CHAPTER V

'LESBIA ILLA'

Or, as true deaths, true maryages untie,
So lovers contracts, images of those,
Binde but till sleep, deaths image, them unloose?

JOHN DONNE, 'Womans Constancy', *Poems* (1633) 197

1. *FALSO NOMINE*

The name 'Lesbia' occurs sixteen times in Catullus' poems, always in the nominative or vocative case.[1] The phrase *mea puella*, or *puella* alone, occurs twelve times, and *mulier mea* once.[2] We know the name was a pseudonym, and we can guess why: 'Lesbia' was married, the affair was clandestine, the lady's real name could not be publicised. Even a generation later, Ovid did not reveal it. It may have been Ovid's friend Hyginus, an authority on modern poets, who first made public the identification referred to by the learned Apuleius in A.D. 158: 'Gaius Catullus used the name Lesbia instead of Clodia.'[3]

Even in the permissive moral climate of the fifties B.C., a formal anonymity was required to protect the reputation of a person of quality. Take Juventius, that youthful blossom on a noble family tree: like some other young aristocrats, he was prepared to make himself sexually available, but that could not be said quite openly.[4] Where Catullus names him, he does not

[1] Nominative: 43.7, 58.1f (three times), 79.1, 83.1, 86.5, 87.2, 92.1f (twice). Vocative: 5.1, 7.2, 72.2, 75.1, 107.4. Cf. Quinn 1972, 60, 66f.

[2] *Mea puella*: 2.1, 3.3, 3.4, 3.17, 11.15, 13.11, 36.2. *Puella*: 8.4, 8.7, 8.12, 36.9, 37.11 (3.7?). *Mulier mea*: 70.1. Also *lux mea* (68b.132 and 160), *mea vita* (104.1, 109.1).

[3] Ovid *Trist.* II 427–30, Apul. *Apol.* 10 (Appendix, nos. 19, 23); Wiseman 1969, 50–2.

[4] Cat. 24.1–3 ('flosculus Iuventiorum'), cf. Cic. *Planc.* 12, 18, 51, 67 on the *nobilitas* of the family (consular since M'. Iuventius Thalna in 163 B.C.). *Adulescentuli nobiles*: Cic. *Att.* I

name his lovers, and refers to nothing more specific than kisses; where he mentions Aurelius and his hopes of *pedicatio*, the boy remains anonymous. The subsequent juxtaposition of the poems, in a single cycle of love and jealousy, makes the identification practically inevitable, but it is still not explicit.[5]

So too with 'Lesbia'. Even under the protection of her pseudonym, she is not named with any identifiable man except Catullus himself. 'Lesbius' in poem 79 is as pseudonymous as she is, and Caelius in poem 58 is merely the addressee; otherwise, the only person named in the same poem as 'Lesbia' is Quinctia, the rival beauty of poem 86. Where her other lovers are named, 'Lesbia' is not.[6] The phrases he uses to describe her make his meaning clear enough, but the separation of her name, even in disguise, from those of identifiable individuals is formally preserved. Even in poem 100, where the man named was a loyal friend, the love of 'Lesbia' must be inferred from a periphrasis.

As in the case of Juventius, this cautious covering of tracks would be more effective with poems circulated individually than it is in the collection, where the thematic development makes it clear how the poems in which 'Lesbia' is named are related to those in which she is not. Perhaps by the time he put the collection together he cared less about her reputation. 'Lesbius est pulcher' in poem 79 certainly suggests something like that, if it is really the allusion to Clodia's family name that it seems to be.[7] But even if, in the bitterness of his anger, Catullus came so close to revealing her identity, what is important is that he didn't quite do it. However tenuously, the conventions were respected.

16.5, VI 3.9 (on which see MacMullen 1982, 487), Val. Max. IX 1.8, Gell. *NA* VI 12.4f; cf. the silver cup illustrated in C. Vermeule, *Antike Kunst* 6 (1973) plate 14, and C. Johns, *Sex or Symbol* (London 1982) 103 and plate 25.

[5] Juventius named in poems 24, 48, 81, 99 (love and kisses only), not named in 15 and 21 (Aurelius and *pedicatio*); the lover in poem 24 is identified as Furius only by cross-reference with 23.1. Cycle: Wiseman 1969, 3f.

[6] Poems 37 (Egnatius), 40 (Ravidus), 77 (Rufus), 82 (Quinctius), 91 (Gellius); no names at all at 11.17f or 68b.135f.

[7] First suggested by Muretus in 1554: 'Cum Lesbia Clodia sit, Lesbium quoque P. Clodium, fratrem ipsius, esse arbitror . . . id magis ut suspicer, facit additum "pulchri"

How free could a Roman poet be with someone else's name and reputation? Cn. Naevius had been imprisoned by the *triumviri capitales* for persistent abuse (*maledicentia*) of distinguished citizens – but that was probably slander from the public stage, which may be thought to be a special case.[8] It is possible – though the question is very controversial – that written libel came under the Sullan law *de iniuriis*, or could even count as *maiestas*.[9] Certainly Horace in his *Satires* is very conscious of the danger of offending the victims too much, in case they go to law; Lucilius, on the other hand, had been totally uninhibited about lampooning even the most powerful and aristocratic of his contemporaries.[10] The difference lies not so much in any tightening-up of the legal position as in the poets' respective status. Lucilius was a wealthy man of senatorial family,[11] Horace the son of an ex-slave, grateful for the patronage of Maecenas. Presumably the victims of Lucilius' satire regarded it as the hostility of a social equal, like the personal attacks that were given and received in the law courts without any question of an action for libel ever arising.

The same evidently applied to Catullus, whose obscene abuse of Piso, Memmius and Caesar was as unrestrained as Lucilius' attacks on Scaevola, Lentulus and Metellus, and delivered with equal impunity. Caesar knew how much damage poems 29 and 57 did to his reputation, but was content with a private apology followed by an amicable dinner with the offending poet.[12] Such

nomen: hoc enim cognomine fuisse Clodium omnes sciunt.' See Cic. *dom.* 22 ('Caesar Pulchro s.d.'), Sen. *contr.* x 1.8; Wiseman 1970, esp. 212f, on his son Pulcher Claudius.

[8] Gell. *NA* III 3.15, 'ob assiduam maledicentiam et probra in principes civitatis'; cf. ps.Asc. 215St on the offended Metelli. See pp. 186–8 below on attacks from the stage.

[9] Ulp. *Dig.* XLVII 10.5.9f (*de iniuriis*), Cic. *fam.* III 11.2 (*maiestas*). See R. E. Smith, *CQ* I (1951) 173–7; *contra* J. Crook, *Law and Life of Rome* (London 1967) 252–5.

[10] Hor. *Sat.* I 4.24f, 33, 78f, II 1.1f, 60f, 81f ('ius est iudiciumque'); see N. Rudd, *The Satires of Horace* (Cambridge 1966) 88–92 on *Sat.* I 4, ibid. 128 on libel, 133–8 on Horace's living targets, 150f on the victims' hostility. Lucilius: Cic. *ND* 1 63 (Tubulus, Lupus, Carbo), Hor. *Sat.* II 1.67f (Metellus Macedonicus, Lentulus Lupus), Pers. I 114f, Juv. I 154 (Q. Scaevola), Non. 424L (C. Cassius), etc.

[11] Hor. *Sat.* II 1.74f, 'ego . . . infra Lucili censum'; Vell. II 29.2, 'stirpe senatoria' (cf. Porph. *ad Sat.* II 1.75 for the relationship with Pompey).

[12] Suet. *Jul.* 73, q.v. also for his reconciliation with Calvus.

attacks were part of the hazards of public life, the feuding of men who would not deign to use the law of libel unless their *dignitas* were hurt by a social inferior. Catullus could get away with venomous lampoons because – like Lucilius – he was wealthy and independent, and thus effectively invulnerable to retribution except in kind.[13]

So it was not through fear of the consequences that Catullus refused to name the litigious adulterer with the ginger eyebrows, or the loose-lipped girl with the ugly walk. He was teasing his audience, inviting them to guess the name, either from the clues he offers or by reference to other poems, as poem 29 reveals the identity of 'Mentula'.[14] The pretence of concealment is just part of the joke.

Normally Catullus attacked with the proper name, as Libo, Otho, Aemilius, Victius, Silo, Cominius and others had good reason to know.[15] Women were fair game too: Aufillena and Rufa are accused of sexual enormities by name, with circumstantial details to make identification absolutely certain; so too is 'Ameana', whatever name it is that lurks behind the textual corruption. ('Ipsithilla' is a different matter; her name, also corrupted in the manuscripts, is probably the working name of a professional prostitute, for whom poem 32 would be no insult but a welcome advertisement.)[16] Maecilia, whose career of adultery Catullus dates from 70 to 55 B.C., was from a family as respectable as his own: as with the Valerii Catulli, an Augustan

[13] It looks as if Gellius fought back (116.2f), and perhaps 'Mentula' too (105 on his poetry).

[14] 67.45–8, 42.7–9 (cf. Forsyth 1977, 448f, convincingly identifying her as 'Ameana'), 29.13 ('ista vostra diffututa mentula', cf. 94, 105, 114–15). The anonymous *scortillum* of poem 10 could be identified via Varus (10.1), and the addressee of poem 104 via Tappo (104.4).

[15] Cat. 54, 97, 98, 103, 108; also Vibennius (33), Porcius (47), Nonius (52), Gallus (78), Naso (112); the addressees of 71 and 78b are concealed by textual corruption (but see Nisbet 1978, 109f on 71). Thallus (25) and Socration (47) are Greek names; there is no need to suppose them false.

[16] Cat. 59, 110–11, 41 (cf. Cic. *Att.* VI 1.13, 'de Amiano' – a debtor of Atticus in Cilicia?). On 'Ipsithilla', see *Filologia e forme letterarie: studi offerti a Francesco Della Corte* (Rome, forthcoming), where I suggest that the name was Hypsithylla, 'High Festival of Love'.

moneyer marks its rise to senatorial status.[17] Finally there is a patrician lady 'drunker than the drunken grape'; drunkenness was traditionally second only to adultery (to which it was assumed to lead) in the catalogue of sins unforgivable in a Roman matron, yet Postumia is named, and her ancestry alluded to, in a poem which must have caused her staider relatives anger and shame.[18]

Rome, said Cicero, was a *maledica civitas*;[19] slander was a national pastime, and Catullus did his share of it. But 'Lesbia' was immune, even when he came to hate her. His use of the phrase *male dicere* is revealing. It is what 'Lesbia' does about him – to her husband, among others – but he is quite explicit that he could never do it about her. On the contrary, he claims credit for *bene dicere*, though it was wasted on her.[20] The nearest he comes to it is in poem 11, with the *non bona dicta* Furius and Aurelius have to deliver to her – and yet even there he holds back in a significant way. Poem 11 is one of three poems (the others are 37 and 58) in which Catullus visualises the sordid reality of 'Lesbia's' sexual promiscuity. In none of them does he use the obscenity which is so conspicuous a feature of his invectives. At 11.20 *ilia* is a respectable anatomical term, at 58.5 *glubit* is metaphorical, but an innocent word in itself.[21] In each case the picture Catullus summons so vividly to the reader's mind is foul, but expressed with no foulness of language. It seems that even at the bitterest moments 'Lesbia' was kept separate in his mind from the victims of his invective. And that, I think, is why he preserves her anonymity (however tenuously), while attacking them by name with total freedom.

[17] Cat. 113; M. Maecilius Tullus (Mattingly and Sydenham 1923, 79).

[18] Cat. 27, with Cairns 1975, 27f. On *matronae* and wine, see Cato *ap.* Gell. *NA* x 23.4, Pliny *NH* XIV 89f, Juv. VI 300–19 (part of *luxuria*); cf. Cic. *de rep.* IV 6 (authority to be exercised), Val. Max. II 1.5 ('proximus gradus ad inconcessam venerem').

[19] Cic. *Cael.* 38, *Flacc.* 7.

[20] Cat. 104, 'credis me potuisse meae male dicere vitae?'. Lesbia's *male dicta*: 83.1 (husband), 92.1 (Catullus in return uses only *deprecatio*). *Bene dicta* (and *facta*): 76.7f, cf. 30.9.

[21] *Ilia*: *TLL* VII.1 325f, Adams 1982, 50f. *Glubit*: B. Arkins, *LCM* 4.5 (May 1979) 85f; H. D. Jocelyn, ibid. 87–91; O. Skutsch, *LCM* 5.1 (Jan. 1980) 21. See in general *Latin Teaching* 35.6 (1979) 11–15.

The women of Lesbos were proverbially beautiful. Every year in the precinct of Hera the Lesbian girls in their trailing robes were judged for beauty, 'and all around there rang the wondrous sound of the loud holy cry of women'.[22] The Lesbos *kallisteia* were familiar from Homer, Alcaeus and Theophrastus, and may still have been held in Catullus' own time. Lesbos was traditionally associated with refinement and sophistication, for example in music, poetry and dress.[23] Above all, it was the home of Sappho, whose poetry exemplified that refinement and celebrated that beauty. We have seen already that Sappho's work appealed to Catullus, with its emphasis on love, marriage, and the world of the emotions. It is not difficult to see why he chose to disguise his beloved as 'Lesbia'.

The comic poets of Athens interpreted the life of the women of Lesbos in the way their audiences would most appreciate, and used *lesbiazein* as a slang term for *fellare*. Alexandrian commentators preserved that interpretation, with predictably disastrous results for the reputation of Sappho; Didymus 'Chalkenteros', the record-holder in scholarly productivity, even included among his four thousand titles an essay on 'Was Sappho a whore?'.[24] Though that probably appeared a little after Catullus' time, the material it depended on was no doubt already familiar to Hellenistic scholars in late-Republican Rome. But the suggestion that Catullus alluded to it in his choice of the name 'Lesbia'[25] seems to me very unlikely, reflecting the self-conscious emancipation of late-twentieth-century scholarship rather than any helpful insight into the sensibilities of Catullus and his age. If he

[22] Alcaeus 130.32–5 L–P, Hom. *Il.* IX 129f (with Schol. A), Theophrastus *ap.* Athen. XIII 610a.

[23] Sappho fr. 106 L–P, Cratinus fr. 243K (bards); Sappho frr. 24, 57, 98 L–P, Anacreon fr. 13G (clothes). See in general L. Woodbury, *TAPA* 109 (1979) 281–3.

[24] Attic dramatists: Aristoph. *Wasps* 1346, *Frogs* 1308, *Eccl.* 920, Pherecrates fr. 149, Theopompus fr. 35, Strattis frr. 40–1; Jocelyn 1980, 31–4, cf. 18f, 21. Cf. Plut. *Thes.* 16.3 (on Minos) for the Attic theatre's treatment of historical – or pseudo-historical – characters. The modern sense of 'lesbian' goes back to Byzantine scholiasts (A. C. Cassio, *CQ* 33 (1983) 296f), but did not become part of current usage until the nineteenth century. Didymus: Sen. *ep.* 88.37; cf. Pfeiffer 1968, 274–9.

[25] J. G. Randall, *LCM* 4.2 (Feb. 1979) 28–30; E. Wirshbo, *CP* 75 (1980) 70.

didn't use obscenities in even the bitterest of his poems about her, he would hardly have introduced an obscene *double-entendre* into her very name.

The name 'Lesbia' was a graceful compliment, and he must have trusted her taste to accept it as such. Whether she did or not, whether she even understood it, are questions we cannot answer. For the brute fact is that apart from her real name we know nothing about 'Lesbia', except what we can infer through the distorting medium of Catullus' poems about her. Her real name tells us, if we allow ourselves the inference from poem 79, that she was a noblewoman, from the same family as Clodia Metelli (see chapter II) – conceivably even Clodia Metelli herself, more probably one of her sisters.[26] That is certainly something, in that it provides a social context for the affair, a background against which we may read the poems. But it is only from the poems themselves that we can hope to discover what 'Lesbia' was like.

Furthermore, we do not have *carte blanche* to read the poems any way we choose. Our body of evidence is a collection headed *Catulli Veronensis liber* and beginning with a dedication poem. In the absence of any demonstration to the contrary – and the arguments advanced so far are certainly not compelling[27] – I think we must work on the assumption that it is what it purports to be, Catullus' own collection of his poems, and not the work of some unattested compiler or 'posthumous editor'. And if that is so, then the collection as a whole is itself part of the poet's work of art, the ordering of the poems within it part of the message to the reader.[28] Catullus was a subtle poet, and we need not expect the message to be an obvious one; but we are not entitled just to take out poems irrespective of their context and arrange them in what looks like a plausible biographical sequence.

[26] Wiseman 1969, 50–60; 1974, 104–14. On the non-identity of 'Lesbia' and Clodia Metelli, see now Hillard 1981, 151–4.

[27] They are best presented in Wheeler 1934, 13–31; *contra* Quinn 1972, 9–20, whose view seems to me to be clearly right (see Endnote 2 below).

[28] For the orthodox dogma, cf. most recently M. C. J. Putnam, *TAPA* 113 (1983) 261, on Catullus and Robert Frost: 'It is unfortunate that the corpus of Catullus' poetry, as we

We cannot know how the affair between the real Catullus and the real Clodia worked out in life; all we have is what he made of it. Interpreting what he made of it is not a simple matter. There are two stages to be borne in mind: that of the first-time reader of the collection, recognising the 'Lesbia' relationship as a major theme and having his insight into it progressively developed as he proceeds; and that of the returning reader, who knows what comes afterwards, and can use his knowledge to pick up cross-references in both directions. I think it is a fair assumption that Catullus hoped for readers who would not be satisfied with going through the collection only once.[29]

2. THE INTRODUCTORY SEQUENCE

The first poem after the dedication was the most famous Catullus ever wrote.[30] It introduces the poet's mistress – indirectly, through her pet bird – but unfortunately for us, the text is not entirely certain. I print a version as close as possible to the manuscript archetype:[31]

Passer, deliciae meae puellae,
quicum ludere, quem in sinu tenere,
cui primum digitum dare appetenti
et acris solet incitare morsus,
cum desiderio meo nitenti
carum nescioquid lubet iocari
et solaciolum sui doloris,
credo, ut tum gravis acquiescat ardor;
tecum ludere sicut ipsa possem
et tristis animi levare curas! 10

have inherited it from antiquity, does not offer the critic the rewards that he can claim from exploring Frost through the dialogue of juxtaposed poems.'

[29] Cf. Hor. *AP* 365: 'haec placuit semel, haec deciens repetita placebit'.

[30] See Appendix nos. 25–30: from Mart. IV 14.14 it looks as if *Passer* was the title of a whole book (i.e. the 1–60 volume?).

[31] Cat. 2. The *Veronensis* evidently read 'cum acquiescet' at line 8; Goold (1983, 32) accepts that reading, and transposes lines 7 and 8, reading *sit* for *et* at 7; he also reads

O sparrow that are my sweetheart's pet, with whom she likes to play,
whom to hold in her lap, to whose pecking to offer her finger-tips and provoke
you to bite sharply whenever it pleases her, bright-eyed with longing
for me, to engage in some endearing frolic – and as a diversion for her pain, I
fancy, so that the fierce passion may subside. Could I but play with
you, as does your mistress, and allay the sad cares of my heart!

Sparrows were sacred to Aphrodite (they pull her chariot in Sappho's well-known poem),[32] and this poem is about love, not birds. The sparrow's mistress is *his* girl, and he is confident that desire for him is what makes her eyes shine.[33] Or is he? The crucial word is *credo*: he thinks, but does not know, that she feels the pain of love. He certainly feels it himself, and would like Aphrodite's bird to cure his heartache as Aphrodite herself was asked to cure Sappho's.[34] The double allusion reminds the reader of what Sappho asked for in her prayer to the goddess of love: 'bring about my heart's desire'. The possessive confidence of the first half of the poem is cut away in the second; we are to see an aspiring lover, not yet a successful one.

There may have been success in the next poem, of which all that survives is a simile comparing the speaker to Atalanta, too long a virgin and now glad to loose her girdle.[35] Poem 3, on the death of the sparrow, is a *tour de force* of affectionate wit and

posse for *possem* at 9, and includes the three lines of 2b as part of this poem; so I have had to adapt his translation rather drastically.

[32] Sappho 1.10 L–P, cf. Athen. IX 391e–f, Schol. B *Iliad* II 305; Cic. *de fin.* II 75 on *passeres* and *voluptas*.

[33] Nisbet 1978, 92f. Before that, *desiderium* used to be taken in a personal sense ('whenever it pleases my bright-eyed love'), which ought to suggest that the girl is somehow unattainable, since *desiderium* is properly desire for something lost or absent; cf. Cic. *fam.* XIV 2.2 and 4, *mea desideria* used of the exiled Cicero's wife and children – but at Petr. *Sat.* 139 *meum desiderium* is used of a lover safely in the arms.

[34] Sappho 1.25f L–P (χαλέπαν δὲ λῦσον ἐκ μερίμναν); F. E. Brenk, *Latomus* 39 (1980) 713.

[35] Cat. 2b, p. 121 above. Alexander Guarinus in 1521 reported a gap in the text of 'an ancient manuscript' after *curas* in poem 2; whatever the truth of that, I would rather assume a loss like 14b and 78b than emend poem 2 to enable these lines to be part of it (n.31 above).

verbal music,[36] but does not advance our picture of the poet's relationship. For that we must wait till poem 5, where it comes with a bang.

Vivamus, mea Lesbia, atque amemus,
rumoresque senum severiorum
omnes unius aestimemus assis!
Soles occidere et redire possunt;
nobis, cum semel occidit brevis lux,
nox est perpetua una dormienda.

Let us live, my Lesbia, and love, and value at one penny all the talk of stern old men. Suns can set and rise again: we, when once our brief light has set, must sleep one never-ending night.

Now for the first time we have the lady's name, its significance already perhaps prepared for the alert reader by the Sapphic echoes in poem 2. And he uses it in a cry of defiance – the old men disapprove, but what the hell? It's a reasonable inference that what they disapproved of was not love as such, but illicit love. Catullus and 'Lesbia' will have to brave the conventions of society to enjoy their life together. The togetherness – we two against the world – is expressed by those conspicuously first-person-plural verbs; in the whole collection there are only two other places, to which we shall come in due course, where Catullus refers to his mistress and himself as 'we'. But the verbs are only subjunctive: this is what Catullus wants to happen, not necessarily what is the case. Did 'Lesbia' respond, and give all for love before their brief light set?

'Give me a thousand kisses, then a hundred . . .' Catullus flicks his abacus like an accounts clerk,[37] and then muddles the total deliberately to avoid bewitchment:

[36] Note the double *l*'s in 13 of its 18 lines. (Against the notion that *passer* is an obscene *double entendre*, see Jocelyn 1980a and Adams 1982, 32f; one of the arguments cited in its favour, Festus 410L on *struthion*, is in fact an *e silentio* argument against.)

[37] P. 104 above. (Cf. Varro *Men.* 346B 'vive meque ama mutuiter', from a satire subtitled 'On coins', though the context is totally unknown.)

dein, cum milia multa fecerimus,
conturbabimus illa, ne sciamus,
aut ne quis malus invidere possit,
cum tantum sciat esse basiorum.

Then, when we have made up many thousands, we will wreck the count, lest we know it or any devil have power to cast an evil eye upon us when he knows the total of our kisses.

The financial imagery we have looked at already, in the last chapter; here we must think about superstition. Astrology and magic were real, and intellectually respectable, in the Rome of the late Republic. A man who hoped against hope for something he had set his heart on might well be afraid of bewitchment by the 'evil eye'.[38] Here the word he uses of it is *invidere*, and Invidia, the companion of Nemesis, was the power who hurled men down from the summit of felicity.[39] The usual term was *fascinatio*, and that is what he uses at the equivalent point in the other kiss poem, no. 7:

Quaeris quot mihi basiationes
tuae, Lesbia, sint satis superque.
Quam magnus numerus Libyssae harenae
lasarpiciferis iacet Cyrenis
oraclum Iovis inter aestuosi
et Batti veteris sacrum sepulcrum;
aut quam sidera multa, cum tacet nox,
furtivos hominum vident amores;
tam te basia multa basiare
vesano satis et super Catullo est,
quae nec pernumerare curiosi
possint nec mala fascinare lingua.

[38] See Liebeschuetz 1979, 120–3 (astrology), 129–33 (magic); they were part of Rome's intellectual legacy from the Hellenistic world. On the 'evil eye', see Virg. *ecl.* 3.103, Hor. *ep.* I 14.37f, Pliny *NH* XXVIII 39, Gell. *NA* IX 4.8, Plut. *Symp.* 5.7 (*Mor.* 680c–683b), and a mosaic from Antioch (D. Levi, *Antioch Mosaic Pavements* (Princeton 1947) 33f and plate IV); there is an entertaining account in W. W. Story, *Roba di Roma* II (London 1863) ch. 9, esp. 299–319.

[39] Stat. *Silv.* II 6.68–79, Aus. *Mos.* 379 (Nemesis); Lucr. V 1125–8.

You ask, Lesbia, how many kissings of you are enough and to spare for me. As great the number of the sands of Libya to be found in silphium-bearing Cyrene between Jove's torrid oracle and the sacred tomb of legendary Battus; or as many the stars which in the silence of night behold the stealthy loves of mankind: so many kisses to kiss you with would be enough and to spare for love-crazed Catullus, too many for the inquisitive to be able to count or bewitch with their evil tongues.

The mood has changed since poem 5. The two are no longer 'we', but 'you' and 'I'; the open defiance of the world's opinion has become a sense of stolen love, observed by the stars; and for the first time Catullus comments on his own state – it's madness. In its context, *vesano* suggests a quotation: 'Catullus, you're crazy – when will you be satisfied?' The very notion of *satis superque* betrays a difference in emotional commitment to the affair. She was cool and moderate; he was emotionally insatiable.

Meanwhile, something startling has happened; the first obscenity of the collection has been perpetrated. The two kiss poems are separated by an entertaining little scene set in the bedroom of a bachelor flat. Flavius is still in bed, but it's obvious that there has been someone else in it, and that they have been giving the bed a lot of exercise. It's no good pretending, Flavius – who is she? Catullus wants to know, so that he can celebrate them in elegant verse.[40] Part of the evidence is Flavius' 'fucked-out crotch';[41] the vulgar phrase comes as a shock, and probably came as a shock to Catullus' contemporaries too. Such language was acceptable in certain genres, such as satire or epigram, but in a collection of mixed short poems a warning or apology might be expected.[42]

Poem 6 offers one view of the sexual life – rumpled sheets, the smell of last night's perfume, the cheerful bawdry of young men

[40] Poem 6 is the fulfilment of its own promise (Morgan 1977, 341); cf. 37.10, 42.1–6 for self-fulfilling poems.

[41] 6.13, 'latera ecfututa'; for *latus* in this sense see Ovid *AA* II 413, Juv. VI 37, with D. W. T. C. Vessey, *LCM* I (1976) 39.

[42] E.g. Mart. I pref., I 35 (straight after the first obscenity of the book, *futui* at 34.10), III 68.7 and 69.2, X 64 (apology for *mentula* at 63.8?), XI 15.8–10 (followed by 16.5). On Catullus 14b and 27, see Wiseman 1969, 7f.

discussing 'some hot little tart' (*nescioquid febriculosi scorti*, 6.5f). The vivid detail, and the one explicit obscenity, point the contrast with the poems on either side. Flavius is expected to say who the girl is and tell Catullus all about her ('Venus loves gossip and chat'),[43] and what he has been doing with her is referred to in realistic detail and uninhibited language. In the kiss poems, on the other hand, 'Lesbia' is in pseudonymous disguise, Catullus is determined to frustrate the curiosity of other people, and the action as reported is just a hyperbole of kisses, effeminately unerotic in view of men like Furius and Aurelius.[44] The juxtaposition makes it unmistakable that the 'Lesbia' affair was something special: very private, and much more than just sex.

That, at least, is what it was for 'crazy Catullus' (7.10). Straight away, we see he has been fooling himself. Poem 8 is a masterpiece of construction, of which the first ten lines run as follows:

> Miser Catulle, desinas ineptire,
> et quod vides perisse perditum ducas.
> Fulsere quondam candidi tibi soles,
> cum ventitabas quo puella ducebat
> amata nobis quantum amabitur nulla:
> ibi illa multa cum iocosa fiebant,
> quae tu volebas nec puella nolebat,
> fulsere vere candidi tibi soles.
> Nunc iam illa non vult: tu quoque impotens noli,
> nec quae fugit sectare, nec miser vive . . . 10

Poor Catullus, you must stop being silly, and count as lost what you see is lost. Once the sun shone bright for you, when you would go whither your sweetheart led, she you loved as no woman will ever be loved again; when there took place those many jolly scenes which you desired, nor did your sweetheart not desire, truly the sun shone bright for you. Now she desires no more: do you too, weakling, not desire; and do not chase her who flees, nor live in unhappiness . . .

[43] 55.20, where I think Camerius is frustrating Catullus' curiosity just as Flavius does (cf. *LCM* 6.6 (June 1981) 155).

[44] 16.12f; see Wiseman 1976, and pp. 123f above.

'Jolly scenes' may not be quite right for *iocosa*, but it is hard to improve on it; the oddity comes less from the translation than from the original, Catullus' 'plaintive whimsy of understatement'.[45] In six beautifully chiastic lines Catullus offers the images of a lost happiness, and still he shrinks from physical description. What did they do? We can guess, of course, but all he mentions is the laughter.

He sees that time as bright suns shining. We have met those suns in poem 5, when he was carefree and triumphant – 'let's love while the suns still shine for us'. Now the suns have set, not in death but in the end of love. What tells us most about the affair, however, is line 4. 'Where she led, you kept on coming'; whether or not we are to think literally of visits and assignations, the frequentative verb gives us a glimpse into their relationship. The same relative position of leader and follower recurs in a significantly different form in line 10. When all was well and she wanted it too, she led and he went after; now that she doesn't want it, she flees and he pursues (frequentative verb again). Either way, the initiative is hers. Through this bitter little flashback, and the *quaeris* of poem 7, we can see for a moment how the affair looked to 'Lesbia'. She was in charge, and she had had enough.

The second half of the poem presents a psychological drama:

> . . . sed obstinata mente perfer, obdura.
> Vale, puella: iam Catullus obdurat
> nec te requiret nec rogabit invitam.
> At tu dolebis, cum rogaberis nulla.
> Scelesta, vae te! quae tibi manet vita?
> quis nunc te adibit? cui videberis bella?
> quem nunc amabis? cuius esse diceris?
> quem basiabis? cui labella mordebis?
> At tu, Catulle, destinatus obdura.

. . . but harden your heart, endure, and stand fast. Goodbye, sweetheart. Catullus now stands fast: he will not look for you or court you against your will. But you will be sorry when you are not courted at all. Wretch, pity on you!

[45] Quinn 1970, 117.

What life lies in store for you! Who will come to you now? Who will think you pretty? Whom will you love now? Whose will people say you are? Whom will you kiss? Whose lips will you bite? But you, Catullus, be resolute and stand fast.

For the Catullus-figure in the poem, telling the girl she'll be sorry, those nagging questions require the answer 'no one'. But Catullus the poet, creating his work of art, allows us to see how easily she might answer 'someone else'. At the moment when that thought would become intolerable to Catullus-in-the-poem (and here we *do* have a little physical detail), the poet makes him repeat his resolve, thus closing the composition with a satisfying symmetry.[46] The art and the pathos lie in the self-deception: within the world of the poem, Catullus the lover can even say 'Whose will people say you are?', as if all that mattered to her was to be called Catullus' girl. In making the poem, and juxtaposing it with no. 7 in the collection, Catullus the poet delicately suggests that it was really the other way round.

After so much emotional intensity, the reader needs a respite. Poem 9 celebrates the scholarly Veranius, best of friends,[47] and poem 10, full of slang and racy humour, tells a good joke at Catullus' own expense.[48] Both pick up a theme introduced in poem 4. There, the boastful boat told of a trip from Bithynia up the Adriatic to north Italy; here, we meet Veranius returning from Spain and learn that Catullus himself has been in Bithynia.[49]

Poem 11 continues this theme of young men seeing the world – but it is a poem in Sapphics, which warns the reader to remember 'Lesbia'. For three leisurely stanzas Catullus plays with the idea that he might go with his faithful comrades Furius and Aurelius to the East (where Crassus' great new expedition

[46] Line 19 echoes line 11, the vocative *Catulle* echoes the first line (see Wiseman 1974, 62 for the 'double ring').
[47] See Endnote 3 below.
[48] Obscenity again at lines 12 and 24 – but *irrumator* and *cinaediorem* are not meant literally.
[49] For this theme, see Wiseman 1969, 12f (and bibliography cited there); cf. also *JRS* 69 (1979) 162f.

promised fabulous wealth) or to the West with Caesar.[50] Then comes an unexpected twist:

> . . . omnia haec, quaecumque feret voluntas
> caelitum, temptare simul parati,
> pauca nuntiate meae puellae
> non bona dicta.
>
> Cum suis vivat valeatque moechis,
> quos simul complexa tenet trecentos,
> nullum amans vere, sed identidem omnium
> ilia rumpens;
>
> nec meum respectet, ut ante, amorem,
> qui illius culpa cecidit velut prati
> ultimi flos, praetereunte postquam
> tactus aratro est.

Ready as you are to face all these hazards with me, whatever the will of heaven above will bring: take back to my sweetheart a brief and not kind message. Let her live and be happy with her lovers, three hundred of whom at once she holds in her embraces, loving none truly but again and again rupturing the loins of them all; and let her not count on my love, as in the past, for through her fault it has fallen like a flower at the meadow's edge, after being lopped by the passing plough.

These first six poems of love describe a kind of parabola. In the sparrow poems (2 and 3), the beloved is seen indirectly, via her bird, and appears only in the genitive case (*meae puellae*).[51] In the kiss poems (5 and 7) she is named, and addressed in the vocative; in poem 8 she is not named, but she acts in the nominative and is addressed in the vocative (*puella*).[52] Now, in poem 11, she is again seen indirectly, via the bearers of the message, and appears only in the dative case (*meae puellae*).[53]

There are bitter allusions here to the earlier poems. In the

[50] Cf. 29.12 (Britain thought of as west, not north); Dio XL 12.1, App. *BC* II 18 etc. on Crassus ('glory and profit').
[51] 2.1, 3.3f, 3.17; cf. 2.9 (*ipsa*), 3.5 (*illa*) – in subordinate clauses.
[52] 5.1, 7.2; 8.4, 8.9 (*illa*), 8.12, 8.14 (*at tu*).
[53] 11.15; cf. 11.22 (*illius*) – in a subordinate clause.

triumphant poem 5 it was *vivamus atque amemus*; now it is *vivat valeatque*, no longer their life of love but her life of degradation.[54] In poem 8 she led and he followed, or ran and he pursued; now it is no use her looking back (*nec respectet*) – he won't come running any more. At 8.15 he called her *scelesta*, but did not say what her *scelus* was; now he defines her crime (*culpa*) as the killing of his love.[55]

What 'Lesbia' had done was to commit adultery. *Moechis* is explicit – not just lovers but adulterers, as if she were actually married to Catullus. Indeed, as Roland Mayer has acutely pointed out, the form of the poem is that of a divorce *per nuntium*.[56] But if Catullus conceived of his love-affair as a sort of marriage, which spouse was he? The poem is written in Sappho's metre, and the wonderfully evocative concluding image (which Catullus uses metrical licence to emphasise)[57] alludes to one of Sappho's wedding poems, in which the cut flower is the bride's virginity.[58] Implicit in the final stanza is the notion of rape, with Catullus' love as the innocent victim. Again, but in a different light, we see the balance of power in the lovers' relationship.

These poems tell us far more about Catullus than they do about 'Lesbia', but there is one thing about her that comes through clearly enough – her dominance. She acted, he reacted. His contribution was the concept of a love unparalleled (8.5), more than just sexual, involving both the responsibilities of the marriage bond and the vulnerability of a virgin bride. It would not be surprising if the real woman found such devotion something of a burden.

[54] 5.1, 11.17; cf. 8.15, 'quae tibi manet vita?'.

[55] For the quality of his love, contrast 8.5 and 11.19.

[56] Mayer 1983. J. C. Yardley, *Symb. Osl.* 56 (1981) 63–9, less convincingly takes *nuntiate* at 11.15 as the formal repudiation of a friendship.

[57] The final *i* of 11.22 is cut off (by a hypermetric elision) just like the flower; for a similar effect, cf. p. 117 above on the word-order in 45.1.

[58] See p. 120 above, on 62.39–47. For the application to poem 11, cf. Adler 1981, 143–5.

After the flower falls to the passing plough, the emotional tension is relaxed again. There follow three pieces of *urbanitas* on Catullus' friends, their parties, and the refinement of their taste. (One of them does indeed refer to *mea puella*, but only in a subordinate role: the main compliment is for Fabullus.[59]) The third, poem 14 to Calvus, refers back to the dedication poem; and since it is immediately followed by a fragmentary programmatic announcement about the next part of the collection, it is reasonable to infer that 1–14 form a sequence complete in itself.[60] By now the reader has all the essentials about Catullus and his world – his friends, his values, his circumstances, and the two bits of biographical data that will be needed to make sense of certain poems later in the collection, namely the trip to Bithynia and the affair with 'Lesbia'. There is no point asking whether the affair was really as parabolic as poems 2–11 suggest; that is what he gives us, and we must be content with it.

Poem 14b introduces a homosexual element, poem 27 gives a veiled announcement of bitter invectives. These themes are interspersed with occasional poems, and as the collection proceeds the tightness of its thematic organisation is inevitably relaxed, to make room for poems to be fitted in.[61] Of the 45 short poems after 14b, only five refer to 'Lesbia' or *mea puella*, and

[59] As indicated by the three vocatives (lines 1, 6, 14); the catch-words *sal*, *venustus* etc. show that Fabullus is getting the same in-group admiration as Pollio in poem 12 and Calvus in poem 14. As for *meae puellae*, Quinn (1972, 72f and 94) rightly distinguishes between passing references and 'Lesbia-poems' proper; at 13.11, 43.7 and 86.5 the compliment is conventional, and without reference to the quality of the poet's feeling for his mistress. Catullus in poem 13 is inviting Fabullus to see his girl, as Varus invited Catullus himself in poem 10, and Flavius failed to invite him in poem 6; see Quinn 1970, 134f and Vessey 1971, 45–8 for *unguentum* implying the girl's presence (the obscene interpretation is rightly rejected by C. Witke, *CP* 75 (1980) 325–9). For the poem's generic context, see L. Edmunds, *AJP* 103 (1982) 183–8.

[60] 1.1 / 14.8 and 12 (*novum libellum*), 1.10 / 14.23 (*saeculum*); Wiseman 1969, 7–13 on 14b and the coherence of 1–14.

[61] A necessary corollary of a collection of short poems on varied subjects (Wiseman 1969, 4; ibid. 7f on 14b and 27).

there are three others which may allude to her.[62] But even when relegated – for the moment – to the background, the affair remains vivid in the reader's mind thanks to the impact of the early sequence, and he is able to fit these poems into his mental picture without difficulty.

The first reference is in poem 36. As always, the context in the collection is important – and here in particular the group of five poems from 36 to 40.

The promise of invective announced at poem 27 is fulfilled with poems 28, 29 and 33. Variation of subject and metre is provided by the occasional poems between: Alfenus (30, pp. 122f above), the return to Sirmio (31), 'Ipsithilla' (32), the hymn to Diana (34, pp. 96f above), and the letter to Caecilius (35). The last of these brings us into the world of poetry, as Caecilius has been working on his *Lady of Dindymus*, and in particular the world of Sappho, to whom Caecilius' girl friend is compared.[63] Sappho, Lesbos, 'Lesbia' – the deft reminder leads us into a group of poems where the themes of invective, poetry and the poet's mistress are intertwined.

Poem 36 begins:

> Annales Volusi, cacata charta,
> votum solvite pro mea puella.
> Nam sanctae Veneri Cupidinique
> vovit, si sibi restitutus essem
> desissemque truces vibrare iambos,
> electissima pessimi poetae
> scripta tardipedi deo daturam
> infelicibus ustulanda lignis.
> Et hoc pessima se puella vidit
> iocose lepide vovere divis. 10

Annals of Volusius, you shitty sheets, discharge a vow in my sweetheart's name: for she vowed to holy Venus and Cupid that, if I were restored to her and ceased to launch vicious lampoons, she would give the choicest writings of the

[62] Cat. 36, 37, 43, 51, 58; 38, 40, 60. The *puella* of 56.5 is not relevant.
[63] 35.16f, 'Sapphica puella musa doctior'.

worst of poets to the limping deity to burn with wood from a barren tree. And the naughty girl realised that this vow to the gods was a pretty piece of fun.

(She meant Catullus by 'the worst of poets', but he pays the vow for her by burning Volusius' *Annals*.) The *iambi* of line 5 are not just lampoons in general, but poems written in the traditional metre of invective – either true iambics, like the attack on Caesar and Pompey (29), or 'limping' iambics (scazons, *choliambi*) with a dragging spondee in the final foot. The description of the fire-god as *tardipes*, slow-footed, perhaps gives a hint that it is the second category in particular that 'Lesbia' had in mind.[64]

Which poems did she mean? We soon discover,[65] as poem 37, in scazons, opens with a devastatingly obscene attack on the customers at the 'lechers' bar' nine columns down from the temple of Castor.[66] They are both randy and exclusive ('you think you're the only ones with pricks? the only ones who can fuck the girls?'), but Catullus will brand them with infamy. The cause of his fury appears in the second half of the poem:

> Puella nam mi, quae meo sinu fugit,
> amata tantum quantum amabitur nulla,
> pro qua mihi sunt magna bella pugnata,
> consedit istic. Hanc boni beatique
> omnes amatis, et quidem, quod indignum est,
> omnes pusilli et semitarii moechi;
> tu praeter omnes une de capillatis,
> cuniculosae Celtiberiae fili,
> Egnati, opaca quem bonum facit barba
> et dens Hibera defricatus urina. 20

[64] Cf. Pliny *ep.* v 10.2 (hendecasyllables represent *blanditiae*, scazons *convicium*); for *tardipes*, cf. Varro *Men.* 57B = 55 Cèbe ('pedatus versuum tardor', of scazons).
[65] Quinn (1970, 199) tentatively suggests that 36.5 refers to 37 (at 1972, 98 and 287 n.27 he plays down the idea); preferable to Wiseman 1969, 40, who had not realised the significance of *tardipedi deo* and the Pliny passage (n.64).
[66] I.e. among the *tabernae veteres* in front of the Basilica Sempronia (Plaut. *Curc.* 480f, Livy XLIV 16.10, Pliny *NH* XXXV 25); cf. Livy I 35.10 (anachronistic) for the portico in front. Tenney Frank (see above, p. 26 n.39) thought it meant Clodia's Palatine house – a wild conjecture unfortunately perpetuated by Quinn 1972, 135 (tentatively) and Goold 1983, 243.

For the girl who fled my embrace, she I loved as no woman will ever be loved again, for whom mighty wars were waged by me, has set up her pitch there. All you men of rank and fortune are her lovers, and indeed, to her shame, all the petty lechers of the back streets, you above all, you prince of the long-haired, Egnatius, you son of rabbit-ridden Celtiberia, given class by your bushy beard and teeth that are brushed with Spanish piss.

It is a wonderful performance, the consciously masculine energy of the denunciation not weakened but enhanced by the painful flashback to poem 8.[67] We learn a little more about the later stages of the affair – Catullus has fought battles for 'Lesbia', but lost. Her successful lovers (the three hundred of poem 11) are not only the rich and noble of her own class, with whom Catullus might feel he could hardly compete, but even men like – ugh! – Egnatius. That's where it hurts: 'Lesbia' has let herself down, as the scene of the poem itself eloquently suggests. For taverns were frequently also brothels, and the emphatically postponed verb *consedit* implies that she has 'taken her seat' there professionally.[68]

Poem 38 is a reproachful appeal to Cornificius, a friend and a poet.[69] Catullus is in a bad way, and getting worse, yet Cornificius has not offered a *consolatio*. Please, just a little poem, but 'sadder than Simonidean tears'. The reason Catullus gives for his disappointment (*sic meos amores?*) is elliptical to the point of obscurity, but in the context of this sequence of poems it can only refer to his love affair; is that all Cornificius cares about it?[70] Like Bosinney in *The Man of Property*, Catullus has 'taken the knock'.[71] It's too late now for Sappho; what he needs is Simonides, to make his misery bearable.

With poem 39 we are back in limping iambics, against Egnatius again. No obscenity this time (though the final word is

[67] 8.5/37.12; 8.10/37.11 (*fugit*, present/perfect).

[68] *Sedere* (etc.): Plaut. *Poen.* 266–8, Prop. II 22.8, Ovid *Pont.* II 3.20, Mart. VI 66.2; cf. Dio LIX 28.9 (καθίζων). Taverns and prostitution: Ulp. *Dig.* III 2.4.2, XXIII 2.43.pref. and 2.43.9, cf. *CIL* IV 8442, IX 2689.

[69] Ovid *Trist.* II 436, Macr. *Sat.* VI 4.12, 5.13, Jer. *Chron.* 159H; Rawson 1978, 188f.

[70] *Amores* as in 7.8, 68b.69, Cic. *Cael.* 44 etc. (not as in 10.1 and 45.1, meaning a person); Wiseman 1969, 14f.

[71] John Galsworthy, *The Man of Property* (London 1906), part III ch. 4.

contemptuously vulgar),[72] but the malicious irony is brilliant, and devastating. Egnatius' toothpaste was still remembered in the second century A.D.,[73] and it is not hard to imagine the effect the poem had on contemporaries. If this was how Catullus dealt with the down-market end of 'Lesbia's' clientele, the warning in the next poem was something to be taken seriously:

> Quaenam te mala mens, miselle Ravide,
> agit praecipitem in meos iambos?
> Quis deus tibi non bene advocatus
> vecordem parat excitare rixam?
> An ut pervenias in ore vulgi?
> Quid vis? qualubet esse notus optas?
> Eris, quandoquidem meos amores
> cum longa voluisti amare poena.

What infatuation, lovesick Ravidus, drives you headlong into my lampoons? What god invoked by you in an evil hour makes haste to start the frantic duel? Is it because you want to be on people's lips? What are you after? Do you desire to be known, no matter how? So you shall be, since you've chosen to love my loved one and be pilloried for ever.

Despite some echoes of the Juventius sequence,[74] the placing of this poem makes it natural to identify Ravidus as another rival for the favours of 'Lesbia'. It was she who objected to Catullus' *iambi* (36.5); it was for her sake that he had fought duels (37.13) like the one with which he threatens Ravidus here; and it was her lover Egnatius who ran into the iambics that pilloried *him* for ever (37 and 39). The whole sequence from poem 36 to poem 40 explores love and hate, and what poetry can do for each.

After a casual reference in poem 43, where she marks the standard of beauty Mamurra's mistress fails to reach,[75] 'Lesbia' appears next in a famous and controversial scene:[76]

[72] For *mingere* (39.18) and *lotium* (39.21), see Adams 1982, 245–8.

[73] Apul. *Apol.* 6, quoting 39.19.

[74] 15.14 'mala mens furorque vecors' (cf. 40.1 and 4); 15.1, 21.4 (*meos amores*).

[75] 43.7; cf. n.59 above.

[76] Cat. 51 (Goold's translation slightly adapted at 11f, where he reads *geminae*, with *aures*). Bibliography up to 1974 in Harrauer 1979, 73f.

Ille mi par esse deo videtur,
ille, si fas est, superare divos,
qui sedens adversus identidem te
  spectat et audit

dulce ridentem, misero quod omnis
eripit sensus mihi: nam simul te,
Lesbia, aspexi, nihil est super mi
. . . . . .

lingua sed torpet, tenuis sub artus
flamma demanat, sonitu suopte
tintinant aures, gemina teguntur
  lumina nocte.

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

He seems to me the equal of a god, he seems, if that may be, the gods' superior, who sits face to face with you and again and again watches and hears you

sweetly laughing, an experience which robs me, poor wretch, of all my senses; for the moment I set eyes on you, Lesbia, there remains not a whisper [of voice on my lips,]

but my tongue is paralysed, a subtle flame courses through my limbs, with sound self-caused my ears ring, and my eyes are covered in double darkness.

Idleness, Catullus, is your trouble; idleness is what delights you and moves you to passion; idleness has proved ere now the ruin of kings and prosperous cities.

The first line tells the reader that it is a translation of one of Sappho's most famous poems; the second line tells him that it is not only that, but a translation with Catullan additions; and the final stanza shows him that the translation has become an independent poem to be interpreted on its own terms. To make sense of it, those three levels of understanding must be considered in turn.

Sappho's original presents our first problem.[77] Who is the girl? Who is the man? What is the occasion? Wilamowitz argued that they were the bride and groom at a wedding, and that interpretation long held the field.[78] But recent authorities reject it, with curiously intemperate polemic.[79] In the absence of other likely occasions, in archaic Greek society, for a man and a woman to be in such intimate converse, and in view of the fact that god-like felicity was part of the traditional *makarismos* of the bridegroom, it seems to me more likely than not that Wilamowitz was right.[80] If that were so, and if Catullus could count on his readers recognising the wedding background, then we might see an ironic contrast with the only other Sapphic poem in the collection, where the allusion is to divorce.[81] Given the uncertainties, of course, we cannot be confident about that; but there are other signs that Catullus' version looks back to, and is influenced by, the Lesbia-poems in the introductory cycle.

What does he add to Sappho's original? The whole of the second line; *identidem* in line 3, *spectat et* in line 4, *misero* in line 5, *eripit* in line 6, the vocative *Lesbia* in line 7, *suopte* in line 10, *gemina . . . nocte* in lines 11 and 12. The overall effect is to make it more rhetorically emphatic, and more explicit as a personal declaration.[82] Sappho's laughing girl was anonymous; Catullus names her – appropriately, of course – as 'Lesbia'. What we already know of 'Lesbia', and of Catullus' feelings towards her, gives the translator's additions an added significance.

The clearest and most shocking allusion comes in the third

[77] Bibliography in E. Robbins, *TAPA* 110 (1980) 255f; add Jenkyns 1982, 15–22 and 222–5.

[78] U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Sappho und Simonides* (Berlin 1913) 56–61.

[79] D. Page, *Sappho and Alcaeus* (Oxford 1955) 30–3: 'there should never have been such a theory in the history of scholarship' (p. 33); Jenkyns 1982, 6f on 'Wilamowitz's preposterous theory'.

[80] See Merkelbach 1957, 6–12. Sitting opposite: cf. Hom *Il.* IX 190 (Patroclus and Achilles). Like gods: e.g. Sappho 44.34 L–P, Aristoph. *Birds* 1731–43, Cat. 61.16, Sen. *Med.* 82–9; B. Snell, *Hermes* 66 (1931) 71–6. I am grateful to Richard Seaford for help on this matter.

[81] Poem 11: n.56 above.

[82] Kidd 1963, 301–3.

line. Again and again (*identidem*) the fortunate man looks on 'Lesbia' and hears her laughter, just as in poem 11 her lovers broke their manhood in her insatiable embrace. The repetition of the rare adverb at the same metrical position in the stanza cannot be an accident. Similarly, *misero . . . mihi* (i.e. *Catullo*) is an echo of *miser Catulle* in poem 8; *miser* is a strong word in Catullus, and this is the first occurrence of it since then.[83] After that, the 'double night' in lines 10–11, emphasised by the striking transferred epithet and the juxtaposition of *lumina* for 'eyes', has an ominous ring when we remember the bright suns of life and love in poems 5 and 8. For readers who remember those early poems, what Catullus has added to Sappho's original has a cumulatively sobering effect.[84]

That being so, the change of direction in the final stanza is not a total surprise. The reader now sees that the version of Sappho in the first three stanzas was, as it were, in inverted commas; the 'Catullus' who addressed them to the woman is now himself addressed, and his malaise diagnosed. As in poem 8 (the last Lesbia-poem to contain the vocative *Catulle*), we must distinguish the persona, Catullus the lover, from Catullus the poet.[85] The former is allowed to masquerade as Sappho, but the latter has the final comment, and it is a bitter one. Those physical symptoms are the sign of a self-destructive emotional excess.[86]

It has been suggested recently that poem 51 was the concluding item in Catullus' book of short poems, and that 52–60, 'a jumble of unrelated and curiously unfinished verses', were added by the putative posthumous editor who appears so often like a

[83] Cf. 68.92f, 76.12 and 19, 91.2, 101.2 and 6; *misellus* (3.16, 35.14, 40.1, 45.21) has a quite different tone.

[84] Wiseman 1969, 34. The effect of the cross-references escapes those who think poem 51 must be the first 'Lesbia-poem'; but that preconception, based ultimately on biographical reconstruction, seems to me gratuitous.

[85] P. 144 above (self-address also at 46.4, the farewell to Bithynia).

[86] Cic. *TD* v 16: 'quid? elatus ille levitate inanique laetitia exsultans et temere gestiens nonne tanto miserior quanto sibi videtur beatior?' (cf. III 24 on *voluptas gestiens*, IV 66 on *exsultans gestiensque laetitia*); Kidd 1963, 305 (cf. Lafaye 1894, 55f, who understood the unity of the poem better than many of his successors). For *gestire*, see Don. *ad Eun.* 555, 'motu corporis monstrare quid sentias'; Festus 85L (Paulus), 'nimio corporis motu'.

deus ex machina in modern scholars' accounts of Catullus' collection.[87] That seems to me an unsatisfactory idea, based on an intuitive view of how Catullus *ought* to have closed his book.[88]

It is clearly right to take 50 and 51 together, as a comment on *otium* and the effects it has,[89] but the point is lost if we don't look at the poems that follow. With 52, 53 and 54 we are in the thick of Roman political life – *negotia*, the opposite of *otium*. Once more the ordering of the poems carries a message of its own, for I think no Roman reader could have failed to see in the final stanza of 51 a rejection of 'idleness', with its dangerous self-indulgence, and a return to the traditional Roman preoccupations of public life.[90] That is a long way from the defiance of convention in poem 5; but Catullus the lover has learned a lot since then, as Catullus the poet has allowed us to see. The impulse to give all for love was one part of his personality; another, as we saw in chapter IV, was an old-fashioned respect for traditional virtues. The two voices of poem 51 express the conflict between them.

The poems that follow are set firmly in the streets and squares of Rome – in the Forum, with Nonius in his curule chair and Vatinius on trial, in the Circus Maximus, on the Capitol and in Pompey's colonnade in the search for Camerius.[91] And it is on the streets of Rome that we meet 'Lesbia' again:[92]

[87] Cf. C. P. Segal, *Latomus* 27 (1968) 307 n. 1. Skinner 1981, 74–6 (quotation from p. 74), W. Clausen, *CP* 71 (1976) 40, and Goold 1983, 245f end the *libellus* with poem 50; as for Catullus' supposed omission of 51–60 from his book, 'reasons why can be invented' (Clausen), and have been (Goold).

[88] Skinner (1981, 89–91) sees the final stanza of 51 as 'an urbane and witty affirmation of the *bios* of the neoteric poet'; it seems to me to be just the opposite.

[89] Segal 1970; Skinner 1981, 80f (citing previous bibliography).

[90] Cic. *Cael.* 42 expresses the conventional expectation: 'postremo cum paruerit voluptatibus, dederit aliquid temporis ad ludum aetatis atque ad inanis hasce adulescentiae cupiditates, revocet se aliquando ad curam rei domesticae, rei forensis reique publicae.'

[91] 52.2, 53.1 (*corona*, p. 69 above), 55.3–6 (on which see *PBSR* 48 (1980) 6–16); cf. *urbana* at 57.4.

[92] Cat. 58. Goold translates 'our Lesbia' in the first line; I amend on the strength of 43.7. *Glubit* in line 5 is literally 'peels': see Adams 1982, 168 and the bibliography in n. 21 above.

Caeli, Lesbia nostra, Lesbia illa,
illa Lesbia, quam Catullus unam
plus quam se atque suos amavit omnes,
nunc in quadriviis et angiportis
glubit magnanimos Remi nepotes.

Caelius, my Lesbia, the peerless Lesbia, the Lesbia that Catullus once loved above all, more than himself and all his nearest and dearest put together, now haunts the street-corners and alleys, sapping the great-souled descendants of Remus.

Here is the conflict again; the third line implies a choice, 'Lesbia' or his family. He chose her, and this is the result. The promiscuous adulteress of poem 11 became the bar-room floozy of poem 37; now she is imagined as the lowest of prostitutes, handling her customers on the street corner or down the alley. Where can we go from here?

The first book (1–60, the short-poem collection) is nearly complete, but Catullus still has a surprise for his readers. Three out of the four concluding poems (or all three, if 58b is misplaced in the text) have structural and thematic elements in common.[93] A five-line sentence on the degradation of 'Lesbia'; a five-line sentence in scazons on the degradation of Rufa the *fellatrix* (59); then another five-line sentence in scazons (60) which concludes the whole series:

Num te leaena montibus Libystinis
aut Scylla latrans infima inguinum parte
tam mente dura procreavit ac taetra,
ut supplicis vocem in novissimo casu
contemptam haberes, a nimis fero corde?

Was it some lioness on Afric hills or a Scylla barking from her womb below that bore you to have a mind so hard and inhuman as to treat with scorn a suppliant's plea in his last need, ah, too cruel-hearted one?

[93] Weinreich 1959, 88–90. The relationship of 58b with 55 is an unsolved problem; the manuscript archetype did sometimes misplace groups of lines, as at 54.1, 61.198, 64.386, 68.49, 84.10.

The reader is given no explicit information; what he needs in order to understand the poem must be inferred, from allusion and juxtaposition. The Greek word *leaena* – used here for the first time in Latin, as far as we know – gives the hint to look for a parallel in Greek literature. The lioness and Scylla come in Euripides, in Jason's complaint to the cruel Medea; and from similar passages in Virgil, Ovid, Lygdamus and Catullus himself we may perhaps guess that Hellenistic literature had made it a commonplace for a man to address a heartless woman in these terms.[94] The emphasis on Scylla's barking groin is not a commonplace, however: after poems 58 and 59, and in the metre of invective, it reminds us of sex and shamelessness.[95]

So the reader infers that the addressee is 'Lesbia', corrupt and callous as we now believe her to be. But who is the suppliant? It can only be Catullus, *in novissimo casu*: at this late stage, and in this last poem, Catullus the poet shows us Catullus the lover still obsessed, begging her to soften her heart to him.

4. ALLIUS' HOUSE

What have we learned about 'Lesbia' by the end of the first book of Catullus' collected poems? His subject is not so much the woman herself as his own reactions to her; nevertheless, we can recognise in that distorting mirror a will stronger than his, appetites more earthy than his, a beauty, an elegance and a capacity for laughter that captivated him against his better judgement,[96] and perhaps also a certain presence, a *hauteur* that made her intimacy all the more electrifying. For his first approach is diffident (*credo*, 2.8), he sees her in his infatuation as

[94] Eur. *Med.* 1341–3, 1358f, Virg. *Aen.* IV 366f, Ovid *Met.* VIII 120f, IX 613–15, Lygd. [Tib. III] 4.85–91, Cat. 64.154–7; cf. Hom. *Il.* XVI 33f (Patroclus to Achilles); Weinreich 1959, 79–84.

[95] Cf. Ferrero 1955, 190f (dogs were proverbially shameless). Metre: Wiseman 1969, 16 on the closure of the theme announced at 27 (59–60 is the only sequence of scazons in the collection).

[96] *Elegantia* inferred from 43.4, beauty from 43.5f, laughter from 2.6, 8.6 and 36.10, better judgement from 58.2f.

the consort of a god (51.1) – and she has very high-class lovers (37.14). The contrast between the patrician lady and the young man from the Transpadana is not just romantic biographers' cliché. It corresponds to a social reality.

An exactly contemporary document, Cicero's speech against Piso, shows how the family of a Transpadane business-man might be represented in Roman high society. Piso's mother came from the colony of Placentia, first established in 218 B.C.; Cicero alleges that her father, Calventius, was a Gaul from north of the Po who had settled in the colony as a mere trader.[97] The invective exaggeration is obvious, since Calventius came to Rome and married his daughter to a Roman aristocrat, but what is revealing is the prejudice Cicero can play on. Addressing an audience of senators, he can assume that a Transpadane centre like Mediolanum is essentially as barbaric as 'trousered Gaul' beyond the Alps.[98] The evidence shows two things equally: that wealthy families from the towns of Italy and Cisalpine Gaul could and did marry into the Roman nobility; and that the snobbery of the Roman élite could treat such parvenus – and their new in-laws – with hurtful contempt.[99]

How did Catullus stand in the eyes of the patrician Claudii? He was rich, cultured, well connected – but his family was in business, and he came from Transpadane Gaul.[100] He might well hope for a gracious reception, but he couldn't count on it. This social difference adds an extra dimension to Catullus' next, and most ambitious, poem about his mistress and himself.

Book Two of the collection does not touch on the poet's affairs

[97] Cic. *Pis.* fr. ix, xi (Asc. 4–5C): 'Insuber quidam fuit, idem mercator et praeco'. For *mercator* as a pejorative term, cf. Cic. *Verr.* v 167, with D'Arms 1981, 24f.

[98] Cic. *Pis.* 53 'bracata cognatio', 62 'Mediolanensis praeco', *red. Sen.* 15 'cognatio materna Transalpini sanguinis'; see Syme 1979, 34f = *JRS* 27 (1937) 130f.

[99] Wiseman 1971, 50–64. Cic. *Pis.* 14, 53, 67 ('Piso Placentinus') for the contempt extending to the in-laws; cf. Cic. *Att.* II 7.3 on 'Drusus Pisaurensis', possibly M. Livius Drusus Claudianus, whose wife was from a municipal family, the Alfidii (J. Linderski, *Historia* 23 (1974) 463–80).

[100] Well connected: e.g. with Memmius (*cohors praetoria*), Caesar (paternal *hospitium*), Manlius Torquatus (wedding poem). For business and aristocratic attitudes, see pp. 101–6 above. For the Transpadana as *Gallia*, cf. Cic. *Att.* I 1.2. etc.

(at least, not overtly); 'Lesbia' does not appear, and Catullus himself only as a narrator.[101] Book Three begins at poem 65, with the announcement of a new metre (elegiacs), and apparently a new theme to account for it: the 'sad songs' that follow are due to the death of the poet's beloved brother.[102] That theme reappears in 68a; some see a reference to 'Lesbia' and her lovers at lines 27–30 of that poem, but though the text is corrupt and hard to interpret, I think it refers rather to the effect of the poet's grief, shutting him up in Verona away from love affairs of any kind.[103]

If that is the case, then the reader is quite unprepared for what happens next.[104] *Non possum reticere, deae . . .* An address to the Muses, in epic style;[105] and an emphatic announcement that the poet *cannot* keep quiet about what Allius has done for him. After that striking start, the exordium proceeds in a leisurely way for ten lines on Allius' immortal glory before the reader is given a hint of what his service to the narrator had been:

> Nam, mihi quam dederit duplex Amathusia curam,
> scitis, et in quo me torruerit genere,
> cum tantum arderem quantum Trinacria rupes
> lymphaque in Oetaeis Malia Thermopylis,
> maesta neque assiduo tabescere lumina fletu
> cessarent tristique imbre madere genae.

For you [the Muses] know the suffering the treacherous goddess of love caused me and in what fashion she scorched me, when I burnt as much as Sicily's volcano or the Malian spring at Thermopylae beneath Oeta, and my

[101] 61.189, 209; 63.91–3; 64.24 and 116.

[102] 65.10–12; Wiseman 1969, 17f and 1979, 176; see p. 184 below for *carmina Battiadae*.

[103] Wiseman 1974, 96–100 (*contra* W. A. Camps, *AJP* 94 (1973) 134f). See pp. 111–15 above on the puritanical reputation of the Transpadani, which helps to explain line 29 (as does Petr. *Sat.* 132 'quis vetat in tepido membra calere toro' – the bed is only lukewarm until heated by love-making).

[104] On 68b as a separate poem, I have not been persuaded away from the position argued in Wiseman 1974, 77–103. To the bibliography cited there, and in Harrauer 1979, 95–8, add now: Della Corte 1976, 114–34; G. N. Sandy, *Phoenix* 32 (1978) 77–80; F. Cairns, *Tibullus* (Cambridge 1979) 162–5, 224f; G. W. Williams, *Figures of Thought in Roman Poetry* (Yale 1980) 50–61; Most 1981, 116–18, 120–5; Tuplin 1981, esp. 113–19.

[105] *Deae*: cf. Hom. *Il.* II 485, Virg. *Aen.* VII 641, Stat. *Theb.* 1 3f. The classic instance (the first line of the *Iliad*) has a singular goddess; so too Call. *Hymn* 3.186, Theocr. 22.116.

poor eyes never stopped melting with constant tears or my cheeks streaming with a sorry flood.

So it has to do with Catullus' love affair – but how? Ten more lines of extended epic simile follow, laying on the colours with superb pictorial skill, and only then, in the 27th line of the poem, do we find out what Allius has done;[106]

> Is clausum lato patefecit limite campum,
> isque domum nobis isque dedit dominae,
> ad quam communes exerceremus amores.

He opened up a broad path in a fenced field, and gave a house to me and to my mistress, beneath whose roof we might enjoy the love we shared.

Allius had provided a place of assignation. Now we see why the first line was so emphatic – 'I *cannot* keep quiet', despite what convention demands. It is a defiance like that of poem 5, and the *senes severiores* will disapprove. A mid-Victorian Fellow of Trinity certainly disapproved, of these 'unmeasured praises of a man guilty of as base an action as a gentleman could well commit, who lent his house to conceal an adulterous intrigue between a woman of high rank and a vicious youth'.[107] It is precisely because the act was so sordid in the eyes of the respectable world that Catullus takes such care to dress it up with all the magnificence of traditional poetic art.

Their love is to be mutual – for that is clearly the sense of *communis* here[108] – like that of Acme and Septimius or Vibia and Torquatus in Catullus' idealising conception (pp. 116–18 above). And yet they are not equals. She is his *domina*, 'mistress' in more

[106] 68b.67–9 (the traditional line-numbering includes the 40 lines of 68a as if it were all one poem). I accept Froelich's emendation *dominae* for *dominam* at line 68 (see Baker 1975), and must therefore revise Goold's translation at that point.

[107] H. A. J. Munro, *Criticisms and Elucidations of Catullus* (London 1878) 181. Cf. Tac. *Ann.* XI 4.2 on the brothers Petra, who provided a house for Mnester and Poppaea and were tried before the Senate and executed.

[108] Cf. Lucr. IV 1195–1208, 'communia gaudia . . . mutua voluptas . . . mutua gaudia . . . communis voluptas' (also Ovid *amores* II 5.31, *Her.* 16.319); cf. n.70 above on *amores*. Note that here, for the first time since poem 5, 'Lesbia' and Catullus together are 'we' in a first-person plural verb.

than just the diluted modern sense; in Catullus' time, before his successors had made it trivial, the metaphor still brought to mind the mistress of a slave.[109] More than that, she is a goddess:[110]

> Quo mea se molli candida diva pede
> intulit et trito fulgentem in limine plantam
> innixa arguta constituit solea,
> coniugis ut quondam flagrans advenit amore
> Protesilaeam Laudamia domum . . .

[then follows the long central 'panel' of the poem, on Laodamia]

> Aut nihil aut paulo cui tum concedere digna
> lux mea se nostrum contulit in gremium,
> quam circumcursans hinc illinc saepe Cupido
> fulgebat crocina candidus in tunica.

Thereto with dainty steps my shining goddess came, and checking her bright foot upon the polished threshold stepped on it with a tap of her sandal, as on a time ablaze with love for her husband came Laodamia to the house of Protesilaus . . . Yielding to her in naught or in but little was then my sweetheart when she brought herself into my arms; and oft about her, flitting hither, flitting thither, Cupid shone brightly in his saffron tunic.

The imagery is among the richest and most evocative in all Catullus' work. The coming of 'Lesbia' is an epiphany of Venus, with her son in attendance; and he wears a saffron tunic, like that of Hymen in poem 61. The bridal allusion, appropriate to the comparison of 'Lesbia' with Laodamia, gives a particular significance to the reflexive verbs *se intulit* and *se contulit* (she 'brought herself', but a bride should come escorted), and makes the sound of her sandal ominous in retrospect (for a bride should step over the threshold, not on it).[111] But the unease is so far only marginal; what predominates is the radiance of the scene, the sense of sudden brightness in the dark.[112]

[109] See p. 30 above on its corollary, *deservire* (Cic. *Cael.* 67, *parad.* 36).

[110] Lines 70–4, 131–4.

[111] 61.8–10 (Hymen), 159f (threshold); cf. Plaut. *Cas.* 815, and S. Baker, *CP* 55 (1960) 171–3.

[112] For *candidus* (lines 70, 134), cf. Serv. *Georg.* III 82 'quadam nitenti luce perfusum'; *lux mea* (132) occurs elsewhere in Catullus only at the end of this poem (146).

It is misleading, of course, to take the two halves of this scene so closely together. They are separated by sixty lines of complex, allusive, carefully structured mythological narrative, on which Catullus has lavished all the resources of his art.[113] Here too there is unease, for Laodamia has offended the gods and suffers for it; but what is more important is that we are borne away into the tragic and glamorous world of the age of heroes, and kept concentrating on a bewildering coruscation of flashback, digression and extended simile, before we are allowed to return to the scene of 'Lesbia's' arrival. We may see it only in the magical half-light of heroic legend.

But now the real world begins to break in:[114]

> Quae tamen etsi uno non est contenta Catullo,
> rara verecundae furta feremus erae,
> ne nimium simus stultorum more molesti.
> Saepe etiam Iuno, maxima caelicolum,
> coniugis in culpa flagrantem contudit iram,
> noscens omnivoli plurima furta Iovis.

And though she is not content with Catullus alone, yet shall I put up with the rare lapses of my discreet mistress, lest I be a nuisance like stupid men: even Juno, greatest of goddesses, has often beaten down the anger that has flared up at her husband's guilt, when she learns the lapses of all-lustful Jove.

The goddess-bride is a real woman, with other sexual interests besides Catullus. Instead of the jealous rage and the venomous attack that we might expect after the earlier poems, he resolves to accept the situation, showing a worldly tolerance quite new in his portrait of the affair. But she is still the mistress (*era*) who wields the power,[115] and in his simile Catullus takes the female part, of Juno tolerating her husband's adulteries. The apparent realism is still based on illusion: Catullus is treating her affairs with other men as adulteries, as if she were being unfaithful to *him*.

[113] See Tuplin 1981, 119–31 on the allusions (esp. to Euphorion); Wiseman 1974, 70–6 on the structure (articulated round *coniugium* at 73, 84, 107).

[114] 68b.135–40; *contudit iram* is Hertzberg's conjecture for *cotidiana*.

[115] Note the use of *eri* for the gods at lines 76 and 78.

So a further stage of realistic analysis is necessary:[116]

> Nec tamen illa mihi dextra deducta paterna
> fragrantem Assyrio venit odore domum,
> sed furtiva dedit muta munuscula nocte,
> ipsius ex ipso dempta viri gremio.
> Quare illud satis est, si nobis is datur unis
> quam lapide illa diem candidiore notat.

Moreover, it was not on her father's arm that she came to a house scented with perfumes of the orient, but gave me stolen joys in the silence of the night, snatched from very embrace of very husband. Wherefore this is enough, if to me alone is given the day she distinguishes with a brighter mark.

Only now, and only for a moment, do we catch a glimpse of 'Lesbia' as she may have been in life – the adulterous noblewoman cheating her husband again for a night with an adoring lover. How much did it matter to her that he saw her in his fantasy as his bride? He should be glad she found time for him at all.

He *was* glad – and on her terms. Precariously, he could preserve his illusions. Of course we must distinguish Catullus the lover, a character in the drama, from Catullus the poet, who narrates it. But this delicate balance, of knowing her promiscuity and being able to live with it, suggests that in this poem the two are not far apart; that is, the reader may suspect (and I think there is some evidence) that when Catullus the poet wrote it, Catullus the lover still had some stages of his experience to come.[117]

The poem concludes with a passage that matches the exordium, promising Allius immortality and invoking the goddess of Justice to reward his devotion as she rewarded the men of old. We are back in the high style – the curtain has

[116] 68b.143–8 (after a resolve not to compare mortals with gods, and a corrupt passage apparently alluding to parental responsibility for brides: cf. 61.51, 62.58); *muta* at 145 is Heyse's conjecture for *mira* (cf. 7.7 for stolen love in the silent night).

[117] I infer from the disturbed symmetry of the Laodamia simile (in order to accommodate the passage on the brother's death at lines 91–100) that the original version of 68b was written some time before the organisation of the collection: Wiseman 1974, 73f, *contra* Della Corte 1976, 199 ('gratuita ipotesi'), Tuplin 1981, 118 ('arbitrary').

dropped again on that momentary glimpse of adulterous reality. Catullus gives his blessing – to Allius and his wife (or mistress), to their house itself, to the man who first introduced them to Catullus, and finally to 'Lesbia':[118]

et longe ante omnes mihi quae me carior ipso est,
lux mea, qua viva vivere dulce mihi est.

. . . and, far above all, she who is dearer to me than my very self, my shining star, whose living makes life happiness for me.

It is a superb ending to a superb poem; but *lux mea* takes us back to the dream world (line 132), not the real one.

5. THE EPIGRAMS

At poem 69 Catullus' elegiac collection suddenly contracts from the spacious sweep of mythological narrative to the concentrated economy of epigram. But though the scale changes, the sequence is held together by continuing themes as well as continuing metre. The first of the epigrams, on Rufus' armpits scaring the girls away, has recognisably the same tone and satirical intent as the 48 lines of poem 67; and the second, on what 'Lesbia' thinks about marriage, makes explicit what was implied in the sumptuously evocative description of her arrival at Allius' house in 68b. Indeed, the lampoons are themselves relevant to the themes of marriage and 'Lesbia'; for most of Catullus' Book Three – as far as poem 92, after which other preoccupations prevail – the juxtaposition of the poems creates a coherent drama featuring Catullus the lover, his mistress, and his rivals.[119]

The mistress – 'my woman' – appears first in a poem imitated from Callimachus, that master-epigrammatist whose name opens and closes Catullus' third book:[120]

[118] 68b.159f; cf. 153 on Themis (p. 107 above), 157f on the introduction, for which see *CR* 24 (1974) 6f and V. Cremona, *Aevum* 41 (1967) 258–64.

[119] Wiseman 1969, 22–8; on poems 69–92 see also O. Weinreich, *Catull, Liebesgedichte* (Hamburg 1960) 169, and Schmidt 1973, 228–33.

[120] Cat. 70; Call. 9 G–P (*Anth. Pal.* v 6). Callimachus' epigrams: Mart. IV 23.3f, Pliny *ep.* IV 3.4, Suda *s.vv. Archibios, Marianos*. Cat. 65.16, 116.2: Schmidt 1973, 233.

Nulli se dicit mulier mea nubere malle
quam mihi, non si se Iuppiter ipse petat.
Dicit: sed mulier cupido quod dicit amanti
in vento et rapida scribere oportet aqua.

The woman I love says there is no one she would rather wed than me, not though Jupiter himself should apply. So she says: but what a woman says to an eager lover should be written on the wind and running water.

The theme of marriage had dominated the second volume – two wedding poems (61 and 62) and a mini-epic on the marriage of a mortal to a goddess (64). It was continued in the third, with a heroic Callimachean bride in poem 66, an adulterous Transpadane one in 67, and the grand illusion of the poet's mistress as his bride in 68b.[121] So we are ready for the idea that Catullus might want 'Lesbia' to divorce her husband and marry him – and in the down-to-earth genre of epigram we are not surprised at his reaction to her reply.

The man with the armpits returns in poem 71 – not named, but the reader assumes it is Rufus again – and this time he has been more successful with the girls: the poem is addressed to the man whose mistress he has fucked. (Again, as in poem 6, the calculated obscenity comes between two Lesbia-poems, for contrast.) Possibly the addressee was named, more probably not;[122] at this stage the reader is still kept guessing.

The theme of poem 70 is resumed in 72. But by now some time has passed, some things have been discovered:

Dicebas quondam solum te nosse Catullum,
Lesbia, nec prae me velle tenere Iovem.
Dilexi tum te non tantum ut vulgus amicam,
sed pater ut gnatos diligit et generos.
Nunc te cognovi: quare etsi impensius uror,
multo mi tamen es vilior et levior.
Qui potis est, inquis? Quod amantem iniuria talis
cogit amare magis, sed bene velle minus.

[121] See Schäfer 1966, 73–7; Wiseman 1969, 17–25 (detecting hints of the theme also in poems 65 and 68a); cf. pp. 111–21 above on Catullus and marriage.

[122] At line 4, *a te* may conceal a vocative; more probably *apte* should be read (R. A. Kaster, *Phil.* 121 (1977) 308–12, after Schoell). Cf. pp. 141f above on 6.13.

You once said, Lesbia, that you belonged to Catullus alone and wished not to possess even Jove in preference to me. I cherished you then, not just as an ordinary man a mistress, but as a father cherishes his children and their spouses. Now I know you: so, though I burn more ardently, you are much cheaper and slighter in my eyes. 'How so?' you ask. Because such hurt as you have inflicted forces a lover to love more, but to like less.

This is a new tone in Catullus' love poetry – cooler and more analytical than the outbursts of joy or fury in the first book. 'To isolate Catullus' feelings from the form in which he presented them is a mistake'; in the elegiacs he often seems to be sorting his experience out in his mind, trying to define its mutually inconsistent elements and somehow make sense of them.[123] Here, his attempt at definition results in a wonderfully revealing simile. His love for 'Lesbia' was not just sexual; it was also like a father's love for his sons and his sons-in-law. What did Aurelius and Furius (poem 16) make of *that*? We have seen in the last chapter how much the family and its continuity meant to Catullus; astonishingly, he applies its standards of non-erotic, altruistic affection to show how much 'Lesbia' meant to him, at the time when he believed her faithful to him alone.

Now, he has found her out. The real woman cannot be assimilated into his ingenuous fantasy. Sexual passion remains, but the rest is gone. How to express it? What verb could he use for 'love'? What is left, burning even more harmfully, is *amare*; what is lost is *diligere, bene velle*. Linguistic order, at least, has been made out of the emotional chaos.

The careless aristocrat pleases herself; her lover writes off his investment and thinks himself defrauded.[124] The sense of injustice extends into the next poem (73), a bitter attack on a friend who has paid back honest generosity with treachery and harm. 'Don't try and deserve well of anyone; don't expect *pietas*; there's no gratitude, and it does no good to do a kindness . . .' No name, no details; the reader must wait to see what the context may be.

[123] Commager 1965, 93–9, quotation from 105; cf. Lyne 1980, 22 and 41f.
[124] Lines 5f (*impensius, vilior*), 6 (*iniuria*); see pp. 104f, 123 above.

The explanation comes (after an apparently irrelevant squib on how Gellius cuckolded his uncle) in poems 75–77, where Catullus bitterly reflects on duty, treachery and emotional waste in a sequence of three interrelated poems addressed to 'Lesbia', to himself, and to Rufus.[125] Now we realise why the lampoons on Rufus alternated with Lesbia-poems at 69–72, and we can guess who the treacherous friend was, and what his offence, in poem 73.

In 76, the central poem of the trio, as he dwells at length on his betrayal, Catullus invokes a new and momentous idea:

> Si qua recordanti benefacta priora voluptas
> est homini, cum se cogitat esse pium,
> nec sanctam violasse fidem, nec foedere in ullo
> divum ad fallendos numine abusum homines,
> multa parata manent in longa aetate, Catulle,
> ex hoc ingrato gaudia amore tibi.

If, remembering his former kindnesses, a man can feel pleasure, when he reflects that he has done his duty, that he has not broken sacred faith or in any agreement has abused the sanction of the gods in order to deceive men, then many joys in a long life await you, Catullus, earned from this ill-requited love.

It is not just that he has acted properly and in good faith. We are to think of a *foedus* sanctioned by the gods – that is, an agreement or contract bound by oath – which he has dutifully kept, and she has broken. 'So why torture yourself any more? Harden your heart and go back to where you were: the gods don't want you to be wretched.'[126] Catullus himself has done right by the gods; it is she who has offended them[127] – and in so far as he is still obsessed with her, he too incurs their displeasure.

[125] Duty: 75.2 (*officium*), 76.2 and 26 (*pietas*), 76.3 (*fides*). Treachery: 75.1 (*culpa*), 76.6 (*ingrato amore*), 76.9 (*ingratae menti*), 77.6f (*crudele venenum*). Waste: 75.2 (*perdidit*), 76.9 (*perierunt credita*), 77.1 (*nequiquam credite*), 77.2 (*magno cum pretio*). Other cross-references: 75.3/76.24; 76.20/77.6; 76.21/77.3. At 75.3f, *bene velle* and *amare* look back to 72.8; at 77.4f, *eripuisti* looks back to 51.6 (p. 152 above).
[126] 76.10–12; cf. *Mélanges M. Renard* 1 (Brussels 1969) 782f, and p. 105 above.
[127] Cf. 8.15 (*scelesta*), 11.22 and 75.1 (*culpa*), 60.4 (rejection of suppliant), 72.7 (*iniuria*).

So when he has argued himself into a total impasse ('you must give her up even if it's impossible'), he can only pray for mercy:[128]

O di, si vestrum est misereri, aut si quibus umquam
  extremam iam ipsa in morte tulistis opem,
me miserum aspicite et, si vitam puriter egi,
  eripite hanc pestem perniciemque mihi,
quae mihi subrepens imos ut torpor in artus
  expulit ex omni pectore laetitias.
Non iam illud quaero, contra ut me diligat illa,
  aut, quod non potis est, esse pudica velit:
ipse valere opto et taetrum hunc deponere morbum.
  O di reddite mi hoc pro pietate mea.

Ye gods, if it is in you to have mercy, or if ever to any you have given aid at the last in the very hour of death, look on me in my misery and, if I have led a pure life, rid me of this plague and pestilence, which, creeping like a paralysis into the depths of my being, has banished happiness from every corner of my heart. I do not now seek this, that she should love me in return, or, what is not possible, that she should wish to be chaste: I yearn to be well and to get rid of this foul disease. Ye gods, grant me this as a reward for my devotion.

The fact that he cannot stop 'loving' her (in his redefined sense of *amare* as sexual passion only) is the reason he must ask for the gods' mercy on him, and he excuses himself for it by likening it to an illness.[129] On the other hand, the fact that he is conscious of rectitude in all other matters (the 'purity' of his life being unaffected by *her* adultery with *him*) is the reason he can also ask for a just reward in return for *pietas*.[130] The fault in the eyes of the gods is hers, not his.

The predictable, and necessary, relaxation of emotional intensity comes in poem 78 on Gallus, another uncle with a randy nephew (even in good humour we are not allowed to forget

[128] 76.17–26; line 26 refers back both to the beginning of the prayer (*o di*) and to the beginning of the whole poem (*pietate*).

[129] *Amare*: 72.8, 75.4, cf. 76.13 (*amor*). Disease: the parallels with poem 51 are revealing (Kidd 1963, 304f); cf. p. 154 above.

[130] See Liebeschuetz 1979, 45–7.

adultery). 78b is too fragmentary for us to be able to see how it contributed to the sequence. But after that we have 'Lesbia' in six out of the next nine poems, in three of them with other men ('Lesbius' in 79, Quinctius in 82, her husband in 83). Moreover, one of the three apparently unconnected items is on Gellius, as was poem 74: four consecutive attacks on Gellius and his incestuous vices follow at 88–91, in the last of which it is revealed that he too was one of Catullus' treacherous rivals. In short, the whole sequence 69–92 is devoted to 'Lesbia' and the various men in her life, with only three other poems inserted for variety:

	69	Rufus	
Lesbia	70		
	71	(Rufus)	
Lesbia	72		
	73	(Rufus?)	
	74	Gellius	
Lesbia	75		
Lesbia	76		
(Lesbia?)	77	Rufus	
	(78)		
Lesbia	79	Lesbius	
	80	Gellius	
	(81)		
(Lesbia)	82	Quinctius	
Lesbia	83	husband	
	(84)		
Lesbia	85		
Lesbia	86		Quinctia
Lesbia	87		
	88	Gellius	
	89	Gellius	
	90	Gellius	
(Lesbia)	91	Gellius	
Lesbia	92		

With one conspicuous exception – the comparison with Quinctia in poem 86, where the words and the mood recall the

more carefree parts of the first book[131] – the poems on 'Lesbia' all have a characteristic shape and tone, a kind of tension between the argumentative symmetry of the elegiac form and an anarchic sense of resentment and desperation. What exercises him still is the nature of love; the dilemma expressed at length in poem 76 is reduced to its essentials in the famous couplet, poem 85:

> Odi et amo. Quare id faciam, fortasse requiris.
> Nescio, sed fieri sentio, et excrucior.

I hate and love. Perhaps you ask how I can do this? I know not, but I feel it so, and I am in agony.

What cannot be caught in English is the transition from active to passive. No use asking how Catullus *does* it; it's something that *is done* (to him), and all he can do is suffer.

The imagery of poem 76 reappears in a beautifully controlled exposition of his case against her (poem 87):

> Nulla potest mulier tantum se dicere amatam
> vere quantum a me Lesbia amata mea est.
> Nulla fides ullo fuit umquam in foedere tanta
> quanta in amore tuo ex parte reperta mea est.

No woman can truly say that she has been loved as much as my Lesbia has been loved by me. No faithfulness in any contract ever proved so great as that which was found on my side in my love for you.

The postponement of *vere* to follow *amatam*, in emphatic enjambment at the beginning of line 2, produces a rich ambiguity: is it 'no woman can truly say', or 'that she has been truly loved'? We know from poem 11 that *real* love was not what 'Lesbia' gave her men; we know from poems 8 and 37 that Catullus' love for her, on the other hand, was unique, and from poem 72 that he even tried to define it in familial terms.[132] His type of love was the real thing, faithful as if to a contract signed and sworn. But her type was *amor* as well, and he was subject to

[131] E.g. *candida* (86.1/13.4), *venustas* (86.3/3.2, 13.6), *sal* (86.4/12.4, 13.5), *Veneres* (86.6/3.1, 13.12).

[132] 11.19 (*nullum amans vere*); 8.5, 37.12; 72.3f (pp. 146, 166 above).

that even when all other feeling was gone, or changed to hate (*odi et amo*).

In this long fugue of love, hate and self-justification, two distasteful themes obsessively recur. They are combined in the person of the unspeakable Gellius, first introduced in a deceptively good-humoured piece on his seduction of his aunt (poem 74); the otherwise unknown Gallus features in a similar scenario in poem 78, after which three successive poems refer to *fellatio* (78b–80). Of those guilty of this vice, one is unidentified because the poem is incomplete; one is 'Lesbius', whom any Roman reader would infer from the name to be the brother of 'Lesbia' (she prefers him to Catullus, nevertheless); and the third is Gellius. In the final succession of attacks on Gellius it is the incest – not only his aunt but his sister, his mother and all the girls in the family – that draws Catullus' increasingly severe condemnation. Why should he go after 'Lesbia' as well? Because betraying an old friend appealed to his taste for gratuitous evil-doings:[133]

> . . . tantum tibi gaudium in omni
> culpa est, in quacumque est aliquid sceleris.

. . . such is the delight you take in any offence which has some portion of sheer wickedness.

'Now I have found you out', says Catullus to 'Lesbia' at the beginning of this sequence (72.5); and what he had found out was that *fellatio* and incest were two of the pastimes of her milieu. They offended two of his own most cherished values, the virtues on which he had based his appeal to the gods in poem 76: purity ('si vitam *puriter* egi') and *pietas* ('reddite mi hoc pro *pietate* mea').[134] Purity was inconsistent with oral intercourse,[135] and incest was *impietas*, an offence against the gods of the family.[136]

[133] 91.9f; see Wiseman 1974, 119–29 on Gellius – probably L. Gellius Poblicola, later consul in 36 B.C.

[134] 76.19 and 26. On *pietas* and *fides* (76.2f), see Henry 1950–51; for purity and the marriage ideal, cf. 66.84.

[135] 78b.1f; *comminxit* at line 2 (cf. 67.30 and Adams 1982, 142 for *mingere* in a sexual sense) reminds us of Egnatius, whose mouth was impure (39.14) for a different reason.

[136] 64.397–408 (esp. 403f), 67.29f; cf. 88.4–8 (*scelus*), 89.5 and 90.1 (*nefas*), 90.4 (*impia*).

The two recurring themes were not just random targets for Catullus' invective, but expressions of a moral revulsion inseparable from his own dilemma of simultaneous abhorrence and desire.

What did the liberated lady herself think of her puritanical admirer? As usual, 'Lesbia' is a shadowy figure. But we see her as an arrogant aristocrat in the poem on 'Lesbius' (79), where she and her brother dismiss Catullus 'and all his kin', and Catullus in return boldly puns on the name of their noble house (p. 131 above). Then, in poem 83, we see her with her husband, delighting him by speaking ill of Catullus. Fool! It just shows Catullus is on her mind: better to be the object of her anger than simply forgotten.

A similar poem closes this lengthy sequence. After the culminating attack on Gellius, with its reference to Catullus' 'doomed and wretched love' and the mistress whose love was 'eating him away' like a cancer,[137] poem 92 seems to offer a change for the better:

> Lesbia mi dicit semper male nec tacet umquam
> de me: Lesbia me dispeream nisi amat.
> Quo signo? Quia sunt totidem mea: deprecor illam
> assidue, verum dispeream nisi amo.

Lesbia is for ever criticising me and never shuts up about me: I'm damned if she's not in love with me. How do I know? Because I've the same symptoms: I curse her all the time, but I'm damned if I'm not in love with her.

After all that has gone before, that seems extraordinary. But not when we remember the redefinition of *amor*. All the 'real love' has gone, but what is left – *amare*, not *diligere* or *bene velle* – is more compulsive than ever. Poem 72 spelt it out at the start: now that he knows her, he has no liking or respect for her, but desires her more no matter what she does.[138] The symmetry shows that he has accepted love on her terms – physical desire based on mutual dislike and defamation. Since the meaning of *deprecari* in

[137] 91.2, cf. 8.1f, 51.5, 75.2; 91.6 ('cuius me magnus *edebat* amor'), cf. 76.21, 77.3.
[138] 72.7f (p. 166 above); 75.4, 'nec desistere amare, omnia si facias'.

line 3 is to beg to be rid of something, we are entitled to expand 'I'm damned if I don't love her' with the reflection that if he does love her he's damned as well.[139]

The second half of the epigram collection (poems 93–116) is introduced by a dismissive couplet on Caesar and has one recurring theme, Caesar's henchman Mamurra in his guise as The Prick ('Mentula': p. 105 above).[140] The proportions are reversed from the first half: out of 24 poems, 'Lesbia' is mentioned in only four, and in two of those not as the main subject.

In poem 100 Caelius of Verona is praised for his loyalty when the 'mad flame' was burning Catullus' marrow, and in poem 104 an unnamed person is rebuked for supposing Catullus could speak ill of his love (*mea vita*), who is dearer to him than his two eyes.[141] Then come two poems addressed to 'Lesbia' herself, separated by a vitriolic attack on a certain Cominius and his *impuri mores*.[142] They are the last love poems in the entire three-volume collection, and they are unlike anything we have met so far:[143]

> Si quicquam cupidoque optantique obtigit umquam
> insperanti, hoc est gratum animo proprie.
> Quare hoc est gratum nobisque est carius auro,
> quod te restituis, Lesbia, mi cupido,
> restituis cupido atque insperanti, ipsa refers te
> nobis. O lucem candidiore nota!
> Quis me uno vivit felicior, aut magis hac res
> optandas vita dicere quis poterit?

[139] *Deprecari*: pointed out by A. Gellius (*NA* VII 16, Appendix no. 37) with explicit reference to this poem. *Dispeream*: cf. 8.2 for the association of *perire* and *perditus* (91.2).
[140] It is possible that several of the persons attacked in this sequence were Caesarian partisans (Wiseman 1969, 28f).
[141] 100.7, 'cum vesana meas torreret flamma medullas'; 7.10 (p. 141 above) for *vesanus*. 104.1f (p. 134 above); cf. 82.3f for the simile.
[142] 108.2, '*spurcata* [cf. 78b.2, 99.10] impuris moribus'. Again (cf. poems 5–7, 70–2), the juxtaposition seems to be for the sake of contrast.
[143] Cat. 107, 109. The text is uncertain at 107.3 and 7f, where (without much confidence) I follow Goold in printing the emendations of Haupt and Lachmann respectively.

If aught was ever granted to anyone who desired and prayed and never hoped, that is truly welcome to the soul. So is this welcome and dearer to me than gold, that you restore yourself, Lesbia, to me who desired, restore to me who desired and never hoped, that you return yourself to me. O day distinguished with a brighter mark! Who lives happier than I in all the world? Or who can tell of anything more desirable than the life that is mine?

Iucundum, mea vita, mihi proponis amorem
hunc nostrum inter nos perpetuumque fore.
Di magni, facite ut vere promittere possit,
atque id sincere dicat et ex animo,
ut liceat nobis tota perducere vita
aeternum hoc sanctae foedus amicitiae.

You assure me, my darling, that this mutual love of ours will be happy and last for ever. Ye gods, grant that she may be capable of promising truly and say this sincerely and from the bottom of her heart, so that we may our whole life long maintain this eternal compact of hallowed friendship.

There are several unobtrusive cross-references to earlier poems,[144] but both the tone and the subject matter are quite different from what has gone before. 'Lesbia', it seems, is offering love on Catullus' terms – a love which is also a friendship, and for ever, and bound by a bond. In both poems the idea of *life* predominates, even to the extent of appearing (here and nowhere else) as a vocative for 'Lesbia' herself.[145] In 109 the emphatic repetition *nostrum . . . nos . . . nobis* brings us back to those rare moments of felicity when he and she are combined as 'we'.[146] But it is not quite the mood of 'vivamus, mea Lesbia, atque amemus'. He needs the help of the gods to make her mean it, to bring those first-person-plural pronouns out of the subordinate clauses of her proposal and his prayer into the indicative mood of actual experience.

Whether they heard his prayer, we are not to know. Catullus

[144] 107.1 and 4f (*cupido*)/72.3; 107.5 (*refers te*)/68b.70f and 132 (p. 161 above); 107.6/68b.148; 107.7 (*vivit*)/8.10; 109.6 (*foedus*)/87.3.

[145] 107.7 (*vivit*), 107.9 (*vita*), 109.1 (*mea vita*), 109.5 (*tota vita*). For the *foedus*, cf. Lyne 1980, 36.

[146] 5.1f, 68b.69 (see above, p. 139 and n.108).

the poet leaves Catullus the lover in a precarious balance of sudden happiness and sober, unconfident hope. And his readers take their leave of 'Lesbia' on a grave and moving line; what lives on, despite everything, is the poet's stubbornly old-fashioned view of the responsibilities of love.

6. REFLECTIONS IN MYTH

Who knows the human heart so well as to think it incapable of an uneasy and hopeful return to its beloved after a desperate refusal?

Eckart Schäfer's wise warning against attempts to put the 'Lesbia' poems into a chronological order should be heeded especially by those who believe that Catullus had nothing more to say to his mistress after poem 11.[147] The temptation to identify 'the end of the affair' leads only to biographical fantasy. We may reasonably assume that the real affair with his Clodia was an emotionally devastating experience for C. Valerius Catullus. But he was not wholly devastated. As a poet, he was in control of his material, able to present it as a drama, with himself and his infatuated illusions among the *personae*. And since he chose to leave it open-ended, we have no right to impose an ending to suit ourselves. All we have is what he gives us. 'Lesbia' lives only in his collected poems.

But there may be a way, still within the collection, of seeing her from a different angle. It has often been thought that the choice and treatment of Catullus' mythological themes were influenced by his own experience in love.[148] It is dangerously easy to slip into mere intuitive speculation, but I think there are some parallels for which objective arguments may be advanced.

In poem 68b, for example, the long passage on Laodamia has a significance more complex than its ostensible function as a simile

[147] Schäfer 1966, 49: 'Wer kennt das menschliche Herz so gut, dass er ihm nicht nach der verzweifelten Absage an die Geliebte eine bangende, hoffende Rückkehr zutraute?'

[148] See Forsyth 1976 and Della Corte 1976, 317–47 (both citing previous bibliography).

comparing the heroine with 'Lesbia'. It begins at line 73 (following the passage quoted at p. 161 above):

> . . . coniugis ut quondam flagrans advenit amore
> Protesilaeam Laudamia domum
> inceptam frustra, nondum cum sanguine sacro
> hostia caelestis pacificasset eros.
> Nil mihi tam valde placeat, Ramnusia virgo,
> quod temere invitis suscipiatur eris.

. . . as on a time ablaze with love for her husband came Laodamia to the house of Protesilaus, a house begun in vain, before a victim's sacrificial blood had appeased the lords of heaven. May nothing please me so mightily, Rhamnusian maid, as to be rashly ventured against heaven's will!

Implicit in the prayer to Nemesis (a goddess he took seriously)[149] is a comparison of Laodamia with Catullus himself. We have seen elsewhere that it came naturally to him to compare himself with a woman; this example adds two further dimensions, marriage and the approval of the gods. Laodamia offended them, and lost her husband; is Catullus' quasi-marriage doomed as well? Like him, Laodamia is insatiable in love.[150] And her love, like his, is deeper than physical passion, fully expressible only in terms of familial devotion between the generations.[151] It is hard to avoid the inference that the development of her story reflects his own emotional preoccupations – and not just in the way the narrative of his poem requires.

More elusive, in that the narrative is wholly mythological, is the question of personal relevance in poem 64. Here the signal is not by first-person comment but by imagery and phraseology which remind the reader of the love poems, and the comparison is again with a tragic heroine.

The description of the coverlet on the marriage-bed of Peleus and Thetis begins with Ariadne on the shore, watching Theseus sail away and unable to believe her eyes (64.56–9):

[149] 50.20f, cf. p. 140 above on Invidia.
[150] 68b.81–83, cf. 7.2 and 10 (p. 141 above).
[151] 68b.119–24, cf. 72.3f (p. 166 above). The simile of the doves (68b.125–8) emphasises unique fidelity; normally, women are *multivolae*.

> . . . utpote fallaci quae tum primum excita somno
> desertam in sola miseram se cernit harena.
> Immemor at iuvenis fugiens pellit vada remis,
> irrita ventosae linquens promissa procellae.

. . . no wonder, since then first she woke from treacherous sleep and saw herself, poor thing, abandoned on a lonely strand. But the youth fleeing unmindful of her beats the waters with his oars, leaving his vain vows to the blustering gale.

In much the same words she begins her bitter speech of complaint (64.132–5):

> Sicine me patriis avectam, perfide, ab aris,
> perfide, deserto liquisti in litore, Theseu?
> Sicine discedens neglecto numine divum
> immemor ah devota domum periuria portas?

'Thus, faithless one, having lured me from my ancestral altar, faithless Theseus, have you left me on a desolate shore? Thus indifferent to the will of heaven, do you depart and ah, unmindful, carry home the curse upon your broken oath?'

With *fallax*, *immemor*, *perfidus*, the promise blown to the empty breezes, and other verbal echoes as well, the reader cannot help but remember poem 30 (pp. 122f above). Moreover, as Ariadne's speech proceeds, he will recognise two Lesbia-poems. First at 64.139–42:

> At non haec quondam blanda promissa dedisti
> voce mihi, non haec miserae sperare iubebas,
> sed conubia laeta, sed optatos hymenaeos,
> quae cuncta aerii discerpunt irrita venti.

'But not such were the promises you gave me once with winning words, not such the hopes you bade me, poor fool, conceive, but happy wedlock and the nuptials I longed for; all which the winds of the air have shredded into nothingness.'

When 'Lesbia' said she would marry Catullus, it was words written on the wind – and the emphatic *dicit* fell at the beginning of the hexameter just as *voce* does here (p. 165 above). These four

lines have just the same message as the four lines of poem 70, with Ariadne playing the Catullus part. Twelve lines later (64.154–7):

> Quaenam te genuit sola sub rupe leaena,
> quod mare conceptum spumantibus exspuit undis,
> quae Syrtis, quae Scylla rapax, quae vasta Charybdis,
> talia qui reddis pro dulci praemia vita?

'What lioness bore you beneath some solitary rock, what sea conceived and vomited you from its foaming waters, what Syrtis, what ravening Scylla, what monstrous Charybdis, you who for precious life have given me such return?'

The parallel with poem 60 (p. 156 above) is unmistakable. And when at last Ariadne makes her prayer to the gods, with a desperate trust in the rightness of her cause, it is in phraseology reminiscent of poem 76.[152]

There are equally significant allusions to the wedding songs; in the flashback to the moment when she falls in love with Theseus, the reader has seen Ariadne as a virgin bride.[153] If he sees her now also as Catullus the lover, that recalls the comparison of Catullus himself with Atalanta and Laodamia, and of his love with the fragile flower of virginity.[154] The theme of brides and marriage (or the promise of marriage) is central to both narratives of Catullus' epic, in conspicuous contrast with the tales of incestuous passion and metamorphosis that seem to have attracted his contemporaries.[155] In the Peleus and Thetis story too there is an echo of the Lesbia-poems at a critical moment: when the Fates sing the wedding hymn, the structure of their song emphasises the happiness of a marriage expressed as a *foedus*.[156]

[152] 64.191 (*postrema hora*), 76.18 (p. 168 above). See Henry 1950–51, 52–4; on Ariadne in general, Putnam 1961, 168–80 and Adler 1981, 111–14.

[153] 64.86–90/61.21–5 and 56–9, 62.21–3 and 39–41; Klingner 1956, 82f.

[154] See above, pp. 121 (2b), 176 (68b.73–8), 146 (11.21–4).

[155] Cinna's *Zmyrna*, Calvus' *Io*, Cornificius' *Glaucus*, etc.; see Wiseman 1974, 54–6 (on the influence of Parthenius).

[156] 64.335 (cf. 87.3) and 373; for the ring-construction see Wiseman 1974, 69f, the wedding night and the morning after enclosing the story of the son conceived between. The good omens (64.329) recall those at 45.19, 61.19f and 159 (p. 118 above).

There are stylistic differences between the 'main' narrative on Peleus and Thetis and parts of the 'inserted' narrative on Ariadne and Theseus; the latter shows some Lucretian influence, and it may be that it was written later (Lucretius died in 54 or 53 with his great work unfinished, though it is possible that Catullus had heard some of it before its posthumous publication).[157] It is tempting to guess that the theme of a mortal marrying a goddess in blissful felicity and that of an innocent betrayed by false promises and heartless cruelty suggested themselves to Catullus in that order. If we do guess at such a sequence, we are going behind what the poet wants to tell us, and trying to analyse the compositional history of a work which he presents to us as an integral whole.[158] There is nothing wrong with that, but we must realise that we are dealing with a different sort of evidence.

To revert to the safer territory of the text as it is (presumably the poet's final version), it is worth considering the way he presents the Ariadne and Theseus story as an *ekphrasis*, the description of a work of visual art. What the wedding guests are imagined as looking at on the tapestry, Catullus' readers probably had in their minds already as a familiar composition in Hellenistic painting or relief.[159] On one side, the sea, with Theseus' ship in the distance; in the centre, the shore, with distraught Ariadne gazing out after him; on the other side, the land behind her, with Iacchus and his rout of satyrs and bacchantes.[160] In the work of art, both sides of the composition are equally important: Theseus abandons Ariadne, the god finds her and makes her his heavenly consort. Her anguish will be followed by unparalleled felicity; amid all the variants in the details

[157] There are as many spondaic endings in the sixty lines 67–119 and 252–8 as in the whole of the rest of the poem (368 lines); and out of 18 possible Lucretian echoes in the poem, 15 come between lines 125 and 250 (C. Bailey, *Titi Lucreti Cari de rerum natura libri sex* (Oxford 1947) III 1753f). On the evidence for Lucretius' death, see Wiseman 1974, 40–3.

[158] Cf. n.117 above for a similar analysis of the Laodamia passage in 68b.

[159] T. B. L. Webster, *Hellenistic Poetry and Art* (London 1964) 308, and *GR* 13 (1966) 29f.

[160] 64.52–70, 249–64 ('parte ex alia', 251). Everything between is marked as digression: see lines 76, 116f, 124, 212 for variants of 'they say . . .'.

of the story, those two poles are fixed. Catullus may not rewrite the happy ending, but he can overshadow it by lavishing all his attention on the anguish, and leaving the felicity wholly unemphasised.[161] What he does choose to emphasise in the Iacchus scene is something the reader of the previous poem in the collection associates with madness and barbarism:

> What we are shown is not the meeting of Ariadne and the god, not the joy and glory he brings her, but only his outlandish and barbarous company. We leave the Ariadne story to the wild strains of the Bacchantes, beside themselves in the same hysterical and potentially destructive frenzy that Catullus evokes in that disturbing *tour de force*, the *Attis*. This terrifying scene and the picture of the betrayed Ariadne are what linger in the mind, not her deliverance.

This final echo in the Ariadne story directs us to Catullus' greatest poem.[162]

Book Two consists of the two wedding poems (61 and 62), the epic tale with its double narrative (64) – and between them, *Attis* (63). What exactly poem 63 is, is a question we shall have to face in the next chapter. For the moment it is enough to point out that the poem ends with a prayer in the first person (like that in 68b: p. 176 above), and so may reasonably be brought into the question of Catullus' experience and the reflection of it in his narrative poems.

There were many versions of the story of Cybele, the Great Mother of the Gods, and her consort Attis; the only element common to them all was castration, to account for the Mother's eunuch priests.[163] The one Catullus tells is unlike any of the others, and may have been composed in conscious opposition to them.[164] His Attis, like his Ariadne, leaves the security of home

[161] Forsyth 1980, 101 and 104f; 64.253 for the one reference to the god's love, echoing that of Peleus in the 'main' narrative (64.19).

[162] Curran 1969, 180: cross-references between 64.254–64 and 63.21–5. See especially lines 254 ('lymphata mente') and 264 ('barbaraque horribili . . .').

[163] Summarised in Vermaseren 1977, 90–2 and 111f: Paus. VII 17, Arnob. *adv. nat.* V 5–7, Diod. Sic. III 58f, Ovid *Fasti* IV 221–44; cf. Neanthes of Cyzicus *FGrH* 84F37, Alexander 'Polyhistor' *FGrH* 273F74.

[164] Contrast 63.76–90 (Attis and the lion) with Dioscorides 16 G–P (*Anth. Pal.* VI 220); cf. also *Anth. Pal.* VI 217–19, 237 and Varro *Men.* 364B (Nonius 775L) for the orthodox version of the incident.

and family; she was led by a false lover to expect marriage, he was led by madness to expect communion with a goddess. Both find themselves on an alien and deserted shore, looking desperately for a safety they will not find – she deserted, he self-castrated. In each case, Catullus has altered the emphasis – or even the data – of the received story. Ariadne's communion with the god is played down, and the Bacchic rout behind her is made to seem dangerous and sinister. Attis' marriage with the goddess is replaced by madness and slavery, and Cybele's home in the forests of Ida behind him is made to seem a place of savagery, the lair of wild beasts.[165]

Madness and slavery were two of the metaphors Catullus used for his own love ('Lesbia' was a *domina*, like Cybele);[166] his mistress was a goddess manifest, and to follow her meant in some sense to deny his kin.[167] The world she inhabited was a moral wilderness, where the values he had been brought up with did not apply: *fides* and *pietas* were treated with contempt, and the responsibilities of marriage and the family were corrupted into incest and sexual perversion.[168]

Like most of the poems in the collection, poem 63 probably had a life of its own before the collection was put together. But in its setting next to the wedding-songs and the epic tale, in the central position between the two blocks of personal and occasional poetry, it acquires an extra resonance, echoing in another genre the preoccupations of the poet–lover. The collection is in itself a work of art. What Catullus did within the confines of a single poem in the Laodamia digression in 68b, he has done on a bigger scale with the long poems of his second book. By placing

[165] 63.50–73; 64.86–90, 117–20, 178–87 (home, shore, desperation); verbal cross-references between 63.47–56 and 64.124–30 (*aestus*, *vastos*, *maesta*, *aciem*). Madness: 63.4, 38, 44, 57, 79, 89. Slavery: 63.68, 80, 90. Beasts: 63.53f, 70–2; cf. 63.13, 33, 77, with Sandy 1968, 390–5.

[166] 7.10 (*vesano*), 100.7 (*vesana flamma*), cf. 76. 20–5; 68b.68 and 156, 63.13 and 91 (*domina*); 68b.136, 63.18 (*era*); pp. 160f above.

[167] 68b.70 (*candida diva*), cf. 51.1f, 70.2, 72.2; 58.3 ('plus quam se atque *suos* amavit *omnes*'), 79.2–3 ('cum tota gente tua').

[168] Wiseman 1974, 117f; on 64.397–408, see D. Konstan, *Catullus' Indictment of Rome: the Meaning of Poem 64* (Amsterdam 1977) 83; on incest, Rankin 1976, 120f.

them there he has set his personal experience – or such of it as he allows us to see – in suggestive juxtaposition with the grand and tragic themes of Greek mythology.

Catullus wrote for people who took poetry seriously – for re-readers, who would come back to Attis, Peleus and Ariadne with the whole cycle of Lesbia-poems in their minds. For such readers, the collection is more than the sum of its parts. From the bright seascape where Peleus fell in love, in the 'too happy time' when mortals and goddesses were on earth together, to the shores of Ariadne's island and the dark woods of Attis' insanity, the experience of Catullus the lover is acted out on the opera-stage of myth and legend. And his mistress, in the process, is invested with an epic grandeur – beautiful as Thetis, heartless as Theseus, implacable as Cybele.

CHAPTER VI

THE UNKNOWN CATULLUS

> At last he rose, and twitch'd his Mantle blew:
> To morrow to fresh Woods, and Pastures new.
>
> JOHN MILTON, 'Lycidas', *Poems* (1645) 65

1. POEM 116

Catullus was a learned and allusive poet, but the loss of so much of the poetry of the Hellenistic age has made it impossible to judge the full extent of his technique. It is characteristic of the state of our knowledge that a hexameter from an unknown Greek poet, casually quoted in one of Cicero's letters, should be the original of a line in Catullus' miniature epic.[1] However, papyri are steadily increasing our stock of Hellenistic literature, if only in fragments; in particular, one seminal Alexandrian work – the *Aetia* of Callimachus – is now understood in a way the great Catullan scholars of the nineteenth century could not have dreamed of.

We can now see, as they could not, how Catullus exploited his readers' knowledge of the *Aetia* at the beginning of all three books of his collection. In poem 1 he asks of the Muse what Callimachus asked of the Graces in *Aetia* 1, and describes his book, via a bilingual pun, as Apollo describes Callimachus' work in the *Aetia* prologue.[2] At the beginning of poem 61, where Hymen is summoned to the wedding of Manlius Torquatus, his home on Helicon and his descent from the Muse Urania can now

[1] Cat. 64.111; Cic. *Att.* VIII 5.1 (?Callimachus fr. 732 Pf).

[2] Cat. 1.9f, *Aetia* I 7.14; Zicàri 1965, 239, Cairns 1969, 156, Carilli 1975, 927, Wiseman 1979, 174. Cat. 1.1, *Aetia* I 1.24; for *lepidus* and λέπτος, see Latta 1972, 204 and 210–13, Wiseman 1979, 169f.

CATULLUS AND HIS WORLD

A REAPPRAISAL

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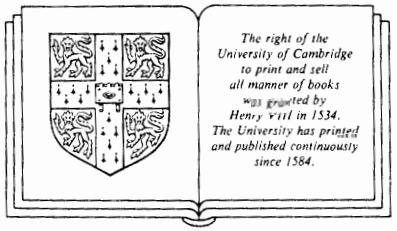

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