

Catullus V: Vivamus atque Amemus

The poem below is by Catullus (see online bio) and was written to his (code-named and possibly imaginary) lover “Lesbia” (so named because in antiquity, the women of the island of Lesbos were thought to be beautiful and sensual).

See if you can “match” the Latin to the translation (which is not literal) – in other words, WHY does it mean what it means?

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| VIVAMUS mea Lesbia, atque amemus, | 1 | Let us live, my Lesbia, and love, |
| rumoresque senum seueriorum | 2 | and value at one farthing |
| omnes unius aestimemus assis! | 3 | all the talk of crabbed old men. |
| soles occidere et redire possunt: | 4 | Suns may set and rise again. |
| nobis cum semel occidit brevis lux, | 5 | For us, when the short light has once set, |
| nox est perpetua una dormienda. | 6 | remains to be slept the sleep of one unbroken night. |
| da mi basia mille, deinde centum, | 7 | Give me a thousand kisses, then a hundred, |
| dein mille altera, dein secunda centum, | 8 | Then another thousand, then a second hundred, |
| deinde usque altera mille, deinde centum. | 9 | then yet thousand, then a hundred. |
| dein, cum milia multa fecerimus, | 10 | Then, when we have made up many thousands, |
| conturbabimus illa, ne sciamus, | 11 | we will confuse our counting, that we may not know the reckoning, |
| aut ne quis malus invidere possit, | 12 | nor any malicious person blight them with evil eye, |
| cum tantum sciat esse basiorum. | 13 | when he knows that our kisses are so many. |

(Materials from Vroma.org.)