

Catullus 50

(a poem to his friend and fellow poet Gaius Licinius Macer Calvus)

Hendecasyllables

Hesterno, Licini, die otiosi
multum lusimus in meis tabellis,
ut convenerat esse delicatos.
scribens versiculos uterque nostrum
ludebat numero modo hoc modo illoc,
reddens mutua per iocum atque vinum.
atque illinc abii tuo lepore
incensus, Licini, facetiisque,
ut nec me miserum cibus iuvaret,
nec somnus tegeret quiete ocellos,
sed toto indomitus furore lecto
versarer cupiens videre lucem,
ut tecum loquerer simulque ut essem.
at defessa labore membra postquam
semimortua lectulo iacebant,
hoc, iucunde, tibi poema feci,
ex quo perspiceres meum dolorem.
nunc audax cave sis, precesque nostras,
oramus, cave despuas, ocelle,
ne poenas Nemesis reposcat a te.
est vehemens dea: laedere hanc caveto.

hesternus, -a, -um “of yesterday”

lūdō, lūdere, lūsī, lūsus “play, sport, frisk”

conveniō, -venīre, -vēmī, -ventus “come together,” impersonal, “be agreed, be settled”

dēlicātus, -a, -um “charming, luxurious, voluptuous”

numerus, -ī, m. “number, rhythm, meter”

reddō, reddere, reddidī, redditus “give back, render, make”

mutuus, -a, -um “mutual, in exchange, reciprocal”

lepos, lepōris, m. “charm”

facetia, -ae, f. “wit”

tegō, tegere, tēxī, tēctus “cover”

indomitus, -a, -um “untamed”

versō, versāre, versāvī, versātus “turn”
poema “poem” (a Greek form; here, neuter accusative singular)
perspiciō, perspicere, perspēxī, perspectus “look through, discern”
caveō, cavēre, cāvī, cautus “be on one’s guard, take heed, beware”
prex, precis, f. “prayer, request”
dēspuō, dēspuere “spit out, spit upon”
repōscō, repōscere “demand back, demand, exact, require”
vehemēns “violent, furious”
laedō, laedere, laesī, laesus “hurt, wound, injure”

The Scholars

W. B. Yeats

Bald heads forgetful of their sins,
Old, learned, respectable bald heads
Edit and annotate the lines
That young men, tossing on their beds,
Rhymed out in love's despair
To flatter beauty's ignorant ear.
All shuffle there; all cough in ink;
All wear the carpet with their shoes;
All think what other people think;
All know the man their neighbour knows.
Lord, what would they say
Did their Catullus walk that way?