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Catullus, Ennius, and the Poetics of Allusion<sup>1</sup>

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It is this backward motion toward the source,  
Against the stream, that most we see ourselves in,  
The tribute of the current to the source.

Robert Frost, *West-Running Brook*

Almost since Catullus' own lifetime, it has been axiomatic to any discussion of the so-called new poetry that one of the primary aspects of its novelty lies in its rejection of earlier Roman poetry. The new poets, we are told, turned away from the clumsy style and heroic subjects of earlier Latin literature; they adopted instead the manner and the matter of Alexandrian poetry, particularly of Callimachus. They wrote urbane short poems and recondite epyllia; they made use of Greek words in transliteration and of learned allusions after the manner of the Alexandrians; they polished the hexameter to such a degree that Catullus, in poem 64, shows not a single violation of Hermann's Bridge. In short, it would seem, the poetry of the neoterics is Greek in all but its use of the Latin language.

To some degree, this description of neoteric style is exaggerated; but it is salutary to remember that there are still reputable scholars who look on Catullus 64 as a translation of a lost Greek original, and Giangrande has tried to identify the model as a product of the school of

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<sup>1</sup>In keeping with the original form of this paper as a lecture, I have added relatively little annotation. The main changes have been occasioned by the appearance, since I delivered the oral version, of Richard F. Thomas' article (below, note 7), whose examination of Ennian influence on Catullus 64. 1-18 is more detailed than my own, but with whose approach (as will be seen) I disagree. I am grateful to my wife, Susanna Stambler, for her improvements of this article, and to the other speakers and audience at the University of Minnesota for their helpful comments.

Rhianus Cretensis.<sup>2</sup> Few indeed would go so far as that, but the possibility of any extensive debt of Catullus, at least in his longer poems, to the masterpieces of early Roman literature is one that leaves many critics profoundly uneasy. Of the use of Ennius in Catullus 64, C. J. Fordyce remarked that "Alexandrian artifices are imposed on the traditional style of the Latin hexameter as it had come down from Ennius."<sup>3</sup> In other words, in this interpretation Catullus was influenced by Ennius only in so far as such influence was the unavoidable result of their shared use of the Latin language and the dactylic hexameter. What is significant in Catullus' style is thus the Alexandrian artifice; the Ennian elements are only there because they had to be.

It would be perverse to suggest that Catullus or any of his fellow-neoterics nursed a deep and abiding admiration for archaic Roman literature, but it would be equally foolish to ignore what use is made in Catullus both of archaic diction and of reminiscences of specific passages of Ennius' poetry. It is clearly not the case that Catullus wished to emulate the forms or the style of Ennian epic. The neoterics preferred to compose epigrams, lyrics and epyllia, not epic.<sup>4</sup> Annals, the form most closely associated with Ennius, were the object of neoteric scorn, deemed suitable for fish-wrappings in poem 95, described as *cacata charta* in poem 36. As a follower of Callimachean theory, Catullus rejected epic, both in terms of its style and in terms of its subject, and no collection of Ennian allusions should be taken to suggest anything else. The goal of this paper is to suggest, however, that Catullus was not totally scornful of archaic Roman poetry. In the first place, Ennius provided a Roman equivalent for the Alexandrians' use of Homeric diction.<sup>5</sup> And, in the second place, allusions to specific passages of Ennius, like allusions to other authors, are an instrument for conveying poetic meaning. As for the Alexandrians, an imitation of a specific earlier text was often meant to draw the reader's attention to the similarities or differences between the two works, to provide a sub-text of allusions which might reflect on the surface argument of a

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<sup>2</sup>G. Giangrande, "Das Epyllion Catullus im Lichte der hellenistischen Epik," *L'Antiquité Classique* 41 (1972), pp. 123-47. The assumption of a Greek model is made explicit on p. 146; the discussion of Rhianus' alleged influence appears on pp. 139 ff.

<sup>3</sup>C. J. Fordyce, *Catullus, A Commentary* (Oxford 1961), p. 275; so also T. E. Kinsey, "Irony and Structure in Catullus 64," *Latomus* 24 (1965), p. 912.

<sup>4</sup>For a recent discussion with bibliography of the nature of neotericism, see R. O. A. M. Lyne, "The Neoteric Poets," *Classical Quarterly* 28 (1978), pp. 167-87.

<sup>5</sup>See W. V. Clausen, "The new direction in poetry," *Cambridge History of Classical Literature* II (Cambridge 1982), p. 188 (quoted below, at note 10).

poem.<sup>6</sup>

The interpretation of literary allusions is not easy, and not all critics agree on their significance. Richard Thomas, in the most recent discussion of poetic references in Catullus 64, sees the allusions to Ennius, as to other poetic predecessors both Latin and Greek, as polemical in nature: "...A great deal of the intent of the New Poetry is to modify, conflate and incorporate prior treatments. Through this method the poet rejects, corrects or pays homage to his antecedents, and — the ultimate purpose — presents his own and superior version."<sup>7</sup> In other words, the purpose of literary allusions in Catullus is, quite simply, to demonstrate the ability to make literary allusions. The goal of the learned poet is no more than to demonstrate his learning.

No one would deny that the *poeta doctus* was interested in displaying his erudition, or that at least a part of the pleasure of writing and reading such poetry was to feel the warm glow of superiority to less learned poets and readers. But a poetry that existed primarily for the purpose of displaying learning would be remarkably sterile; and while it may be an apt characterization of, for example, Lycophron or Nicander, it seems scarcely adequate to Catullus 64 or to Callimachus himself. While such poets were, to an extraordinary degree, self-conscious in their deliberate manipulation of the details of language and meter, this technical mastery was not an end in itself, for either the Alexandrians or their Roman imitators.

Although the main purpose of this article is to indicate some of the ways in which allusions contribute to the larger goals of Catullus' poetry, it may be useful to point out that even technical details are manipulated in Catullus 64 in the service of larger goals. We tend to think, following Cicero, that the spondaic hexameter was the hallmark of neoteric style; indeed, Catullus 64 shows the highest proportion of such verses in Latin poetry, having, on the average, one every 14 lines. But even such a deliberate mannerism is by no means evenly distributed.<sup>8</sup> There is not a single spondaic verse in the 70 lines of Ariadne's speech, and only one (and that a Greek proper name) in any speech in the poem. On the other hand, there are seven in the 25 lines of the initial description of Ariadne, three in the 14 lines describing the

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<sup>6</sup>An excellent example of the importance of allusion for the interpretation of Alexandrian poetry will be found in A. Bulloch, "Callimachus' *Erysichthon*, Homer and Apollonius Rhodius," *American Journal of Philology* 98 (1977), pp. 97-123.

<sup>7</sup>Richard F. Thomas, "Catullus and the Polemics of Poetic Reference (Poem 64. 1-18)," *American Journal of Philology* 103 (1982), pp. 144-64, at p. 163.

<sup>8</sup>On this feature, see J. Bramble, "Structure and Ambiguity in Catullus LXIV,"

appearance of Dionysus, and seven in the 38 lines concerning the arrival of the divine wedding-guests. In other words, the mannerism is manipulated, and was felt to have certain distinct purposes: no matter how fond Catullus may have been of spondaic verses, he thought them appropriate for descriptive passages, but not for direct speech.

Other stylistic features have a similarly uneven distribution. R.O.A.M. Lyne has analyzed the use of verses with a main trochaic caesura in the third foot, and notes their tendency to cluster to create an effect. He also points out Catullus' tendency to give sequences of "emphatically fourth-foot-homodyned lines" to similar effect. And linguistic archaisms show similar groupings: they cluster at the beginning of the poem, in the initial description of the coverlet, and in Ariadne's lament. As Lyne well remarks, "Catullus deploys archaisms as part of a general stylistic plan, as well as to achieve local and individual effect with each instance."<sup>9</sup>

What is perhaps most relevant to our purpose here, however, is to note one curious feature of Catullus' use of marked stylistic mannerisms, that the passages which show the highest concentrations of archaic diction also show a high incidence of those features which we more customarily identify as neoteric. This combination is in fact a logical consequence of Catullus' Alexandrianism. Just as Callimachus joined Homeric language with his own coinages, so Catullus combined archaic and modern features. As Clausen remarks in connection with the opening verses of Catullus 64: "All this — and these three lines are typical of the poem throughout — might seem but an absurd confusion of Hellenistic artifice, with Ennius doubling for Homer; yet the voice of Catullus does emerge, powerfully if obliquely."<sup>10</sup> It will be suggested below that Catullus' reminiscences of Ennius, like Callimachus' allusions to early Greek poetry, can refer as much to context and content as to diction alone.

Stylistic mannerisms, however skilfully deployed, can only impart a general tone to a passage or poem; specific allusions have a much more pointed effect. Consider, for example, Catullus' poem on his brother's grave (101):

Multas per gentes et multa per aequora uectus  
 aduenio has miseras, frater, ad inferias....

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*Proc. of the Cambridge Philol. Society* 196, n.s. 16 (1970), p. 24, note 2.

<sup>9</sup>On these features, see R.O.A.M. Lyne, ed., *Ciris* (Cambridge 1978), pp. 18-23, 27 ff. The quotation is from p. 28.

<sup>10</sup>Clausen (above, note 5), p. 188.

It is not mere adornment or polemic that leads Catullus to mark the description of his voyage to Troy by a clear allusion to the opening lines of the *Odyssey*, nor is it coincidental that an allusion to both these passages is found in Anchises' words to Aeneas in the underworld (*Aen.* VI. 692-93):<sup>11</sup>

Quas ego te terras et quanta per aequora uectum  
accipio! quantis iactatum, nate, periclis!

It is eminently appropriate to Catullus' linking of his brother's death with the death of *uirtus* and his vision of the Trojan War as the death, not the apex, of the heroic age (68. 89 ff.) that he portray his eastern voyage as a backward *Odyssey*, an anti-*nostos*. And it is equally appropriate that Virgil not only include an allusion to the opening of the *Odyssey* at the end of the Odyssean half of his poem but also reverse Catullus' poem by having the dead speak to the living, not the living to the dead, in Homer's words.<sup>12</sup>

Not all allusions to previous literature have a function beyond their immediate context, even if we are able to recognize them. When Catullus alludes to the opening lines of the *Iliad* at 64. 152 ff., there does not seem to be any particular resonance;<sup>13</sup> when he translates the verse of an unknown Hellenistic poet at 64. 111 we have no idea why he does so. Even when he alludes to identifiable lines of Ennius in the opening of poem 64, there is no clear reason for us, or for the poet, to connect the sailing of the Argo to the departure of the Roman fleet in 190 B.C.<sup>14</sup> But when he alludes to the opening of the *Odyssey* in poem 101, as mentioned above, or when he alludes to one of Sappho's epithalamia in 11. 22 ff., he clearly intended the learned reader to

<sup>11</sup>On these passages see G. B. Conte, "Memoria dei poeti e arte allusiva," *Strumenti Critici* 16 (1971), pp. 325-33.

<sup>12</sup>On beginnings and ends, see below, note 28.

<sup>13</sup>On this passage, see J. E. G. Zetzel, "A Homeric Reminiscence in Catullus," *American Journal of Philology* 99 (1978), pp. 332-33. There have been three replies to this note, by R. Renehan, *AJP* 100 (1979), pp. 473-74, R. F. Thomas, *AJP* 100 (1979), pp. 475-76, and James H. Dee, *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 111 (1981), pp. 39-42. Of these, only that of Thomas seems to me at all cogent; but rather than reply in detail, I will simply point out that his suggestion that Catullus 64. 152 ff. is a commonplace rather than an allusion to *Iliad* I. 4 ff. seems to be refuted, according to his own methods in the article cited above (note 7), by Virgil's double imitation of the lines of both Homer and Catullus in *Aen.* IX. 485 ff. According to the same method, Ovid *Her.* 10. 96 shows that he at least recognized an allusion to Zenodotus' text of Homer in glossing *praeda* with *cibus*. Dee's suggestion that the allusion is unlikely because neither Callimachus nor Catullus was interested in Homer is both absurd and a misreading of the articles of Thomas and Lyne which he cites in justification.

<sup>14</sup>On this passage, see below, pp. 257-58.

compare the context in the source with his own adaptation and to use the original to enhance the appreciation and understanding of Catullus' poem, not just to admire his *doctrina*.

The same effort of comparison and comprehension is demanded of the reader by most of Catullus' identifiable allusions to Ennius, in both the epigrams and poem 64. Two epigrams allude to identifiable fragments of the *Annales*, and the technique of allusion is the same as that described above with reference to poem 101.<sup>15</sup> The first of these is generally recognized by commentators on both poets. Catullus concludes poem 115, an ironic praise of Mamurra for his extensive properties, with the couplet (115. 7-8):

omnia magna haec sunt, tamen ipsest maximus ultro,  
non homo, sed uero mentula magna minax.

The alliteration of the final words would alone lead one to suspect parody, and the source survives in a verse of the *Annales* (621 V):

Machina multa minax minatur maxima muris.

Ennius is speaking of a siege engine, and Catullus of something rather smaller; but the recognition of the parody clearly enhances one's appreciation of Catullus' epigram.<sup>16</sup>

The other example of the use of the *Annales* in Catullus' epigrams is less familiar. The last example in Latin poetry, and the only one in Catullus, of the dropping of final *s* occurs in the last line of the corpus of Catullus, in a poem to Gellius. Catullus states that he has in the past tried to soften Gellius' attacks on him by seeking to send him poems of Callimachus; now, seeing that that is futile, he will protect himself and reply in kind (116. 7-8):

contra nos tela ista tua euitabimus †amitha  
at fixus nostris tu dabi' supplicium.

This is not the only stylistic peculiarity in poem 116; the same epigram also contains the only purely spondaic hexameter in classical Latin poetry. The archaisms, like the alliteration in poem 115, lead one to suspect parody, especially since the reference to Callimachus suggests that the poem is likely to be concerned with literary polemics.<sup>17</sup> Once

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<sup>15</sup>Both passages are discussed by S. Timpanaro, *Contributi di filologia e di storia della lingua latina* (Rome 1978), p. 177, note 42.

<sup>16</sup>Vahlen *ad loc.* suggested that the context of Ennius' line was Marcellus' siege of Syracuse, but no certainty is possible.

<sup>17</sup>On this poem, see C. W. Macleod, "Catullus 116," *Classical Quarterly* 23 (1973), pp. 304-09.

more Ennius supplies a plausible model (99-100 V):<sup>18</sup>

nec pol homo quisquam faciet impune animatus  
hoc nec tu: nam mi calido dabis sanguine poenas.

Here the parody has a deeper purpose than in the preceding poem: Catullus is ceasing to send Gellius poems of Callimachus, as signs of friendship, and is instead sending him weapons, weapons which are, in fact, Ennius. That opposition alone has an obvious literary significance, but it is also important to recognize the Ennian context: Romulus' words to Remus before killing him are transferred to Catullus' attack on one of his rivals.

A short poem does not provide scope for an elaborate set of allusions. In each of these cases, a single line in Catullus makes use of an Ennian reminiscence to add point to a joke, and the original context, whether it is the siege of Syracuse in the first case or the murder of Remus in the second, cannot be said to add more than a slight twist to the epigram and to permit the learned reader to savor his erudition. In the second case, of course, there is something more, because the fact that it is Ennius who is recalled is a deliberate foil to the mention of Callimachus in the second verse. What may be significant, however, in the larger context of the relationship of Catullus to Ennius, is that Catullus can expect his readers to be familiar with Ennius. The style of the earlier poet may be parodied or rejected, but knowledge of the text is a necessity.

It is possible to say rather more about the allusions to Ennius in Catullus 64 than about those in the shorter poems. Not only are there more allusions, but the majority of them seem to form a significant pattern, forcing the reader to recall the Ennian text and use it in interpreting Catullus' poem. Of the five recognizable allusions to Ennius in poem 64, four are to a single work, the *Medea Exul*, one to the *Annales*. The last, most recently discussed by Thomas, is of a different, and simpler, type than the others. As Thomas has pointed out,<sup>19</sup> 64. 6-7:

ausi sunt uada salsa cita decurrere puppi,  
caerula uerrentes abiegnis aequora palmis.

alludes to two adjacent fragments of the *Annales* (384-86 V):

uerrunt extemplo placide mare marmore flauo;  
caeruleum spumat sale conferta rate pulsum.  
labitur uncta carina, uolat super impetus undas.

<sup>18</sup>I read *nec* rather than *nisi* in line 100 following Baehrens and Valmaggi and *dabis* rather than *das* following Servius Auctus, Valmaggi and Timpanaro.

<sup>19</sup>Thomas (above, note 7), pp. 156 ff.

The similarities between Catullus and Ennius here are in diction, not in word order or phraseology. As Thomas' table of parallels suggests, Catullus chose to use these lines of Ennius not because of any contextual similarity between the sailing of the Roman fleet and the departure of the *Argo*, but because of his desire to use archaic language to evoke a mood.

Before attempting to draw any wide-reaching conclusions from the reminiscences of the *Medea Exul* in Catullus 64, it would be just as well to set them out in detail. The first is in the opening lines of the poem:

Peliaco quondam prognatae uertice pinus  
dicuntur liquidas Neptuni nasse per undas....

As has long been known, the first lines of poem 64 recall the opening of Ennius' play (246 ff. V = 208 ff. J):

Utinam ne in nemore Pelio securibus  
caesae accidissent abiegnae ad terram trabes....

Wilamowitz, stating as an obvious fact that Catullus was borrowing from Ennius, pointed out that the order of events in Catullus' proem was not that of Euripides, who began from the passage through the Symplegades and then went back to the cutting of trees on Mt. Pelion, but that of Ennius, who related the events in strictly chronological order.<sup>20</sup> There are several verbal reminiscences of Ennius in the opening lines: *Argiuae robora pubis* recalls Ennius' *Argiui in ea delecti uiri*, a phrase not found in Euripides' prologue, and *auratam optantes Colchis auertere pellem* is, as Klingner notes, extremely close to Ennius' *uecti petebant pellem inauratam arietis*.<sup>21</sup> As Thomas has shown in detail, this passage displays a wide range of allusions; not only to Ennius, but to Apollonius, Euripides, and perhaps others as well.

The other three allusions to the *Medea Exul* occur quite close to one another, in Ariadne's speech and the accompanying description. The first comes at 64. 171-72:

Iuppiter omnipotens, utinam ne tempore primo  
Cnosia Cecropiae tetigissent litora puppes....

Although this passage also alludes to Euripides and Apollonius, there can be little doubt that it was meant to recall the first line of the *Medea*

<sup>20</sup>U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Hellenistische Dichtung in der Zeit des Kallimachos* (3rd edn., Dublin / Zürich 1973), II, p. 300. The archaisms and Ennian borrowings of the proem have been sufficiently discussed elsewhere; see, in particular, F. Klingner, "Catullus' Peleus-Epos," *Studien zur griechischen und römischen Literatur* (Zürich 1964), pp. 156-61, Bramble (above, note 8), pp. 35 ff., and Thomas (above, note 7), *passim*.



*Exul* cited above. The same fragment of Ennius is also the source of a line in Catullus' description of Ariadne, 64. 250:

multiplies animo uoluebat saucia curas,

which is clearly drawn from the last line of the opening fragment of the *Medea Exul* (254 V = 216 J):

Medea animo aegro amore saeuo saucia.

A different fragment of the play is the source for the final, and perhaps the most obvious, allusion to Ennius in Catullus 64, at lines 177-181:

Nam quo me referam? quali spe perdita nitar?  
 Idaeosne petam montes? at gurgite lato  
 discernens ponti truculentum diuidit aequor.  
 an patris auxilium sperem? quemne ipsa reliqui  
 respersum iuuenem fraterna caede secuta?

These lines are obviously modelled on *Medea's* similar despair (276-77 V = 217-18 J):

Quo nunc me uortam, quod iter incipiam ingredi?  
 Domum paternamne anne ad Peliae filias?

A collection of allusions such as this poses obvious questions of interpretation, and the solution of "allusion for allusion's sake" will not go far to help us. Thomas suggests that Catullus chose to start his tale of the wedding of Peleus and Thetis from the sailing of the *Argo*, a legend with which the marriage was not traditionally connected, because the multiplicity of versions of the story of the *Argo* lent itself to a display of massive erudition suitable for the *poeta doctus*.<sup>22</sup> But if that is so, why does the proem of the *Medea Exul* appear not only at the opening of poem 64, but twice more in the ephrasis describing Ariadne? Surely it would be better, even without considering the content of the poem, to believe at the very least that the use of the same model in both parts of the poem would assist in binding the narrative and the ephrasis together.<sup>23</sup>

If we set aside for the moment the question of why Catullus chose to allude specifically to Ennius' treatment of the story of *Medea*, there are a number of reasons for which Catullus may have chosen to open his poem with the story of the *Argo*. Thomas is certainly right to stress that, prior to Catullus, the connection of Peleus and Thetis with

<sup>21</sup>Klingner (above, note 20), p. 159.

<sup>22</sup>Thomas (above, note 7), pp. 163 ff.

<sup>23</sup>So Bramble (above, note 8), pp. 37 ff.

the Argo is unimportant; but the connection of the voyage of the Argo with the story of Theseus and Ariadne has significant precedent in Apollonius. Clausen has pointed out that the story given by Catullus of Ariadne's departure from Crete with the knowledge, if not the blessings, of her family is found before him in Apollonius III. 997 ff., where Jason is being highly misleading in his wooing of Medea.<sup>24</sup> It is also significant that the marvelous garment given in book I of the *Argonautica* by Hypsipyle to Jason, the cloak on which the marriage of her grandparents Dionysus and Ariadne had been consummated, is used by Medea in Book IV to lure her brother Apsyrtus to his death.<sup>25</sup>

The weddings of Peleus and Thetis in Catullus and of Jason and Medea in Apollonius have more in common than the shared presence of the bridegrooms on the Argo and the shared references to the tale of Theseus and Ariadne. Peleus and Thetis were not the only couple to have a remarkable coverlet on their wedding bed: Jason and Medea (*Argonautica* IV. 1141 ff.) consummated their marriage on the golden fleece itself. Unusual wedding songs were performed on both occasions, by the Parcae for Peleus and Thetis, by Orpheus for Jason and Medea. And, of course, the reversal of the traditional mythic chronology in Catullus 64 makes both marriages the direct result of the voyage of the Argo.<sup>26</sup>

If we return then to the extraordinary concatenation of allusions to earlier treatments of the Argo at the opening of Catullus 64, it becomes quite clear that Catullus did not alter the traditional tales merely in order to be able to make learned allusions to previous versions, but that the allusions themselves provide an intertextual guide to the interpretation of the poem; the reader is meant to see the parallels between Peleus and Thetis on the one hand and Jason and Medea on the other. At the end of the poem, after he has described Thetis' falling in love with Jason at first sight, Catullus delivers an apostrophe to the heroes of the Argo (64. 22-25):

O nimis optato saeculorum tempore nati  
 heroes, saluete, deum genus! o bona matrum

<sup>24</sup>W. V. Clausen, "Ariadne's Leave-Taking: Catullus 64. 116-20," *Illinois Classical Studies* II (1977), p. 220; so more briefly Kinsey (above, note 3), p. 914, note 2.

<sup>25</sup>The cloak is described and identified at *Arg.* IV. 423-34; on this see also Clausen (above, note 5), pp. 191 ff. For my understanding of the importance of Ariadne in Apollonius and its relevance to Catullus 64 I owe much to an unpublished lecture of A. Bulloch and an unpublished article of Clifford Weber.

<sup>26</sup>There is no need here to repeat the well-known alterations which Catullus made to the traditional tale of Peleus and Thetis; see Fordyce (above, note 3) on 64. 19 for a brief summary.

progenies, saluete iter<um...  
uos ego saepe meo, uos carmine compellabo.

These verses constitute a reversal of hymnic convention, because the salutation and promise of future song belong to the end, not the beginning, of a hymn.<sup>27</sup> And the specific model for this passage exists, at the very end of the *Argonautica* (IV. 1773-75):

Ἰλατ' ἀριστῆες, μακάρων γένος, αἶδε δ' αἰοδαί  
εἰς ἔτος ἐξ ἔτεος γλυκερώτεραι εἰεν ἀείδειν  
ἀνθρώποις....

There are two possible reasons for the allusion to the end of the *Argonautica* at the beginning of Catullus' poem. One is formal: that it seems to be a convention of Alexandrian and neoteric poetry to reverse beginnings and ends.<sup>28</sup> But the other is thematic: the story of Peleus and Thetis, as presented by Catullus, is the sequel to the voyage of the Argo. And every reader would know that, in the traditional versions of Greek mythology, the usual sequel to the voyage of the Argo was not the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, but the tragedy of Medea.

That it is Medea and the *Medea* that are present in the opening lines of Catullus 64 is evident; Catullus begins by the obvious allusion to Ennius' play. What is less frequently emphasized in discussions of the poem, however, is Catullus' deliberate delay in mentioning his real subject. The putative first reader, coming to this poem without preconceptions and without the title which modern editors have supplied, would immediately assume, from the allusion and from the narrative, that the subject of the poem was Medea.<sup>29</sup> It is not until line 19 that Catullus makes clear that it is Peleus and Thetis, not Jason and Medea, about whom he is writing, and then he does so emphatically, by repeating Thetis' name in three successive lines. The point of that emphasis should be obvious: the poet intended to surprise the reader.

<sup>27</sup>On the use of hymnic convention see Fordyce and Kroll *ad loc.* and Klingner (above, note 20), pp. 167 ff.

<sup>28</sup>This characteristic does not seem to have been sufficiently recognized; but note that Catullus ends poem 64 with an allusion to the opening of Hesiod's *Eoëae* (fr. 1 M-W), and that the first major episode of Callimachus' *Aetia* (fr. 7. 19-21 Pf) is an episode from the end of the voyage of the Argo, while the last episode (fr. 108-09 Pf) before the *Coma* comes from the beginning of the voyage.

<sup>29</sup>So Kinsey (above, note 3), pp. 915 ff.; L. C. Curran, "Catullus 64 and the Heroic Age," *Yale Classical Studies* 21 (1969), p. 185. D. P. Harmon, "Nostalgia for the age of heroes in Catullus 64," *Latomus* 32 (1973), p. 312 finds in the absence of Ennius' *utinam* *ne* from the opening of poem 64 a significant and deliberate reversal.

The importance of Medea in the proem to Catullus 64 was rightly stressed more than 25 years ago by Friedrich Klingner, who saw the alterations of the tale as positive and optimistic in tone.<sup>30</sup> Catullus, in his view, rewrote the story of Peleus and Thetis in such a way as to remove all unpleasant aspects of the tale: there is nothing here of Thetis' unwillingness to wed Peleus, nothing of her subsequent abandonment of him. It is a romantic tale of love at first sight, of the highest peak of mortal happiness, to be contrasted with the unspeakable present adumbrated in the closing lines of the poem. In this view, the importance of Medea is that she is *not* there, that she functions as an unmentioned tragic foil to the bliss of the tale Catullus tells. More recent critics have paid less attention to the allusions, more to the contradictions and antitheses present in the poem itself: between the use of the word *uirtus* and the unheroic deeds of both Theseus and Achilles which it is used to denote, between the surface brightness of the wedding song and the horrible human sacrifice and bloodthirstiness which it describes, between the happiness of Peleus and Thetis in the poem and the various disturbing elements which Catullus mentions or which were well known to readers from other versions of the tale.<sup>31</sup> The allusions to the story of Medea seem to offer strong support to the latter version, since from the opening words of the poem Catullus makes certain that the reader has her in mind, and that can scarcely be supposed to portend a happy tale.

None of the references to the story of Medea as a whole, however, explains Catullus' choice of the *Medea Exul* of Ennius as the specific source for his opening lines or for the later allusions in the Ariadne episode. But a number of reasons may be advanced. There is, in the first place, a generic argument, which applies to Catullus' use of both Euripides and Ennius. It is obvious that Hellenistic poetry was highly indebted to Euripidean psychology and female characterization and that even Apollonius' Medea was highly indebted to Euripides'. Furthermore, it is worth pointing out that the epyllion form in particular owes much to tragedy. Although it is formally a variety of epic, it is

<sup>30</sup>Klingner (above, note 20), pp. 156-61.

<sup>31</sup>The most important of these interpretations are those of Curran (above, note 29), Bramble (above, note 8) and D. Konstan, *Catullus' Indictment of Rome* (Amsterdam 1977), with further bibliography. The attacks on such interpretations by Giangrande (above, note 2) and James H. Dee, "Catullus 64 and the Heroic Age: A Reply," *Illinois Classical Studies* VII (1982), pp. 98-109 are unconvincing for reasons too numerous to list here. They rely on a cross-examination of individual words and lines without any attention to context, on an unwillingness to read Catullus 64 as a poem rather than a logical treatise, on ignoring all literary allusions, and on a failure to recognize that Roman poetry is different from Greek in more than language.

in many of its techniques a version of tragedy: the extensive use of direct speech, the eclipse of narrative, the emphasis on emotion and psychology are all characteristic of drama rather than of classical epic, and of Euripidean tragedy in particular. Nor is it coincidental that the fragments of the *Hecale*, Callimachus' epyllion, show according to Pfeiffer significant linguistic affinities to Attic drama.<sup>32</sup> If epyllion's genre is epos, its mode is tragic, and it is only reasonable for a poet as learned as Catullus to demonstrate his understanding of his genre through the allusions employed.

As for the choice of Ennius over Euripides, several explanations are possible. In the first place, it is worth remembering that Ennius' play had represented a development from Euripides' along the lines suggested by Alexandrian poetry. Where Euripides described his Medea as ἔρωτι θυμὸν ἐκπλαγείσ' Ἰάσονος, Ennius' is *animo aegro amore saevo saucia*. The emphasis on female passion is a clear example of Ennius' debt to Hellenistic poetry, and it is a feature of Ennius' style which Catullus obviously recognized.<sup>33</sup> It is certainly not impossible that Catullus wished to demonstrate his knowledge that early Roman poetry, like his own (although to a much smaller degree), was indebted to Alexandrian poetry.

Another explanation, already mentioned, deserves further consideration, that, as Clausen observes, Ennius serves Catullus in some respects as an equivalent to Homer. But the debt of Catullus to Ennius is more than his use of the earlier poet as a source of archaisms with which to reproduce the Alexandrian taste for exquisite Homeric diction. The Alexandrian poets made Homer and other early poets the foils against which to operate: they explored their own peculiar desire to reshape the Homeric world by emphasizing poverty, domesticity, and the various unheroic qualities exemplified by Apollonius' Jason while couching their new approaches in Homeric language. Catullus used Ennius in the same way, as a representative of early Roman poetry and life rather than as the author of a specific text. Catullus, and presumably his fellow-neoterics, desired to naturalize the techniques of Alexandrianism, to interpret and adapt the Roman past and poetic traditions. The large moral and historical themes of Catullus involve a questioning

<sup>32</sup>See Pfeiffer on fr. 233.

<sup>33</sup>Bramble (above, note 8), pp. 35 ff. emphasizes Ennius' greater moralism and solemnity than Euripides as an influence on Catullus. For the language, see Jocelyn's note (*The Tragedies of Ennius* [Cambridge 1967], p. 356). On the debt of archaic Roman poets to Hellenistic literature, see most recently G. A. Sheets, "The Dialect Gloss, Hellenistic Poetics and Livius Andronicus," *American Journal of Philology* 102 (1981), pp. 58-78.

of the values and meaning of the Roman, not the Greek tradition: not merely the use of *annales* as a poetic foil, not merely the explicit contrast of mythic past to Roman present at the end of poem 64, but consistently, through the questioning of the language of Roman public life in the epigrams, through the double-edged references to Caesar in poem 11 and to Cicero in poem 49, through the portraits of Acme and Septimius in poem 45.<sup>34</sup> In order to anchor the myths of Greece in the Roman tradition, Catullus uses Ennius as a point of reference, as a source of archaic diction, as a conveyer of traditional ideas of heroism, and as a Roman.

All this may seem extremely subjective and impressionistic, but there is at least one piece of evidence that suggests the larger reasons for which Catullus turned to Ennius as a source of allusion, and to the *Medea Exul* in particular. In this connection it is worth citing again a few of the lines from Ariadne's lament quoted above:

nam quo me referam? quali spe perdita nitar...  
 an patris auxilium sperem? quemne ipsa reliqui  
 respersum iuuenem fraterna caede secuta?

It has long been recognized that, in this context, the reference to a brother's blood is rather strange: Ariadne's brother (more precisely, half-brother) was none other than the Minotaur, a sibling whose death she can scarcely have regretted to any great extent. In the Ennian and Euripidean models, the reference to a brother's death makes more sense: Medea had been responsible for the murder of Apsyrtus.<sup>35</sup> What is significant, however, is that the passages of Ennius and Euripides in question make no mention of that unfortunate event; Catullus must have added it on his own. Some interpreters explain this passage by connecting it with the circumstances of Catullus' own life, the intimate relationship of his feelings for Lesbia with his grief for his brother; and that explanation, while it cannot be pressed too far, has much to commend it.<sup>36</sup> But there is also a literary explanation of some interest.

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<sup>34</sup>On this topic in general, see D. O. Ross, Jr., *Backgrounds to Augustan Poetry* (Cambridge 1975), pp. 9-15; on the various specific poems, see M.C.J. Putnam, "Catullus 11: The Ironies of Integrity," *Ramus* 3 (1974), pp. 70-86 (= *Essays on Latin Lyric, Elegy, and Epic* [Princeton 1982], pp. 13-29), D. O. Ross, Jr., "Style and Content in Catullus 45," *Classical Philology* 60 (1965), pp. 256-59. The fullest exposition (not entirely convincing) of a "Roman" interpretation of poem 64 is that of Konstan (above, note 31); I have stated my own views more fully, but without annotation, in "Catullus," *Ancient Writers*, ed. T. J. Luce (New York 1982), pp. 643-67.

<sup>35</sup>On the peculiarity of Catullus' reference, see, for example, Kroll on 64. 150; Konstan (above, note 31), p. 68.

<sup>36</sup>Konstan (above, note 31), p. 73, note 157 rejects it as "grotesque," and it is obvious that there is no consistent metaphor employed. For the autobiographical interpre-

Catullus was not the first Roman to add a reference to a brother's death to an imitation of these lines of Ennius; it had been done some 70 years earlier, in the last speech of Gaius Gracchus before his murder in 121 B.C. (fr. 61 ORF<sup>2</sup>):

quo me miser conferam? quo uortam? in Capitōliumne? at fratris  
sanguine redundat. an domum? matremne ut miseram lamentantem  
uideam et abiectam?

That Gracchus was imitating Ennius is obvious, and that Catullus was writing with full awareness of both passages ought to be.<sup>37</sup> Where Ennius has *quo nunc me uortam?* and Gracchus has *quo me miser conferam? quo uortam?*, Catullus has *nam quo me referam?*, changing the prefix of Gracchus' verb in typically learned fashion.<sup>38</sup>

It would not do to press the precise significance of this allusion too much. Gracchus, unlike the mythical heroines, had not caused his brother's death, nor had Catullus. And one should not suggest that Catullus used Ennius' *Medea* because Gracchus too had used it; it is used with far too many overtones to be explained so simply. Nevertheless, it was certainly a convenient coincidence, linking the great past of Roman literature with the beginning of social upheavals at Rome and thus with the decay of Roman values that is so important a motif for Catullus. Even if Ennius' greatest work, the *Annales*, was not a text which could supply a model for Catullus either in its techniques or in its values, he remained, through his dramatic works, a poetic ancestor to be recognized and acknowledged. To recreate a true Alexandrianism at Rome, it was not enough to imitate the Greek poets slavishly. Cicero, in the *Tusculan Disputations* (3. 45), interrupted his quotation from Ennius' *Andromacha* to address the poet:<sup>39</sup>

O poetam egregium! quamquam ab his cantoribus Euphorionis contemnitur.

If by scorn Cicero meant only the absence of uncritical admiration, he was of course right; but the neoterics were not mere *cantores*

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tation of poem 64 see M.C.J. Putnam, "The Art of Catullus 64," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 65 (1961), pp. 165-205 (= *Essays* [above, note 34], pp. 45-85).

<sup>37</sup>Of recent commentators on Catullus only Quinn, to my knowledge, even cites the fragment of Gracchus, but he does not see the consequences. Jocelyn (above, note 33), p. 357 notes both allusions to Ennius, but does not connect them.

<sup>38</sup>On Alexandrian alterations of prefixes and suffixes, see G. Giangrande, "'Arte Allusiva' and Alexandrian Epic Poetry," *Classical Quarterly* 17 (1967), p. 85 (= *Scripta Minora Alexandrina* I [Amsterdam 1980], p. 11). Note also Varro Atacinus' alteration of Catullus' *deperdita* to *experdita*: see Clausen (above, note 24), pp. 222 ff.

<sup>39</sup>On this passage see, most recently, Lyne (above, note 4), pp. 166, 174 with further references.

*Euphorionis* and their poetry was Roman in more than language alone. Catullus, and presumably his friends as well, knew that it was necessary to do more than import Greek techniques to create a new poetry at Rome, that it had to be anchored in some way in their own heritage. They had the sense to understand that the rude origins of Latin literature had much to commend them, and that by acknowledging Ennius they could acquire a past on which to build.

This paper has concentrated on the interpretation of a small group of allusions to Ennius in Catullus, but has also involved some brief consideration of a number of larger questions about the nature of Alexandrianism and neotericism as a whole. And perhaps some final observations on that subject will not be out of place. Literary allusion is only part of the larger continuum of relationships between the poet and his past. Catullus may use an archaic word, he may imitate a passage of archaic poetry, he may talk about the relationship of historic or mythic past to the political or poetic present. The important fact, however, is that all these techniques are connected, and they are all significant. The new poet, like the Alexandrian, was concerned with the technical renewal of language, the recovery and renovation of old words. But the interest in old words is directly parallel to his attitude to old poems, and to old ideas. None is to be rejected out of hand, but all have, in one way or another, become stale, trite, or empty. Catullus, like Callimachus, wished to create a different poetics in a different world. Just as the super-human heroes of the Homeric poems had little place in Alexandria and were consequently revised on a smaller scale, so Catullus and his contemporaries rejected the stale words and ideas of Roman politics and military heroism in favor of more private worlds. But in neither the Greek nor the Roman case was that rejection unconditional; both the old poetry and the world of which it had been a part had once been glorious and still remained worthy of respect. If the new poets turned away from Ennius, they did not forget him.

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