Catullus and Ovid

John Ferguson

The American Journal of Philology, Vol. 81, No. 4. (Oct., 1960), pp. 337-357.

Stable URL:
http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0002-9475%28196010%2981%3A4%3C337%3ACAO%3E2.0.CO%3B2-W

The American Journal of Philology is currently published by The Johns Hopkins University Press.

AMERICAN

JOURNAL OF PHILOLOGY

VOL. LXXXI, 4 WHOLE NO. 324

CATULLUS AND OVID.[1]

1

That Ovid knew and admired the poetry of Catullus is not in doubt. He takes him as the type of the poet who has brought renown to his birthplace:

> Mantua Vergilio gaudet, Verona Catullo;
> Paelignae dicar gloria gentis ego.[2]

In his elegy for Tibullus he depicts Catullus and Calvus as welcoming the young laureate to the land of the shades:

> obvius huic venias, hedera iuvenilia cinctus
> tempora, cum Calvo, docte Catulle, tuo.[3]

The epithet *doctus* is also applied to Catullus by Lygdamus and Martial; it may be alluded to by Horace; at any rate it does not seem original with Ovid.[4] In the light of this passage, and Propertius' inclusion of Catullus in the list of his predecessors,[5] it is a little curious that Ovid does not mention him either in his early answer to Envy, or his later autobiographical poem to Posterity.[6]

[1] I cannot find that this theme has been much discussed. Zingerle, *Ovidius u. s. Verhältniss*, I, pp. 35 ff. has a useful collection of "echoes." I would like to express my gratitude to my colleague Mr. H. F. Guite for much helpful criticism. The errors that remain are my own.

[2] Ov., *Am.*, III, 15, 7.

[3] *Ibid.*, III, 9, 61.

[4] Lygd. [Tib.], III, 6, 41; Mart., I, 61, 1; VII, 99, 7; Hor., *Sat.*, I, 10, 19.

[5] Prop., II, 34, 87.

[6] Ov., *Am.*, I, 15; *Trist.*, IV, 10. He appears in *Trist.*, II, 427.

The explanation may be, as Rand suggests, that Catullus was not technically an elegist; we know that Quintilian does not so account him, though it is difficult, reading the 76th poem, to understand on what technical grounds he was excluded from the succession. It is possible, however, that his omission was more personal. After all, the autobiography only professes to deal, with the possible exception of Gallus, with poets whom Ovid knew or might have known in his lifetime. The poem from the *Amores* is more of a catalogue of predecessors. The selection is decidedly odd, and more might have been made of it in evaluating Ovid's approach to poetry. Among the Greeks he mentions Homer, Hesiod, and Callimachus, but not Sappho (too unbridled?), Simonides (too moralizing?), or Pindar (too obscure?); Sophocles, but not Aeschylus (again too obscure?) or Euripides (reformers were not in Ovid's line); Menander but not Aristophanes (polish preferred to vigour); and Aratus. The Romans are Ennius and Accius, Varro of Atax, Lucretius (Que fait-il dans cette galère? It is hard to discern an affinity between Lucretius and Ovid. But Ovid seems to have admired crude grandeur in Romans and polish in Greeks; he had a philosophical streak in him; and he may at one time have had Epicurean sympathies), Vergil, Tibullus, and Gallus. No Plautus or Terence, Propertius or Horace.

In fact, when Ovid was forming himself as a poet, Catullus attracted him for his love-themes, but not for his technique. In his younger days Ovid was not a learned poet. It was his studies for the *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti* which brought in myth as a significant element in his writing. Martini has shown that this period of his life marks a change in his approach to poetry.[7] He is now picking up the work of the *neoteri*, for in undertaking simultaneously the elegiacs of the *Fasti* and the epyllia which make up the *Metamorphoses* he was bringing to the Rome of his day the two principal *genres* of Alexandrianism. Now parallels of treatment between his work and that of Catullus become more frequent. We may instance the use of the παραδεῖγμα or *exemplum*, which is found in the Theognis corpus.[8] This use of parallels from Greek legend to establish a point was essayed by Catullus with notable success in the Laodamia theme in his

[7] Martini in *Ἐπιτύμβιον H. Swoboda dargebracht* (1927), pp. 165-94.
[8] E. g. 1123-8, 1287-94, 1345-50.

long letter to Manlius.[9] Ovid did not however take it straight from Catullus; it was mediated through Propertius.

In detailed technique they were poles apart, and it does not appear that Catullus had any influence upon Ovid's versification. Catullus' verse, though at times extremely skilful, is a different sort of medium of expression from Ovid's. Except perhaps in his hexameters he did not seek formal perfection. The poet who could produce as a pentameter

quam modo qui me unum atque unicum amicum habuit,

even though we can see that the harshness of the verse deliberately matches the harshness of the sentiment, was not likely to commend himself for his verse-form to the elegant Ovid. Modern taste has not always accepted this view, and Walter Savage Landor could write many years ago: "Those whose ears have been accustomed to the Ovidian elegiac verse, and have been taught at school that every pentameter should close with a dissyllable, will be apt to find those of Catullus harsh and negligent. But let them only read over, twice or thrice, the twelve first verses (*sic*) of this poem, and their ear will be cured of its infirmity. By degrees they may be led to doubt whether the worst of all Ovid's conceits is not his determination to give every alternate verse this syllabic uniformity." In truth, Catullus is a romantic poet, Ovid a classical, and this judgment, based on their approach to form, is seen to be true of their approach to matter also. There is nothing in Ovid, who can when he chooses give an admirable quiet description of a countryside, to compare with the romantic fervour of

montium domina ut fores
silvarumque virentium
saltuumque reconditorum
amniumque sonantum.[10]

Where the poets come together is that each is, in his way, a moral and political nonconformist. The point has not always been taken; once made, there is no need to labour it:

ille ego nequitiae Naso poeta meae.[11]

[9] Cat., 68, 73-86 and 105-30; cf. 65, 13-14.

[10] Cat., 34, 9-12.

[11] Ov., *Am.*, II, 1, 2.

Ovid in fact uses Catullus as an instance of a poet of moral laxity, whose morals were reflected in his verse.[12] On the political side Catullus was a notable critic of Caesar's rise to power; Ovid refused to use his poetry as the instrument of the moral didacticism of the Augustan régime, and was, however accidentally, somehow implicated in a movement of opposition to the emperor.

2

The third section of Catullus' published works, the more epigrammatic elegies, have left little trace upon the surviving works of Ovid. This does not determine for certain their influence upon Ovid, since we know of works by him in this genre which have not survived, and a line quoted by Quintilian:

cur ego non dicam, Furia, te furiam?

is reminiscent of Catullus, who would however have pointed the line less sharply.[13] A few verbal echoes are sufficient to demonstrate that Ovid knew this part of Catullus' work. Thus *foedus amicitiae* and *candidiora nive* come in both poets, one from a poem of Catullus which we should single out as outstanding, one which we regard as trivial.[14]

Other borrowings are more significant. Catullus has a famous phrase, derived from Sophocles, about the unreliability of women's words:

dicit: sed mulier cupido quod dicit amanti,
in vento et rapida scribere oportet aqua.[15]

The phrase became something of a commonplace, and Zingerle has catalogued a number of passages where the words of men are carried away on the wind.[16] But in one passage of the *Amores* we are justified in thinking that Catullus is either the proximate or the proproximate source. Propertius' version of Catullus is:

---

[12] *Trist.*, II, 427.

[13] Quint., IX, 3, 70, cf. VI, 3, 96; Priscian, V, 13, *G. L.*, II, p. 149, 14. Compare Cat., 81, 6.

[14] Cat., 109, 6; Ov., *Trist.*, III, 6, 1; Cat., 80, 2; Ov., *Pont.*, II, 5, 37.

[15] Cat., 70, 3-4.

[16] Ov., *Am.*, II, 6, 43; 11, 33; *A. A.*, I, 388; *Her.*, II, 25; VII, 8; XIII, 92; *R. A.*, 286; *Met.*, VIII, 134.

hoc perdit miseras, hoc perdidit ante puellas:
quidquid iurarunt, ventus et unda rapit.[17]

Ovid has probably both in mind; like Catullus he allows a couplet for the essential thought, but *ventus et unda* comes from Propertius:

verba puellarum, foliis leviora caducis,
irrita, qua visum est, ventus et unda ferunt.[18]

It is important for our understanding of the difference between Ovid and his predecessors, to notice that he expands the thought by the additional image of the falling leaves.

This process is even more obvious in another example. Ovid was fascinated by Catullus' state of mind during the renunciation of Lesbia. Three poems of this period gripped his imagination, the 8th, to which we shall return, the 76th and the 85th, and they blend in Ovid's memory in a single mood, the mood of "odi et amo":

odi, nec possum cupiens non esse, quod odi.[19]

This has a cleverness, an elaboration, which Catullus' direct passion lacks. Similarly, as Weinreich has pointed out, Ovid, in the same mood elaborates the word *excrucior* (with reference to Catullus 76?):[20]

mens abit et morior, quotiens peccasse fateris,
perque meos artus frigida gutta fluit.
tunc amo, tunc odi frustra, quod amare necessest:
tunc ego, sed tecum, mortuus esse velim.

But phrases from Catullus are held in his brain, and *fortasse requiret* slips out.[21] In the longest of the renunciation poems Catullus had a couplet:

quin tu animo offirmas atque istinc teque reducis
et dis invitis desinis esse miser.[22]

---

[17] Prop., II, 28, 7-8.

[18] Ov., *Am.*, II, 16, 45-6.

[19] *Ibid.*, II, 4, 5.

[20] *Ibid.*, III, 14, 37-40; Cat., 85, 2; 76, 21. O. Weinreich, ***Die Distichen des Catulls***, p. 70.

[21] Ov., *Pont.*, IV, 5, 29; Cat., 85, 1.

[22] Cat., 76, 11-12.

The first line recurs, quite appropriately, slightly modified in the *Metamorphoses*:

quin animum offirmas teque ipsa recolligis, Iphi.[23]

We note here how Ovid irons out the rough edges of Catullus' work. More important is a passage in the *Remedium Amoris*.[24] It does not seem to have been observed that Ovid has Catullus in mind in this passage,[25] but it is a clear analysis and criticism of Catullus' psychology. The "odi et amo" state is there; the phrase *desinet esse miser* (657) points the reference; even *perfer* (642) may come from Catullus (8, 11). Ovid has seen that Catullus' very intensity is the sign that he is still in love (648):

qui nimium multis Non amo dicit, amat.

What a magnificent piece of Freudian analysis centuries before Freud! If you wish to be free of love, Ovid goes on to say, you must be free of hatred too, and cultivate indifference (657-8):

non curare sat est: odio qui finit amorem,
aut amat, aut aegre desinet esse miser.

This is direct criticism of Catullus.

But the "odi et amo" state of mind fascinated Ovid, and in the *Amores* he had given an elaborate analysis of it.[26] This is hardly self-analysis; I agree with those critics who feel that Ovid writes of love with the detachment of an onlooker rather than the involvement of a participant. The last part of the poem is an ingenious set of variations on the Catullan theme (33 ff.):

luctantur pectusque leve in contraria tendunt
hac amor, hac odium, sed, puto, vincit amor.
odero, si potero; si non, invitus amabo:
nec iuga taurus amat; quae tamen odit, habet.
nequitiam fugio: fugientem forma reducit;
aversor morum crimina: corpus amo;
sic ego nec sine te nec tecum vivere possum
et videor voti nescius esse mei.
aut formosa fores minus, aut minus improba, vellem:
non facit ad mores tam bona forma malos.

---

[23] Ov., *Met.*, IX, 745.

[24] *R. A.*, 641 ff.

[25] Except perhaps by Weinreich, *Die Distichen des Catulls*, p. 71, but he only adduces it as a parallel.

[26] Ov., *Am.*, III, 11.

facta merent odium, facies exorat amorem:
me miserum! vitiis plus valet ipsa suis!
parce, per o lecti socialia iura, per omnis,
qui dant fallendos se tibi saepe, deos
perque tuam faciem, magni mihi numinis instar,
perque tuos oculos, qui rapuere meos!
quidquid eris, mea semper eris; tu selige tantum,
me quoque velle velis, anne coactus amem!
lintea dem potius ventisque ferentibus utar,
ut, quamvis nolim, cogar amare velim.

Weinreich comments: "Man stellt gewöhnlich fest: Catulls Distichon ist zerdehnt zur Elegie, die Hülle prall ausgestopft mit Rhetorik."[27] It is of course brilliant; it would be hard to better *odero, si potero; si non, invitus amabo* or *sic ego nec sine te nec tecum vivere possum.* But it is a cold brilliance. No one who felt what he was writing about could play on the idea in this way. Recollections of Catullus are there,[28] but the difference between Catullus and Ovid is nowhere to be more clearly seen than in Ovid's expansive and elaborate playing on a single conceit with all the instruments of his orchestra. Fénélon's comment is revealing "Combien Ovid et Martial, avec leurs traits ingénieux et façonnées, sont-ils au dessoux de ces paroles négligées, où le coeur saisi parle seul dans un espèce de désespoir."

One other poem in this section calls for some brief notice. This is Catullus' elegy for his brother. There is a curious biographical similarity between Catullus and Ovid in that each visited Troy, and each lost a brother whom he dearly loved:

iamque decem vitae frater geminaverat annos,
quum perit, et coepi parte carere mei.[29]

The point here is a negative one; there is no trace of Catullus' elegy in this couplet. But there is an echo in the *Fasti*, appropriately in the story of Romulus and Remus:

atque ait, Invito frater adempte, vale.[30]

This is an allusion without elaboration. The reason is clearly that in both passages Ovid is seriously involved. In the first,

[27] O. Weinreich, *Die Distichen des Catulls*, p. 73.
[28] 35, Cat., 85, 1; 39, Cat., 75, 3-4; 46, Cat., 76, 4.
[29] Ov., *Tr.*, IV, 10, 31-2. For Ovid's visit to Troy see *Fast.*, VI, 417-24.
[30] Ov., *Fast.*, IV, 852. Cat., 101, 6; cf. 68, 20 and 92.

it is his own brother, not a literary fiction, and an echo of Catullus would be almost improper. In the second, the echo is proper, but Ovid is genuinely interested in Roman legend, and does not wish to play with the theme.

3

Ovid was a story-teller in verse, and it was natural that he should look closely at Catullus' epyllion, especially as he was himself more than once concerned to write the story of Ariadne. Unfortunately we cannot easily now be certain what Ovid is taking from Catullus, and what from the latter's Hellenistic originals,[31] though there are enough verbal reminiscences to make us realize that Ovid had made a detailed study of Catullus' poem.

If we go first to *Heroides* 10, a careful examination of parallels is illuminating. Ovid's Ariadne, like Catullus', rises from sleep with a start;[32] she climbs a hill;[33] she cannot believe her own eyes.[34] Ovid's heroine wanders like a Bacchante; Catullus' stares out to sea like the statue of a Bacchante. (In Ovid the statue thought is separated and follows immediately.)[35] She asks herself frantic questions.[36] The island is deserted.[37] She may not go back to her father, even if she could;[38] had she not helped Theseus out of the labyrinthine *tectum*?[39] She refers to the Minotaur as her brother: Palmer comments that this is "perhaps the most flagrant instance of bad taste in Ovid, but Catullus is to blame for it."[40] She can only hope for a death by wild animals.[41] She wishes that the past were undone,[42] and recalls the death of Androgeos and the tribute of the land of Cecrops (which Catullus narrates as background to his story).[43] She

[31] See J. N. Anderson, *On the Sources of Ovid's Heroides* (Berlin, 1896).

[32] Ov., *Her.*, X, 13; Cat., 64, 56.

[33] Ov., 25; Cat., 126.

[34] Ov., 31; Cat., 55.

[35] Ov., 48, 50; Cat., 61.

[36] Ov., 59; Cat., 177.

[37] Ov., 59; Cat., 184.

[38] Ov., 64; Cat., 180.

[39] Ov., 71; Cat. 113.

[40] Ov., 77; Cat. 150, cf. 181; A. Palmer, *Ovid's Heroides*, p. 312.

[41] Ov., 83-4, 96; Cat., 152.

[42] Ov., 99; Cat. 171.

[43] Ov., 99-100; Cat., 76-83.

will be unburied and the birds will perch on her bones (in Catullus, a prey to birds).[44] She is left on her wave-beaten isle.[45]

Three things stand out about this analysis. In the first place there is a coincidence of ideas too close to be accidental, but there is little coincidence of words. Elsewhere, as we shall see, Ovid uses the words of Catullus' epyllion; he has them in his mind. I conclude therefore that the avoidance is deliberate. Ovid has Catullus' narrative open before him; he is using the thought, but changing the language. Of course some of the thoughts are inevitable in the situation, but touches like the failure to believe her own eyes, and the image of the Bacchante show the derivation. Secondly, Ovid rearranges the ideas; this again seems a deliberate variation. In fact, Catullus' narrative follows a logical sequence; in Ovid the logic is deliberately disarranged—Ariadne keeps recurring to the thought of her unburied corpse. Thirdly, Ovid elaborates his original, not always with profit: the birds perched on the bones is a splendid conceit, but the Bacchante image is more compelling in Catullus. One can see Ovid's thought that a Bacchante should be associated with movement, but the thought of that movement frozen as to stone is finer. Similarly Ovid characteristically analyses the thought of wild beasts into wolves, lions, tigers and even seals (the slight comedy of this is out of place). He adds a number of touches of his own, like:

> in me iurarunt somnus ventusque fidesque:
> prodita sum causis una puella tribus,[46]

which is over-clever, and his last line after she appeals to Theseus to return:

> si prius occidero, tu tamen ossa leges,[47]

which has a certain genuine pathos, which he has carefully prepared by the recurring theme of absence of burial.

Neither heroine, as Palmer has observed,[48] has much personality or depth of character. She is conceived as responding rather

[44] Ov., 123; Cat. 153. Ovid has also in mind Prop., III, 7, 11.
[45] Ov., 136; Cat., 52.
[46] Ov., 117-18, perhaps with Prop., I, 13, 30 in mind.
[47] Ov., 150.
[48] A. Palmer, *Ovid's Heroides*, p. xvii.

to a situation of loneliness and terror. In Catullus the loneliness predominates, in Ovid the terror. Both heroines soliloquize with some realism—the fear of seals is a not wholly successful attempt by Ovid to convey realistically the trepidation of a timid young girl. Ovid, who had an admirable streak of gentleness in his make-up, makes his Ariadne gentler; in Catullus she is more passionate, and thus (surprisingly) more rhetorical and more compelling. It is a subjective judgment, but I must confess that though I can coldly appraise the skill of Ovid's portrayal, it is Catullus' Ariadne who stirs my imagination and whose words remain in my memory.

Ovid reverted to the story more than one. He tells it again in the *Ars Amatoria*, this time with a greater intensity.[49] The picture of Ariadne is more summary and compact, but the adjective *perfidus* is again prominent, and the self-questionings are there. There is this time an elaborate description of the arrival of Bacchus, and again I have the feeling that Ovid is deliberately eschewing the phrases of Catullus, and probably has Catullus open before him and is varying his picture and language. When he speaks of Ariadne in the *Fasti* the language is Catullan:

> dicebam, memini, periure et perfide Theseu;
> ille abiit: eadem crimina Bacchus habet.
> nunc quoque nulla viro, clamabo, femina credat:
> nomine mutato causa relata mea est.[50]

Perfide Theseu recalls Catullus;[51] the third line is directly from

> nunc iam nulla viro iuranti femina credat.[52]

(It is noteworthy that Ovid has lightened the first foot.) A line or two later *desertis . . . arenis* has been taken by some as a slight echo of Catullus' *desertam . . . arena*.[53] Ovid is dealing here with a later stage of the Ariadne saga; he seems to have felt that in tackling the same theme to echo Catullus' language would be plagiaristic, but in tackling a different theme an echo served as an allusion and bridge between two parts of the story.

[49] Ov., *A. A.*, I, 527 ff.
[50] Ov., *Fast.*, III, 473-6.
[51] Cat., 64, 133.
[52] *Ibid.*, 143.
[53] *Ibid.*, 57; Ov., *Fast.*, III, 479.

This explains also the echoes in Ovid's treatment of Medea. Catullus has already linked the two heroines by applying to Ariadne the thoughts of Euripides' Medea.[54] Ovid carries the process further. Catullus says of Ariadne:

> non prius ex illo flagrantia declinavit
> lumina, quam cuncto concepit corpore flammam
> funditus atque imis exarsit tota medullis.

Ovid uses the same picture of Medea:

> spectat, et in vultu, veluti tunc denique viso,
> lumina fixa tenet: nec se mortalia demens
> ora videre putat; nec se declinat ab illo.

So too Medea cries to herself:

> excute virgineo conceptas pectore flammas.[55]

Further, *regia virgo* is applied to both heroines.[56] Plainly this is deliberate; Ovid wishes his reader to impose the image of Ariadne upon Medea. This is important for our understanding of Ovid's Medea, for Ariadne is a more immediately sympathetic person.

The story of Scylla and Nisus also offered Ovid the opportunity for Catullan reminiscences. The resemblance with the *Lock of Berenice* was too obvious to be passed over, and Ovid pointed it by borrowing the words *praemia nulla peto,* and transferring them from the end of a pentameter to the start of a hexameter.[57] But he also had Ariadne in his mind; there was a parallel situation in the betrayal of the home king for a foreigner, and the irony of Minos' part in each story gave the parallel added point. So Scylla is given words which recall Ariadne's self-questionings,[58] and Minos' parentage, like that of Theseus, is compared with wild animals, Syrtis and Charybdis.[59] The whole of the speech is based on Ariadne's. The allusion is meaningful; one feels, however, that perhaps before the immensity of the *Meta-*

[54] Cat., 64, 171 ff.; Eur., *Med.*, 1 ff.
[55] Cat., 64, 91; Ov., *Met.*, VII, 17 and 86.
[56] Cat., 64, 86; Ov., *Met.*, VII, 21.
[57] Cat., 66, 86; Ov., *Met.*, VIII, 92.
[58] Cat., 64, 177; Ov., *Met.*, VIII, 113.
[59] Cat., 64, 154; Ov., *Met.*, VIII, 120. Verg., *Aen.*, IV, 365-7 comes between the two.

morphoses even Ovid's inventive genius is beginning to flag. There is a great difference from the man who took such pains not to reduplicate Catullus in the *Heroides.*

There is also a touch of Ariadne in Phyllis' letter to Demophoon. Ariadne has said of her promised marriage:

> quae cuncta aerii discerpunt irrita venti.

Mark what Ovid makes of this:

> Demophoon, ventis et verba et vela dedisti:
> vela queror reditu, verba carere fide.[60]

It is of course brilliant; first the zeugma and then the point, the wit, hammered home with a light tap. It is also utterly unfeeling. But Phyllis has compared herself with Ariadne before the poem is through.[61] We may note in passing that the same line gave Ovid in the *Tristia*

> cunctane in aequoreos abierunt irrita ventos? [62]

It will be as well to consolidate Ovid's debt to this poem by noting a number of other reminiscences. The most important is in the *Amores* where one of the elegies begins:

> Prima malas docuit, mirantibus aequoris undis,
> Peliaco pinus vertice caesa vias,

in clear allusion to the beginning of Catullus' poem.[63] Elsewhere we notice *ventosa aequora,*[64] *vomere taurus,*[65] *variatis figuris* [66] (this last in the story of Peleus and Thetis), *imis medullis,*[67] *redimita capillos,*[68] *candida purpureum,*[69] *teretam versabat pollice fusum* [70] (this from the story of Arachne, where a reference to Ariadne is appropriate), *iustitiam fugarat.*[71] All of these recall

[60] Cat., 64, 142; Ov., *Her.*, II, 25-6.
[61] Ov., *Her.*, II, 75-6.
[62] Ov., *Trist.*, I, 8, 35.
[63] Ov., *Am.*, II, 11, 1-2; Cat., 64, 1-2, cf. 15.
[64] Ov., *Her.*, XVII, 5; Cat., 64, 12.
[65] Ov., *Fast.*, II, 295; Cat., 64, 40.
[66] Ov., *Met.*, XI, 241; Cat., 64, 50.
[67] Ov., *Trist.*, I, 5, 9; Cat., 64, 93.
[68] Ov., *Am.*, III, 10, 3, cf. *Her.*, IX, 63; Cat., 64, 193.
[69] Ov., *Met.*, X, 596; Cat., 64, 308.
[70] Ov., *Met.*, VI, 22; Cat., 64, 313-14; see Ehwald, *ad loc.*
[71] Ov., *Fast.*, I, 249; Cat., 64, 398.

phrases in Catullus; most of them are slight; some may be coincidental; not more than one or two are deliberate. The only substantial debt which it remains to note is that the description of the Iron Age at the beginning of the *Metamorphoses* is a typically Ovidian expansion of the similar passage at the end of the *Peleus and Thetis.*[72]

4

In the other longer poems Catullus influenced Ovid most significantly in his portrayal of Laodamia. She forms an elaborate *exemplum* in his letter to Manlius. The thirteenth of the *Heroides* certainly appears to be based on Catullus, though, as with Ariadne, the portrayal is altogether gentler in Ovid, and, as Palmer remarks, free from the overwhelming passion which Catullus gives her.[73] Antonius Volscus stated that Ovid's source was Pacuvius, but no one knows the authority for his assertion.[74] In one of the *Amores* the echo of Catullus is unmistakable:

et comes exstincto Laodamia viro

coming from

docta est amisso Laodamia viro.[75]

Elsewhere in Ovid *madere genas* [76] and *scabra rubigine* [77] may be echoes of this poem; they may however be coincidental. More significant is the allusion to the first (and unfinished) section of the poem in the *Tristia.* There Ovid, in his Scythian gloom, wrote

non hic librorum, per quos inviter alarque
copia.

He is implying that Rome is his real home, as Catullus had written

nam, quod scriptorum non magna est copia apud me,
hoc fit, quod Romae vivimus.[78]

---

[72] Ov., *Met.*, I, 127 ff.; Cat. 64, 397 ff.
[73] A. Palmer, *Ovid's Heroides*, p. xviii.
[74] *Ibid.*, p. 401.
[75] Cat., 68, 80; Ov., *Am.*, II, 18, 38.
[76] Cat., 68, 56; Ov., *A. A.*, III, 378.
[77] Cat., 68, 151; Ov., *Pont.*, I, 1, 71; cf. Verg., *G.*, I, 495.
[78] Cat., 68, 33; Ov., *Trist.*, III, 14, 37.

The Lock of Berenice, as we have seen, left its mark on the story of Scylla and Nisus, but otherwise influenced Ovid very little. This is itself significant, as it was perhaps Catullus' most elaborate essay in elegiacs, and it shows that Ovid was not interested in Catullus' metrical technique. Some people have supposed that the mood and tone of *Amores,* II, 15 comes from the *Lock,* but I am dubious. *Tardus Bootes* provided him with an acceptable epithet;[79] the Homeric original is not quite the same.[80] *Cura medullas* may come from there, but the combination of words is a likely one.[81] Similarly in the 65th poem, we cannot make much of the recurrence of *ore rubor.*[82] More curious still is the fact that the *Attis* had next to no impact upon Ovid; with his morbid attachment to the pathology of love one might have expected otherwise. But Ovid is a reflective poet, and the spirit of the *Attis* with its breathless onrush was not for him; I have scarcely noted a single echo of it, and not one of which I feel certain.

It is otherwise with the two marriage-hymns, which offer one notable borrowing. Catullus compared the untouched virgin to a garden-flower:

> multi illum pueri, multae optavere puellae:
> idem cum tenui carptus defloruit ungui,
> nulli illum pueri, nullae optavere puellae.

In that stanza the image of the flower changes to the image of the girl. In telling the story of Narcissus, Ovid uses the same words:

> multi illum pueri, multae cupiere puellae:
> sed fuit in tenera tam diva superbia forma:
> nulli illum iuvenes, nullae tetigere puellae.

The parallelism is obvious: the young man will turn into a flower. But it is noteworthy that Ovid considerably lightens the verses: he varies the words, he avoids a harsh elision, and introduces an additional dactyl.[83] There is a certain bitterness in a

[79] Cat., 66, 67; Ov., *Met.,* II, 177; cf. *Fast.,* III, 405.
[80] Hom., *Od.,* V, 272.
[81] Cat., 66, 23; Ov., *Am.,* II, 19, 43.
[82] Cat., 65, 24; Ov., *Trist.,* IV, 3, 70.
[83] Cat., 62, 42-4; Ov., *Met.,* III, 353-5; see W. Kroll, *Studien zum Verständnis der rom. Literatur* (1924), p. 170.

further reminiscence of this poem. The young men reply that an unmarried girl is like an unfruitful vine, and Ovid alludes to the words in speaking of the infertility of Tomi.[84]

5

Finally we turn to the lyrical poems. Here we might expect to find a negligible connection, for Ovid used quite a different medium, though again we should remember that Ovid wrote hendecasyllabics which we have lost.[85] In fact there are a whole host of reminiscences, emphasizing again that Ovid went to Catullus for his moods not his metres. First we notice how Ovid takes his defence for the intemperance of his poetry from Catullus, who had written:

> nam castum esse decet pium poetam
> ipsum, versiculos nihil necesse est.[86]

Ovid uses the same defence:

> crede mihi, mores distant a carmine nostro;
> vita verecunda est, Musa iocosa mihi.[87]

As always, Ovid's lines are exquisitely pointed, but their derivation is clear.

The most substantial instance of Ovid's indebtedness to the lyrics is seen in his account of his journey to Tomi, which is based with gloomy irony on Catullus' account of his journey *from* the East.[88] This has been meticulously analysed by Munro, and by others since, and does not call for much comment here.[89] We may note that the bold use of nominative and infinitive, with which Catullus starts, was much affected by Ovid.[90] Catullus' opening lines are:

---

[84] Cat., 62, 50; Ov., *Pont.*, I, 3, 51.

[85] Quint., *Inst. Or.*, XII, 10, 75; cf. (perhaps) Mart., II, 41, 1-2.

[86] Cat., 16, 5-6.

[87] Ov., *Trist.*, II, 353-4.

[88] Cat., 4; Ov., *Trist.*, I, 10.

[89] H. A. J. Munro, *Criticisms and Elucidations of Catullus*, pp. 9 ff.; O. Weinreich, *Stud. z. Mart.*, pp. 154 ff.; U. von Wilamowitz, *Hellenistische Dichtung*, II, pp. 295 ff.; G. Jachmann in *Gnomon*, I (1925), pp. 200-14; Hoppe, in *Ph. Woch.* (1939), pp. 1139 ff.

[90] E. g. *Met.*, XIII, 141.

phasellus ille quem videtis, hospites,
ait fuisse navium celerrimus,
neque ullius natantis impetum trabis
nequisse praeterire, sive palmulis
opus foret volare sive linteo.

In Ovid's hands this becomes:

est mihi sitque, precor, flavae tutela Minervae,
navis, et a picta casside nomen habet.
sive opus est velis, minimam bene currit ad auram,
sive opus est remo, remige carpit iter.
nec comites volucri contenta est vincere cursu,
occupat egressas quamlibet ante rates.

Munro is clearly right when he says that Ovid "shews himself here too 'nimium amator ingenii sui' and pushes to hyperbole the simple thought of Catullus." Ovid starts the story of his ship at Cenchreae, echoing the language in which Catullus links his with Cytorus,[91] and goes on to allude to Catullus' *tot per impotentia freta.*[92] Catullus' words *erum tulisse* become in Ovid

hac dominum tenus est illa secuta suum.[93]

Ovid refers to the idea of sacrifice to the gods of the shore, and concludes with a prayer to the Tyndaridae.[94] There are substantial differences between the poems: for one thing, Catullus' voyage is completed, Ovid's is not. Ovid has a long catalogue of cities, from which Catullus for all his Alexandrianism is relatively free. Ovid is much more mannered than Catullus, and for once we are bound to say even that Catullus' poem is technically superior.

A different kind of debt is seen in the poem on the dead parrot.[95] Epitaphs on dead animals are not uncommon in Greek, and the Anthology contains some twenty-eight.[96] Catullus' poem on the death of Lesbia's sparrow is, however, not an epitaph, but a personal lyric arising out of the situation.[97] It was one

[91] Cat., 4, 13-15; Ov., *Trist.*, I, 10, 9.
[92] Cat., 4, 18; Ov., *Trist.*, I, 10, 11-12.
[93] Cat., 4, 19; Ov., *Trist.*, I, 10, 22.
[94] Cat., 4, 25-7; Ov., *Trist.*, I, 10, 45 ff.
[95] Ov., *Am.*, II, 6.
[96] *Anth. Pal.*, VII, 189-216.
[97] Cat., 3.

of his most famous poems in antiquity, as later, and Ovid saw the potentialities of the idea for a poem of wit. He parodied a funeral elegy, the bidding to the mourners (1-16), the regrets (17-24), the outburst against the powers of darkness, and list of those who could better have been spared (25-42), the deathbed scene (43-8), the hopes of a blessed life beyond the grave (49-58) and the final committal (59-62). The whole thing is amusing and utterly unfeeling. He has taken nothing from Catullus except the idea.[98] (He takes the directness of his opening from the previous poem of Catullus.) The contrast between the two poems can well be seen in comparing Catullus' tender

> qui nunc it per iter tenebricosum
> illuc unde negant redire quemquam

with Ovid's conceit:

> ossa tegit tumulus, tumulus pro corpore parvus,
> quo lapis exiguus par sibi carmen habet.[99]

The contrast in length between the poems is also noteworthy. Ovid is amusing, but he draws out his humour to the point of tediousness.

Ovid, as the poet of love, however consciously and whimsically, was interested in Catullus' expressions of love. Catullus' fifth poem begins:

> vivamus, mea Lesbia, atque amemus
> rumoresque senum severiorum
> omnes unius aestimemus assis.

Ovid transfers the thought to Byblis:

> iura senes norint, et quid liceatque nefasque
> fasque sint inquirant, legumque examina servent;
> conveniens Venus est annis temeraria nostris.[100]

Allegations of incest were made against Clodia, and that makes this particular borrowing all the more pointed. It is interesting to find a not dissimilar sentiment in Ovid's "Controversium": *tu hoc optinebis, ut terminos quos adprobaveris custodiant, ut nihil faciant nisi considerate, nihil promittant nisi ut tu vis*

[98] Unless Ov., *Am.*, II, 6, 39 comes from Cat., 3, 13-14.
[99] Cat., 3, 11-12; Ov., *Am.*, II, 6, 59-60.
[100] Cat., 5, 1-3; Ov., *Met.*, IX, 551-3.

facturi, omnia verba ratione et fide ponderent? senes sic amant.[101] Catullus continues:

> soles occidere et redire possunt:
> nobis cum semel occidit brevis lux,
> nox est perpetua una dormienda.

The thought is a commonplace, but at the beginning of the next book of the *Metamorphoses* Ovid uses it in contrasting the inevitability of extinction with the power of love.[102] Catullus' eighth poem is a poem of unhappy love; it belongs to the " odi et amo " cycle. We have already seen how Ovid elaborates this mood. Here it is enough to notice that he had studied it in the lyrics as well as the elegiacs, and took the words *perfer et obdura* (plainly the right reading) from the poem of Catullus, adapting them from iambic to hexameter by inserting *et*.[103] It has been suggested in the same poem that

> vidi ego quum foribus lassus prodiret amator,
> invalidum referens emeritumque latus

comes from Catullus:

> cur? non tam latera ecfututa pandas.[104]

This is much less certain, but the general derivation of the poem from Catullus leaves it possible. Ovid was certainly familiar with the sixth poem; as Ellis pointed out, the lines

> pulvinusque peraeque et hic et ille
> attritus, tremulique quassa lecti
> argutatio inambulatioque

suggested to him the lines

> cur pressus prior est interiorque torus

and

> spondaque lasciva mobilitate tremat[105]

and from this poem also he took the vivid *viduas noctes*.[106]

The *Remedium Amoris* contains what may be one substantial

[101] Sen., *Contr.*, II, 2, 9-11.
[102] Cat., 5, 4-6; Ov., *Met.*, X, 25-35.
[103] Cat., 8, 11; Ov., *Am.*, III, 11, 7.
[104] Cat., 6, 13; Ov., *Am.*, III, 11, 13-14.
[105] Cat., 6, 9-11; Ov., *Am.*, III, 14, 26 and 32.
[106] Cat., 6, 6; Ov., *Her.*, XIX, 69.

allusion to Catullus. Catullus completed the Sapphic version which he wrote for his Lesbia with a verse directed to himself:

> otium, Catulle, tibi molestum est:
> otio exultas nimiumque gestis.
> otium et reges prius et beatas
> perdidit urbes.

If *otium* causes a man to fall in love, then to remove *otium* is the antidote to the plague, and Ovid says so:

> otia si tollas, periere Cupidinis arcus. . . . .
> tam Venus otium amat; qui finem quaeris amoris,
> cedit amor rebus: res age; tutus eris.[107]

This would appear to be a direct and singularly happy reference.

The others are mostly less substantial. For the sake of completeness we may note the use of *charta* in the sense of "book,"[108] the *novem continuas fututiones*,[109] and the possible echo of the forty-second poem in the *Ars Amatoria*.[110] In the thirtieth poem Catullus has

> idem nunc retrahis te ac tua dicta omnia factaque
> ventos irrita ferre ac nebulas aerias sinis.

The familiar line in the *Tristia*:

> cunctane aequoreos abierunt irrita ventos

more probably echoes Catullus' Ariadne, but in the *Ars Amatoria*

> et iubet Aeolios irrita ferre Notos

recalls this passage.[111] Catullus 35:

> quamvis candida milies puella
> euntem revocet manusque collo
> ambas iniciens roget morari

seems to be the source of some lines in the *Amores*:

> implicuitque suos circum mea colla lacertos;
> et, quae me perdunt, oscula mille dedit,

---

[107] Cat., 51, 13-16; Ov., *Rem. Am.*, 139-44.
[108] Cat., 1, 6; Ov., *Trist.*, III, 1, 4.
[109] Cat., 32, 7; Ov., *Am.*, III, 7, 26.
[110] Cat., 42; Ov., *A. A.*, III, 447-50.
[111] Cat., 30, 9-10; 64, 142; Ov., *Trist.*, I, 8, 35; *A. A.*, I, 633.

where *mille* is the tell-tale word.[112] In Catullus 46

ad claras Asiae volemus urbes

gave Ovid

te duce magnificas Asiae perspeximus urbes.[113]

Indeed, the whole of this account of his journey to the East merits comparison with Catullus. Finally we may recall Catullus' comparison of the number of Lesbia's kisses to the sands of the desert or stars of the sky. This is a commonplace which extends back to Homer, and it is sufficient to note that such comparisons recur in Ovid, generally of his own sufferings.[114]

I do not know that we gain very much fresh insight from these reminiscences. Taken as a whole they show a very thorough acquaintance on the part of Ovid with Catullus' lyric poetry, a familiarity which extends through all periods of his writing career. There is one big difference between the two poets which emerges. It is true that Catullus was not afraid to echo the Greeks, Homer or Sappho or the Alexandrians. But he is writing generally out of his own experiences, and his literary learning fuses with that experience to give it expression. With Ovid one feels that the experience is lacking, and that he is content to play with giving expression to the experiences of others. Catullus takes phrases from the Greeks to express his own emotions. Ovid takes emotions from Catullus to dress in his own phrases.

6

The general contrast between the poets is clear. It is not, as has sometimes been suggested, that Ovid is a poet of polish and Catullus is not; few Latin poems are more carefully burnished than the *Peleus and Thetis*. Nor should we forget that it is Catullus, not Ovid, who receives the name *doctus*. The contrast lies elsewhere. It is partly that Catullus, on the whole, writes out of his own experience, and Ovid, on the whole, does not; partly that Ovid seeks point, wit, and rhetorical elaboration—he is post-Pollio, a product of the *recitationes*.

[112] Cat., 35, 7-9; Ov., *Am.*, II, 18, 9-10.

[113] Cat., 46, 6; Ov., *Pont.*, II, 10, 21.

[114] Cat., 7, 3; Hom., *Il.*, IX, 385; Ov., *Trist.*, I, 5, 47; IV, 1, 55; V, 1, 31, etc.

This contrast is far-reaching and makes Ovid's considerable and detailed knowledge of Catullus suprising. With this knowledge, he tends to avoid direct verbal allusions. Where he uses them it is generally to make a point, to link his Medea with Catullus' Ariadne, his Narcissus with Catullus' flower, his Byblis with the incestuous Clodia, his remedy for love with Catullus' unhappiness in love. What he sought in Catullus was the range of experience to form the subject-matter of his own detached comment. He could scarcely have found a better source, and we remain amazed that anyone could so deeply assimilate Catullus' matter while retaining so little of his directness of approach.

JOHN FERGUSON.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, IBADAN, NIGERIA.