

.....
 nunc audax cave sis, precesque nostras,
 oramus, cave respuas, ocelle,
 ne poenas Nemesis reposcat a te. 20
 vemens est dea: **ludere** hanc caveto.

2 *invicem Sabellicus* : in meis OGR : in tuis *Schwabe*

19 *respuas Trappes-Lomax* : despuas OGR

21 *vemens est McKie* : est vemens OGR *ludere scripsi* : laedere OGR

Though the meaning is not entirely clear – Heyworth proposes a lacuna before 18 – the poet seems to be saying that poetry may be a trivial game, at least in some circumstances, but friendship is sacred. Mocking friendship will attract the wrath of Nemesis. The repeated verb would contrast the innocent play of exchanging impromptu verses with dangerous disrespect for Nemesis.

Finally, we should probably follow John M. Trappes-Lomax in preferring the forms *loedere* and *in vicem* to *ludere* and *invicem*,² but I have kept the traditional spellings here so readers may set aside the orthographic questions while contemplating the change (or rather non-change) of verb in the last line. However, I could not resist using a title that implies *loedere* rather than *ludere*.

² *Catullus: A Textual Reappraisal* (Swansea, 2007), on 44.3 (page 116) and 50.2 (124) respectively.