Nox Perpetua: Reception and Translation of Catullus in Renaissance England

A thesis presented

By

Jessica Renee Myers

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Emerging from complementary eras in similarly tumultuous political moments, Catullus of ancient Rome and the Renaissance writers of seventeenth-century England both inhabited a poetic moment fraught with sensation, sensuality, and an unbridled desire for love found in, and threatened by, the changing currents of time. The turn of the seventeenth century represented an era of chaos, rebellion, and recreation, and just as new lands were discovered and new dynasties established, so too were new poetic forms embraced and explored. As the name asserts, Renaissance England bore and then witnessed the rebirth of a cultural movement, and within it, Catullus found his poetic revival. Robert Herrick, Richard Lovelace, and their poetic predecessors, although differing politically with Catullus, identified with the same nostalgia for national status quo that he had so ardently portrayed. These English poets found in Catullus, an advocate of the republic, an escape from their current historic moment to a Roman one very much the same.
Acknowledgments

To Professor Cole, who taught me Latin *poetas, puellas*, and the delight of translation.

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To the Harvard Houghton Library, which houses some of the most exciting manuscripts I’ve been fortunate enough to find. Without it, I would never have leafed through the ink-bled pages of the first full-length translation of Catullus, on an unassuming Friday afternoon.

To the friends I’ve made at Northeastern, who helped me navigate this strange place we call graduate school, and who kept me steadily in the twenty-first century when my mind continued to wander elsewhere, to a place more ancient.

To my close family, who are my spirit and who are more important to me than can be encompassed by these small words on this single page.

And to Catullus, a solar flare of passion, lost to the *nox perpetua*, and found within the very same.

*Plus uno maneat perenne saeclo.*
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Preface: Love in Translation

In his preface concerning Ovid’s epistles,\(^1\) seventeenth-century poet John Dryden examines the art and act of translation, paying special attention to the work done by English poets in bringing ancient texts to contemporary life. By the time Dryden had found his footing in the seventeenth century, the Renaissance in England had reached its peak and was beginning to ebb, and in turn translation, particularly of Greek and Latin works, had become the hub for literary activity and inquiry. Dryden writes, “Thus much concerning the Poet: Whom you find translated by divers hands, that you may at least have that variety in the English.” For Dryden—and indeed, for many translators and critics to follow—translation fell into one of three primary forms: metaphor, paraphrase, and imitation.

Metaphrase translation is one devoted to keeping intact the authenticity of the original author’s language. It is a word-by-word, line-by-line reproduction, providing the reader a glimpse into the Latinate through Englished diction. Paraphrase translation, Dryden writes, is “where the Author is kept in view by the Translator, so as never to be lost, but his words are not so strictly follow’d as his sense.” In paraphrase, poetic meter and diction, while still important, are no longer the heart of the translation. A translation paraphrased may answer the question, what would the poet write now if he or she were writing those same poems—potentially in a different language? The third form of translation, imitation, is a looser interpretation than the previous two. The translated poem may retain some of the original groundwork, but it can extend freely in any direction, interpreting and inputting as desired. Dryden was highly critical of

imitation, questioning the validity of imitation as a true form of translation, written by “the Translator (if now he has not lost that Name).”

While Dryden never took up Catullus as his literary subject, the early modern poets who did can be usefully read against his influential categories of translation. This study will therefore take Dryden’s theories of translation, particularly his inclusion of imitation (despite his disapproval), as an illuminating and necessary framework in examining translations of Catullus. Translation via metaphor or paraphrase is often the center of dialogues on translating, while imitation, doubtless because of Dryden’s disfavor, is culled, left in the corner of conversation. However, as Catullus was beginning to find purchase among seventeenth-century English poets, his work was often imitated. These impressionistic works were found in a variety of materials—from songbooks to pamphlets, from plays to posthumous works.

My appreciation for the imitations of Catullus, something that I hadn’t cultivated before, only grew as I delved further into this project and into the archive. In the initial stages of my research, I discovered the first complete English translation of Catullus ever written, published by John Nott in 1795. It was, in hindsight, serendipitous, and as I sat in my corner of Harvard’s rare books library and leafed through its pages, I considered this single source of translation that had somehow survived through the centuries—a feat that Catullus’s own original works had failed to accomplish. I wanted to know how these poems had transpired to an English audience, how Nott had possibly stumbled upon Catullus’s poems just as I had stumbled upon his translation of them. The search continued.

As I began to dig deeper into the lineage of Catullan influence on writers of the English Renaissance, I quickly discovered that my search, though endlessly exciting and proving fruitful,

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2 My research in the archive undoubtedly centered on Catullus—however, my selection of Nott’s translation was one without previous knowledge of its status as the first entire version in English.
would never be fully satisfying or satisfied. Closely reading poets like Carew, Herrick, and Lovelace, I felt as though the world they occupied was so familiar to me, yet undeniably foreign. Their poems represented conversations and relations happening in the shadows that the archive simply could not access. Although I found revivals of Catullus in wayward poems or jots in commonplace books, I wanted to know the entire story—how Catullus found his way from a blooming Roman Empire, through the seccresies of the Middle Ages, into the light of the European Renaissance at large. Every poem seemed to signal another passage of thought, a moment in poetic time, and I was attempting to travel across centuries with every stanza.

Perhaps this is how Lovelace felt, or Herrick, or Campion, or even Jonson. Perhaps they too stumbled upon a Catullan line or poem and, escaping their own tumultuous world for just one moment, they entered a Roman one very much the same. As voyages were circling and mapping the world, and pamphlets were spreading news across towns and nations, the Renaissance writers were relating to a poet who delighted in playful eroticism and political obscenities and who was as nostalgic for Rome’s republic as they felt for an emerging absolute monarchy in England. Vicars, physicians, and noblemen alike discovered a lesser-known Roman writer and situated his sensuous affairs and pleas for love within an England rife with change and desperate for stability.

In a literary space of experimentation and collaboration, early English writers interacted with Catullus in a way that treasured theme over form. They related to Catullus not in the actualities of their political idealisms, but in the way they interacted with these attitudes during drastic civil change. Catullus and his Renaissance imitators were poets of new generations, tapping into themes of passion and the present to negotiate shifts in societal structures. Though their imitations are short and playful, the Renaissance writers seem to have been motivated by
sincere fascination and a notion that they were experiencing feelings of passionate excitement and quiet concern that Catullus had poeticized centuries prior and miles away.
Chapter I: Relocating Catullus

_He was a little out at elbows, as young lively fellows of warm passions and costly tastes, even though possessed of fine fortunes, will be upon occasion._
—Theodore Martin

Studies of Catullan poetry often begin with an attempt to articulate his life’s timeline and to identify his work and his place within Roman culture, to varying degrees of thoroughness and success: Some writers, like H. J. Rose, weave reconstructions of Catullus’s life throughout their analyses of the original Latin poetry, while others, like Eric A. Havelock, don’t spend more than a page painting the Catullan portrait before delving directly into the text. There is no proper way to write about Catullus, and this is not the place or the paper to suggest one—but it does appear to me as though our continual attempts to know Catullus are frustrated by the scant knowledge we have about his life in the moment that he was living it.

As the field continues to explore the legacy of Catullus and his work translates from century to century, the ways that we interact with his poetry continue to shift and expand. We can conjecture much more broadly and accurately now about his life and the society and people that most heavily influenced his work. If we take a step back, however, and think about how writers of the Romantic or Renaissance periods would have learned about Catullus and accessed his works, our grasp of the ancient author may have looked very different. It is difficult to say how much information on Catullus was available to his poetic audience over the past two millennia. When looking at past translations and imitations of Catullus, the only thing of which we can be certain is that there was some form of access to his works. The rest is lost in the silence of the past—or, perhaps, the archive. What Catullus wrote, rather than who Catullus was,

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is thus the critical stepping-stone into deciphering his appearance within, and as a product of, Renaissance compositions: an ancient Catullus adopted into English modernity.

**Tracking Ancient Footsteps**

The mystery and intrigue of Catullus’s life is one not unfamiliar to scholars of Latin poetry. There are many things that we do know: We know that Catullus was born in Cisalpine Gaul to a reputable Veronesi family, and that he spent most of his adult life in the city of Rome. We know that his opus—at least, what remains of it—is brief but weighty, leaving for modern readers just over one hundred poems of love found, love lost, and the mythological, spiteful, and curious relationships that encircled his life. Finally, we know that his literary and expressive life was ill fated: He did not live beyond the age of thirty, and, as Havelock so eloquently describes, “like a flame going out, so intense and youthful seems his genius.”

Much of the rest is left for our imagination. What isn’t made explicit about Catullus’s life, either in his own poetry or those like Horace and Martial who make mention of him in their own works, is up for interpretation. This is what makes Catullus so frustratingly fun, unanswered inquiries laying the foundation for a fruitful field of study. His works have been dissected since their publication; multiple manuscripts have been copied and are the subjects of their own dedicated studies, and editions of his original Latin poetry were published alongside Latinate commentaries in the sixteenth century. Research on Catullan transmission and translation has flourished only relatively recently; as often happens, our insight into the past deepens as time continues to lapse. Beginning as early as Cornelius Nepos—who was a friend of Catullus and the

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recipient of Catullus’s poetic dedication—poets have been drawn to the poetry of Catullus. Within the past decade, scholars have begun to investigate why.

Catullan scholarship of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is often divided into eras of influence and periods of his revival in European literature and culture. James A. S. McPeek’s important 1939 inquiry, *Catullus in Strange and Distant Britain*, covers a wide swath of British landscape, hinting at a Catullan revival in the fourteenth century and tracing his footsteps through the first quotation of Catullus in the sixteenth century, concluding the timeline with his lingering in the work of Keats. *Catullus and His Renaissance Readers*, a 1982 reception work by principal Catullan scholar Julia Haig Gaisser, taps into the timeline of transmission through the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in Renaissance Italy. While both of these texts are valuable to the critical scholarship of Catullan translation and reception during the Renaissance period in Europe, their eras conclude prior to the initial seventeenth-century English translations, thus leaving significant gaps in the study of Catullus’s influence.

Published in 2016, Henry Stead’s *A Cockney Catullus: The Reception of Catullus in Romantic Britain, 1795-1821* performs marvelous work in its investigation and alignment of the two first complete English translations of Catullus: one by John Nott in 1795, and the other by George Lamb in 1821. *A Cockney Catullus* is intensive in its research, arguing not that Catullus was a sort of proto-cockney slangster of the Roman age, but instead that Catullus found his “first substantial foothold in British popular consciousness” by way of the artists and creators comprising the Cockney School.5 For Stead, John Nott’s instrumental translation—the first nearly full-length completion of an English Catullus—paved the way for poets like Leigh Hunt and John Keats to embrace and interpret the primary Catullan clutches of passion, mythology,

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and time that mapped so neatly upon the thematic canopy of the Romantic era. Touching briefly upon Nott’s predecessors, Stead points to the key figure and publication being Lovelace’s posthumous collected of poetry titled Lucasta, in addition to Abraham’s Cowley’s posthumous The Works of Mr. Abraham Cowley (wherein exists only one Catullus translation) and an anonymous translation of La Chapelle’s The Adventures of Catullus, which itself translated more than forty poems from Latin into French. Quoting an 1821 edition of the London Magazine, Stead suggests that “Catullus has been nibbled at by many poets,” but that it is Nott’s translation just before the turn of the nineteenth century that is truly “regular” and exceptional in its wholeness.

It is this moment of “nibbles,” however, that becomes most fascinating. Following the 1795 publication, and particularly Lamb’s 1821 version, it becomes much easier to trace the lines between translations and poets capturing Catullus. From Nott and Lamb to Wordsworth and Keats, the Romantic era gives way to the most conclusive and readily accessible interpretations of Catullus’s work that we can find. These published translations have been the subject of scholarly scrutiny for the past century or so. Yet in the end of the sixteenth century, a newly imagined Catullus begins to flourish in the creations of poets—creations that have not yet been made the focus of critical modern inquiry. As the English Renaissance began to fade into a period of rebellion and romanticism, so too was Catullus’s work revived through individual poetic interpretations tucked into books of writers like Herrick, Raleigh, and Lovelace.

My point of entry begins at the turn of the seventeenth century, with Campion and Jonson at the helm, and revolves primarily around Lovelace’s interaction with and portrayal of Roman Catullus as Renaissance cavalier. Rather than attempt to outline and analyze a comprehensive

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6 Ibid., 33.
7 Ibid.
catalogue of Catullan-inspired poetry, my main focus centers on how early seventeenth-century poets—particularly Herrick and Lovelace—resituated Catullus in contemporary forms of poetry (like *carpe diem* poems) and in moments of political strife in England, namely the years immediately preceding the English Civil War. As my work will explore, Catullus represents, for Renaissance writers, both a space for play and for political intervention, an opportunity to celebrate life in the face of social unrest.

**An English Intervention**

As we often encounter when we examine the passage of writing over time and the spread of ideas and themes, it can be difficult to trace patterns of transmission from poet to poet or text to text. Turning to the mysterious case of Catullus, the historical lines of transit become even murkier as manuscripts, references to hard copies, and authorial intent are lost to the so-called Dark Ages. As Alina Laura de Luca explains, “We know that it [the *Liber Catulli Veronensis*] had an enormous and immediate popularity among poets of the ‘Golden Age’ and was read and discussed from the second to the fourth century.”\(^8\) This is certainly true and well catalogued; in his book of Catullan translations, John Nott devotes a prefatory section to the “Ancient Writers, who make mention of Catullus,” chronologically listing every mention of Catullus available to his eighteenth-century scholarship, from Horace, to both Pliny the Elder and the Younger, and ending with the grammarian Terentianus Maurus’s mention in a treatise of meters and the hendecasyllabic form that Catullus so fully embraced.\(^9\) With his last known glimmer in the third

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If Catullus had occupied a significant corner in the European canon of studied poetry, the archive has so far revealed only a few brief glances: a florilegium, a sermon, and Petrarch’s library. These are the places where, fleetingly and perhaps unsurprisingly, we do find Catullus within the Middle Ages. De Luca details that there is “evidence that Catullus was being read in France and northern Italy” in the ninth and tenth centuries; she points to the inclusion of poem 62, on the god Hymen, in a florilegium, and the mention of Catullus in a sermon given by Raterio, Bishop of Verona. “I read Catullus that has never been accessed before,” he spoke in 966. Raterio’s comment here is notable: If we are to take him at his word, we discover that not only was Catullus still obtainable in his birthplace of Verona, but tenth-century contemporaries felt as though they too were stumbling upon an uncharted poet.

While de Luca suggests that, more likely than not, the Liber “lay undisturbed in the Chapter Library of Verona throughout most of the Middle Ages,” it—or another version of Catullus—curiously made its way into Petrarch’s hands and library in the fourteenth century. The work of Albert C. Clark suggests that Petrarch owned a copy of a Catullan manuscript. He owned this copy in addition to one by Propertius; according to Clark, these would have been copies of “two very rare authors,” and at that time was an extremely rare feat by Petrarch. “Without a doubt,” Clark suggests, this Catullus manuscript was drawn from the “unique copy which survived in the Verona library,” and which had been the touchstone for the author of the 1329 manuscript Flores Morales. As a poetic scholar and one of the most prominent figures of

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10 de Luca, “«Catullum Numquam Antea Lectum [...] Lego»,” 329.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
14 For more information on manuscript transmission, see Albert C. Clark, “The Reappearance of the Texts of the Classics,” presentation at the Biographical Society, February 21, 1921.
the Italian Renaissance, it is not improbable to think that this is the path that led Catullus to writers in Renaissance England, whose poetry often reveals the influence of Petrarchan models and motifs. Catullus was cited by Petrarch several times\(^\text{15}\) and, in Petrarch, we might find Catullus qualified and solidified as an ancient love poet to be reckoned with, a voice of classical authority.

His Petrarchan connection and European presence provides some framework for how Catullus was disseminated throughout England, but the answer to the question of the first English Catullus is still very much up for debate. Classicist George Patrick Goold expresses this, providing the example of the Skelton conundrum: “While no one doubts that John Skelton’s *Book of Philip Sparrow* (c. 1505: of 1382 lines!) draws somehow for its theme upon the poet of Verona, we look in vain for an incontrovertible piece of evidence that would clinch the connection.”\(^\text{16}\) The line of transfer, then, remains a secret of the archive, or perhaps simply lost somewhere among Petrarch’s texts and England’s poetic renaissance. Ultimately, Catullus found his way from France and Italy into England, where he found his footing as a notable Roman poet in his own right. The French novel, *The Adventures of Catullus*, by La Chapelle was translated into English at the turn of the eighteenth century, as specified by a number of scholars and included in Nott’s prefatory materials.\(^\text{17}\) But this derivation cannot wholly explain how earlier poets—Sidney, Jonson, and Raleigh—came in contact with Catullus’s work. Their translations often appear in bodies of work, alongside translations of Martial or Horace, without much acknowledgment or explanation of the translating process. Even John Nott’s later translation of Catullus in full, though he includes a preface detailing his particular approach to the process of

\(^{15}\) de Luca, “«Catullum Numquam Antea Lectum [...] Lego»,” 329.


translating and catalogues those incomplete or non-English translations that came before him, does not embellish upon how he came into contact with Catullus in the first place.

The endorsement of Petrarch was enough to guarantee that Catullus would find purchase in the rest of Latinate Europe and England. This transmission of Catullus was bolstered by the shift in readership and canonization becoming less indebted to individual transcription and more a product of the printing press. By the seventeenth century, pamphlets—quickly and cheaply printed—were found around every corner as handwritten copies were becoming antiquated technologies. Publication became a crucial way that poetry and its translations were circulated and discovered, as seen in the songbooks of Campion, the plays of Jonson, and the anthologies of Herrick. As Goold writes, “With the printed book the poet spreads like wild-fire.” Following the preliminary imitations of Catullus in English, where the original Latin was sometimes included opposite the translation, his work could be easily digested and in turn reread, retranslated, and recreated.

Lacking the archival foundation necessary to foreground a more comprehensive study of transmission, I am drawn to simply looking at the translations themselves—reading poetry of Herrick, Lovelace, and their predecessors—and mapping their translations and imitations against the originals. While we may not know through modern archival research precisely what was available to readers of Catullus in Renaissance England or how they came across these poems, there is plenty of room to wonder why the Sons of Ben and the Cavalier poets took up Catullan themes. As Stead writes, “Catullus, through his poetry, manages to transcend geographical, temporal, and ideological boundaries, making him one of the most familiar classical authors

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whose work survives for readers from all classes and genders.” The distance between a pre-Christian Rome and an England stricken by religious feuds and national boundaries seems to shrink with every line of translation.

Chapter II: Recovering Catullus

*The present age is all the more at home with Catullus because the feelings he expressed were those of an individualist clinging, in a disintegrating society, to the one standard which he could feel was secure, that of personal integrity.*

—R. G. C. Levens

Although separated by miles and millennia, the sociopolitical circumstances of first-century Rome and post-Elizabethan England are strikingly similar, both undergoing vast and unprecedented changes that radically shaped poetic output and language seen in this chapter. Catullus’s estimated lifetime, around 84-54 BCE, places him squarely in the turbulent transitional period between the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire, one rife with restless republican citizens and emerging imperial dictatorships. There existed a divide between several hierarchical social groups who aimed to achieve political status in very different ways, and out of this tumultuous mess came the First Triumvirate, which lasted roughly until Catullus’s death and preceded Caesar’s rise to tyrannical power.

Compare this to the environment in which the poets Jonson, Herrick, and Lovelace were composing their works of passionate intimacy and political conflict, an early seventeenth-century England caught between tense religious divisions and shifting dynamics of power. When the House of Stuart took the throne in 1603, the country—which had experienced a comparably stable queenship in the Elizabethan era—began forging toward an entirely new type of era, one defined by an unapologetically absolutist monarchy.

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21 This is not to say that the Elizabethan era resembled republicanism in Rome.
H. J. Rose wrote of the first century BCE tumult, “An age of poetry was dead, and another coming to the birth, and men’s sympathies were divided between the old and the new.” While Rose is speaking to Catullus’s intervention into his contemporary period of Roman transition throughout his lifetime, we might also be able to read this summary with a much more early modern and English context in mind. Perhaps this notion of a dying age of poetry proves too stark in representing the transformations occurring in Renaissance England, but it isn’t too far of a stretch, I argue, that we think of Rome and England on similar planes of change—the republic’s concession to Caesar and the English accession of King James—that might breed parallel poetic movements of capturing fleeting love in a moment of flux.

It is important to clarify that Catullus and these Renaissance writers did not hold the same views of the political shifts that they separately experienced. Where Catullus disdained Caesar and preferred the constancy of the Republic, these early poets of the seventeenth century often wrote for, lauded, and fought on behalf of kings James and Charles. If these two sets of poets were to discuss governmental structures and the rule of leaders, it would likely end in a scuffle rather than an agreement. It is not their similar beliefs that connect them, but rather the inclination to cling to and write on similar sentimental themes when confronted by civic structures in motion.

**Carpe Diem: Seizing Catullan Romance**

When we look at the collection of Catullan imitations that precede Lovelace’s more diverse collection of translations in 1659, there is one clear similarity among them: They all take inspiration from or directly point to Catullus 5, title-less (as all of his poems are) and so named

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due to its placement in the Catullan canon, but generally known by its first line, Vivamus, mea Lesbia, atque amemus. Now one of Catullus’s most well-known Lesbia poems, there may be many reasons why this specific poem is the primary source of Catullan influence on Renaissance England. Theodore Martin writes, “Probably no poem has been so often translated and imitated as this.”

Perhaps it caught on because of its short length and early placement within Catullus’s set of carmina; perhaps its romantic but playful nuances made it an exciting prospect to translate. Certainly, the poem’s first-person setting allows for a unique opportunity to envision yourself as the author, rather than the reader—every translation retains this embodiment of a Catullan self, with some imitations preserving Lesbia and others inserting their own personalized partner. Out of more than one hundred poems, this one stuck more than the rest with early Renaissance readers, even those outside of England: Martin cites that there were thirty paraphrased translations of this poem composed in French. Below is the original poem in Latin:

\[
\begin{align*}
Vivamus, mea Lesbia, atque amemus, \\
rumoresque senum severiorum \\
onnes unius aenum chemin assis. \\
Soles occidere et redire possunt: \\
nobis, cum semel occidit brevis lux, \\
nox est perpetua una dormienda. \\
Da mi basia mille, deinde centum, \\
dein mille altera, dein secunda centum, \\
deinda usque altera mille, deinda centum, \\
dein, cum milia multa fecerimus, \\
conturbabimus illa, ne sciamus, \\
aut ne quis malus invidere possit, \\
cum tantum sciat esse basiorum. 
\end{align*}
\]

\[24\] Ibid., 140.
To understand the various strategies of translation employed by early modern writers approaching Catullus, it perhaps makes most sense to start at the beginning, with the first translation of the seventeenth century: Campion’s “My Sweetest Lesbia,” first published in a Philip Rosseter songbook in 1601. In this recreation of Catullus 5, Campion has set this love narrative to music, hearkening back to the classical aural tradition, the musicality of poetry. This creative production falls in line with Martin’s own commentary on Catullus 5: “Surely a charming little song. It seems to suggest its own music.”

My sweetest Lesbia, let us live and love,
And though the fager fort our deeds reprove,
Let us not way them. Heau’ns great lampes doe due
Into their weft, and ftrait againe reuie,
But foone as one fet is our little light,
Then muft we sleepe on euer-during night,
euer-during night.

If all would lead their lives in loue like me,
Then bloody words and armour should not be,
No drum nor trumpet peaceful sleepe should moue,
Unless alarm came from the camp of loue:
But fools do liue, and waffe their little light,
And seek with pain their euer-during night.

When timely death my life and fortune ends,
Let not my hearfe be uexed with mourning friends,
But let all louers, rich in triumph come,
And with sweet pastimes grace my happy tomb;
And, Lesbia, close up thou my little light,
And crown with loue my euer-during night.

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26 There has been debate on the true authorship of this translation, as Philip Rosseter sometimes—but not always—wrote his own lyrics to accompany his musical compositions. This translation of Catullus, however, is regardless widely attributed to Campion.
27 Martin, The Poems of Catullus, 140-1.
28 Throughout this thesis, poems will be reproduced as they appeared in the their cited texts, including any text formatting and stylistic spelling. This means that I will also include the original long s (f) in the original complete translations. However, for clarity and simplicity, I’ll resort to the short s and more modernized spellings in any external quotes and excerpts.
In the original, Catullus 5 can be roughly broken down into three general sections: first, an entreaty within the public gaze, a push to love one another and to forget old men and their chatter; second, a delving into the natural space, a desire to love before the sun falls and dark night eternally falls; third, a turn toward the supernatural, a theory that the number of kisses, measured by many sums, will confuse such old men and defend the lovers against malicious looks—\textit{invidere}, “to envy” but also “to cast an evil eye.” If we compare Campion’s song against this framework, it’s quickly clear that only the first stanza, loving before a reproachful “sager sort” until the fall of an “ever-during night,” stays true to the original.

The rest of the Campion’s interpretation becomes one of imitation or creation, not touching at all upon the counting of kisses, or the ancient \textit{malus} magic of \textit{invidere possit}. We might imagine, in one potential scenario, that Campion had in fact lacked an entire version of the original or only knew the first six lines of Catullus 5, and thus only translated what he had available to him. In another, perhaps more likely, scenario, Campion simply chose to use the first half of Catullus’s original poem as the foundation for his song and decided to imitate or create the remainder. Campion does use “vexed” in the fifteenth line of the poem, perhaps his way of quietly nodding to \textit{invidere possit}. It sits, however, outside of Catullus’s context of counting, kissing, and casting spells, and may be more happenstance than deliberate.

A physician by trade and a poet by fame, it is difficult to say what may have prevented Campion from imitating the entire poem—or what prompted him to substitute mentions of “bloody swords and armor,” “sweet pastimes” and “mourning friends.” As Gordon Braden suggests, “What follows [the first stanza], however, is a wholly different development—based partly on Propertius—in the course of which death becomes almost welcomed, almost a
fulfillment of love.” Where Catullus’s poem plays with the dichotomy of life and death, of eternal passion and love found and then threatened by sage old men, Campion takes a more serious turn in his lyrical version. He treasures the weight of love more than the lightheartedness of it, anchoring his melody with a repetitious “ever-during night”—love’s inescapable denouement.

Once we move past Campion’s musical interpretation and into the Tribe of Ben era, the resulting imitations and translations of Catullus 5 begin to align more closely with the contemporary carpe diem poem, a style quite popular throughout Renaissance England. The carpe diem poem—or at least its title—is often attributed to Horace, and rightly so: “Carpe diem,” he writes in the final line of Ode 1.11, “quam minimum credula postero.” Although the translation of carpe into “seize” has historically been critiqued, carpe diem as “seize the day” has travelled through the centuries and is well known still today. In Renaissance England, the theme of seizing the day was taken up as its own motif. “One great topic in western love literature,” writes Rosalie Colie, “is the carpe diem, carpe florem theme, so common in Renaissance poetry.”

Colie’s work focuses exclusively on Andrew Marvell’s reanimation of carpe diem poetry. A politician of the parliament in the 1660s and ’70s, Marvell falls later in our timeline, but his creation of carpe diem poems may retroactively illuminate our own discussion. Colie calls attention to two poems in particular: “Young Love” and “The Picture of little T.C. in a Prospect of Flowers.” These poems highlight, for Colie, the ways in which the carpe diem poem works

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31 “Seize the day, trusting as little as possible in what follows.” (My own translation.)
much like Catullus 5, as they both demonstrate the “fundamental element of the pastoral love code as well as of the sensualist’s code.” We can extend this line of thought to those who touched upon Catullus explicitly in the early seventeenth century, notably in the vulgar sensuality of Jonson and the pastoral *carpe* of Carew and Herrick.

Interpretations of Catullus 5, then, seem to be interacting distinctly with *carpe diem* poetry both thematically and formulaically, creating a fusion of the two and overlaying an ancient poem with a more modern lens. As seen, for example, with Ben Jonson’s interpretation of Catullus 5, key components of the original poem continue to shape the imitation while the second half of the poem often strays in a corresponding though ultimately differing direction. In his *Volpone*, a satirical play on greed and lust, Jonson invokes *Vivamus, mea Lesbia, atque amemus* when the titular character speaks to Celia in a “song.”

Come, my Celia, let us prove,
While wee can, the ports of loue;
Time will not be ours, for euer,
He, at length, our good will feuer;
Spend not then his guiftes, in vaine.
Sunnies, that fet, may rife againe:
But if, once, we loołe this light,
‘Tis with us perpetuall night.
Why shou’d wee deferre our ioyes?
Fame, and rumor are but toyes.
Cannot wee delude the eyes
Of a few poore houſhold-spies?
Or his eaſier eares beguile,
Thus remoued, by our wile?
Tis no finne, loues fruicts to steale;
But the ſweete thefts to reuele:
To be taken, to be ſeeene,

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33 One might imagine and pursue an exploration into Marvellian interpretation of Catullus, particularly in “Young Love”: “Come little Infant, Love me now, / While thine unsuspected years / Clear thine aged Fathers brow / From cold Jealousie and Fears.” These lines might open up new dialogues in the love, simultaneously paternal and romantic, often expressed in ancient and contemporary poetry.

34 Colie, “Carpe Diem Poems,” 53.

35 Herrick was also largely known for his *carpe diem* poetry, but his most famous one, “Gather ye Rosebuds,” doesn’t have an explicit connection with Catullus 5 like the translations by Jonson and Carew.
Thefe haue crimes accounted beene.\textsuperscript{36}

Although this imitation was published only six years after Campion’s own song, Jonson’s interaction with the content is more mischievous and light-hearted. Where Campion focuses more on the impact of death and thus cherishing every opportunity to love, Jonson’s imitation represents a true \textit{carpe diem} poem in its most obscene moment, one of using passing time and the threat of a looming “perpetual night” in order to sway and seduce a lover in the present. Catullus’s poem is full of requests and invitations: Let us live, let us love, give to me a thousand kisses. In \textit{Volpone}, these seem to become baits and challenges: Let us prove, spend not time’s gifts in vain, why \textit{should} we defer our joys? Asking a series of questions makes sense within the context of an ensemble play, where another participant may respond or react, but it also transforms Catullus 5 into a poem of unscrupulous passion and pursuit.

While Jonson is certainly extending his own creative license over Catullan themes, some scholars are not as appreciative of his impression. Philologist and medieval historian Eleanor Shipley Duckett, in her discussion of early English translations of Catullus, writes, “We think first of Catullus always as exultant, in his joy of Lesbia. It is a far cry from this to the horrid invitation of Ben Jonson’s old Volpone.”\textsuperscript{37} Far cry indeed—the song occurs early on in the play when Volpone, having just met Celia, is attempting to replace her “base husband” by asserting his own aptitude as a “worthy lover.”\textsuperscript{38} Celia initially refutes, unimpressed.

This difference in narrative attitude seems to exemplify the difference between Catullus and Volpone as narrators. The former is desperately in love, the latter a conniving ruffian, yet

\textsuperscript{36} Ben Jonson, \textit{Ben Jonson: his Volpone or the Foxe} (Printed for Thomas Thorppe, 1607), H2(r).
\textsuperscript{38} Jonson, \textit{Ben Jonson: his Volpone or the Foxe}, (H2v).
both are seducing women who are not legally theirs, using language that is enticing and, at times, loftily ambitious. “Compassion, intimacy, vulnerability, the contradictions of desire, are not among the attributes and experiences [Jonson] dramatizes,” explains John Stubbs. “His plays are parades of vice, streams of unerringly realized flaws fresh off the street.” Jonson’s Catullus is a crude English fox, his ancient passion debauched and transplanted into the city corridors of Renaissance England.

The curt Catullus who held a brief role in *Volpone*, and the Catullus sung to us by Campion, are both different from Carew’s Catullus who appears sometime after the prior two. Because Carew’s work was published wholly and posthumously in several editions, it isn’t specified or known when he wrote his imitation of Catullus, although we can estimate that it was sometime between the 1610s and his death in 1640. While this is a wide window to occupy, for the purpose of this thesis, I’ve focused on the Catullan influence in the last sixteen lines of his eighty-four-line poem, “To A.L. Persuasions to Love.”

In this poem Carew, according to Martin, “has expanded the idea of the first half of Catullus’s poem into the following graceful lines”: 41

Oh love me then, and now begin it,
Let us not lose this present minute:
For Time and Age will work that wrack
Which Time or Age shall ne’er call back.
The Snake each year fresh skin refumes,
And Eagles change their aged Plumes;
The faded Rose each Spring receives
A fresh red tincture on her leaves:
But if your Beauties once decay,
You never know a second May.
Oh, then be wise, and whilst your season

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39 Lesbia, a pseudonym, is traditionally thought to refer to Clodia, wife of Quintus Caecilius Metellus Celer.
Affords you days for fport, do reafon;
Spend not in vain your lives fhort hour,
But crop in time your Beauties flow’r:
Which will away, and doth together
Both Bud and Fade, both Blow and Wither.\(^{42}\)

The first half of Catullus 5, as Martin indicates, is quickly found in “Persuasions of Love” as it is also the first portion of Carew’s poem. Much like previous imitations by Campion and Jonson, Carew takes up the first two portions of the original—loving now before time elapses—as introductory to his own poem. *Nox perpetua* isn’t explicitly translated as we see with Campion and Jonson, but Carew does turn to time and age, which “shall ne’r call back” the present minute of love.

We are also immediately able to spot key differences between Carew’s rendition of Catullus 5 and earlier versions by Campion and Jonson, which have become so familiar as trademarks of early English imitations. Carew addresses this poem not to Lesbia, nor to Celia, nor any other recognizable names or pseudonyms, but rather to an unspoken and unseen partner. While the title of the poem specifies that it is addressed to A. L., there is no in-line reference to a particular person. Another notable change is the enormous shift toward the natural that Carew takes. This certainly falls in line with Carew’s other works, which harness imagery of the sensuous bucolic, but sets him apart from Campion’s exultant hymn and Jonson’s cynical city-slicking seduction.

As Stubbs suggests, “The early career of Thomas Carew illustrates for us the formation of a privileged literary gentleman, and ‘idle’ writer.”\(^{43}\) Son of knighted master of chancery Sir Mathew Carew, from a young age Carew was a man for and of the state. At the age of eighteen,

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\(^{43}\) Stubbs, *Reprobates*, 27.
he waited on English ambassador Sir Dudley Carleton in Venice, “a gentleman of the Inns of Court, with a confident, somewhat severe and critical manner.”44 In adulthood, Carew would take up arms for King Charles, for just as he and his colleagues “fancied themselves poets and scholars, with the contemplative life as their model, so they also considered themselves soldiers: it was all encapsulated in the Continental gentleman’s title of ‘cavalier.’”45 While we may be hesitant to designate Carew as a cavalier, the marriage of his lively, sensual poetry (“crop in time your Beauties flow’r”) and his devotion to the king is certainly proto-cavalier, closely encircled with Ben Jonson and holding privileged places at the court throughout his lifetime.

**Herrick and the Catullan Corinna**

Robert Herrick was a man of the cloth, baptized in 1591 and living well into his eighties, a lifespan impressive for seventeenth-century England. Herrick was a poet as well as a priest, and he was proud to be, along with Carew, Lovelace, and Suckling, one of the Sons of Ben. He greatly admired Jonson’s work and frequently addressed him in writing; his works include prayers, odes, and poems to Jonson. When his “attempts to live by his pen” ultimately failed, Herrick was able to “win the patronage of Endymion Porter, Charles and Buckingham’s travelling companion, translator, ambassador, and purchaser of art,”46 and through this eventually became chaplain to George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham. Herrick, in addition to being “the ‘cavalier’ who wrote [Gather ye rosebuds]” and “an Anglican priest,” thus soon became a devoted metaphorical soldier of the king, even if he ultimately “avoided all personal exposure to war after travelling as a chaplain [to George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham] on a

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44 Ibid., 19.
46 Ibid., 79.
disastrous naval mission to the French coast in 1627.” Herrick held many titles and served his literary “father” (Jonson), his earthly “father” (King James) and, for longer than the rest, his heavenly father.

Occupying an interesting moment as the early Renaissance began to fade into the past and the cavalier movement was growing in size and stature, Herrick is a unique figure to closely investigate. Much like the treatment of Catullus post-Roman Empire, Herrick has often been overlooked for his obscenity and, during and immediately following his own lifetime, he was frequently overshadowed by contemporaries like Donne and Carew. For decades, he was a minor poet, fitting into the Renaissance lineage without contributing much toward it. Martin critiqued him, asserting, “Herrick copied Catullus in his worst feature, indelicacy,” allowing for “gross materialism” and a “coarseness” that contrasts the original Catullus as well as “the pure glow of Spenser” and similar poets. Recent scholarship has restored Herrick’s reputation, establishing him as a poet who became as notable as his own poetic inspirations and contemporaries.

For the purposes of my inquiry, we simply cannot leave out the important imitative work that Herrick performed. He is often considered the father of the *carpe diem* poem: His “To the Virgins, to make much of Time” is highly regarded and frequently cited in discussions of the sensuous and natural *carpe diem* poem, an instance where both *carpe diem* and Colie’s *carpe florem* are immediately present in the first two stanzas:

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Gather ye Rose-buds while ye may,
Old Time is still a flying:
And this same flower that smiles to day
To morrow will be dying.

The glorious Lamp of Heaven, the Sun,
The higher he’s a getting;
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The sooner will his Race be run,
And nearer he’s to Setting.⁴⁹

This poem does not explicitly reference Catullus, nor does it incorporate many of the factors that we expect to find in a Catullus 5 imitation: call to Lesbia or another woman, counting kisses, shirking old men’s glances. Yet, with his references to the passage of time alongside his description of the setting of the sun, it isn’t improbable to imagine that “Gather ye Rosebuds” was in part a product of Catullan inspiration or intervention. Certainly it was influenced by his political station, coming “as close as anything to capturing the life-philosophy of Herrick’s master. Buckingham was all for living in the present, and for making much of time.”⁵⁰ Its natural connotations are also reminiscent of Carew’s: Herrick’s “same flower that smiles today / Tomorrow will be dying,” just as Carew advises A. L. to “crop in time your Beauties flow’r: / Which will away, and doth together / Both Bud and Fade, both Blow and Wither.” Carpe diem, translated most often as “seize the day,” here reflects the original meaning of carpe: Pluck, rather than seize, the rosebuds, a symbol of thriving life. Pastoral imagery of flowers’ bloom and wilt takes the place of the Catullan lux and nox, though both the ancient and Englished poems are seducing and seeking the same result.

This isn’t to say that Herrick did not imitate or translate Catullus directly. His poem, “Upon the death of his Sparrow. An Elegie,” is an elegy on a passing passer akin to Catullus 3, where in Lesbia mourns the death of her own sparrow. While Martin, again highly critical, argues that “Herrick, who of course has an elegy on a sparrow of his own, tries to cap his

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⁵⁰ Stubbs, Reprobates, 80.
prototype, not very successfully,” I argue that Herrick builds from and helps to deepen Catullus’s portrayal of grief and, very subtly, the role of the afterlife:

Why doe not all freth maids appeare
To work Love’s Sampler onely here,
Where spryng-time splies throughout the yeare?
Are not here Roſe-buds, Pinks, all flowers,
Nature begets by th’Sun and showers,
Met in one Hearce-cloth, to ore-fpred
The body of the under-dead?
Phill, the late dead, the late dead Deare,
O! may no eye diſtill a Teare
For you once loft, who weep not here!
Had Leſbia (too-too-kind) but known
This Sparrow, she had fcorn’d her own:
And for this dead which under-lies,
Wept out her heart, as well as eyes.
But endleſſe Peace, fit here, and keep
My Phill, the time has to sleepe,
And thouſand Virgins come and weep,
To make theſe flowerie Carpets flow
Freth, as their blod; and ever grow,
Till pafſengers ſhall fpend their doome,
Not Virgil’s Gnat had ſuch a Tomb.

The rosebuds of “To the Virgins” grow within this elegy as well, yet they’ve become the blanket of the passed, laying roots in the soil surrounding the “body of the under-dead.” Gathering rosebuds, then, becomes an action more ominous, for even as Herrick requests that we take advantage of the rosebuds while they grow and thrive, they themselves are fruits of the a fertile earth enveloping the already departed. This morbid notion of an earthly underworld connects to the Catullan original: *Qui nunc it per iter tenebricosum / illuc unde negant redire quemquam.*

Lesbia is explicitly mentioned, a “too-too-kind” woman who, when she lost her own sparrow, had “wept out her heart, as well as her eyes,” leaving her with *flendo turgiduli rubent*

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51 Martin, *The Poems of Catullus*, 140.
53 “Now it proceeds along a path shrouded in shadows, to the place whence no one is able to return.” (My own translation.)
Herrick’s version seems to be simply one of agreement in remorse, a memory of mourning that relates to an elegy grappling with a very similar loss. Herrick’s sparrow seems to have been named Phil, and is the addressee of the poem. “My Phill,” Herrick writes, “the time has to sleep.” While there is no true mention of night, Herrick writes that “nature begets by th’Sun,” such that we might imagine, in his sparrow’s time of sleep, an accompanying setting of the sun and eternal night.

The name Phil isn’t clarified or explained either. It is likely that this name stems from Skelton’s “The Book of Phillip Sparrow,” an oft-read poem in the English Renaissance. However, we might also intimate that it refers to Philomela, a female figure from Greek mythology who becomes transformed into a nightingale. Herrick’s oeuvre includes a dialogue sung between “Charon and Phylomel,” so we know that the story of Philomela and her “witching note” were part of Herrick’s classical comprehension.\(^{54}\) While not a sparrow, the intervention of a nightingale perhaps adds a new layer of context about Lesbia, her sparrow, and an eternally resounding lament—but this is a theme better suited for another paper.

Another poem where we may be able to draw explicit connections to Catullus—and particularly Catullus 5—is one of Herrick’s more well-known poems, “Corinna’s going a-Maying.” Although the theme of delighting in love prevails throughout the poem, the final stanza is the one most similar to Catullus’s \textit{Vivamus, mea Lesbia, atque amemus}:

\begin{verbatim}
Come, let us goe, while we are in our prime;  
And take the harmleffe follie of the time.  
We shal grow old space, and die  
Before we know our liberty.  
Our life is short; and our dayes run  
As faft away as do’s the Sunne:  
And as a vapour, or a drop of raine  
Once loft, can ne’r be found againe:
\end{verbatim}

\(^{54}\) Herrick, \textit{Hesperides}, 292.
So when or you or I are made
A fable, fong, or fleeting fhad;
All love, all liking, all delight
Lies drown’d with us in endlesf night.
Then while time ferves, and we are but decaying;
Come, my Corinna, come, let’s goe a-Maying.\(^55\)

The first word being “Come” provides a strong connection to Catullus 5 and other English imitations of it. It acts as an invitation, helping to set it within a familiar lineage of Catullan call and response. We can also see how its natural imagery aligns it with the work of Carew, a bucolic world that “Herrick, though a city-dweller by birth, came to celebrate.”\(^56\) Perhaps shaped by his short-lived time with the Duke of Buckingham, and also reinforced by the signature traditions of the seductive carpe diem poem, “Corinna’s going a-Maying” undeniably invites Corinna, and his readers, “to abstain from destructive movements and to pursue fleeting pleasures; to foster the private causes of their future melancholy.”\(^57\) We can imagine how the state of England—entering into political and religious wars, quelling the autonomy of the Parliament and the people—could have a heavy influence on Herrick’s urgency here for delighting in the simple pleasures and staving off time’s imminent promise of decay.

Yet there is an added element of despair or realization in Herrick’s “Corinna” that differs from Catullus’s youthful curiosity of love. As Stubbs suggests, “There are those for whom Herrick’s urgency has immediate relevance—the boys and girls out Maying; and there are those for whom it is already too late.”\(^58\) Rather than worrying over the criticisms of senile men and adding up great sums of innocent kisses, Herrick seems to speak from a place of experienced regret: “We shall grow old space, and die / Before we know our liberty. / All love, all liking, all

\(^{55}\) Ibid., 75-6.
\(^{56}\) Stubbs, Reprobates, 76.
\(^{57}\) Ibid., 81.
\(^{58}\) Ibid., 77.
delight / Lies drown’d with us in endless night.” Catullus had his Lesbia, and perhaps other lovers as well; Herrick, we know, lived his life as a bachelor, never taking a wife. “It is never quite clear,” Stubbs concludes, “whether Herrick’s own poetic speaker belongs to those who cast off sloth in time or those who failed to do so.”

This *carpe diem* poem, rather than ending in promising sensuous seduction, might read as a defeated plea for a bygone, imagined era.

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59 Ibid.
Chapter III: Rewriting Catullus

How shall one communicate to the English mind the essence of a Latin poet long dead?
—Eric A. Havelock\textsuperscript{60}

From the start of the seventeenth century and lasting until 1659, we see a small but meaningful swell of Catullan interpretations that Anglicize and realize Catullus’s poetry in a swiftly changing Renaissance England. However, until this point, such interpretations are composed through one distinct point of access—\textit{Vivamus, mea Lesbia, atque amemus}—and as such have lacked an explicit political point of entry. While Jonson, Carew, and Herrick all interacted with Catullus within a post-Elizabeth England,\textsuperscript{61} their interpretations of him speak to the emphatic love of Catullus without invoking their own politicized ambitions—notably Herrick’s role as chaplain.

Enter Richard Lovelace, quintessential cavalier poet of seventeenth-century England, a politically incensing and artistically evocative figure in the poetic arena. Born in 1617, Lovelace couples the dramatic inklings of the Sons of Ben and the shifting political and artistic attitudes of England. By the time he turned ten, Charles I had taken the throne, and it is this king for whom Lovelace would eventually fight, following in his father’s footsteps and becoming ensign and captain in skirmishes like the Scottish wars and regiments like General George Goring’s.

Outside the battlefield, Lovelace continued to expand his reputation as writer known for his sensuous persuasions of love, praise for friends and colleagues, and commentaries on shifts in political situations. As Stubbs relays, “Lovelace himself was one of the heart-throbs of

\textsuperscript{60} Havelock, \textit{The Lyric Genius of Catullus}, 2.
\textsuperscript{61} As Campion predated the kingship of James, publishing “My Sweetest Lesbia” while Elizabeth was still queen, his imitation acts as more of a predecessor and less of an exemplar.
seventeenth-century literature.” As an undergraduate, he composed a play that was performed by his classmates, and was later performed in London. In Stubbs’s assessment, perhaps without much trial and error, Lovelace was a notable writer at a young age: By the time he had turned twenty-five, he was “all that Suckling failed to be, with much less effort. Beloved at court, at Oxford he had been ‘accounted the most amiable and beautiful person that ever eye beheld.’” Chivalric, gallant, and witty, Lovelace proved to be a genuine king’s gentleman, his short life abundant with political scuffles and poetic impressions. One of his most well-known poems, “To Althea, from Prison,” was composed during his imprisonment, yet it manages to intertwine the freedom of love with the threat of guilt, grief, and barred creation. It is not surprising that such a gentlemanly poet would reap the affectionate returns of the court that he so sincerely supported.

Lovelace saw the threat toward his king’s power posed by the Parliament, and fought heavily against it; Catullus, witnessing a Rome where “democracy, wounded as ever by its own blundering hand, was dead” and that was messily transitioning from republic to empire, wrote through his own unwillingness to see his nation turn against itself. In doing so, his poetry prefaces many of the features that we see within Lovelace’s body of work, and I argue that Lovelace felt drawn to Catullus because of their similar devotion to their nations’ respective status quos and the sense that these status quos were in jeopardy.

Lovelace and Catullus interact not only in historical divergences, but also in their respective poetic reputations. “Catullus himself was distinctly of the ‘new poets’ whom Cicero

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62 Stubbs, Reprobates, 322.
63 Ibid., 321.
64 Ibid.
66 Stubbs is very careful to allocate the moniker of “cavalier” to a particular timeframe in English history: “We should not, that is, read the meaning the word ‘cavalier’ acquired in the 1640s back into its earlier usage” (250). Though it is tempting to read back upon Catullus as a sort of ancient cavalier, it is most fruitful for this particular thesis to focus on the import that political status and bold, passionate poetry held for Lovelace as he reflected back upon Catullus.
heartily despised, but a more flamboyant democrat in politics was never seen,” writes Rose. “He was an obscurantist, a warm upholder of the good old ways of blunder-and-plunder, alternating with wait-and-see.” While little is known about tangible actions taken by Catullus, he wrote several invective poems about Caesar: His poem 57 notably refers to both Caesar as pathico (“sexually submissive”) to his military officer, Mamurra, both of them improbis cinaedis (“wanton sodomites”). Lovelace, the face of a new cavalier movement, was similarly set apart from his poetic cohort and discovered his own enemies along the way—namely the Parliament, which imprisoned him when he continued to back anti-Parliament petitions.

Through Lovelace’s translations of Catullus, we can trace a longing for a time that relished in artistic endeavors and portrayed themes of love and loss as complex, inherently entwined with political uncertainty and national loyalty. In touching upon more than Catullus’s Lesbia and interacting with his other lovers, close friends, and Cicero, Lovelace helps to move Catullus beyond simple inspiration for a carpe diem poem and give him dimension and a contemporary voice. Lovelace translates Catullus through a politicized lens as a new poet of the seventeenth century, even from the quiet final pages of his posthumous publication.

“To Lesbia, from 1659”

Before taking a closer look at some of the Catullan poems that Lovelace translated, let us briefly explore his most highly regarded poem, “To Althea, from Prison”—in particular, the final two stanzas of it. For this, I turn to the work of scholar Sharon Cadman Seelig, as she deftly examines the thin line drawn between love and loyalty, between affection and allegiance:

When (like committed linnets) I

67 Ibid., 541.
With shriller throat shall sing
The sweetness, Mercy, Majesty,
And glories of my King;
When I shall voice aloud how good
He is, how Great should be,
Enlargéd Winds, that curl the Flood,
Know no such Liberty.

Stone Walls do not a Prison make,
Nor Iron bars a Cage;
Minds innocent and quiet take
That for an Hermitage.
If I have freedom in my Love,
And in my soul am free,
Angels alone that soar above
Enjoy such Liberty.  

“He wrote ‘To Althea, from Prison’ while himself confined,” Seelig explains. “His very ardor in support of the king’s cause, the boldness with which he presented the strongly pro-royalist Kentish petition to the House of Commons, led to his imprisonment in 1642.”  

This entrapment is quick to grasp, with some of the poems final lines speaking to “stone walls” and “iron bars,” and this exploration of imprisonment seems to link clearly with the political differences that led him to the Gatehouse. His “voic[ing] loud” the glories of his king has caused him to become confined, but his freedom of self, of love, cannot be held by such tangible constraints.

Little is known about Lovelace’s life outside of his poetry. It is unclear if he married or if he, as Herrick, remained a bachelor throughout his life. A handful of his poems are address to someone named Lucasta, who we often assume to be his lover, but this is conjectural. “Lucasta” seems to be a marriage of the Latin lux and casta, roughly translating to “pure light.” This provides a unique context to surround Lovelace’s Lucasta poems, as they are no longer about
leaving a lover for the battlefield, but leaving chaste truth in pursuit of honor. We can see this in “To Althea, from Prison” as well, his “divine Althea” seems to be more symbolic than real. We might suggest, then, that love of Lovelace’s poems is not a tangible one, but references toward light and truth, expressions of his commitment to cause and to the king.

“To Althea, from Prison” may reflect the specific imprisonment in which Lovelace wrote the poem, but there is a larger movement at work as well, throughout his corpus: In a larger sense, “Lovelace’s fascination with power and imprisonment is manifested more generally, and which depicts a world in which the speaker is not always in control.”\(^\text{70}\) We might relate this feeling of helplessness or apprehension to the political world at large, one that is highly mobile. Seelig argues that Lovelace has a “fascination with confinement, seen in male-female relations and in captive-captor relations”;\(^\text{71}\) I view this curiosity of confinement as stemming from his own imprisonment within a political uncertainty that plagued England at the turn of the seventeenth century—one that certainly could have affected poetic independence in first-century Rome.

Lovelace’s “To Althea, from Prison” expresses his dedication to self-expression as it walks hand in hand with freedom of soul—and, in turn, liberty in love, allegiance, and all life virtues. As Seelig explains, when caught behind politically reinforced bars, “It is the speaker himself who is imprisoned; while he distinguishes between the physical state of imprisonment and the state of moral freedom, he also finds himself sensuously entangled.”\(^\text{72}\) This sensuous entanglement with the physical and the moral, the tangible and the intangible, the present and the forever, is one that we also see in carpe diem poems and entwining with Vivamus, mea Lesbia, atque amemus. In his concluding lines, Lovelace speaks of a love unchained so that it can escape

\(^{70}\) Ibid., 167.
\(^{71}\) Ibid., 168.
\(^{72}\) Ibid., 167.
iron bars and join with the heavens above, transcending space and time—just as Catullus’s love for Lesbia, living both ephemerally and now, is inherently indebted to the passage of time.

**Author Never Lost: Lovelace’s Interpretation**

If there is one critical difference between Lovelace’s translations of Catullus and those who came before him, it is that Lovelace clearly aims to remain close to the literal meanings of the original poems. As opposed to poets like Campion and Carew, who employ great creative liberties in their imitations, the translations by Lovelace are more faithful regarding the lengths, diction, and general themes and narrative moves of each poem. No English translation can be entirely perfect, of course; Gorman captures the delicacy of translating Catullus nicely: “His packed expressiveness cannot be let down in a loose web of English verbiage and still be himself.” However, Lovelace is one of the first to take on the difficult task, and does so beautifully without sacrificing the complete character of each poem.

In fact, Lovelace’s poetry is as complex and varied as Catullus’s: Where Catullus mixes sensuous love poetry with political diatribes, Lovelace’s posthumous collection ranges from lengthy mythological dialogues to short praises of animals. As Seelig writes, Lovelace had a “rather remarkable range of his verse, which extends from highly polished lyrics to the uneven production of the gentleman amateur.” Including various styles of composition—satires, imitations, odes, elegies—as well as translations of Ausonius, Martial, and Catullus, Lovelace is framed by a similar context and poeticizes the variations of content similar to Catullus. The 1659

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74 Seelig, “My Curious Hand or Eye,” 151-2.
posthumous printing of his poems includes ten translations of Catullus, four of which concern Lesbia while the rest are a mixture of praises, invectives, and meditations. 75

The first Catullus poem included in the book is Catullus 49,76 titled by Lovelace, “To Marcus T. Cicero. In an English Pentastick.”77 The Latin and English versions, as with all of the other translations in this text, are set side by side as such: 78

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\begin{align*}
\text{Disertifftime Romuli nepotum} & \quad \text{Tully to thee Rome’s eloquent Sole Heir,} \\
\text{Quot sunt, quotque fuere Marce Tulli,} & \quad \text{The best of all that are, shall be, and were:} \\
\text{Quotque post alios erunt in annis,} & \quad \text{I the worst Poet send my best thanks and prayer,} \\
\text{Gratias tibi maximas Catullus} & \quad \text{Ev’n by how much the worst of Poets I} \\
\text{Agit pessimus omnium Poeta,} & \quad \text{By so much you the best of Patrones be.} \\
\text{Tanto pessimus omnium Poeta;} & \\
\text{Quanto tu optimus omnium Patronus.} & \\
\end{align*}
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This poem is a far cry from the sensuously erotic imitations of Lesbia, \textit{vivamus} and \textit{amemus}, that were frequently written before. This isn’t a love poem—in fact, quite the opposite—nor does Lesbia appear at all. It is addressed to Cicero (“Tully”), and it intends to analyze the quality of Cicero’s work. The translation is composed in iambic pentameter, the meter frequently found in Renaissance England; it does not focus much on rhyme, and certainly does not attempt to map against Catullus’s oft-used hendecasyllabic framework. Most interestingly, the English translation is shorter than the original Latin—this rarely happens, as Latin has traditionally and linguistically held deeper and expansive meaning within each individual word, requiring a more rambling and robust literal translation. That is not the case with this poem, as Lovelace combines the second and third lines, as well as the fourth and fifth lines.

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75 For the sake of space and analysis, I’ll discuss only three of these ten translations.
76 Labeled in Lovelace’s text as “Ad M. T. Ciceronem. Catul. Ep. 50.”
78 For the purposes of line-by-line translation, I’m including both the Latin and the Englished poems as they appear in the original posthumous Lovelace.
The original poem has long been critiqued and analyzed, with scholars unsure if Catullus is genuinely praising Cicero and his literary skills, or if he is instead being overly sarcastic. There are arguments to support both, and I don’t intend to make a claim on the original Latin in this paper, but I do think that Lovelace’s translation favors the sardonic over the genuine. Rather than write on Catullus’s behalf, Lovelace embodies the speaker, not including Catullus but simply writing in the first-person. In doing so, his translation asserts that he is “worst poet”—likely something that Lovelace would not have written, even in the midst of genuine praise. By compressing the second and third lines, the English reads hyperbolic act of admiration, “the best of all that are, shall be, and were. This, compounded by the translation of gratias as words of worship (“thanks and prayer”) and of maximas as “best” (similar to Catullus’s already included optimus in the last line), suggests that Lovelace translated this as one with Catullus, supportive of his sarcastic deprecation of Cicero and making a claim that he—Catullus and Lovelace—is prime poet of the nation.

Lovelace also translates Catullus 48, which is preceded by, “To Juvencius,” and which is its own version of Catullus 5’s poem of kisses—but this poem lacks Lesbia:

\begin{align*}
\textit{Mellitos oculos tuos Juvenci} & \quad \text{Juvencius thy fair sweet Eyes,} \\
\textit{Si quis me finat ufque bafiare,} & \quad \text{If to my fill that I may kiffe,} \\
\textit{Ufque ad millia bafiem trecenta;} & \quad \text{Three hundred thousand times I’de kiffe,} \\
\textit{Nec unquam videat futurus;} & \quad \text{Nor future age shoulde cloy this Bliffe;} \\
\textit{Non fi denfior aridis arifitis,} & \quad \text{No not if thicker than ripe ears,} \\
\textit{Sit noftrae feges Ofulationis.} & \quad \text{The harvest of our kisses bears.}
\end{align*}

Lovelace manages to translate this precisely by line, his poem written in iambic tetrameter. This results in some lines being shortened or modified in order to fit the meter, such as usque not

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79 Labeled in Lovelace’s book of work as “Ad Juvencium, Cat. Ep. 49.”
80 Lovelace, Lucasta, 91.
being translated at either of its two inclusions. However, for the most part, Lovelace remains true to the original in length and implication.

Although not written to Lesbia, as we’ve commonly seen, or to a woman at all,\(^1\) both the original and the translation are remarkably similar to the *carpe diem* poem that we’ve seen translated by Carew and Herrick. Not only is Catullus—and Lovelace, as translator—counting his kisses in great numbers, but he also draws comparisons between their love and natural imagery. Even if the harvest of their kisses should be “thicker than ripe ears,” he will still want more. Now is the time to act and love, and nothing that the future might bring will disrupt the joy of the present. Lovelace’s own version of a Catullan kissing poem is romantic and seductive—simply not the one most familiar to early English readers.

Of course, Lovelace does translate Lesbia into English, and notably does so in his version of Catullus 72,\(^2\) simply introduced by its language, “Englished”:\(^3\)

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dicebas quondam folum te noffce Catullum, 
Leβia, nec prae me velle tenere Jouem; 
Dilexi tum te, non tantum ut vulgus amicam 
Sed pater ut gnatos diligit & generos. 
Nunc te cognovi, quare & impfenius uror, 
Multo mi tamenes vilior & levior. 
Qui potis est inquis? quod amantem injuria 
talis 
Cogat amare magis, fed bene velle minus. 
Odi & amo, quare id faciam fortaffe requiris, 
Nescio, fed fieri sentio & excrucior. 
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That me alone you lov’d, you once did say, 
Nor shold I to the King of gods give way, 
Then I lov’d thee not as a common dear, 
But as a Father doth his children chear; 
Now thee I know, more bitterly I smart, 
Yet thou to me more light and cheaper art. 
What pow’r is this? that such a wrong should prens 
Me to love more, yet with thee well much leffe. 
I hate and love, wouldst thou the reason know? 
I know not, but I burn and feel it fo.

Unlike his other translations, where he matches iambic with Catullus’s hendesyllabic (likely due to the meter’s commonality at the time), Lovelace writes this poem in rhyming iambic

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\(^1\) Juventius is regularly regarded as Catullus’s male lover, and although this is an interesting component of the poem and its translation in Renaissance England, I hesitate from approaching this subject within the limitations of my paper.

\(^2\) Labeled in Lovelace’s book of work as “Ad Lesbiam, Cat. Ep. 73.”

\(^3\) Lovelace, *Lucasta*, 103-5.
pentameter couplets, likely mimicking Catullus’s own use of the elegiac couplet form. And as we’ve seen before with the translation of the address to Cicero, Lovelace inserts himself into the poem. He does not translate *Catullus* into “Catullus” or even “Lovelace,”, nor does he even include *Lesbia*. Instead, he simply uses “you” and “I” to connote their relationship and inhabit it fully, perhaps indicating his own personal entry into such a relationship—or, perhaps, as a stylistic choice that simply brings Catullus’s ancient narrative into a contemporary English light.

While Lovelace does translate this poem line by line, his version differs from the Catullus 72 that we are familiar with today. This is not due to his expansion or creation of any particular line: In this translation, Lovelace tacks two other Catullan lines onto the end of the original. “I hate and love, wouldst thou the reason know?” he asks. “I know not, but I burn and feel it so.” This is his own translation of Catullus 85, a poem only a couplet in length, which includes in the Latin version that is side by side with his English translation: *Odi et amo. Quare id faciam fortasse requiris? / Nescio, sed fieri sentio et excrucior.* This melding of two poems is striking, as his other ones remain true to the original Latin versions. And while his translation of these final two lines is nearly exact, *excrucior*, rather than becoming “I am tormented” or “I am tortured,” is Lovelace’s “I burn.” The Latin for burn (*uror*) is found in the fifth line of the poem, where Lovelace appears to translate it as “smart.” Yet “burn” appears in the final line of his English translation of a different Catullan poem.

There may be many reasons for this inclusion—perhaps Renaissance versions of Catullus included these compound poems. However, with a focus only on Lovelace’s poem, I find his interjection here, even one of Catullan origin, both new to his typically faithful style of translation and a personalized ending of the poem. His addition of a new ending to Catullus 75 suggests to me a small form of revisionist reclamation. Seelig writes, “Lovelace sometimes
focuses on the sensuous surface in a way that is inherently unstable." While I might not describe this ending as unstable, it is certainly indicative of his own personal intervention in translation, a poetic moment that, once inhabited, he felt the urge to expand and individualize. Perhaps this poem’s mixed sensation of passion and animosity is one that both poets also felt within their own sociopolitical spaces, among friends and enemies, in nations of change. In this moment of creation in translation, we can see where the lineage still survives, where imitation not only reflects back upon a poetic past, but also actively forges its own meaning in interpretation.

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84 Seelig, “My Curious Hand or Eye,” 166.
Conclusion: Writing Nox Perpetua

Catullus’s poems, all title-less and their proper chronological order still contested, are known collectively as the Carmina. Referring back to the original Latin carmen, meaning “song,” this terminology is not unique to Catullus or to ancient Rome. In Catullus’s time, carmen didn’t only mean song—it could refer to a spell, poem, incantation, prayer, work of magic, and anything in between. The word “poem,” comparatively, from the Greek poiema, means “thing made.” Poems are read, tangible, manufactured; carmina are mystic, experienced, an ethereal intervention.

Translation has an odd way of qualifying as both tangible and ethereal: It puts onto paper the retelling of another person’s story, recapturing a moment in time. Each Renaissance writer wrote a different Catullus: the songbird Campion turned him into a melody; the satirist Jonson picked out his most vulgar parts; and the cavalier Lovelace envisioned him defiant, unbroken from his chains. In closely reading seventeenth-century interpretations of Catullus’s work, we find that he wasn’t shocking to his readers, nor did he oppose their own beliefs. His work became an opportunity for Renaissance poets to connect with and contribute to a nostalgic past fraught with familiar political tension, recycling its sense of passionate urgency and eternity.

I hope that my work has showcased the lasting influence of Catullus, and that it encourages other scholars to find where his sphere of influence continues to travel among and settle into past and present poetry. In his nox perpetua, it is my desire that Catullus’s Carmina continues to live on through transmission and translation. Addressing the patrona virgo, Catullus once requested, plus uno maneat perenne saeclo.85 In response, as we are translating him, I suggest that we are also writing into his eternal night: Vixisti, Catullus, atque amavimus.

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85 “May it [this charming new book of mine] endure a perpetual lifetime.” (My own translation.)
References


Jonson, Ben. *Ben Jonson: his Volpone or the Foxe*. Printed for Thomas Thorppe, 1607.


