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A COMPANION TO CATULLUS

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CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Catullus and Roman Love Elegy

Paul Allen Miller

There are two incontrovertible facts about Catullus' relation to the elegists. First, the elegists clearly recognized that they were writing in a genre of which he was among the most esteemed of pioneers. Second, the nature of that genre, and how it derives from the multifaceted corpus that is the Catullan collection (polymetrics, *carmina maiora*, epigrams; Lesbia poems, political poems, comedies of manners, translations, epyllia), is anything but clear. Indeed, while modern scholarship has widely, though not universally (Fantham 1996: 106; Veyne 1988: 12, 34–6), agreed with the Roman elegists' claim to be Catullus' heirs, there is no firm consensus on the nature of that kinship.[1] This chapter will examine under a variety of rubrics the forms of affiliation that unite them and will answer the following questions: what are the formal similarities between Catullus and the elegists; what are the thematic similarities; what are the generic similarities; and what is the relation between poem 68 and subsequent elegiac practice? Before turning to these questions, however, let us examine what the elegists themselves say.

Elegiac *Testimonia*

While Catullus is alluded to in both Tibullus' and Propertius' first books of elegiac poetry, the first fully explicit acknowledgment of their kinship is found in the final lines of Propertius 2.34. This is the last poem in Book 2 and a text with clear programmatic intent. In this poem, Propertius traces his poetic genealogy and contrasts his aesthetic project with that of Vergil, who was in the process of composing the *Aeneid*:

> Varro also when he had finished Jason, yes Varro,
> played in verse the great passion of his Leucadia;
> the writings of wanton Catullus (*lasciui . . . Catulli*) sang (*cantarunt*) these matters too,

> and thus Lesbia is better known than Helen herself;
> even the pages of learned Calvus confessed these things,
> when he sang of the death of poor Quintilia;
> on account of beautiful Lycoris how many things did Gallus sing just now,
> who dead washes his wounds in the infernal waters!
> Cynthia indeed shall live on praised, in the verse of Propertius –
> if Fame wishes to place me among the likes of these.
>
> (2.34.85–94)[2]

On the immediate thematic level, Propertius seems to say nothing more than that he, like Catullus and a number of other poets, chooses to sing of love rather than war, which is the matter of the epic poets like Vergil. A closer reading of the passage, however, tells a story of generic evolution that goes beyond the bounds of simple thematic resemblance.

The first poet mentioned, Varro of Atax, is known to have translated Apollonius' *Argonautica* before turning his hand to erotic verse. Nothing of the *Leucadia* survives, so we cannot judge for sure either its content or its meter, but the name Leucadia refers to an island sacred to Apollo on which Sappho was said to have thrown herself from a cliff for the love of Phaon. If we assume that Varro's beloved was given the name Leucadia in his collection of erotic verse, or that the name at least refers to her indirectly, then we have here an anticipation of Catullus' Lesbia, also named for an island associated with Sappho. Moreover, Varro's case is important because he effects a progression that is the opposite of Vergil's. Where the latter began with the erotic verse of the *Eclogues* and then moved through the didactic poetry of the *Georgics* to elegy's declared generic antagonist, epic, Varro moved from epic to erotic verse and hence to a prefiguration of Catullus' own beloved.

This same movement between opposed genres is continued in the next couplet, with the emphasis now firmly on the pre-eminence of Catullan proto-elegy. As lines 87–8 tell us, Lesbia became better known than Helen herself, and thus in Catullus we have the triumph of erotic verse over epic and hence the consummation of Varro's trajectory (Stahl 1985: 185). Calvus, who comes next in 2.34, was most famous for an elegy he wrote on the death of his beloved, Quintilia. Not only was he a good friend of Catullus (see Catullus 50, 53), but the elegy on Quintilia is specifically mentioned in Catullus' own elegiac epigrams in poem 96.[3]

> If anything pleasant or acceptable is able to come
> from our grief to the speechless dead, Calvus,
> through which longing we renew old loves and
> weep for friendships formerly abandoned,
> then certainly her premature death will not cause Quintilia to grieve
> so much as she will rejoice in your love.

Not only, then, is Catullus a historical personage but his position in the poem also serves a clear structural function. He is the first poet on the list depicted as only writing erotic verse about a single beloved, Lesbia, and thus striking the pose typical of the Roman elegist (although in fact he practiced other types of poetry). He also is depicted as besting epic with his erotic verse and thereby establishing elegy's supremacy: "Lesbia is better known than Helen herself." Catullus in Propertius 2.34

introduces elegy both directly through the evocation of Lesbia and indirectly through the figure of Calvus' poem on Quintilia. We close with Gallus, who is considered the founder of erotic elegy proper, inasmuch as he wrote only elegy and was best known for his verses on Lycoris. He is the last poet to be named before Propertius. Catullus in the poetic genealogy Propertius uses to draw Book 2 to a close occupies a central position in the thematic and formal evolution of the genre. With him, the shift from epic to elegy becomes definitive and the list of erotic elegists begins.

Ovid in many ways echoes Propertius. In *Tristia* 2, the apology to Augustus, he explains from exile in Tomis why the *Ars Amatoria* was not "an incitement to adultery." In it, he includes a mocking literary history that aims to show that poets have always written about love. Elegy, therefore, which takes the erotic as its domain, is the true master genre and the *telos* of this genealogical narrative. After a survey of Greek poets from Anacreon to Sophocles, Ovid turns to the Roman tradition. There, Catullus, paired once more with Calvus, is cited as his first real predecessor in Roman literature:

> Thus often his woman, whose pseudonym was Lesbia,
> was sung (*cantata est*) by wanton Catullus (*lasciuo . . . Catullo*);
> and not content with her, he publicized many loves
> in which he confessed his adultery.
> Equal and similar was the license of slender Calvus,
> who unraveled his infidelities in a variety of meters.
> (*Tr.* 2.427–32)

The pairing of the adjective *lasciuus* with the verb *canto* is clearly meant to recall Propertius 2.34.87. Ovid's catalogue is, as is his manner, longer and more inclusive than Propertius', but in it two predecessors hold pride of place as the only ones to receive more than a single couplet, Catullus and Tibullus. The latter, like Ovid a member of the poetic circle gathered around Messalla Corvinus, received a full nine couplets and clearly held a special place in Ovid's poetic imagination, but Gallus and Propertius only receive one apiece, whereas Catullus, who heads the list of Latin erotic poets, receives a pair.

Ovid and Propertius thus saw themselves as writing in a tradition of Latin poetry in large part founded by Catullus. Tibullus, who makes no significant explicit programmatic statements in his poetry, alludes to Catullus on several occasions (see 1.2.39–40, 1.4.21–4, 1.5.7–8, *inter alia*), while Ovid in his funeral poem on Tibullus pictures him being greeted in the underworld by Catullus, Calvus, and Gallus (*Am.* 3.9.61–4). Catullus is by universal account the undisputed ancestor of Roman love elegy.

Formal Similarities

Yet while the elegists were unanimous, the scholars did not agree. Why? The argument centers on how the elegiac genre is defined. In the ancient world, poetic genres were in the first instance defined by meter. Archaic Greek lyric was written in meters sung to the lyre. Iambic invective was written in iambic meters. Elegy is written in elegiac couplets. By this criterion, Catullus, who wrote in a variety of meters, is not

truly an elegist. And it is for this reason that Quintilian does not include Catullus in his canonical list of elegists (*Inst.* 10.1.93).

This is not of course to say that Catullus did not produce poetry in elegiac distiches. He most certainly did (65–116), but this is not the largest part of his work, which was written in a mixture of lyric and iambic meters as well as in the dactylic hexameters of epic (1–64). Moreover, there was a distinction recognized in the ancient world between two types of poems written in elegiac couplets. The first was the epigram. This is a short poem that eschews narrative and mythological elaboration in favor of compact rhetoric and a sting in the tail. Elegies by contrast are poems of some length that almost always contain narrative elements and frequently possess elaborate mythological exempla. The average elegy of Tibullus is 75 lines; the poems of Propertius in his first three books average 35 lines (86 in Book 4), and those of Ovid in the *Amores* 50 lines. Of Catullus' first-person erotic poetry written in elegiac couplets only one poem is of more than 35 lines, poem 68 (160 lines).[4] Poem 76, which is the next-longest erotic poem, consists of 26 lines, but it has neither the mythological nor the narrative elaboration characteristic of elegy.

The rest of the first-person erotic work in elegiac couplets is distinctly epigrammatic in nature. Catullus' most famous erotic epigram is poem 85, a marvel of concision whose conflicting emotions become the hallmark of erotic elegy as a whole: "I hate and I love. Perhaps you ask why I do it. I don't know, but I feel it happen and am torn apart." Yet, while a poem like this may feel like a miniature elegy, and that feeling is reinforced by the epigrammatic elegies of the only female elegist Sulpicia (average 7 lines),[5] the latter are more the exception than the rule. The epigram as a form is frequently a satirical poem with little amorous content and often an obscene directness.[6] This is as true in Catullus as in any other practitioner of the form. A too exclusive focus on the Lesbia poems has often given a distorted picture of the collection as a whole.[7] They are but one thread, although a brilliant one, in a larger tapestry. Thus the poem immediately preceding 85 is a lampoon on a certain Arrius' affected pronunciation, while poem 88 is one of a series of poems attacking Gellius for sexual perversity. The elegiac epigrams as a unit, then, can in no sense be seen as the predecessor of such thematically unified works as Propertius' *Monobiblos* or Ovid's *Amores.*

There is one sense, however, in which Catullus' poetry is the formal antecedent of the elegists. Catullus, like the elegists, wrote volumes of poetry that were meant to be read as books and that chronicled – nay, embodied and created – the experience of their first-person speaker. There has been disagreement on whether Catullus edited the collection we now have – and if so, whether he published it serially, as a unity, or first serially and then in an *opera omnia* edition (see Skinner, chapter 3 in this volume). Today the majority opinion has shifted firmly in the direction of Catullus as the editor of at least the major sections of the corpus (polymetrics, *carmina maiora*, elegiac poems),[8] although there is more disagreement about whether poems 65–8 belong with the longer poems or those in elegiac meter (Skinner 2003: xxvi, 1; King 1988; Quinn 1972b: 258–9; Wiseman 1969: 121), and whether Catullus edited his *opera omnia*. Yet even among those who remain agnostic or continue to hold out against the view that Catullus himself had a hand in the arrangement of the poems as we read them today, there is no doubt that these poems are meant be read in terms of one another and thus presume the existence of a collection in one form or another (Janan 1994: ix, 40, 43, 90).[9]

Catullus' poetry thus represents the first example of the composition of a self-conscious poetic collection in Latin, at least one that has come down to us.[10] This form of composition will become the norm in the Augustan period. It is one that allows for complex narrative relations between poems as well as sharp thematic juxtapositions. It demands not only reading, but also rereading (G. Williams 1980: ix–x; Skinner 1981: 106). Thus it is now well established that the opening of the polymetrics gives an encapsulated form of the narrative of the Lesbia affair as a whole: from the coy erotics of the sparrow poems (2 and 3); to the declaration of love and dawning awareness of mortality and infidelity in the kiss-poems (5 and 7); to the initial disillusionment and final break of poems 8 and 11 (Miller 1994: 63–72; Janan 1994: 78; Wiseman 1985: 147; Hubbard 1983: 230; Segal 1968: 311–16). A similar progression can be seen in the Lesbia poems at the beginning of the elegiac portion of the collection, although the movement there is less narrative than analytic (Skinner 2003: 85; Miller 2002: 115–19; Quinn 1972b: 40). Poem 68 presents an overview of the beginning of the affair, establishes it as adulterous, and depicts Catullus as struggling to adopt an attitude of sophisticated acceptance toward Lesbia's infidelities. Poems 70 and 72 present Lesbia's declaration of love to Catullus and the poet's subsequent disillusionment. Poem 72 also presents the first articulation of what will be the dominant theme in these poems: the poet's inability either to esteem his beloved or to stop loving her. The same antithesis is condensed and sharpened in 75 before receiving a much more expansive and analytic treatment in 76 (Ferguson 1988: 15; W. R. Johnson 1982: 122–3). Poem 79, then, reveals that Lesbia has a perfidious brother, Lesbius,[11] and 83 presents a flashback to an earlier, happier time, before the antithesis that defines the sequence as whole is distilled into the crystalline terms of 85's *odi et amo.*

In fact, the polymetric and the elegiac sequences are more complex than this schematic presentation allows, but for our purposes this should be sufficient to show the importance of the poetic book in establishing both relations between individual poems and the possibilities of narrative elaboration that will be central to the elegiac genre. Thus Propertius' *Monobiblos* will move from the moment when Cynthia first captured the poet with her eyes, through various quarrels, separations, and encounters with potential amorous and poetic rivals. The sequence is in no way a straightforward linear narrative but, on the analogy of Catullus, is replete with narrative potentiality. Similarly, Tibullus' books on Delia and Nemesis each present affairs that unfold simultaneously through time as the reader progresses through the scroll, as do Ovid's *Amores.*

Thematic Similarities

The thematic principle around which the elegiac collections were organized was the love affair. Each book of the canonical elegists was devoted to a single beloved of the opposite sex. Like all generic laws, this is more a rule of thumb than an unalterable decree of nature. Cornelius Gallus is the first true elegist, in that all four of his books were devoted to his beloved, Lycoris, and were written in elegiac couplets. Unfortunately, while Gallus looms large in the poetry of Vergil, Propertius, and Ovid, his poetry has all but disappeared. Tibullus wrote two books of poetry. The first is

devoted to Delia, but also features three pederastic poems (1.4, 1.8, 1.9) dedicated to a certain Marathus. Tibullus here is following Hellenistic precedent in which erotic poetry written in elegiac meters was generally homoerotic in nature. Catullus did the same, writing erotic epigrams about his love for Juventius, as well as poetry on a variety of other subjects. Tibullus dedicates his second book exclusively to his travails with the ominously named Nemesis. Both books of Tibullus' poetry also feature poems dedicated to his patron, Messalla Corvinus. The first three books of Propertius are devoted to his love for Cynthia, yet they too are liberally sprinkled with poems addressed to Propertius' patron, Maecenas, with programmatic poetic statements, as well as with poems such as 2.7 and 3.4, which are at least as political as they are amatory. Ovid's *Amores* recount the course of his affair with Corinna. Thus, with certain exceptions, the works of the elegists are distinguished by their being thematically organized around the recounting of the events, if not the history, of a poet's all-consuming love affair with his mistress in what presents itself (however ironically) as a confessional mode.

Catullus' mistress, Lesbia, is the central focus of his most famous poetry too. Nonetheless, much of that poetry is not written in elegiac couplets, and much of what is written in them is on topics other than the poet's affair. Yet it is precisely the Lesbia poems that are adduced by Propertius and Ovid when Catullus is presented as the founder of love elegy. Moreover, where the polymetrics' influence on the elegists is widely conceded, the epigrams' condensed style, rough prosody, and eschewal of narrative, mythological elaboration, and other devices of Alexandrian learning were of more limited impact (Lyne 1980; 103; Ross 1975: 116; Quinn 1959 [1969 reprint]: 57).

The Problem of Genre

We are, then, faced with a paradox. Catullus is widely credited with being the founder, or at least a very significant predecessor, of Roman love elegy by ancient poets and modern critics alike. Yet the majority of his output in elegiac distichs bears only a passing resemblance to the elegies written by the canonical elegists; and, while the thematic resemblance between Catullus' poetry on Lesbia and that of Gallus, Propertius, Tibullus, and Ovid on their respective mistresses is undeniable, nonetheless many of the poems that had the most direct influence on the later elegists – both from a stylistic and a thematic perspective – are in the polymetrics. It is for this reason, as noted above, that Quintilian does not include Catullus in his list of canonical elegists and that Sharon James has denied any generic affiliation between Catullus' "lyric" poetry and the work of the elegists (2003: 255 n. 116, 319–20 n. 13).

One element of significant commonality, however, sticks out from our previous examination. Both Catullus and the elegists composed books, that is to say poetry meant to be read and reread. Individual poems relate to one another in a complex and multifaceted fashion that allows the emergence of a multi-temporal and self-reflexive poetic subjectivity that I have dubbed "lyric consciousness" (1994). Catullus, I contend, is the founder, or at least the first exemplar, of lyric consciousness in western poetry. The lyric of the poetic collection that we are familiar with from the

work of Petrarch, Sidney, and Shakespeare finds its first example in the *liber Veronensis Catulli*. The poetry of the Alexandrian elegists, while featuring complex arrangements and subjective framings, as illustrated in Callimachus' *Aitia*, did not purport to present the complexity of the speaking subject's lived experience. Archaic lyric was, of course, more subjective in pose, but the poetry of Sappho, Alcaeus, and Anacreon was intended for public oral performance and symposiastic recreation. It was only later collected by the scholars of Alexandria and then preserved in books arranged largely according to meter. With Catullus, then, we see the emergence of a fundamentally new genre: collections of poetry that foreground the poet's dialogic relation with himself as exemplified in the complex, multi-temporal inter- and intra-textual relations that make up the collection.

If we take the example of the elegiac poems in the Catullan corpus (65–116), then, as we have just demonstrated, poems 68, 70, 72, 75, 76, and 85 form a coherent sequence. That sequence presents a narrative overview of the affair paired with a progressive analysis and condensation of the conflicting emotions that define it. Nonetheless, any notion of a straightforward narrative unfolding of events is complicated by at least four elements. First, the progression from 68 to 70, and from 72 to 75, 76, and 85, is not so much temporal as analytic. Only poems 70 and 72 bear clear temporal markers in relation to one another. Second, these poems are interlaced with other poems, which although often related on the level of diction or dramatic personae, bear no explicit narrative or analytic relation to the poems in question. Thus, poems 69 and 71 on Rufus and his perplexing combination of sexual conquest and body odor are clearly a pair of poems that parallel 70 and 72 in terms of form and temporal relation. Nevertheless, how 69 and 71 relate to their matching Lesbia poems is never spelled out. Still, the two pairs of poems, owing both to their formal symmetry and to their interlacing sequence, demand to be read in terms of one another, even as the reader strives to integrate them into the larger Lesbia sequence.

Third, the sequence itself disrupts its own quasi-temporal unfolding through the inclusion of poem 83, which clearly projects a dramatic date early in the affair when not only is Lesbia's husband[12] still a factor, but the poet can also still jokingly imagine her being infatuated with Catullus. This poem, in turn, makes us reread the earlier sequence from an alternative temporal and emotional perspective. Poem 83 functions, then, as both a narrative flashback and a return of the repressed: past pleasure reveals its trace in present misery.

> Lesbia always insults me with her husband present;
>   this is a great pleasure for that fool.
> Ass, do you feel nothing? If having forgotten us she were silent,
>   she'd be sane; because she growls and chides,
> not only does she remember, but what is more to the point,
>   she is aroused. That is, she burns (*uritur*) and stews.

This recollection of past erotic pleasure is present on the level of diction as much as it is on that of theme. The verb *uritur* thus clearly recalls and anticipates 72.5's *impensius uror* ("I burn more passionately"), which tells of Catullus' continued sexual passion even as he sees Lesbia "now" as "cheaper and more trivial"

(72.5–6). This verbal echo not only demands that 83 and 72 be read in terms of one another, but also provokes the questions: what is the artistic effect sought by this deliberate disruption of the temporal sequence immediately before 85's anguished *odi et amo*; and what is the poetic and aesthetic consciousness that lies behind this subtle manipulation of the narrative structure? The effect is to produce a depth that is simultaneously a *mise en abîme*.

Fourth, poem 79, "Lesbius est pulcer," as Marilyn Skinner has demonstrated, not only establishes that Lesbia has a brother, but that she is in fact Clodia Metelli the sister of Clodius Pulcher, the fiery tribune. The Rufus of poem 69, 71, and 77 can on this basis be identified as Caelius Rufus, the lover of Clodia Metelli and the object of Cicero's politically motivated defense in the *Pro Caelio* (Skinner 2003: 81–3, 92–3, 107; Wiseman 1985: 166–7, 1969: 28). Thus when Catullus refers to Rufus as a disease who is *intestina perurens* ("burning my guts," 77.3) and a *pestis* ("a plague," 77.6), we connect this imagery not only with his depiction of his love for Lesbia as a *pestis* from which he cannot free himself (76.20), but also with his own disillusioned but heightened sexual passion in 72.5 (*impensius uror*) and Lesbia's secret arousal in 83.6 (*uritur*). The fever of desire becomes the plague of betrayal. The sequence thus requires us to read not only forward and backward but also politically and personally. In the process, we uncover the image of a complex poetic subjectivity that both is profoundly self-reflexive and never exists except as the multiple possible recursive readings the collection engenders. Catullus' passion not only echoes (and anticipates) Lesbia's but is also subject to betrayal by Rufus, who is retrospectively identified – thanks to poem 79's Lesbius/Clodius – as Caelius Rufus. This identification, in turn, makes it possible to reread 69 and 71's invective against Rufus' sexual and hygienic sins in light of Clodius' political machinations as well as those poems' relation to 70 and 72. Each new determination thus requires a new reading as the reader unwinds and rewinds the scroll (Skinner 2003: 178–9).

This kind of complexity in the depiction of personal experience is unprecedented in the ancient world, and it was this phenomenon that I named "lyric consciousness" in 1994. The collections of the elegists embody these same complexities. We find in them the same internally dialogized subjectivity, but with a greater restriction of metrical and thematic materials. It is for this reason that I argued (1994: 49) that Roman love elegy was a subgenre of lyric, as defined by the Catullan collection, a definition consonant with both the explicit statements of the elegists and the perceived differences between elegy, as strictly described in terms of meter and theme, and the Catullan corpus. Nonetheless, it would be a mistake to see a wider gap separating the elegiac and Catullan enterprises than there actually is. Catullus may exhibit greater thematic variation than the elegists, but it should not be assumed that because the elegists pretend to write exclusively on love they do not engage other topics, including politics, poetics, and patronage.

If we examine the opening poems of Propertius' *Monobiblos* we see not only the same recursive structures of reading that we have just outlined in Catullus' epigrams and polymetrics, but also that the elegist, while ostensibly writing about love, uses those structures of reading to produce a similarly complex and multifaceted speaking subject, and does so in part by alluding to the works of his acknowledged predecessor.[13] We begin with 1.1.1–4 and its intertexts. Meleager 103, a pederastic epigram, is the recognized model for the opening of Propertius' first poem:

Cynthia was the first to capture me with her eyes,
I who was stricken before by no desires.
Then *Amor* cast down my face of unceasing pride
and pressed upon my head with his feet.

Fedeli notes that Catullus 1 had begun with a similar evocation of Meleager and argues that Propertius here is indicating his adherence to the principles of Alexandrian composition while tipping his hat to one of its earliest advocates in Rome, his acknowledged predecessor in erotic verse (1983b: 1865–6, 1980: 62). One of the most obvious ways in which Propertius' poem differs from Meleager's is that the gender of the beloveds has been switched. This inversion of genders, however, is part of a larger pattern of pederastic intertexts used to frame the relation of Propertius to Tullus, the representative of traditional Roman values in Book 1, Gallus, the elegist, and Bassus, an iambist. The density of inter- and intra-textual reference found here can be clearly seen by examining poems 1.1, 1.4, and 1.5.

To return to 1.1.1–4, then, the first thing that strikes the attentive reader is that the Meleager epigram has been recast in heteroerotic terms on only the most superficial level. The pederastic intertext remains clearly visible throughout. Cynthia ceases to be the subject of the finite verbs in lines 3 and 4 (Hodge and Buttimore 1977: 63–4), and *Amor*, who is male, replaces her. This metonymic evocation of a homoerotic context is made more explicit when it is recognized that in Meleager's poem no such substitution takes place. The *erômenos*, Mousikos, remains the subject throughout.

Within the first four lines, the boundaries between the masculine and the feminine, poetry and experience, the heteroerotic and the homosocial, have been called into question. The Propertian *coup de foudre* is an intertextual one. This process of decentering and inversion unfolds systematically throughout the poem. Indeed, as Duncan Kennedy notes, the very image of Love placing his feet upon the poet's head is a reprise of the gesture of triumph found in Roman depictions of single combat. The poet is portrayed within the poem as subjected and effeminized at the very moment in which the text effects a double gender substitution of Cynthia for the male beloved in Meleager and *Amor* for Cynthia (Kennedy 1993: 48). Subject and object, masculine and feminine, then, are in a very fluid relation to one another.

We must therefore constantly reread both the poem and its intertexts in terms of one another. We do so less in the hope of achieving a final resolution to these tensions than through the acceptance of a necessary practice of reading whereby we surrender ourselves to an ever expanding dialectic of mutual determination, as we continue to work on the poem and the poem continues to work on us. This process of dialectical interaction, *in fine*, produces the image of a multilayered and multi-temporal consciousness behind the *Monobiblos*, in much the same fashion as it produces the Catullan consciousness of the epigrams, the polymetrics, and, ultimately, the *opera omnia*.

Poems 1.4 and 1.5 follow the pattern outlined in 1.1. On the one hand, they articulate a relation between competing homosocial values and their associated poetic genres through the figure of Cynthia (Sharrock 2000: 270). On the other, they deploy this discourse within a complex weave of inter- and intra-textual homoerotic relations and inverted gender polarities. Poem 1.4 is addressed to Bassus, an iambic

poet. Iambic, as exemplified in Catullus' polymetrics, was an invective genre that dealt with the seamier side of life. Thus, when Propertius presents Bassus trying to lure him away from Cynthia by praising the beauty of women of easy virtue, this is a recognizable iambic pose that can also be read as Bassus claiming the superiority of his own poetic genre to elegy/Cynthia (Hodge and Buttimore 1977: 100–1). Propertius responds by telling Bassus that he should cease and desist or Cynthia will so blacken his name that he will be welcome at no girl's door. Cynthia will be transformed into an iambist (the model of phallic aggression) whose invective will reduce Bassus to the archetypal position of the effeminized elegiac lover, the *exclusus amator*. Elegy will show that it can beat iambic at its own game (Fedeli 1983b: 1876; Hodge and Buttimore 1977: 103; Rothstein 1979: 1.88).

Poem 1.5, in turn, is widely recognized as the companion piece to 1.4 (Fedeli 1983b: 1878; Hodge and Buttimore 1977: 100; Richardson 1977: 158). Francis Cairns has demonstrated that the two poems correspond to one another in numerous ways (1983: 62–77). In fact, there seems to have been a deliberate conflation between the addressees. Poem 1.5's *topos* of erotic envy was a common theme of iambic poetry and would be appropriate for Bassus and for Propertius' warnings to him. Nor does Propertius give any indication that he has switched addressees. The name Gallus is deferred to the last line of poem 1.5 (Fedeli 1983b: 1878; Cairns 1983: 81, 96). Thus the poems as well as their addressees are cast as mirror images. As Cairns has argued, these parallels only make sense insofar as we see the Gallus of 1.5 as a rival poet like Bassus: but the Gallus of 1.5 (like Propertius) desires only Cynthia, where Bassus has urged Propertius to play the field. The symmetry of Gallus' desire with Propertius', and its contrast with Bassus', implies that Gallus is also an elegist. Where 1.4 presents the triumph of Cynthia over her rivals, 1.5 presents Propertius' competition for the possession of the crown of elegy with Gallus himself (Oliensis 1997: 159; King 1980: 219).

The most important parallel between 1.4 and 1.5 from our perspective, however, is their common set of Catullan intertexts. First, on a thematic level, Fedeli notes that both poems examine the topic of *fides* betrayed, in the context of failed *amicitia* and amorous betrayal. He cites specific parallels with epigrams 77 against Rufus and 91 against Gellius (1983b: 1876). However, the Catullan subtext goes much deeper and is more specific. The phrase *non impune feres* ("you will not get away with it") at 1.4.17 is a direct quotation from Catullus 78b.3 (Camps 1961: *ad loc.*; Rothstein 1979: *ad loc.*; Suits 1976: 88). The phrase is admittedly not uncommon, as Richardson observes (1977: *ad loc.*), but it is unexampled elsewhere in elegiac couplets, let alone in couplets written with clear iambic intent:

> But now I am pained at this, that your foul spit
> has polluted the pure kisses of a pure girl.
> But you won't get away with it (*non impune feres*): for all the ages will know you
> and old lady fame will say what you are.
>
> (78b.1–4)

The Catullan and Propertian contexts here are identical. Propertius threatens Bassus the iambist with everlasting infamy from Cynthia's invective, while Catullus actually performs the invective and forecasts the same fate for the target of his abuse. Another

interesting point for our argument, however, is the distinct possibility that Catullus' target is either named Gallus or metonymically associated with a Gallus.

Most modern editions print 78b as a separate fragment from poem 78 (Thomson 1997; Pöschl 1983; Quinn 1973a; Mynors 1958), but the relation between the two is uncertain. There may simply be a lacuna. Poem 78 is an invective elegy addressed to a Gallus accused of arranging a sexual liaison between the wife of one of his brothers and another brother's son. Poem 78b is also an invective on sexual impropriety and so it is entirely possible that we are dealing with a later part of the same poem. If 78b is also addressed to Gallus, the parallels between 1.4 and 1.5 already remarked upon are augmented by this intertextual resonance. But even if 78b is not addressed to Gallus, then it, like Propertius 1.4, is an iambicizing poem written in elegiac couplets and immediately succeeds a poem addressed to a Gallus. Propertius 1.5, in turn, is a poem addressed to Gallus immediately following an iambicizing poem written in elegiac couplets.

Verbal echoes match the structural mirroring between the two corpora: 1.5 ends with the phrase *non impune illa rogata uenit* ("that girl when asked does not come without you paying the price"). Cairns has noted the parallel with 1.4.17 (1983: 77). Camps and Rothstein, however, give another Catullan parallel as well, 99.3, *uerum id non impune tuli* ("but I did not get away with it"). Again the context is that of kisses and sexual misconduct, but this is a pederastic poem on Catullus stealing kisses from Juventius. Thus once more we have Propertius substituting a heteroerotic context for a homoerotic one, but with both contexts, each of which has a Catullan resonance, still visible.

Propertius 1.4 and 1.5 thus constitute a Catullan pair. Each makes use of a recognizably Catullan theme, the importance of *fides* in the context of *amor* and *amicitia*. The first is an elegiac poem on iambic themes and the second a poem that, while recalling iambic themes, addresses the question of elegiac rivalry with Gallus. Finally, poem 1.4 contains an allusion to a Catullus poem that is either about someone named Gallus or directly juxtaposed with a poem on someone named Gallus. The line containing this allusion is echoed in poem 1.5. This is the first time Gallus is named in the poem or the collection. The same passage to which poem 1.4 alludes and that 1.5 recalls has a further echo in the Catullan corpus at 99.3, where the kisses of the pure girl that the *spurca saliua* pollutes in 78b become those stolen by Catullus from Juventius, who in turn seeks to wash off the *spurca saliua* of the poet (99.10).

At the same time, each of these poems in Propertius' book opposes the life of poetry to the normative pursuit of the *cursus honorum* represented by Tullus, the dedicatee of poem 1.1 and the presumed patron of the collection. Tullus is also the addressee of poem 1.6, in which Propertius contrasts his *militia amoris* with Cynthia with the real-life hardship Tullus may endure accompanying his uncle, the proconsul, to his province. In the process, Propertius inverts normative Roman gender and political values by portraying Tullus as occupying the feminine position, since he is off to soft Ionia (1.6.31), while Propertius assumes the masculine, *durus*, position by staying home with his beloved, *tum tibi si qua mei ueniet non immemor hora/uiuere me duro sidere certus eris* ("then if ever an hour comes when you will not forget about me, you will be certain that I live under a hard star," 1.6.35–6). Poems 1.1, 1.4, 1.5, and 1.6 thus exhibit a systematic progression not dissimilar to that found at the

beginning of the epigrams. In neither case is the progression so much narrative as analytical, and in both the progress of the affair is also used as a position from which to address a variety of personal, political, social, and aesthetic issues. The systematic responsion of names, themes, and intertexts between the poems shows not only that Propertius is writing in a genre of composition directly cognate with Catullan lyric consciousness, but also that he recognizes that kinship through his use of systematic allusion. Propertius, however, is working on a larger scale, integrating a variety of topics and intertexts within a single poem and then juxtaposing them to one another, while Catullus in the epigrams is building his complex structures out of smaller poems.

Catullus 68

To this point, we have left aside a discussion of Catullus 68, the single poem in the Catullan corpus that most resembles a fully elaborated Roman love elegy. In it, we have a lengthy poem in elegiac couplets, devoted to the topic of the poet's relation to his beloved, one that features narrative and mythological elaboration as well as Hellenistic refinement. Thus a wide variety of scholars have claimed that Catullus virtually invented elegy with this one poem.[14] Nonetheless, as we have already seen, the situation is not quite so straightforward. Many of the borrowings made by the elegists derive from the polymetrics, and to a lesser extent the epigrams. Likewise, the complex and recursive narrative structures that animate the elegiac collection, from the Propertian *Monobiblos* to Tibullus' subtle interweaving of poems on Delia, Marathus, and Messalla, to Ovid's self-conscious three-volume elegiac *magnum opus*, derive necessarily more from relations between the poems of the Catullan corpus than from any single text.

Poem 68, moreover, is anomalous. Not only is it much longer than the average elegy, but its mythological exempla are also more complex than anything found in the elegiac works that come after it. In addition, those exempla are embedded in a complex interlocking set of epic similes that are unexampled either before or after in Greek and Roman poetry (Feeney 1992: 38; Whitaker 1983: 62; G. Williams 1980: 52; Luck 1960). Poem 68 is, thus, not the first Roman love elegy, if we mean by that the archetype from which all later instantiations can be said to derive. Rather it is a poem that in its relation to the rest of the Catullan corpus anticipates what will become some of the typical forms and themes of the elegiac subgenre.

In fact, as I have argued (2004: 32–3), the most significant relation tying Catullus 68 to the elegists is best described in terms of the speaking subject's self-constitution.[15] More specifically, I contend that Catullus bequeaths to the elegists the poetic precedent of a subject position constituted by a fundamental conflict between the speaker's imaginary self-identification and its recognition *as a subject* in the world of codified, signifying practices. The result of this conflict is a split subject whose own discourse is self-undermining and recognizably double, and whose position vis-à-vis communal, symbolic norms is therefore profoundly ambivalent.

To illustrate more precisely this split Catullan consciousness, let us examine selected passages from the poem. The last 120 lines of 68 (68b), as noted above, are written ostensibly to thank Allius for providing a *domus* in which Catullus and

Lesbia consummate their adulterous love. I want to look now at the theme of the house and show how the slippages embodied in its usage within the poem can be traced out into the larger corpus and its complex engagement with the norms of Roman ideology. *Domus* is not only a keyword in Roman ideology – Cicero terms it the *principium urbis et quasi seminarium rei publicae* ("the first principle of the city and the virtual seedbed of the republic," *De officiis* 1.17.54) – it is also one of the major structuring devices of the poem. The word *domus* simultaneously charts the poem's progression and establishes verbal links between its major portions: the initial similes describing Allius' aid; the mythological exemplum of Laodamia and Protesilaus; and the death of Catullus' brother (Whitaker 1983: 61).[16] The interpretive problem posed by this word stems from the fact that these contexts, which the poem invites us to compare to one another, are not commensurable. Not only are these different houses (Allius' in Rome, Laodamia's in Greece, Catullus' in Verona but buried with his brother at Troy), they mean different things. The *domus* Allius provides for Catullus and Lesbia is strictly a physical building. That of Laodamia and Protesilaus is both the household they would have established and the building that would never be completed due to Protesilaus' early death (*domum/inceptam frustra*, 68.74–5; Janan 1994: 121). Finally, the *domus* of the Valerii Catulli is the least substantial of all, since it refers not to Catullus' ancestral seat but to the ideal family unit for which the house stands as synecdoche, and which effectively perished with his brother (68.94). Thus there is a clear progression from the merely physical to the abstract and ideal, but that process of rarefaction is in turn associated with death, as each step beyond the initial threshold leads closer to the evocation of Catullus' brother's grave.

Indeed, the final *domus* of this series seems to defy any placement in space since it must be conceived as existing simultaneously in Verona, the actual home of the Valerii, and Asia Minor, the site of Catullus' brother's grave. This latter location is in turn assimilated within the poem to the mythical territory of Troy (68.89–92), a place outside of space and time that joins Catullus' loss of his brother to Laodamia's loss of her husband, the first Greek soldier to die in the Trojan War (68.83–8). The losses of Catullus and those of Laodamia in their common relation to Troy are then joined together, at the end of the poet's apostrophe to his brother's grave, by an evocation of the adultery of Paris with Helen, a violation of a lawfully constituted *domus*, which, as scholars note, echoes Catullus' adulterous affair with Lesbia (Janan 1994: 131; G. Williams 1980: 59). In this fashion, Catullus directly associates the death of his brother with his own adulterous behavior.

Moreover, the first and last usages of *domus* just examined are both accompanied by nostalgia for what could have been. In line 68, when Allius' *domus* is first introduced, Catullus writes *isque domum nobis isque dedit dominae* ("he gave the house both to me and to my mistress"). The word *domina* here is much debated. Many see it as the first example of the later elegiac usage in which the mistress is portrayed as the dominant partner in the relationship, as opposed to the poet's role as *seruus amoris*. This reading is strengthened by Catullus' use of the word *era* (slave-mistress) to describe Lesbia later in the poem (68.136). Such a reading is also consistent with the poet's anticipation of the elegist's inversion of normative sexual roles. Whether one accepts this reading or not, however, there is a definite etymological play on the relation between *domus* and *domina* that necessarily recalls the

more normative use of the word *domina*, the mistress of a lawfully constituted household (Lyne 1980: 6–7), a household for which the poet can wish, but which he can never have.

This brings us to our fourth example of the *domus* motif, the ideal house of Catullan desire:

> She was not led to me by the hand of her father,
> nor came to a *house* suffused with Syrian perfume.
> Yet one wondrous night she gave me her dear gifts,
> stolen from the lap of her husband himself.
> (143–6)

This is how a Roman *domina* (as opposed to an elegiac one) comes to the lawfully constituted *domus* of her husband, the center of the Roman family and cultic life, the seat of the household gods. The *domus* is the site where individual desire is joined with the norms of law, property, and marriage, the institutions that constitute the foundation of political life. This is the ideal *domus*, which Catullus' brother's death has buried, and which the poet's adulterous desire can never realize.

The word *domus* then displays the slippages that constitute the Catullan subject position both in this poem and throughout the corpus: slippages between normative Roman sexual ideology (the *matrona* as *domina* or *era* of a lawfully constituted *domus*); Catullus' imaginary self-identification (the projection of such values onto his adulterous relationship with Lesbia); and a real world in which these two realms can never coincide. Moreover, as the complex and overdetermined use of the word *domus* – with its fusing of the themes of adultery, family, marriage, and death – indicates, poem 68 displays a profound disaggregation of the relation between the poet's constitution of his personal identity and the categories that Roman life offered to make sense of it.[17] The result is a gap or absence at the subject's center, a kind of death, that the poem identifies metonymically with his brother's tomb.

This gap, with its complex ideological articulations around traditional concepts of household, marriage, and their simultaneous sanctity and nullification, is evident throughout the poem. It posits a beyond that can only be imagined as absence or death. The sequence of thought is strikingly emblematic. We move from the *sepulta domus* of the *gens Valerii* (94) to the *domus* violated by the illicit love of Paris and his *moecha* (103), then to the passion of Laodamia's *domus incepta frustra* imagined as an abyss or tomb (107–8), and finally to Catullus' ideal *domus* unto which Lesbia's father never led her as a bride (143–6). At each stage in the progression, there is an evocation of the normative vision of the Roman household so dear to Catullus from the wedding hymns 61 and 62 (Feeney 1992: 33–4; G. Williams 1980: 56; Wiseman 1969: 20–3; see Panoussi, this volume).

In the end, the *domus* theme and its slippages reveal a longing for a lawful household with a lawful *domina* that Catullus cannot acquire. This slippage and the inversion of values it creates are parallel to the slippage and longing for lawfully constituted relationships in poem 76. Yet in that poem, as here, the invocation of traditional values such as *pietas*, *fides*, and reciprocal *benefacta* cannot manufacture a return to a vanished ideal of Roman normality, but instead produces images of transgression, splitting, and death.[18]

Catullus bequeaths this deeply divided subjectivity to the elegists, one in which the recognized structures of the Roman ideology are no longer adequate to contain the forces of the imaginary desire. Such a split subject can only be symptomatic of profound disturbances in the world beyond the text. It is the moment both obscene and sublime in which the subject cries out "neither is it possible to wish you well if you became the best of women,/nor to cease to love you, no matter what you would do" (75.3–4). It is a moment of crisis that constitutes and makes possible both Catullan lyric subjectivity and the elegiac poetry that deliberately and self-consciously follows in its wake.

Conclusion

Catullus then is explicitly recognized as the progenitor of Roman love elegy by Propertius and Ovid, and implicitly by Tibullus. In terms of metrical form, the Catullan corpus is atypical of elegiac production. Less than a third of it is written in the elegiac meter, and much of that is written in the form of epigrams rather than elegy proper. Thematically, the Lesbia poems clearly anticipate the later elegiac collections, which are united around the story (or stories) of the poet's affair with a single named beloved. Again, however, the Catullan corpus shows considerably greater variety than that found in its elegiac descendants.

Like Catullus, the elegists compose complex collections of first-person verse that present themselves as the recounting and ultimately the embodiment of the speaking subject's lived experience. The lyric consciousness projected by these collections is a complex, self-reflexive, and multi-temporal consciousness made possible by, and dependent on, the process of reading and rereading.

Poem 68, the one poem in the Catullan corpus that most resembles a fully elaborated Roman love elegy, not only serves as a formal antecedent to the genre but also, in its complex relation to the rest of the Catullan corpus, bequeaths to the elegists the model of a split consciousness. It is in this split, as exemplified in poem 68's use of the *domus* motif, that we see the emergence of that which ties the history of the elegiac subgenre to the world beyond either individual desire or symbolic institutions. Catullus, therefore, is not only the progenitor of the elegiac subgenre, he is also the symptom of a crisis in Roman political and cultural history that made that subgenre possible.

NOTES

1 Miller (2004: 31–59, 2002: 1–36; 1994: chs. 3 and 7); Lee-Stecum (1998: 16–18); Hinds (1998: 29); Albrecht (1997: 744); Benediktson (1989: 21); Elia (1981: 74–5); Boucher (1980: 34).

2 All translations are my own.

3 The two poets are frequently listed together. Compare Prop. 2.25.4. See also Prop. 2.32.45, where Lesbia is listed as a predecessor of Cynthia.

4 This poem is commonly divided into 68a and b. The first poem is a *recusatio*, while the second provides (or substitutes) for the verse requested by Allius in 68a (Skinner 2003: 40–3; Lefèvre 1991: 312–14; Courtney 1985: 95). 68b is the poem that treats the poet's relation to Lesbia. It stretches to 120 lines. Some see 68 as one poem in two parts (Janan 1994: 113; M. J. Edwards 1991: 80), although as Hubbard indicates the cash value of the distinction between these two positions is hard to determine (Hubbard 1984: 48 n. 44). My reference text for Catullus is Thomson (1997).

5 Sulpicia's work, however, is impossible to generalize from. Not only is she an anomaly in being the only female elegist, but her body of work is atypical in its shortness (six poems, the longest being ten lines long). She is not mentioned by the other elegists and does not appear in Quintilian's canonical list.

6 There are thus notable stylistic and prosodic differences in Catullus between the longer elegiac poems (65–8) and the epigrams (69–116). See Ross (1969: 115–37) and Skinner (2003: 98–9) on the traditions of Roman epigram. There was a rich tradition of Hellenistic pederastic epigrams.

7 The studies of David Wray (2001) and Christopher Nappa (2001) have drawn attention to the subtle poetics of the non-Lesbia poems through their exploration of the "poetics of Roman manhood" and of Catullus' "social fiction" respectively.

8 See Skinner (2003: xxvii; 1988: 337–8; 1981); Dettmer (1997); Minyard (1988); Ferguson (1988: 12–15); Wiseman (1969: 30, 1985: 136–7, 147–51, 170–1).

9 None of this means that poems were not orally performed or composed for such performance before being integrated into the structures of the poetic book.

10 The one exception may be the fragments of Lucilius, but the texts are so fragmentary that it is difficult to judge the degree of arrangement. They are also satires, rather than the more intimately self-reflexive genre practiced by Catullus.

11 On the importance of this poem for establishing Lesbia's identity as Clodia Metelli and making possible a political reading of this sequence, see Skinner (2003: 81–3, 107).

12 If we accept, as most do, the identification of Lesbia with Clodia Metelli, then this poem would have an early dramatic date, since Clodia's husband, Metellus Celer, died shortly after the affair began.

13 For a fuller reading of these poems, see Miller (2004: 60–94).

14 See Albrecht (1997: 744); Conte (1994: 150, 324); Fantham (1996: 105); Gold (1993: 85); Benediktson (1989: 11); Grimal (1987: 253); Hubbard (1984: 41); Sarkissian (1983: 1); Lyne (1980: 82); G. Williams (1980: 45); Luck (1960: 50).

15 As I make clear in *Subjecting Verses* (2004), this subject position is constituted in relation to the three fundamental realms of Lacanian thought: the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real.

16 For a fuller reading of the poem from this perspective, see Miller (2004: 31–59).

17 On the centrality of the *domus* to the Catullan moral universe, see Nappa (2001: 31).

18 Using a different approach, Theodorakopoulos in this volume develops a similar reading of the *domus* theme: see above, pp. 322–3.

GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

I limit discussion here to books that deal with both Catullus and elegy and that have not been discussed in the body of the chapter. The modern study of elegy begins with Luck's *The Latin Love Elegy* (1960), which provides a useful synoptic view of the genre and of what the ancient sources say about its authors. Lyne's *The Latin Love Poets from Catullus to Horace* (1980)

examines Catullus' role in legitimizing the "life of love" and sees him as establishing the thematics of the elegiac genre through a concept of "whole love," which goes beyond the traditional alternatives of sexual passion and marital duty. Paul Veyne's *Roman Erotic Elegy* (1988) insists on the self-conscious artificiality of the elegiac genre, which separates the elegists from Catullus, whose poetry, he asserts, was meant to be read as sincere. Veyne offers no real argument for this dichotomy, nor does he address the fact that the elegists themselves cite Catullus as their predecessor. His work does, however, provide a useful corrective to the once dominant biographical approach. Ellen Greene's *The Erotics of Domination* (1999b) is the first book-length study to apply feminist scholarship to Catullus in relation to Propertius and Ovid.

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