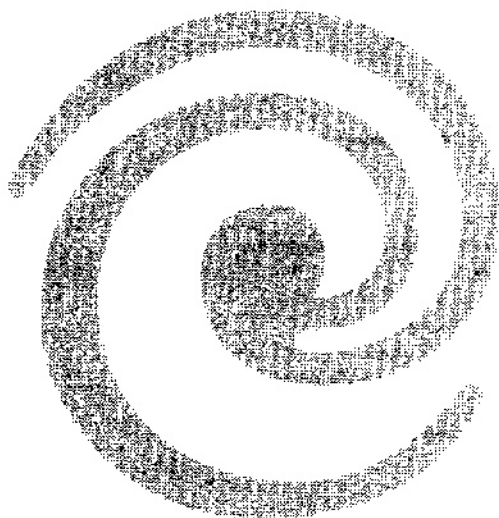


THE POEMS
OF CATULLUS
A BILINGUAL EDITION

TRANSLATED,
WITH COMMENTARY BY
PETER GREEN



UNIVERSITY OF
CALIFORNIA PRESS
BERKELEY LOS ANGELES
LONDON

Who's the dedicatee of my new witty
 booklet, all fresh-polished with abrasive?
 You, Cornelius: for you always used to
 feel my trivia possessed some substance,
 5 even when you dared—the lone Italian!—
 that great three-decker treatment of past ages:
 scholarly stuff, my god, and *so* exhaustive!
 So take this little booklet, this mere trifle,
 whatever it may be worth—and Patron Virgin,
 10 let it outlast at least *one* generation!

2A

Sparrow, precious darling of my sweetheart,
 always her plaything, held fast in her bosom,
 whom she loves to provoke with outstretched finger
 tempting the little pecker to nip harder
 5 when *my* incandescent longing fancies
 just a smidgin of fun and games and comfort
 for the pain she's feeling (I believe it!),
 something to lighten that too-heavy ardor—
 how I wish I could sport with you as she does,
 10 bring some relief to the spirit's black depression!

2B

. . . just as welcome to me as they say that golden
 apple was, long ago, to the maiden runner,
 which freed, at last, a girdle too long knotted.

Mourn, Cupids all, every Venus, and whatever
company still exists of caring people:

Sparrow lies dead, my own true sweetheart's sparrow,
Sparrow, the pet and darling of my sweetheart,
5 loved by her more than she valued her own eyesight.

Sweet as honey he was, and knew his mistress
no less closely than a child her mother;
nor from her warm lap's safety would he ever
venture far, but hopping this and that way
10 came back, cheeping, always to his lady.

Now he's travelling on that dark-shroud journey
whence, they tell us, none of the departed
ever returns. The hell with you, you evil
blackness of Hell, devouring all that's lovely—

15 such a beautiful sparrow you've torn from me!
Oh wicked deed! Oh wretched little sparrow!
It's your fault that now my sweetheart's eyelids
are sore and swollen red from all her weeping.

4

That cutter that you see there, gentlemen, of mine
claims she was once the swiftest vessel of them all:
There was no hull afloat the thrust of which she'd not
outspeed, whether it was | with oars or under sail
5 as the occasion called for, either one.

And she denies the Adriatic's menacing
coast can deny this claim, or the Cycladic isles,
or noble Rhodes, or the | Propontis, bristling with
rough Thracian storms, or the | wild Pontic gulf, where she,
10 the destined future cutter, started out her life

as leaf-maned trees, which on | Cytórus's mountain ridge
would often whisper with soft-speaking foliage.
Pontic Amastris and | you, groved Cytórus's slopes,
to you this setting was, and still remains, well known,
15 the cutter says. In her | remote beginning she
claims it was on your summit that she stood, that your
waters were then the first to handsel her trim oars,
and from that moment on, through strait on hazardous strait
carried her master, whether from starboard or from port
20 beckoned the breeze, or came a strong and following wind,
a godsend, driving hard upon both sheets at once.
Nor were there any vows to dry-land deities
made for her when at last, her final voyage done,
she left the deep and reached this ever-limpid lake.
25 But that was long ago. Now she's laid up for good
in quiet retirement, dedicates herself to you,
twin Castor, and to you, great Castor's brother-twin.

5

Let's live, Lesbia mine, and love—and as for
scandal, all the gossip, old men's strictures,
value the lot at no more than a farthing!
Suns can rise and set ad infinitum—
5 for us, though, once our brief life's quenched, there's only
one unending night that's left to sleep through.
Give me a thousand kisses, then a hundred,
then a thousand more, a second hundred,
then yet another thousand then a hundred—
10 then when we've notched up all these many thousands,
shuffle the figures, lose count of the total,
so no maleficent enemy can hex us
knowing the final sum of all our kisses.

Flavius, that sweetie of yours (Catullus speaking)
must be *totally* inelegant and unsmart—

you couldn't keep quiet otherwise, you'd *tell* me.

Fact is, it's just some commonplace consumptive

5 tart you're mad for, and you blush to say so.

Look, your nights aren't solitary: silence
won't help out when your own bedroom shouts it—

stinking Syrian perfume, all those garlands,
both your pillows, on each side of the bed, all

10 rumbled, *and* the gimcrack bedstead shaken
into sharp creaking, loud perambulation!

It's no good, no good *at all*, your saying
nothing. Why? You wouldn't look so fucked out
if you weren't up to some inept adventure.

15 So, whatever you've got there, nice or awful,
tell us! I'm *after you*, man, *and* your lovebird,
want to ensky you *both* in witty poems!

7

You'd like to know how many of your kisses
would be enough and over, Lesbia, *for* me?

Match them to every grain of Libyan sand in
silphium-rich Cyrene, from the shrine of

5 torrid oracular Jupiter to the sacred
sepulchre of old Battus; reckon their total
equal to all those stars that in the silent
night look down on the stolen loves of mortals.

That's the number of times I need to kiss you,

10 *That's* what would satisfy your mad Catullus—
far too many for the curious to figure,
or for an evil tongue to work you mischief!

Wretched Catullus, stop this stupid tomfool stuff
and what you see has perished treat as lost for good.

Time was, every day for you the sun shone bright,
when you scurried off wherever *she* led *you*—

5 that girl you loved as no one shall again be loved.

There, when so many charming pleasures all went on,
things that *you* wanted, things *she* didn't quite turn down,
then for you truly every day the sun shone bright.

Now she's said *No*, so you too, feeble wretch, say *No*.

10 Don't chase reluctance, don't embrace a sad-sack life—
make up your mind, be stubborn, obdurate, hang tough!
So goodbye, sweetheart. Now Catullus *will* hang tough,
won't ask, "Where is she?" won't, since you've said *No*, beg, plead.

You'll soon be sorry, when you get these pleas no more—

15 bitch, wicked bitch, poor wretch, what life awaits *you* now?

Who'll now pursue you, still admire you for your looks?

Whom will you love now? Who will ever call you theirs?

Who'll get your kisses? Whose lips will you bite in play?

You, though, Catullus, keep your mind made up, *hang tough!*

9

Dear Veranius, of all my close companions
by three hundred miles the foremost—have you
come back home to your household gods, to brothers
one in mind with you, to your aged mother?

5 *Yes, you're back!* The news makes me so happy—

I'll see you safe and sound, hear all your stories
of Spanish tribes and cities, what you did there,
told in your special style. I'll hug you to me,
rain kisses on your eyes and laughing face. Oh,

10 take all the fortunate men alive now—who, pray,
could be happier, more fortunate, than I am?

My friend Varus saw me lounging in the Forum,
dragged me off with him to meet his girlfriend.

"Little scrubber" was my first impression—
not unsmart, though, not entirely witless.

5 When we got there, conversation turned to
every kind of subject, and among them
how were things in Bithynia, what was happening,
had my posting brought me in a windfall?

I replied with the truth: not even praetors,
10 much less aides, could find even the slightest
hope of deals that would fatten their resources—
not least when said praetor was a fuckface
and didn't give a shit for his poor staffers.

"Well, at least," they said, "you must have picked up
15 some of what we hear's their major export—
litter-bearers?" Anxious to impress his
girlfriend, make her suppose I was a fat-cat,
"Sure," said I, "though I got a lousy province,
life wasn't all *that* bad for me—I somehow
20 found myself eight able-bodied porters."

(Truth was, neither here nor there so much as
one spent shag did I own, the kind who'd barely
manage to heft an ancient broken bed-leg.)

At this—predictable bitch—she said, "Catullus,
25 darling, please, please, lend me them—I only
need them a little while, I want a ride to
Serapis's temple." "Whoa," I told her, "what I
claimed just now that I had, I really hadn't,
my mind was slipping, actually it's my colleague
30 Cinna, first name Gaius, bought them—though why
should I care who it is that they belong to?
I still use them just as though I owned them.
Not but what you're a bore, a walking pest, who
won't let pass even slight exaggerations."

Furius and Aurelius, comrades of Catullus,
 whether he'll penetrate the distant Indies
 where the shore's slammed by far-resounding Eastern
 thunderous breakers,

5 or make for Hyrcania, or the queening Arabs,
 or the Sacae, or the Parthians with their quivers,
 or that flat delta to which the seven-channelled
 Nile gives its color,

or toil across high-towering Alpine passes
 10 to visit the monuments of mighty Caesar,
 the Gaulish Rhine, those rude back-of-beyonders
 the woad-dyed Britons—

All this, or whatever the high gods in heaven
 may bring, you're both ready to face together;
 15 just find my girl, deliver her this short and
 blunt little message:

Long may she live and flourish with her gallants,
 embracing all three hundred in one session,
 loving none truly, yet cracking each one's loins
 20 over and over.

Let her no more, as once, look for my passion,
 which through her fault lies fallen like some flower
 at the field's edge, after the passing ploughshare's
 cut a path through it.

Your left hand, friend Asinius, you provincial,
 works its mischief while we drink and gossip,
 snitching napkins from distracted guests. You
 think this trick is smart? So dumb, you can't see
 just how dirty your game is, how unlovely?
 Don't believe me? Then believe your brother
 Pollio, who'd quite gladly pay good money
 if he could stop your larceny—a sweetheart
 chock-full of charm, that boy, and always witty.
 Either, then, you give me back my napkin,
or else you'll get a scad of scathing verses.
 It's not so much the price that's made me angry:
 this was a gift, a memento from my comrade,
 top-line real native hand-towels, that Fabullus—
 and Veranius—sent me all the way from
 Spain: so I must love them just as much as
 sweet Veranius and my dear Fabullus.

You'll dine well, dear Fabullus, in my lodging
 one day soon—if the gods look on you kindly,
if you bring along a good and lavish
 dinner, not to mention an attractive
 girl, plus wine and salt and witty stories.
If, I repeat, you bring this lot, old sweetheart,
 you'll dine well. The thing is, your Catullus
 has a purse that's full—of spiders' cobwebs.
 Still, in return you'll get love undiluted—
 or something even tastier and smarter:
 I'll contribute the unguent that the Cupids—
 Venuses too—of passion gave my girlfriend.
 Get one whiff of that, and you'll beseech the
 gods to make you one big nose, Fabullus!

More than my own eyes I love you, Calvus,
 you greát teáse: were it not so, for that ghastly
 gift of yours I'd hate you like—Vatinus!
 What did I ever do or say to make you
 5 finish me off with all these rotten poets?
 May high gods heap troubles on that client
 who sent you such a parcel of blasphemers!
 Still, if (as I suspect) this new *recherché*
 gift came to you from Sulla, Man of Letters,
 10 I don't take it amiss, but am delighted,
 seeing that all your work has not been wasted.
 Great gods, *what a disgusting* little booklet,
and you carefully chose the time to send it
 to your Catullus, so that you would kill him
 15 on that best of all days, the Saturnalia!
 No, you *won't* get away with this, you smart-ass—
 first thing tomorrow morning I'll go round the
 booksellers' stalls, buy Caesius, Aquinus,
 Suffénus, all the poison on the market,
 20 pay you back with a counterdose of torture.
 Meanwhile, you lot, *out*—back where you hauled your
 bad feet from, time's trash, appalling poets!

14B

If maybe there are some of you who'll read my
 stupid ineptitudes, and won't recoil from
 reaching out and laying hands upon us . . .

Let me commend me and my boyfriend to you,
 Aurelius. I'm asking just one modest favor—
 that if you've ever in your heart felt driven
 to seek out something chaste and undeflowered,
 5 you'll keep the boy safe for me, and well protected—
 not from the public at large: no, I fear nothing
 from folk going to and fro in the piazza,
 brisk, preoccupied, minding their own business.
 It's *you* that scare me, you and your great whanger,
 10 a standing threat to boys both good and naughty.
 Look, wag the damn thing where and how you fancy,
 all you've a mind to out there, cocked and ready—
 just leave *him* out of it, make one nice exception!
 But should ill-will or mindless madness drive you
 15 to such a state, you bastard, that you're willing
 to practice low tricks on me and provoke me,
 ah, *then* you'll feel my dire retaliation,
 feet spread and strapped, back-passage widely gaping,
 reamed all its length with radishes and mullets!

Up yours both, and sucks to the pair of you,
 Queen Aurelius, Furius the faggot,
 who dared judge *me* on the basis of my verses—
they mayn't be manly: does that make *me* indecent?
 5 Squeaky-clean, that's what every proper poet's
person should be, but not his bloody squiblets,
 which, in the last resort, lack salt and flavor
 if *not* "unmanly" and rather less than decent,
 just the ticket to work a furious itch up,
 10 I won't say in boys, but in those hirsute
 clods incapable of wiggling their hard haunches.

Just because you've read about my countless
thousand kisses, you think I'm less than virile?
Up yours both, and sucks to the pair of you!

17

Dear Verona, so eager to celebrate on your lómg bridge
ánd all ready for dancing there if it weren't for the scary
legs of the wretched bridge itself shored with tottering timbers
lest it fall on its back, collapse supine into the marshes!
5 Máy a goód bridge be built for you just the way that you'd like it,
strong enough even to carry the Sálisubsálian dancers—
if you play one hysterical jape for me, please, Verona!
Thére's this féllow-townsmán of mine whom I'd love to see booted
headlong into the muck below, neck over crop, exactly
10 where in the whole of the spreading lake's foully malodorous bog land
lies the deepest and filthiest sheer vertiginous sinkhole.
"Mindless moron" describes the guy —no more sense than a baby
two years old, snoozing rock-a-bye snug on its father's arm, for
though he's wed to a girl he caught right in her springtime glory,
15 *and* more skittish, this girl, than the tenderest frisky kidling,
plus she needs to be guarded more carefully than the ripest
grapes, yet he lets her play around all she wants, doesn't mind it.
Nor's *he* willing to rise on his own part, lies like an alder
felled, laid flat in the ditch by some keen Ligurian axman,
20 no more conscious of things than if *she* was just nonexistent.
There you have this dumb clod of mine— sees zip, hears nothing, zero,
not one clue who the héll he is, even if he exists, yet.
This is the guy I'd love to toss off your bridge, pitch him headlong,
find out if he can shake himself suddenly free of his stolid
25 sloth, leave his passive heart behind stuck in the clinging mud, as
mules' iron shoes can get suckered off by a voracious quagmire.

You, Aurelius, big Daddy of all the hungers—
 not just of these, but of every one hereafter
 or heretofore, in past years or the future:
 so you're bent on rogering my darling—
 5 openly, too! You're with him, swapping stories,
 sticking close up to him, trying every gambit . . .
 No good, friend. If you're plotting to replace me
 I'll fix *you* first, serve you a proper mouthful!
 If you'd just dined when you did it I'd keep silent;
 10 what really ticks me off is that the laddie
 surely will learn from you that thirst and hunger.
 So—lay off while you decently can, or else you'll
 come to a messy end, mouth crammed to bursting!

22

That chap Suffenus, Varus, whom you know too well
 is a delightful fellow, witty, quite urbane,
 and *so* prolific, number one for churned-out verse—
 ten thousand lines, I reckon—could be more—
 5 he's written, not on palimpsest, like most plain folk:
 no, *he* insists on royal papyrus, brand-new rolls,
 new bosses, scarlet cords, expensive parchment wraps,
 all pumiced smooth and levelled off, square-ruled.
 But when you *read* it, then that same smart *úrbáne mán*
 10 Suffenus seems a country lout, clod, clown,
 he's so remote from what he was, *so* changed.
 How explain this? One moment such a smart town wit,
 or anything still more clever (could that be?),
 he comes on hicker than a backwoods hick
 15 the minute he tries a poem—yet this guy

is never so happy as when composing verse,
thinks he's so marvelous, such a real fly boy.
Ah well, we all make that mistake—there 's not
one of us whom you can't in some small way
20 see as Sufferus. Each reveals his inborn flaw—
and yet we're blind to the load on our own backs!

23

You have, Furius, neither slave nor strongbox,
neither bugs nor spiders, no, nor kindling—
yet you do have a father and a stepmom,
teeth well up to chomping flints for dinner.
5 Oh, you get on splendidly with Daddy,
and with Daddy's beanpole of a bedmate—
not surprising, since you're all so healthy,
fine digestion, no persistent worries,
no damn conflagrations, no collapsing
10 buildings, no domestic crimes like murder
(poison, natch), no other kinds of danger:
plus, you've bodies dry as any bone, or
whatever's even drier, all because of
sun and cold and your near-starvation diet.
15 So, why shouldn't you be well and happy?
Swear's unknown to you, you've no saliva,
no snot, no catarrh, no dripping sinus.
To this cleanliness add an even cleaner
asshole, than any saltcellar more polished,
20 *and* you shit less than ten times in a year, and
what comes out is as hard as beans or pebbles—
if you rubbed it in your hands it wouldn't
leave the least mess, even on one finger!
These rich blessings, Furius, please never

25 underestimate or despise, and please stop nagging me for that hundred thousand, since you're quite well-heeled enough as it is already.

24

Hey, Juventius, blossom, best of all your blue-blood clan, not just the current crop but every forebear, each remote descendant— I'd prefer your shelling out a fortune
5 on that jerk (who's penniless and slaveless) to the way you're letting the shit love you! "What," you say, "he's not a dish?" A dish, yes, *but a dish that's penniless and slaveless*— pooh-pooh that all you like, and blow it off: still,
10 *still* he's got no slaves, and not a penny!

25

O queenie Thallus, softer than a furry little rabbit, a goosey-woosey's marrow or the bottom of an earlobe, an old man's languid penis with its cobwebby senescence— yet also, Thallus, greedier than any fierce tornado
5 whenever heavenly sloth reveals the tipsy diners nodding: just give me back that cloak of mine you pounced upon and pilfered, the monogrammed set of face-towels too, and all those Spanish napkins, which—idiot!—you keep on show as heirlooms: pray unglue them *this moment* from your talons and return them to me, if you
10 don't want your fleecy little flanks and tender poofy paw-waws all scribbled with the lash of whips, burned with a shameful branding, on heat (not in your usual way), just like a little skiff that's caught in a heavy storm at sea, a hurricane of gale force.

Your nice bijou cottage in the country,
 Furius, stands exposed to draughts from neither
 south, east, west, nor savage north: instead it's
 faced with an *overdraft* of fifteen hundred
 5 plus—a wind most vile and pestilential!

27

You boy there, serving out the vintage *vino*—
 mix me stronger and sharper-tasting cupfuls,
 follow the lady of the revels' orders
 (who's more drunk than the killer stuff she's drinking).
 5 You, though, pure-water nymphs, can get the hell out—
 ruination to wine you are, move over,
 join the puritans. Here the wine is *unmixed*!

28

Dear Véránus, and you, my own Fabullus,
 Piso's flacks, poor empty-handed staffers
 loaded up with your piddling little backpacks—
 how's life with you? Have you had your fill of
 5 flat wine, cold, and hunger with that bastard?
 Do *your* ledgers show a little profit
paid out, just like mine? When serving *my* chief
 I'd chalk up my expenses as net income.
 (Memmius, man, you really reamed me over,
 10 force-fed me slowly with that giant whanger!)
 Now, so far as *I* can see, you two have
 met the selfsame fate, crammed by no lesser

yárd yourséives! Seek noble friends, they tell us!
May all gods (and goddesses) now serve out
15 those two blots on Romulus and Remus!

29

Who, pray, except some gamester, some voracious
and shameless gut would watch this, who could tolerate
Mamurra skimming all the cream from wildwood Gaul,
and Britain too, the world's | remotest outpost. Hey,
5 fag Romulus, can *you* put up with such a scene?
Now, I suppose, that ass—so arrogant-otiose—
will work his stud's routine through every bed around,
just like some cute white dove or young Adonis. Hey,
fag Romulus, can *you* put up with such a scene?
10 Then *you're* a shameless glutton *and* a gamester:
O military Supremo, was this then your aim,
while you were in that final island of the west,
to let this shagged-out prick, your crony, chomp his way
through twenty million, maybe thirty? What is that,
15 I ask you then, but clumsy open-handed waste?
You think he hasn't screwed | and chewed his fill? Just look:
first, his inheritance. This | he squandered. Next go off
all of his Black Sea pickings, and then, third, his loot
from Portugal—as gold-rich Tagus knows too well.
20 Now Gaul and Britain both are in the danger zone.
Why do you back this no-good? what's his function been
except to wolf rich oily patrimonies down?
Was it for *this*, you ultra-pious Roman pair,
father and son-in-law, you blew the takings, eh?

Al-fé-nús! You forget *and* you play false those who've been true to you—
 Have you *no* pity left hard though you are for your 'sweet intimate'?
No qualms when you betray, cheat and deceive *me*, faithless creature? Do
 acts of treacherous men, impious deeds, please Heaven's occupants?

5 All this *you* disregard, leave me bereft, lost in my misery.

Oh, what *can* people do, you tell me that, whom can they trust? Because
 you, yes *you*, that's for sure, wickedly made me give my soul to you,
 drew me into your love, acting as though all would be safe for me.

Now it's *you* who pull back, leave all your words, all your past deeds to be
 10 blown away by the winds, all unfulfilled, clouds of pure nothingness.

You've forgotten? The gods never forget— nor does Good Faith, who will
 soon, too soon, after this make you regret all that you've done to me.

31

Of all near-islands, Sirmio, and of islands
 the jewel, of every sort that in pellucid
 lakes or vast ocean fresh or salt Neptune bears—
 how gladly, with what joy I now cast eyes

5 on you once more, can't believe I've left those flat,
 endless Bithynian plains, can see your safe haven.

What greater bliss than when, cares all dissolved,
 the mind lays down its burden, and, exhausted
 by our foreign labors we at last reach home

10 and sink into the bed we've so long yearned for?

This, this alone makes all our toil worthwhile.

Greetings, sweet Sirmio, and rejoice, your master's
 here: and rejoice, you too, you lakeside ripples,
 and all you joys of home, break out in laughter.

32

Please please *please*, my darling Ipsithilla,
 oh my delicate dish, my clever sweetheart,
 please invite me home for the siesta—
 and, supposing that you *do* invite me, make sure

5 no one happens to bolt and bar your shutters,
 and that *you* don't, on a whim, decide to
 go off out: just stay home and prepare for
 us nine whole uninterrupted fuckfests.

Fact is, if you're on, ask me *at once*, I've
 10 lunched, I'm full, flat on my back and bursting
 up, up, up, through undershirt and bedclothes!

33

Oh you cream of the con men in the bathhouse,
 Pop Vibennius, and your son the bum-boy—
 Dad may have a dirtier right hand, but
 Junior's got a more voracious backside—

5 why not just sod off to exile in some
 hellhole, since Dad's larcenies are public
 knowledge, while *you*, son, cannot hawk your bristly
 asshole, no, not even for a penny!

34

We in Diana's tutelage
 chaste unwed boys and maidens are:
 óf Diana as chaste unwed
 boys and maidens let's sing now.

5 Leto's daughter, by greatest Jove
sired, yourself the great progeny
whom your mother delivered there
under the Delian olive,

mistress-to-be of all mountain glens,
10 all green-burgeoning forestage,
all remote and sequestered rides,
every echoing river:

women in pangs of childbirth call
on you as Juno Lucina, you're
15 potent at crossways, sometimes named
Moon with counterfeit lustre.

Measuring out in your monthly course,
Goddess, the year's whole itinerary,
you fill the farmer's rustic barns
20 with an abundant harvest.

By whatever title you please
be you revered, and as once
long ago you were wont, protect,
strongly, Romulus' scions.

35

Would you kindly, papyrus, tell my comrade,
sensitive bard Caecilius, to leave the
ramparts of Novum Comum and its lakeside,
make a visit across here to Verona?
5 I'd like him to mull certain cogitations
made by someone who's friend to him and me both—
wherefore, if he's wise, he'll eat the distance,
even though called back a thousand times by
that cute girl from his journey, flinging both arms

10 round his neck and beseeching him to linger—
she who, if the news I hear's the truth, is
dying of hopeless passion for him. Ever
since she perused his still unfinished opus
Dindymos' Mistress, flames have been consuming
15 all her inmost marrow. I don't blame you,
girl more well-read than Sappho's Muse: no doubt that
this work by Caecilius, his *Great Mother*,
is, quite true, most beautifully *unfinished*.

36

You, Volusius' *Annals*, crappy chapters,
please discharge this vow made by my girlfriend:
she to holy Venus and to Cupid
swore that, should she get me back, and if I
5 stopped unleashing my harsh iambs on her,
she'd serve up all the choicest writings of the
dead-worst poet to the crippled god for roasting
on funeral firewood. She, the dead-worst
girl herself, supposed this vow to all the
10 gods a witty joke, so now, O Thou formed
from the dark blue sea, who hauntest all Thy
holy sites like Idalium and Uriti's
open roadstead, Ancona, reedy Cnidus,
Amathus too and Golgi, not to mention
15 Dyrrachium, famed Adriatic tavern—
note this vow as entered and discharged, and
not entirely charmless or unwitty.
You, though, meanwhile serve the fire as fuel,
one great load of countrified ineptness,
20 you, Volusius' *Annals*, crappy chapters.

Public house, bordello, and you, its habitués,
 nine doors along from the felt-hatted Brethren—
 you think your crowd the only ones with cocks, then?
 the one lot licensed to fuck all the girlies,
 5 while the rest of us are goats? Because there's one,
 or maybe two, hundred of you dumbass fuckwits
 sitting lined up here, you really suppose I wouldn't
 dare fill two hundred cocksucking squatters' mouths?
 Well, think again. *And* I'll cover the whole frontage
 10 of your damn tavern with obscene graffiti—
 for that girl of mine, now fled from my embraces,
 once loved by me as none shall be, ever again,
 for whose dear sake I fought great wars, now has
 taken up residence here. All you smart and wealthy
 15 buzzflies are mad for her, and so (to her discredit)
 is every petty adulterer from the backstreets,
 and you above all, king of the long-haired ponces,
 product of Spain with all its teeming rabbits,
 Egnatius, aping class with your thick, black beard and
 20 flashing teeth scrubbed white with Spanish urine.

38

Life is really a bitch for your Catullus,
 Cornificius, *and* (my god!) so *boring*,
and it keeps getting worse now, daily, hourly—
 yet *have you*—it would take the slightest, simplest
 5 effort—*offered him any consolation?*
 I'm pissed off with you. *That* much for my love, then?
 Please, please, spare me *some* small consolation,
 words more tearful than the message on a gravestone!

Because Egnatius has those damn white teeth, he
 flashes them everywhere. On the bench in court,
 when counsel for the defense is coaxing tears, he
 flashes them. Beside the pyre of a loving son, as
 5 mama, grief-stricken, mourns her lost sole child, he
 flashes them. Whatever's up, wherever, never
 mind what he's doing, he flashes them. This sick urge
 is, I would say, neither elegant nor well bred.
 So I have to warn you, Egnatius, my good sir,
 10 that even if you were Roman, or Sabine, or Tiburtine,
 a thrifty Umbrian or an Etruscan fat-cat,
 a swarthy Lanuvium sporting big buck teeth
 or (to include my own people) a Transpadane, or
 anyone who cleans his teeth with good pure water,
 15 I'd *still* not want you flashing yours all round, since
 nothing's more fatuous than a fatuous grin. *But*
 actually you're a Spaniard, and on Spanish terrain
 everyone hoards his night piss, which next morning
 he uses to scrub off his teeth, *and* his sore red gums:
 20 so the more brightly polished your nice white teeth, the
 more stale piddle it proves that you've just knocked back.

40

Wretched Ravidus, what mistaken judgment
 drives you headlong into my iambs?
 What god, ill invoked by you, is getting
 ready to conjure up a senseless quarrel?
 5 What's your game, then? To be a vulgar byword,
 get yourself known at all costs? *That* you will be,
 since you've chosen to be my lover's lover—
and pay the long-term price for your intrusion!

Armeana, that fucked-out little scrubber,
 just had the nerve to ask me for ten thousand.
 (She's the one with the rather icky nose, the
 bankrupt from Formiae's mistress.) Her relations,
 5 those responsible for the creature's welfare,
 really need now to call on friends—and doctors:
 she's clean out of her mind, that girl, and never
 spot-checks her true cash value in the mirror.

Come, you hendecasyllables, in force now,
 each last one of you, from every quarter—
 this vile slut seems under the impression
 I'm a walking joke, won't give me back my
 5 writing tablets—really, can you beat it?
 Let's go after her, call for their surrender!
 Which one is she, you ask? The one you see there,
 her with the vulgar stride, the quite revolting
 stage-door laugh, the face like a French poodle's.
 10 Close in round her now, demand in chorus:
 "Rotten slut, give back the writing tablets!
 Give back, rotten slut, the writing tablets!"
 Not one farthing she cares, the filthy scrubber
 (fill in any nastier name you think of).
 15 Still, don't let's make this our final effort—
 even though we can't do more, let's raise a
 burning blush on the bitch's brazen face, so
 all shout one more time, and even louder,

"Rotten slut, give back the writing tablets!

20 *Give back, rotten slut, the writing tablets!"*

Still this gets us nowhere, she remains un-
moved, you'll need to change your tune and method.

Try this, then, see if it gets you further:

"Pure chaste maid, give back the writing tablets!"

43

Hi there, girl with a nose by no means tiny,
non-dark eyes and two *most* undainty ankles,
not-long fingers and undry lips, besides a
tongue that's far from overly refined—you
5 bankrupt from Formiae's mistress! Does the Province
spread the word that you're attractive? Do men
pick on *you* to compare my Lesbia with now?
Oh this tasteless age, ill bred and witless!

44

Our Country Place, which art Sabine—or maybe Tiburtine
(for those proclaim thee Tiburtine whose hearts hold no
malice towards Catullus, whereas those whose do
will bet the house thou art Sabine), but whichever
5 thou art, be it Sabine or maybe Tiburtine, I
was so glad to be settled in thy not quite urban
villa, convalescing from a bad chest cough
caught by my own damn fault, my own damn greed while
chasing invitations to expensive blowouts, for it
10 was through my determination to be Sestius' guest that
I came to read his speech attacking Antius'
candidacy, packed with poison, pestilential stuff,
and contracted a freezing cold and a chronic cough

that shook me until I retreated to thy bosom
15 and cured myself with rest and nettle tea. Wherefore,
recovered now, I offer thee my heartfelt thanks
that thou didst not punish my misdeed—nor will
I complain, should I ever again be given frigid stuff
from Sestius' ghastly works, should it unload nasal
20 drip and a hacking cough, not on me but on Sestius,
for inviting me just when I've read his malignant brief!

45

Holding his girlfriend Acme close upon his
lap, Septimius said: "My darling Acme,
if I don't love you madly, if I'm not quite,
quite resolved to be constant all my lifetime,
5 insurpassably, desperately devoted,
in far Libya or burning India may I
meet up, solo, with a green-eyed lion!"
At these words, Love leftward as beforehand
rightward sneezed his approbation. Then sweet
10 Acme, gently tilting back her head and
with those rich red lips bestowing kisses
on her darling boy's besotted eyes, said:
"Thus, Septimius, *thus*, my life, my precious,
may we serve this single lord for ever,
15 while more strongly and fiercely day by day this
hot flame blazes through my melting marrow."
At these words, Love leftward as beforehand
rightward sneezed his approbation. Now from
this auspicious omen setting out, they
20 give and receive true love with equal passion.

Poor Septimius now rates Acme over
all the hoopla of Syria and Britain;
with Septimius only, faithful Acme
runs the gamut of all delights and pleasures.

25 Who, pray, ever saw two more triumphant
lovers, who a Venus more auspicious?

46

Now spring fetches back the warmth, and winter's
chills die out; now raging equinoctial
storms are hushed by the west wind's pleasant breezes.

5 Leave these Phrygian plains, Catullus, leave the
lush green meadows of summer-hot Nicaea:
let's decamp, move to Asia's famous cities.
Now my heart's in a tizzy, yearns for action,
now my feet jitter, eager to be going—
so goodbye to my band of pleasant colleagues:
10 though we made the long trip from home together,
widely varying routes will take us back now.

47

Socraton and Porcius, Piso's pair of
left-hand men, the world's prize itch and gut-ache,
has that stripped prick, that damn Priapus chosen
you over dear Veranius and Fabullus?

5 Are *you* setting up smart expensive dinners—
in broad daylight too—while my companions
tramp the streets in their search for invitations?

48

Oh those honey-sweet eyes of yours, Juventius!
 If they'd let me kiss them all I wanted
 I'd go on three hundred thousand times, and
never feel I was getting near my limit,
 5 even though our crop of osculations
 ended tighter-packed than dried-out wheat ears.

49

Sweetest-spoken of Romulus' descendants,
 past or present, Marcus Tullius, and all who
 may yet follow in the distant future—
 warmest thanks to you herewith from Catullus,
 5 who's the worst of all poets, by as much the
 worst of all living poets, as yourself are
 best of all courtroom lawyers for your clients.

50

Being at leisure yesterday, we had great
 fun, Licinius, with impromptu verses
 (on agreement to be light and witty),
 each alternately scribbling little squiblets,
 5 playing around with every kind of metre,
 matching jest with jest, vintage with vintage.
 When I left I was só high on your dazzling
 charm, Licinius, and your smart one-liners,
 eating afforded me (ah poor me!) no pleasure,
 10 sleep just *would not* quietly close my eyelids—
 there I lay on my bed in mad excitement,

tossing, eager for morning, which would let me
be with you, talk with you. But when, exhausted
by such work, my limbs were sprawled across my
15 truckle bed, half dead from all the effort,
then I made this poem for you, sweetheart,
let it tell you the depth of my emotion.
Now please don't be thoughtless, don't despise our
prayers, we beg of you, precious, lest hereafter
20 Nemesis catches you, demands repayment:
she's a vehement goddess, don't provoke her.

51

In my eyes he seems like a god's co-equal,
he, if I dare say so, eclipses godhead,
who now face to face, uninterrupted,
watches and hears you

5 sweetly laughing—*that* sunders unhappy me from
all my senses: the instant I catch sight of
you now, Lesbia, dumbness grips my <voice, it
dies on my vocal

10 cords>, my tongue goes torpid, and through my body
thin fire lances down, my ears are ringing
with their own thunder, while night curtains both my
eyes into darkness.

Leisure, Catullus, is dangerous to you: leisure
urges you into extravagant behavior:

15 leisure in time gone by has ruined kings and
prosperous cities.

52

What's left, Catullus? Why not die right here and now?
 That pustule Nonius occupies a curule chair,
 Vatinius falsely swears by his own consulship.
 What's left, Catullus? Why not die right here and now?

53

Nice joke lately in court from some bystander:
 when my Calvus had finished his quite brilliant
 list of all Vatinius' misdemeanors,
 this man cries, hands raised in admiration,
 5 "Oh my god, an articulate cock-robin!"

54

Otho's bean (it's so tiny he's a pinhead),
 your legs, Rusticus, never fully washed, and
 Libo's smooth and crafty crepitations—
 these at least, I would hope, will irritate both
 5 you and Fufidius, that warmed-up oldie . . .
 Going to lose your cool again because of
 my oh-so-innocent iambs, super *Duce*?

Please come clean, if it isn't too much trouble—
 Where's your hideout? Show us! We've been searching
 high and low for you—on the lesser Campus,
 round the Circus, in all the bookstores, even
 5 up in the hallowed shrine of Jove Almighty.
 Meanwhile down in Pompey's colonnade I've
 been on at all the girlies, friend, although they
 looked quite blank at my words. "Just hand him over,"
 I told every one of them. "Come on now,
 10 bad bad girls, let me see Camerius pronto!"
 "Here," said one, pulling down her dress, "you want him?"
 He's right here, in between my rosy titties!"
 Oh my friend, putting up with you's a bore now,
 you're so arrogant in your flat denials!
 15 Tell us the place you're going to be, reveal it
 bravely, blurt the truth out, trust in daylight.
 Bosomy blondes have got you in their clutches?
 If you seal your tongue in, clamp your lips shut,
 that'll lose you all the fruits of passion—
 20 Venus loves those rhetorical cadenzas.
 Still, if such is your wish, keep mum—provided
 I can stake out a claim to share your love now!

56

Cato, such a ridiculous and comic
 Business, *well* worth your notice, sure to get a
 Giggle, Cato: laugh, if you love Catullus!
 So ridiculous, really too *too* comic—
 5 I just caught my girlfriend's little slave boy

Getting it up for her, and (Venus love me!)
Split *him*, tandem-fashion, with *my* banger!

57

They're well matched, that pair of shameless buggers,
Bitch-queens both of them, Caesar and Mamurra—
Why not? Both display the same disease-spots
(Caught in town by one, abroad by t'other),
5 Deep pocks, there for life, no scrubbing *them* out.
Twins indeed, both sharing the same sickness,
Two sort-of-well-read dwarfs on one cute couchlet,
Hotshots both as studs for married ladies,
Such close friends—but rivals after nymphets—
10 They're well-matched, that pair of shameless buggers.

58A

Caelius, Lesbia—*our* dear Lesbia, *that* one,
that Lesbia whom alone Catullus worshipped
more than himself, far more than all his kinsfolk—
now on backstreet corners and down alleys
5 jacks off Remus's generous descendants.

58B

Even were I Crete's own brazen guardian,
or wing-footed Perseus, or that runner
Ladas, even should I hitch a ride on
Pegasus, or were to drive the snow white mares of
5 Rhesus—yes, and throw in wings and feathers,

and insist on the speed of all the storm winds:
harness me up this lot, Camerius, still I'd
end worn out, just knackered to the marrow,
gnawed right down to the bone by sheer exhaustion
10 after this endless search for you, my comrade.

59

Rufa, Bologna lady, sucks dear Rufus' cock—
Menenius' wife, the one you've seen lots of times
out in the graveyards, snitching food off a pyre,
in pursuit of a loaf that's tumbled from the cinders,
5 or getting banged by some stubble-chinned corpse burner.

60

Was it a lioness up in the Libyan foothills
or Scylla barking from her nether groin who
bore you with so tough and harsh a mind-set
that you could scorn a suppliant's desperate cry
5 in his last, worst, crisis, ah too savage heart?

61

Hymen, dweller on Helicon's
slopes, Urania's progeny,
you who snatch off the tender bride
to her husband, O Hymen, O
5 Hymen, o Hymeneal!