

## Ariadne's Leave-taking: Catullus 64.116-20

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sed quid ego a primo digressus carmine plura  
 commemorem, ut linquens genitoris filia uultum,  
 ut consanguineae complexum, ut denique matris,  
 quae misera in gnata deperdita †leta  
 omnibus his Thesei dulcem praeoptarit amorem? 120

119 *leta* V: *laetabatur* Lachmann; *lamentata est* Conington; *lamentatur* Buecheler

Here, after elaborating as much of the story of Theseus and Ariadne as suited him—Ariadne's fearful emotions as she watches Theseus struggling with her brute half-brother, the simile of the storm-felled tree; in both of which passages Catullus is indebted to Apollonius' *Argonautica*<sup>1</sup>—Catullus breaks off in the manner of Apollonius, *Arg.* 1.648–649:

ἀλλὰ τί μύθους  
 Αἰθαλίδεω χρεῖώ με διηγεκέως ἀγορεύει;

Catullus' purpose is twofold: to underline his sophisticated allusion to the labyrinth,<sup>2</sup> and to prepare for the entrance of Ariadne and her great speech (lines 132–201). His description of her leave-taking is brief and apparently simple; and yet misunderstood.

## LINE 117

Ariadne shall see her father's face no more: how is this to be understood? Comment is unsatisfactory: "carum os genitoris debet semper uelle uidere filia" Baehrens (1885), quoting Stat. *Theb.* 10.693 (*cur ad patrios non stant tua lumina uultus?*) and Sen. *Herc. fur.* 1173–1174 *cur meos*

<sup>1</sup> Though not without reference to Callimachus' *Hecale* and the other bull Theseus killed; see R. Pfeiffer, *Callimachus* I (1949) fr. 732.

<sup>2</sup> A minor Hellenistic *lusus poeticus*: Callim. *Hymn* 4.311; Virg. *Aen.* 5.588–591; 6.27. See E. Norden, *Aeneis* VI (1916<sup>2</sup>) 129, 427 n. 3.

*Theseus fugit| paterque uultus?*; “*genitoris filia*: the juxtaposition emphasizes the unnaturalness of her act: Kroll quotes Cic. *Deiot.* 2 *qui nepos auum in capitis discrimen adduxerit*” Fordyce (1961); “her father (it is implied) shows by his look that he is unapproachable” Quinn (1970). The juxtaposition emphasizes not the unnaturalness but the naturalness of the relationship, and its pathos. Compare Virg. *Aen.* 1.589–590 *namque ipsa decoram/ caesariem nato genetrix*, of which R. G. Austin remarks: “the juxtaposition *nato genetrix* has an intimacy that English cannot reproduce”<sup>3</sup>; 10.466 *tum genitor natum dictis adfatur amicis*; 10.800 *dum genitor nati parma protectus abiret*; Ov. *Met.* 5.438 *interea pauidae nequiquam filia matri*. Ariadne embraces her sister and her wildly grieving mother; the king her father, as becomes his dignity, stands silently by—*premit altum corde dolorem*: while the actors are Greek, the scene Catullus imagines is essentially Roman.

No commentator on Catullus (or Apollonius) notices that Catullus is following Apollonius’ singular version of the story: Jason, sorely in need of magical aid, tells Medea how Ariadne saved Theseus in his hour of peril and then happily sailed away with him, *Arg.* 3.997–1001:

δὴ ποτε καὶ Θησῆα κακῶν ὑπελύσατ’ ἀέθλων  
παρθενικὴ Μινωὶς εὐφρονέουσα Ἀριάδνη,  
ἦν ῥά τε Πασιφάη κούρη τέκεν Ἡελίοιο.  
ἀλλ’ ἡ μὲν καὶ νηὸς, ἐπεὶ χόλον εὐνάσε Μίνως, 1000  
σὺν τῷ ἐφεζομένη πάτρην λίπε.

A seductive paradigm, with a significant adjustment: the wrath of Minos remained vigilant and unsleeping. The standard version was Homer’s, *Od.* 11.321–324<sup>4</sup>:

Φαίδρην τε Πρόκριν τε ἴδον καλὴν τ’ Ἀριάδνην,  
κούρην Μίνως ὀλοόφρονος, ἦν ποτε Θησεὺς  
ἐκ Κρήτης ἐς γουνὸν Ἀθηναίων ἱεράων  
ἦγε μὲν, οὐδ’ ἀπόνητο.

Apollonius’ version (or perversion) is a poet’s: the Hellene is shown glozing the foreign girl with his sweet speech. Apollonius had a clear dramatic purpose, Catullus did not; thus he seems inconsistent in lines 180–181<sup>5</sup>:

<sup>3</sup> *Aeneis I* (1971) *ad loc.*

<sup>4</sup> Noticed by the scholiast on Apollonius (C. Wendel, *Scholia in Apoll. Rhod. Vetera* (1935<sup>2</sup>) *ad loc.*): ὅτι δὲ οὐτε Μίνως συνεχώρησεν τὸν γάμον Ἀριάδνης . . . Ὁμηρὸς φησι βῆτῶς; and implied by Apollonius’ “correction”: ἐπεὶ χόλον εὐνάσε Μίνως. See A. Ardizzoni, *Le Argonautiche III* (1958) *ad loc.*

<sup>5</sup> And in line 150 *et potius germanum amittere creui*. In Apollonius, Jason slaughters Apsyrtus like a huge strong-horn bull, *Arg.* 4.468 *ὥστε μέγαν κεραελάκτα ταῦρον*.

an patris auxilium sperem? quemne ipsa reliqui  
respersum iuuenem fraterna caede secuta?

as if he were thinking rather of Medea's brother than of the Minotaur.

#### LINE 119

Lachmann published his conjecture doubtfully—"fortasse *laetabatur*"—in the apparatus criticus of his edition (1829); Haupt, his devoted admirer and successor, placed it in the text (1853); and there, for the most part, it has remained. Rossbach (1863), Schwabe (1866, 1886), Mueller (1870), Riese (1884), Postgate (1889), Benoist (1890), Merrill (1893), Friedrich (1908), Lenchantin de Gubernatis (1927), Kroll (1929), Schuster (1949), Mynors (1958), Fordyce (1961), and Quinn (1970) all accept it; Schuster, Mynors, and Fordyce without even mentioning Conington or Buecheler. Only Robinson Ellis refused to accept it, steadfastly preferring Conington's *lamentata est*<sup>6</sup>: in his enormous critical edition (1867, 1878<sup>2</sup>), in his commentary (1876, 1889<sup>2</sup>), though describing it as "slightly weak" (he wanted to propose a conjecture of his own), and, finally, in his Oxford Classical Text (1904).

It would appear that *laetabatur* is now settled in the text for good; in 1962, however, Eduard Fraenkel, in a masterly review of Fordyce, remarked: "Zu 64, 119 schweigt F. völlig über *laeta(batur)*, das sein Text bietet. Ich vermag nicht daran zu glauben und halte Coningtons *lamentata est* für evident."<sup>7</sup> Nor can I; and I agree with Fraenkel, although his explanation of the corruption is unlikely. Fraenkel assumed that the end of the line had been damaged so that only the letters *la* could be read in the archetype, and then *laeta* was an easy guess. But his two examples are not well chosen, nor is corruption of this sort common in the MS tradition of Catullus. There is a likelier explanation: haplography, a type of error that may occur in any script at any time. An example lies conveniently to hand, in line 139 *at non haec quondam blanda promissa dedisti: blanda* O: *nobis* X,<sup>8</sup> incongruous with *mihi* in the next line. The scribe, his eye passing from *quondā* to *blanda*, omitted *blanda* altogether; thereupon

<sup>6</sup> Communicated to Ellis by Conington in 1861, as Ellis states in his edition of 1878, presumably to establish its priority over Buecheler's *lamentatur*, published in *Jahrb. f. Phil.* 93 (1866) 610 = *Kl. Schr.* I (1913) 624-625; in his edition of 1867 Ellis identifies *lamentata est* as Conington's but gives no date. Obviously, Buecheler could not have known of Conington's conjecture.

<sup>7</sup> *Gnomon* 34 (1962) 256.

<sup>8</sup> Mynor's sigla. Examples no less strange can be found in L. Havet, *Manuel de critique verbale* (1911) 130-132.

*nobis* was interpolated to secure meter and momentary sense. Similarly in the case of *lamentata est*, the scribe's eye passed from the first *a* to the second, or rather from *LA* to *TA*, the result being *lata est* or *lataē*; and this (under the influence of *miserā*?) became *laeta* or *leta*.<sup>9</sup>

A palaeographical demonstration is never sufficient of itself. *laetabatur* is wrong for two reasons: psychologically wrong, and wrong because it involves a forced interpretation of *miserā*. To begin with the latter: who is miserable, mother or daughter? Kroll, echoed by Quinn, is characteristically direct: "*miserā* gehört zu *gnata*." Fordyce is prudently silent; Lenchantin de Gubernatis somewhat hesitant: "*miserā* è più probabilmente abl. concordante con *gnata* che non nominativo"; Merrill merely amusing: "*miserā*: contrasting the present wretched condition of Ariadne, betrayed by a false love, with the affection formerly lavished upon her by her family." Why should Ariadne be miserable? She has made her peace with her father and is about to sail away with her lover. But if *miserā* refers to Pasiphae, as, surely, it must,<sup>10</sup> then what of *laetabatur*? On an occasion like this an Italian mother does not smile bravely through her tears, she wails uncontrollably;<sup>11</sup> *laetabatur* makes no emotional sense in the context. Compare Cic. *De orat.* 3.214 *quo me miser conferam? quo uortam? in Capitoliumne? at fratris sanguine madet. an domum? matremne ut miseram lamentantem uideam et abiectam?*; <sup>12</sup> and *Pro Mur.* 88 *an ad matrem quae misera modo consulem osculata filium suum nunc cruciatur . . .?*

There is, finally, evidence far older than the Verona MS indicating that Catullus wrote *lamentata est*—two words, the cadence of a verse in the *Argonautae* of Varro of Atax: *experdita lamentatur*.<sup>13</sup>

Varro may be described as a belated neoteric; his literary career is both curious and important, how important can only be guessed at from

<sup>9</sup> "A word of opposite meaning": see Housman, *C.R.* 17 (1903) 309–310 = *Class. Papers* II (1974) 593–594.

<sup>10</sup> "*Miserā*, au nominatif plutôt qu'à l'ablatif comme le veut Ellis" Benoist. Ellis, surprisingly, translates: "her hapless daughter," but seems to have felt a qualm: "*miserā* . . . perhaps spoken from the mother's point of view." F. W. Cornish (Loeb 1913) translates: "her mother last, who lamented, lost in grief for her daughter," but keeps †*leta* in the text.

<sup>11</sup> I once assisted at such a scene: a happy Italian girl being married to an American, a "straniero"—"e la madre pianse disperatamente."

<sup>12</sup> C. Gracchus' anguished utterance, that moved even his enemies to tears; see Fraenkel, *op. cit.* 261 (on line 177).

<sup>13</sup> Fr. 7 Morel, whence Buecheler's conjecture. Was this fragment known to Conington? Ellis does not cite it, nor indeed does any editor of Catullus, not even those who mention Buecheler's conjecture. The tense of *lamentatur* is objectionable, as Riese noted; *lamentata est* resembles *aspernata est* in line 301.

the very meager remains.<sup>14</sup> Born in Transalpine Gaul in 82 B.C., he wrote a *Bellum Sequanicum*, an epic poem in Ennian style, with, it may be supposed, a double object: to celebrate Caesar's victorious campaign of 58 B.C., and, even closer to home, to attract favorable attention to himself. In this respect at least, his poem appears to have been successful; he made his way to Rome—what Latin poet did not?—and there discovered the New Poetry. Jerome reports a tantalizing fact about him, that he learned Greek when he was thirty-five years old, an eager opsi-math: *qui postea XXXV annum agens Graecas litteras cum summo studio didicit*.<sup>15</sup> A "translation" of Apollonius' *Argonautica*, the Alexandrian equivalent of an epic poem, ensued; the inspiration for which and, to some extent, model was probably Catullus 64.<sup>16</sup> Varro must have observed, with peculiar pleasure, how much Catullus owes for the beginning of his poem to Ennius' *Medea exul*.<sup>17</sup> His imitation of line 119 is after the new style: not an inert repetition, rather an exquisite yet recognizable variation that attends to a feature of the original: *expedita* is unique, but *deperdita* (for *perdita*) is rare and first occurs here.

After Varro had finished with Jason and Medea, he turned to love poetry; here, too, some dependence on Catullus is suggested, in Prop. 2.34.85-88:

haec quoque perfecto ludebat Iasone Varro,  
 Varro Leucadiae maxima flamma suae;  
 haec quoque lasciui cantarunt scripta Catulli,  
 Lesbia quis ipsa notior est Helena.

Leucadia, whose poetry has perished, and Lesbia, Sapphic names both:<sup>18</sup> their relationship seems to be easy and unembarrassed.

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<sup>14</sup> Virgil admired him, for he paid him the absolute compliment of stealing one of his verses entire, *Georg.* 1.377 *aut arguta lacus circumvolitavit hirundo* = fr. 22.4 Morel; see T. E. V. Pearce, *C.Q.* 16 (1966) 301-302.

<sup>15</sup> R. Helm, *Philol. Suppl.* 21.2 (1929) 40.

<sup>16</sup> The fantastic opinion of J. Bernays, that Varro may have been inspired by Caesar's crossing of the English channel, is preserved in Schanz-Hosius, *Gesch. d. röm. Lit.* I.1 (1927<sup>2</sup>) 312.

<sup>17</sup> See F. Klingner, *Sitzb. d. berl. Akad.* 6 (1956) 5-9.

<sup>18</sup> Wilamowitz, *Sappho und Simonides* (1913) 294.