</sup> The two poets play at composing *versiculi* in different meters (*scribens versiculos uterque nostrum / ludebat numero modo hoc modo illoc*, 4-5), where the *versiculi* are 'scraps of verse' (as in 16.3 and 16.6).<sup>43</sup> Catullus and Calvus cap each other's verses over laughter and wine (*reddens mutua per iocum atque vinum*, 6), and Catullus departs from the encounter inflamed (*incensus*, 8) by Calvus' 'charm' (*lepore*, 7) and 'wit' (*facetisusque*, 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.<sup>44</sup>

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 *lepos* ('charm'); in poem 50 it is the *lepos* ('charm') and *facetiae* ('wit') of Calvus that arouse Catullus sexually.<sup>45</sup> 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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<sup>42</sup> Quinn (note 11) 237.

<sup>43</sup> 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.

<sup>44</sup> On poem 50 as a programmatic statement of the neoteric literary ideals, see P. Pucci, 'Il Carme 50 di Catullo', *Maiia* 13 (1961) 249-56.

<sup>45</sup> Calvus' 'wit' (*sal*) is also attested in Catullus 14.16, where he is addressed as *salse* 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.<sup>46</sup>

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' (*mundities*) 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 *mundities* in the Furius and Juventius poems, Catullus bests his rival Furius in poetic composition and wit.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> See the important work of M.B. Skinner, *Catullus' Passer: The Arrangement of the Book of Polymetric 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 *versiculi* 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.

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# ACTA CLASSICA



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