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ON A HOMERIC REFERENCE IN CATULLUS

In a recent issue of this journal, Professor J. E. G. Zetzel¹ suggested that Catullus had demonstrable access to a Zenodotean text of the *Iliad*. The relevant lines are:

αὐτοῦς δὲ ἐλώρια τεῦχε κύνεσσιν
οἰωνοῖσί τε δαῖτα.²

(Il. 1.4-5)

pro quo dilaceranda feris dabor alitibusque
praeda, neque iniacta tumulabor mortua terra.
(Cat. 64.152-53)

Not only did Catullus use this text of Homer, but by translating *δαῖτα* with the softer *praeda* (where he could have used a closer word, *cena*) he also demonstrated his awareness of objections to *δαῖτα* made by Aristarchus “because the word is used elsewhere in Homer exclusively to refer to human meals” (333).

The basis for this claim is in the Latin poet’s imitation of the Zenodotean chiasmic word order: “he divides the fate of Ariadne’s corpse into two parts, *dilaceranda feris* and *alitibus praeda*. The two are in chiasmic order, with *feris* and *alitibus* in the center: this clearly imitates the opposition of *κύνεσσιν* and *οἰωνοῖσι*. Likewise, *dilaceranda* will serve as an equivalent to *ἐλώρια*” (332). Thus *praeda* is Catullus’ softened translation of *δαῖτα*, providing the final balance.

But the parallel is not as close as this, for *dilaceranda* refers not to Ariadne, but to *praeda*: “prey to be torn apart by the beasts and birds.” Homer on the other hand: “spoil for dogs and a feast for birds.” The gerundive in Catullus is more natural taken this way,³ and certainly it was so taken by his most notable devotee:

¹ “A Homeric Reminiscence in Catullus,” *AJP* 99 (1978) 332-33.

² *δαῖτα* appears in no manuscripts, papyri or scholia (the manuscripts have *πασι*), but was clearly what Zenodotus wrote (Athenaeus 1.12f.), and was in texts as early as the fifth century. For this, see R. Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship* (Oxford 1968) 111-13; Zetzel (above, n. 1).

³ I take the silence of the commentators as support, since of the eight translations I checked all construe *dilaceranda* as modifying *praeda*.

heu, terra ignota canibus data praeda Latinis
alitibusque iaces!

(Virg. *Aen.* 9.485-86)⁴

Virgil's *data* does the job of *dilaceranda*.

If this is the sense of Catullus 64.152-53, then Homer's lines will not do as a direct model. Rather they should be seen as the first instance of a theme which was to become a thorough commonplace both in Greek and Latin poetry.⁵ Ovid was to expose it as such and provide the ultimate development of the *topos*, by having his Ariadne include wolves, lions, tigers and the mighty seal.⁶

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⁴ Cited by commentators; e.g. K. Quinn, ed., *Catullus: The Poems* (London 1970) 322. Virgil twice used the dative plural *alitibus*—here, and at *Aen.* 10.559, where it is also reminiscent of Catullus (who has it only at 64.152).

⁵ E.g. Aesch. *Suppl.* 800-1; Soph. *Ant.* 29-30 (did *θησαυρόν* suggest *praeda*?), 205-6, 696-98, 1017-18 (the first three Sophoclean passages all seem closer to Catullus, in that they include the absence of burial, a feature not in Homer's lines); Eur. *Ion* 504-5; *Hec.* 1078; Hor. *Odes* 3.27.53-56. See Pfeiffer (above, n. 2) 111; Quinn (above, n. 3) 322.

The *topos* had arrived in Rome at an early stage (Pacuvius, *Iliona* 197-201 Ribbeck). Cicero knew this passage well (*Tusc.* 1.106; 2.44; *Sest.* 126; *Att.* 14.14.1; *Acad. pr.* 2.88), and it was rendered notorious by the fact that one Fufius, the actor playing the part of the sleeping Iliona (who is beseeched by Polydorus' shade to give him a burial), seems to have become drunk, and had, in reality, fallen asleep on stage:

non magis audierit quam Fufius ebrius olim,
cum Ilionam edormit, Catienis mille ducentis
'mater, te appello!' clamantibus.

(Hor. *Sat.* 2.3.60-62)

Here see Pseudacron ad loc., and Ribbeck on Pac. *Iliona* 197-201. It is safe to assume that, as is the case with Greek tragedy, so with Roman tragedy, the theme was a commonplace.

⁶ *Her.* 10.83-87; cf. C. J. Fordyce, *Catullus: A Commentary* (Oxford 1961) 297.