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Odi et Amo: The Reception of Catullus' love poetry in 19th Century Britain

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Abstract

Love, says Socrates, is a “bolt of lightning”, an unexpected, spontaneous miracle that is inherent to us humans. Love is so powerful that remains a mystery to us, despite the innumerable human attempts to understand it throughout history. Chief among them has been art, a perfect means to both comprehend it and to express it, and poetry its main exponent. Probably one of the most influential poets for his love poetry is the Roman poet Catullus, whose love affairs with Lesbia described in his poetry spread across Europe during the Middle Ages. In this paper, I aim to analyse whether some traces of Catullian influence can be seen in 19th century female poetry, more specifically in the counting poem “How Do I Love Thee?” by Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Lizzie Siddals’ “Love and Hate”. In order to do so, I will be comparing the English poems to Catullus’ Carmina 7 and 85.

Key words: love poetry, Catullus, reception, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Lizzie Siddal

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0. Introduction

Art is the mirror of the human soul. Ever since it has existed, art has attempted at expressing and comprehending its nature, its conflicts and its preoccupations. Probably one of the chief concerns of the soul has been, and continues to be, love. It has had its expressions in mythology, paintings, music or cinema, but nothing represents love like lyric poetry. In fact, Gray states that "there exists an understanding, shared across different periods of the western literary tradition, that a poem is the form of expression most naturally suited to love" (1).

In Classical Antiquity, love or Eros was considered to be one of the most important and original deities who preceded the Olympian gods, although the most spread version stated he was the son of Aphrodite and Hermes. Subsequently and as a consequence of his influence, romantic love would be named after him. One of the authors who distinguishes *eros* from other types of love such as friendship is CS Lewis in his essay "The Four Loves". He describes it as "the state which we call 'being in love'" or "the kind of love which lovers are 'in'" (117). Obviously, passion or sexual intercourses—to which he refers as *Venus*— play a major role in Eros. However, Lewis explains, "sexual experience can occur without Eros, without 'being in love', and that Eros includes other things besides sexual activity" (117)—like loyalty and compromise. It is Eros what "makes a man really want, not a woman, but one particular woman" (Lewis 121).

Many historical figures such as Dante or Petrarch have experienced this feeling of being in love. Yet, not-that-famous-authors outside philological spheres such as Catullus in Ancient Rome or Lizzie Siddal and Elizabeth Barrett Browning in Victorian England have also written about it. In the case of the Roman poet, he is considered to be one of the main exponents of love poetry, who stood out for the novelties he introduced in his poems and for the way he portrayed his relationship with his lover Lesbia. The Victorian poets also portrayed the relationships they had with their partners in their poetry. It is noteworthy that they are women finding their own way in poetry in a world dominated by male authors.

It is because of love's universality that transcends cultures and times that we can draw some similarities among these authors. Besides, we can also do it by paying attention to

the Latin poet's transmission through time and space, as Stead or Myers argue[1]. Since it is impossible to certainly know that an author has had a direct influence upon another, unless it is explicitly recognised, we cannot know for sure if Catullus influenced any of the 19th century authors, but we can try to draw relations between them that may point to possible influences. For this reason, the aim of this paper is to see whether some traces of Catullian influence can be seen in 19th century female poetry, more specifically in the counting poem "How Do I Love Thee?" by Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Lizzie Siddals' "Love and Hate".

For this purpose, I will first contextualize the Roman and the English poets' lives and historical backgrounds, especially with regard to their love experiences. For their love poetry is grounded in personal experiences, knowing the poets' love lives will allow an in-depth understanding of the poems. In order to relate Catullus with 19th century Britain, it will be necessary to sketch a chronology of Catullus' transmission throughout the centuries, until his arrival to England. Then, I will move on to analysing the poems, divided into 2 categories: the 'honeymoon' and the 'disappointment' phases, so as to catalogue the poems in the love stage to which they belong. I will also compare and contrast the poems in order to see whether some traces of Catullian influence can be seen in Barrett Browning's or Siddal's poems. This comparative analysis will allow me to draw some general conclusions that will put an end to the paper. It is important to note that an appendix with the 4 poems that will be analysed will be provided at the end of the paper. For the references and works cited list I will be using the MLA 8th edition.

1. *Poetae Novi* and the final years of the Roman Republic

I will be devoting this section to presenting Catullus and the group of poets to which he belonged, the *poetae novi*. However, practically all the information about and the characteristics of this group will be based upon on Catullus' biography and work, for, as Jiménez Calvente states, we do not know much about the internal functioning of the literary group and Catullus' is the only corpus that has completely survived until this day (6). The *poetae novi* will be one of the two pillars for our analysis, and if we find similar groundings – in terms of motivation, artistic innovations or historical context - in the

[1] I will further develop this in the section devoted to Catullus.

other group, we will be able to compare and contrast some of their works and see if there may be any relations between them.

1.1. *Poetae novi*

The *poetae novi* or "the new poets" were a group of young and upper-class poets—and, importantly, friends—who lived during the last year of the Roman Republic. This was a time when epic poetry and tragedies were the very foundations of most poetic productions. These genres were composed by long texts of many lines which, in the end, for these *poetae novi*, greatly affected the quality of each of those lines. Sufeno and Volusio for instance, were criticised by Catullus as having written bad or meaningless poetry, because of their lack of refinement and care (Jiménez Calvente 13). This created in them a feeling of disenchantment with the literary production of their times and, young and enthusiastic as they were, they tried to take a different path, looking for their own style.

In order to do so, the *poetae novi* looked back at Alexandrian poetry (3rd century BC) and took Callimachus, Sappho and other poets of the time as models for the new poetry. These Greek poets made use of shorter texts like epigrams—most notably Callimachus—and of the first-person voice to express individual and mundane concerns, feelings and experiences—namely Sappho[2] with her love poems. Thus, Catullus and his friends took many of these features, blended them, and reinterpreted them through their own Latin perspective and devices (Gaisser 14).

Even if it would seem that they wanted to break with their immediate, previous tradition, "we cannot be sure to what extent the neoterics were breaking with their predecessors rather than building on their work and taking it in new directions", Gaisser argues (14). This is mainly due to the apparent lack of original corpus surviving until today, so that we cannot entirely discern the real differences between the *poetae novi* and the poetry against which they revelled. However, it is clear that they provided Roman poetry with a new direction; so much so that they have become notorious and influential authors up until today, as we will see later on.

[2] Sappho's influence on Catullus not only meant a combination of Greek and Roman literary traditions, but she also managed to transcend personal barriers, as he renamed his lover after her.

1.2. Catullus

We know very few things about Catullus' life, and what we know, we know it mainly through his poems. In them, as we have previously seen with the *poetae novi*, Catullus uses the first person as a poetic voice, which could lead us to think about that voice as Catullus' person. However, we know that the limit between the poetic voice and the real author's is often blurred and can be misleading. For this reason, when it comes to presenting the roman poet's life we must be extremely cautious about what we know to be true and what we do not.[3]

Gaius Valerius Catullus' life is estimated to span from around 84 to 54 BC, although there is no total consensus on the matter. However, what is important and certain is that he lived during the last years of the Republic and the rise of Julius Caesar, of whom he deeply disapproved (Jiménez Calvente 3). As a member of a wealthy family who lived in Verona, Catullus had access to a "splendid education, as the learning—especially the Greek learning—of his poetry attests" (Gaisser 8). He lived great part of his life in Rome, where he further nourished his intellectual life together with his friends and fellow poets, and where he died approximately at the age of 30.

Jiménez Calvente states that the three fundamental elements that shaped Catullus' life and poetry were friendship, love and the agitated city life (5). His love experiences are the ones that have attracted most attention. We see repeated in many of his lines the persona of Lesbia, who is generally considered to be a representation of a married[4] woman called Clodia Metelli, with whom he had a(n ultimately miserable) love affair.

This was a passionate and physical relationship, led by a very carnal *eros*. However, at the end Catullus discovered Lesbia's other lovers, and this, together with her indecision to choose between him and her husband led to a hurtful ending to their relationship. This turbulent relationship with Lesbia has a great importance in his work, since out of the total 116 Carminas he wrote, 25 of them were dedicated to his lover, in which he described different phases of their relationship. However, this is not the only important theme that he writes about.

[3] This concern is shared by Gaisser and Jiménez Calvente among others.

[4] Unlike nowadays where love is the basis of marriage, marriages in ancient Rome were arranged for political or economic purpouses, and rarely were based on romantic love. That is the reason why Roman customs allowed adultery.

As mentioned above, friendship—represented by his fellow *neoterics*—, his family—the death of his brother is very present in his work—or the political city-life are reflected in his poetry. This shows an interesting thematic variety in his work even when he was not a really prolific author. His short life prevented him from writing more than 116 texts that he produced, although, at the same time, it enabled him to reach the level of refinement and perfection that he sought as we have seen in the previous section. In fact, the high quality of his poetry, even if its quantity is scarce, has granted him a place of importance in the western literary canon, and his work has vividly endured throughout the centuries, influencing great numbers of recognized authors all around Europe.

1.3. Catullus' Reception in England

Catullus' influence spreads well beyond the Roman times (Kiss 1). There is evidence that his work was read and transmitted throughout Europe during Antiquity and the Middle Ages, although it suffered a period of obscurity and censorship until his rediscovery in the early Renaissance[5]. It was at that moment when due to the revival of the classic texts by the humanist movement (led by Petrarch or Lorenzo Valla) Catullus' work was rediscovered not only in Italy, but later on in England.

The fact that Catullus was cited several times by Petrarch whom he described as "an ancient love poet to be reckoned with", could be one of the reasons why Catullus made his way among Renaissance English poets, who were highly influenced by "Petrarchan models and motifs", Myers argues (16). However, these are mere suppositions, for there are many gaps regarding the "first English Catullus" (16). What we know for sure is that the printing press had a major effect on the transmission of Catullus' poetry, since it was supported by the numerous printed poems and translations that were made available to a broader audience, thus influencing a higher number of writers.

It is believed that Catullus' kiss poems and passer poems had been in circulation in England since the arrival of his Latin text sometime in the late 15th or early 16th century, Henry Stead argues (5). In fact, Catullus' influence was such that "probably no poem has been so often translated and imitated as carm.5" (Martin, qtd. in Myers 21). The

[5] For further information on the transmission of Catullus' work see Kiss.

"thousand kisses" or *basia mille* to which Catullus refers in his *Vivamus, mea Lesbia* became a late motive in English literature.

Arguably, the first two poets who imitated Carmen 5 were Sir Walter Raleigh and William Shakespeare, two of the most prominent figures of the English Renaissance. However, in the case of Shakespeare it is not sure that "this recurrent theme of the thousand kisses is taken directly from Catullus" (Pérez and Oliva 281). It is in later authors that we can find clear traces of Catullus' influence in their writings. A good example of what we have just mentioned is Thomas Campion's "My Sweetest Lesbia", the first Catullus' translation of the 17th century. The first stanza of the poem is clearly a translation of Catullus' lines, while the rest of it appears to be the English poet's own creation rather than a direct translation (Myers 22-23).

Another good example of 17th century canonical authors imitating Catullus is Ben Jonson's reinterpretation of Carmen 5. In his most famous satiric comedy, *Volpone, "*Jonson invokes *Vivamus, mea Lesbia, atque amemus*" in the first lines of the song "Come, my *Celia*, let us prove" (Myers 25). It is no surprise that Jonson knew and imitated Catullus, as he was the main exponent of the cavalier poets, who followed classical models as taught in the educational system of the times (Pérez and Oliva 283).

It was the Roman poet's "lack of moral utility" and "frequent obscenity" that kept him out of the canonical authors —such as Virgil, Horace, Juvenal or Martial— to be studied and followed in education (Gaisser, qtd. in Stead 3). It should be taken into consideration that the main aim of those grammar and public schools was to "transform young boys into gentlemen" and that could be hardly achieved with Catullus' "sexually explicit and morally off-message" (Stead 4).

Times of unprecedented grow in readership came together with the two first and complete translations of Catullus' corpus, those written in 1795 and 1821 by John Nott and George Lamb. The Roman poet's work became "widely available in a standardized from" (Stead 38) and, together with his status of "poet of excess", attracted readers and writers who repudiated the established conservative order (38).

The most representative artistic movement that challenged this established order and used Catullus as a model was Romanticism. In fact, it is worth noticing that Catullus is considered to be the "precursor of the concept of romantic love", as Pérez and Oliva state

(279). His influence is visible in notorious romantics such as Moore, Keats or Byron[6] as in similar 19th century movements like Pre-Raphaelitism.

2. 19th century England

Despite the difficulties for delimiting it, the Victorian Age is usually defined by the long historical period in which Queen Victoria was monarch to one of the largest Empires in history. London, its capital, had become the "pivotal city of Western Civilization", Robson and Christ (979) argue, since some of the Enlightenment ideals represented by France had become obsolete by the 19th century.

Industrialization had changed the British socio-economical system, provoking migration from the rural areas to the big industrial cities where the working classes made their living in factories under miserable conditions. Besides, the scientific discoveries led by the publication of Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* in 1859 weakened the power of religious faith in Britain. However, the strong Christian moral prevailed in many levels of the Victorian society.

This rigid morality in Victorian times generated a rebellious attitude in many young men and women, who looked for new ways of expressing their frustrations, feelings or desires, in an attempt to change the *status quo* of society and, most importantly for us, art. This is especially relevant in the case of women, who "were provided with only limited schooling, subjected to a rigid code of sexual behaviour, and—especially after marriage—were bereft of legal rights" (Lynch and Stillinger 5) during the late 18th and the 19th century. Thus, it is no surprise that some upper class educated women, obviously, took part in those rebellious movements, as the ones we will be analysing here later on.

These movements were mainly Romanticism, during the first half of the 19th century, and Pre-Raphaelitism, during the second half. Tired of following neoclassical patterns such as Alexander Pope's "The Rape of the Lock", the romantics broke with the extremely rational and symmetrical structures of the art produced in the Enlightenment. For that purpose, they emphasised the importance of the "poetic I" expressing the emotions of the individual—Wordsworth, one of the fathers of British literary Romanticism along with

[6] For further in-depth on Catullus' reception on the Romantic era see Stead.

Coleridge, described "all good poetry as, at the moment of composition, 'the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings'" (qtd. in Lynch and Stillinger 9)—, eliminated the fixed and limited neoclassical structures, and tried to escape rationalism by going back to medieval times as well as classical antiquity.

This reinvention of the lyrical genre shared most of its features with a revolutionary group of poets and artists at the beginning of the second half of the century: the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Established in 1848 in London by William Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, the brotherhood questioned the Royal Academy of Arts' established canon, that which followed the models of Raphael by recovering the art previous to him—hence the brotherhood's name. These previous artistic models were those of medieval times or even Antiquity, just like the romantics and because of that, they were accused of being archaic. However, their name also integrates a modernizing element related to the idea of breaking with the current state of art and moving towards new aesthetic tendencies, becoming the "first of the modernist avant-gardes" (Prettejohn 1).

Not only were they against the Royal Academy, but they also felt displeased with the effects of industrialization. Life at the city was deprived of contact with nature; everything was made out of metal and everything that was produced at the factories had utility as its only aim, leaving aside a primordial element for our artists: beauty. Consequently, they went back to nature—either through the Middle Ages or the contemporary English countryside—in order to escape from this unwanted reality which would earn them the label of "escapists". Besides, they saw in the Middle Ages' craftmanship, devoid of machinery and automation, the perfect model to create both beautiful and useful objects—idea that was at the basis of the *Arts and Crafts* movement, created by William Morris.

Despite their efforts to leave their mark on British art history—or perhaps *because* of that—, they were not well received by some critics of the times, mostly due to the unusual sensuality, erotism and overflowing emotions of their creations—similar to those of the romantics. Most notably, Robert Buchanan harshly attacked the brotherhood—especially, Dante Rossetti—in his article "The Fleshly School of Poetry". As an example of these attacks, he accused Dante of writing excessively explicit, "morbid" and "grotesque" sexual—in the most carnal sense—images in his poem "Nuptial Sleep" (34).

2.1 Elizabeth Barret Browning

Elizabeth Barrett Browning was one of the most influential woman writers in the 19th century. Born on the first half of the century (1806-1861), Barrett Browning's life was marked by three main factors: her family issues—especially with his "tyrannically protective father" who forced her to live in "semiseclusion" for most of her life (Christ and Robson 1078), her relationship with her husband Robert Browning—which was a happy and healthy one and put an end to all those years of "ill health" and loneliness (1078)—and the social issues that were going on at those times. The latter two highly influenced her poetry, as we will see later on.

Something that could have also influenced her writing was the contact with the Latin culture, for she moved to Italy with Robert when they married in 1846. There, in Florence, she became involved in the *Risorgimento*, a unionist movement that wanted Italy to become a nation-state. These Italian aspirations inevitably revived the memory of the Roman Empire, a common ancestor to all the Italian territories, and of which ruins, texts and other cultural elements remained alive throughout the peninsula. However, Browning rejected this pagan cultural heritage in favour of her own Christian faith and tradition, as can be seen in her poem "The Dead Pan", in "which she kills pagan gods, in front of a crucified Christ" (González-Rivas 275).

Unlike most women on the 19th century, Elizabeth received an "unusual education for a woman of her time" and read "voraciously in history, philosophy and literature" (Christ and Robson 1078). However, that education, in which classics played a major role, came to an end when her brothers Edward and Sam—with whom she shared lecture hours—left for Charterhouse College (González-Rivas 276). Despite this mishap, she managed to carry on her studies by herself on Latin and especially Greek, a language for whose alphabet's comprehension felt a "delight inexpressible" (271). On the contrary, although she was interested in Rome's history, her "first encounter with Latin at the age of 10 was not a very positive one", as can be seen in a letter she sent to her uncle: "I have begun Latin (…) I do not like it at all, I think it is twice as difficult as French, but I suppose like many stupid things, it is very useful" (Barret Browning qtd. in González-Rivas 271).

It is no surprise to find many allusions to Classical texts in Barrett's poetry. In her poem "The Cry of the Children", in which she displays her strong social commitment to "liberal

causes of her day"[7] by criticising children labour in factories (Christ and Robson 1078), Barret reinterprets some lines from Euripides' tragedy *Medea*[8]. Among others, she also makes reference to the Greek poet Sappho, who had a great influence on her love poems, by translating Achilles Tatius' "Song of the Rose", a poem that was attributed to the female poet.

2.2. Elizabeth Siddal

Elizabeth Eleanor Siddal lived for just 32 years in the mid-19th century (1829-1862). She was born and raised in a lower-middle class family, although her father claimed they were descendants of an aristocratic family in Sheffield (Daly 33). Due to this, her father tried to maintain this wealthy family standards despite their lack of resources, in an attempt to help his children progress in society and raise above their class (33). This was especially true in the education his children received from him, for "Lizzie was taught to read and write at home" together with the good manners that later on, when Lizzie was in her twenties, would make her stand out among all the labouring girls in Leicester Square, where she worked (32).

It was there, at Cranbourne Alley, "a popular hunting ground for men all over London" where her life changed forever (Daly 32). She was discovered while working by a group of artists in search for the perfect muse for their paintings, the previously mentioned Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. When the art critic John Ruskin first saw her, "he felt that her red-gold hair, ethereal coloring, and large, limpid, brooding eyes gave her the look of a figure who had just stepped out of a medieval Florentine fresco" (34). She was, therefore, perfect for the Brotherhood's escapist paintings. Her soon-to-be husband, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, had a similar reaction when he saw her for the first time, as he believed that "his destiny was defined" just like Dante's when he first saw Beatrice (36). However, it took the couple more than 10 years to finally get married, due to Elizabeth's resistance.

[7] Like many of her contemporaries, EBB used "literature as a tool of social protest and reform" (Christ and Robson 1078). In fact, child exploitation was not the only problem she denounced as she also wrote "The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point" to support American abolitionism—slavery in Britain had already been abolished in 1833—or the verse novel *Aurora Leigh* to denounce the woman issue of Victorian times.
[8] "Alas, my children, why do you look at me?" (Euripides qtd. In Christ and Robson 1079).

Despite Rossetti's idealistic attempts to treat 'Lizzie' like a saint, their marriage was not a totally happy one. This was mainly because of Elizabeth's fragile health[9] and Rossetti's numerous infidelities. Fearful of an "unwanted pregnancy and a furtive ceremony to dress it up" that would shame her on such a moral society, Siddal rejected all Rossetti's efforts of having sexual relationships, who ended up "turning to prostitutes for pleasure and relief" (Daly 46). Likewise, Rossetti started sleeping with Annie Miller, William Holman Hunt's fiancée, who allowed him to "sustain the purity of his fantasy, since he no longer had to press Lizzie for sex" (49).

Elizabeth and Dante got married a few years later, the 23rd of Mary 1860. In spite of her health issues, Elizabeth managed to get pregnant one year after their marriage. However, the joy did not last long, as the baby girl the couple was expecting was born dead (Daly 86). Her husband's on and off relationship with Miller got Lizzie on her nerves, and because of her health issues, her doctor had previously prescribed her laudanum, probably to calm the "persistent stomach pains" she suffered since the 1850s (62). Her doctor little knew that by prescribing her laudanum he "had handed her the means of her slow destruction" (63). Elizabeth died of a laudanum overdose on the 11th February 1862.

Despite all the downsides of belonging to the Brotherhood and of her relationship with Rossetti—which led to her early death—, she also took advantage of her position as a muse, through which she had access to the texts written and read by Rossetti and his companions[10], mainly by romantic authors such as "Tennyson, Blake, Keats, Shelley, Browning" (Daly 38). This contact that she had with the Brotherhood allowed her to develop herself as a painter and a poet, drawing her influences from the mentioned romantics and, perhaps, from the classics.

3. Analysis

Having placed Catullus, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Lizzie Siddal in the contexts that were so relevant to them, and also considering the brief yet determining biographical accounts that have been given in order to understand the poems, the following section is

[9] After posing for Millais' *Ophelia* on a bathtub for hours, Elizabeth "ended up with a great cold that was probably pneumonia" (Daly 41) and from that moment onwards, her health was very fragile. For further information on Lizzie Siddal's illness or life see Daly.

[10] This access was mainly by listening to them recite their poetry and that of their favourite authors (Daly 38).

an attempt at analysing the Latin Carmina 7 and 85 as well as the English poems "How Do I Love Thee?" and "Love and Hate".

I have divided them in two groups; 'The honeymoon phase' and 'The disappointment phase', so as to facilitate the understanding of the analysis. This will also let me relate or compare and contrast the poems more easily. However, before moving on to the analysis, it is pertinent to take into account the concept of "Platonic love", as it will have its relevance throughout the poems, especially in the case of Carmen 7 and "How Do I Love Thee?", as they belong to the previously mentioned 'honeymoon phase'.

Plato in his *Phaedrus* makes use of his 'myth of the soul' to explain his idea of love (Gray 35). He states that "originally" all souls "dwelt in heaven with the gods", looking out to what "really is what it is", the "realm of transcendent, unchangeable forms" (Gray 36). Yet all souls "marked by imperfection lost their wings and fell to earth, to be born into mortal beings" (36). For this reason, when our soul recognizes one of those "heavenly forms", "his memory is carried back to the real nature of Beauty" (36). This provokes the sublimation of the soul to this transcendental level. As a consequence, love suffers a kind of divine rapture that provokes madness on the lover. However, this madness may either be 'divine' or 'human'. While the first is beneficial for it makes the soul transcend itself and give the best version of itself, the second has a much more carnal nature that makes the individual get lost while looking for an immediate satisfaction. These two states are the ones that can be found in the 'honeymoon' phase that we are now going to explain.

3.1 The 'honeymoon' phase

The 'honeymoon' phase refers to the first stages of a relationship in which a couple is getting to know each other. Lovers have an idealized image of each other. Happiness is such that everything feels like a dream, everything is perfect, and lovers want to be at each other's company all the time. Now, let us see how it is portrayed in the following poems.

3.1.1. Carmen 7

As previously mentioned, from the 116 poems that comprehend Catullus' corpus, he dedicated 25 to his lover Lesbia, from which Carmina 5[11] and 7—together with the *passer* ones—are probably the most recognizable ones. Although Catullus' corpus is not chronologically in order, what he expresses on them makes us think that these poems—2,3,5,7—belong to a first, sweet stage in his relationship with Lesbia.

Carmen 7[12] is a perfect example of why Catullus is considered a *Neoteric*. By using a hendecasyllabic metre, he followed the example set by Greeks but also made use of his own style by making use of sophisticated, made-up words such as "basiationes". Catullus also makes allusions to different locations, historical figures or ancient times, as we will see later on in the analysis.

This poem is the continuation of probably one of Catullus' most famous love poem *Vivamus mea Lesbia*—or Carmen 5—which is described by Fernández Corte and González as "insuperable in its simplicity" (511). These poems suppose an attempt at fighting "the censorship that threatened love in the traditional Roman society", in which several strict rules had to be obeyed in order to be respected (Fernández Corte and González 511). By presenting the paradox of the calculable—3300—yet incalculable[13] number of kisses in *Vivamus mea Lesbia*, Catullus sets the perfect scenery for Carmen 7, as its theme will also revolve around passion and kisses.

The poem offers a double possibility for its understanding, Fernández Corte and González argue (513). On the one hand, the verb *basiare* (l.9) could be interpreted as a double object verb and be translated something similar to "to (I) give you many kisses"; or on the other hand, *te* could be the subject and *basia* (l.9) the object, the translation resulting in "that you give me many kisses" (513). As we see, this ambiguity changes the line's—and the poem's— meaning completely, for we can either have a virile—according to the Roman standards—Catullus who plays an active role in the relationship, or a more 'feminine' poet who is kissed by Lesbia after she has taken the initiative to kiss her partner (513).

[11] This is the first time that Catullus mentions the name 'Lesbia', not only to evoke Sappho and the beautiful women that lived in Lesbos—about whom Sappho wrote—but also to recall the "longing, the unaccessible desire and the separation of the lovers" (Fernández Corte and González 512)

[12] See Text 1 in Appendix

[13] Catullus reminds us, Fernández Corte and González state, that at those times "happiness was incalculable" and that for this reason Catullus gets confused—on purpose—when counting the number of kisses "in order to avoid envious people's evil eyes" (511).

This ambiguity goes beyond the understanding of the poem and reaches cultural implications, Fernández Corte and González say, for in Ancient Rome "it is indispensable" that the man has to be the one having an active role in the relationship (513,514)[14]. However, there seems to be a major consensus on the issue, as most of the research carried out point to this "second hypothesis" in which Catullus' masculinity is being threatened (514).

In fact, it is no surprise that these poems—in which the Roman poet devotes himself completely to his lover—received much criticism by his coetaneous fellows. Catullus' passivity did not go unseen and was a perfect target from which he defended himself in Carmen 16, in which he would demonstrate his manhood promising to "sodomize and face-fuck, cocksucker Aurelius and bottom bitch Furius"(l.1-2). Now that we have mentioned the poem's background and cultural implications, we shall start shortly analysing it.

Carmen 7 begins with Catullus' answer to his lover's question 'How many kisses are enough?'(l.1-2). From this moment onward, the poem will result in a series of hyperbolic and exaggerated enumerations that will answer Lesbia's question. Although the poet uses a fairly traditional imagery to portray the innumerable and infinite number of kisses Lesbia has to give him, Catullus makes use of his own personal style and adds sophistication to them.

The first image recalls the infinite "Libyan grains of sand/That lie at silphium producing Cyrene"(l.3-4). Catullus moves on to describing the specific location of these grains of sand "Between the oracle of Sultry Jupiter/And the sacred tomb of old Battus"(l.5-6) These lines give us some glimpses of Neoteric poetry. To begin with, these grains of sand lie in a faraway location that, apart from being in a religious territory—the oracle of Sultry Jupiter[15]—,"contain rare medicinal plants that could heal madness[16]" (Fernández Corte and González 514). They also contain the "sacred tomb of Old Battus" (l.6), who not only was father to Callimachus, but also "father of the cult poets" (514).

[14] Despite its strict morality when it came to sex, Roman customs allowed adultery, as long as it "was the husband who committed it"—adultery in the case of women was considered a very serious issue—, as well as homosexuality, only if it was not practised with free youngsters —in fact, it was accepted with young slaves as long as the individual took an active and "virile" part (Blázquez Martínez 280, 295-297).

[15] This allusion to mythology and superstition could be taken as a Neoteric feature.

[16] Obviously this negative madness that needs to be healed refers to the previously mentioned 'human' madness.

The second image refers to the infinite number of stars that "see the secret love affairs of men/when the night is silent" (l.7-8). It is important to note the role of stars here. They are not passive elements inherent to the night, they also take part in the scene by being witnesses of the lovers' signs of love. Finally, there is an allusion to another superstition mentioned previously, that of the 'evil eye' that avoids an exact number of kisses in order for the "inquisitive" (l.11) not to count and therefore "bewitch" (l.12) the lovers.

3.1.2. "How Do I Love Thee?"

Published in *Sonnets from the Portuguese* in 1850, Elizabeth Barrett Brownings' "Sonnet 43"[17]—better known as "How Do I Love Thee?"— is probably one of the most well-known and "celebrated counting" love poems in English literature (Gray 166). It is believed to have been written around 1843, a time in which Elizabeth and her fiancée Robert were still in Britain.

Divided into an octave and a sestet, the poem follows the classical rhyme pattern of a Petrarchan sonnet being its rhyme (abba abba cdcdcd). Just like the lyric poems developed by Dante and Petrarch in the 13 and 14th centuries, there is a slight *volta* or "real thematic shift" between the octave and the sestet—the octave is a list of hyperboles meanwhile the sestet addresses a mature love—, and therefore it could be argued that Browning's poem is a Petrarchan sonnet. For this reason, the iambic pentameter is present throughout the poem and, together with enumeration, gives the poem great musicality. It is worth mentioning the use of anaphors—"I love thee"(l.2,5,7,8,9,11)—and different parallelisms and comparisons—"as men strive for right/as they turn from praise"(l.6,7)—that can be found in the poem.

Just like Catullus' poem, this sonnet begins with the question that names it: "How Do I Love Thee?"(l.1). It is a question addressed to her soon-to-be husband, who will be listener to his wife. We see a very active Elizabeth giving account of the ways she loves her husband, although due to the strict morality of the time, none of them have any kind of sexual implications. In fact, allusions to the Christian religion are present throughout the poem, especially just before what I believe to be the most important lines of the poem: "And if God choose, I shall but love thee better after death"(l.13-14).

[17] See Text 2 in Appendix

She begins the enumeration by saying that her love is such that goes in all dimensions her "soul can reach"—depth, breadth and height (l.2-3). It is crucial to pay attention to the word soul, another element very closely linked to the after death in the Christian religion. We see here that her love transcends reality, it even goes beyond physical barriers such as death. However, she also evokes "the level of every-days" (l.5), a 'cosy' routinely space where they can be happy together. It is a love that runs every day at every moment, "Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light" (l.6), day and night, there is no moment in which she does not love him. Unlike many women of her time, Elizabeth was lucky enough to marry the man she loved, and that can be seen in "I love thee freely" (l.7).

We can also see how the love she feels for her husband is pure, "I love thee purely" (l.8); innocent "and with my childhood's faith" (l.10) yet experienced "I love thee with the breaths/ Smiles, tears of all my life" (l.12-13) The final sestet is probably the deepest one in meaning and the most remarkable one. She not only loves him purely, innocently, but also she is passional about him, she loves him despite the fact she knows what it feels to be heartbroken and hopeless—lines 9-12. The poem closes with a total declaration of intentions: she will love him even better after death. Therefore, we have such a strong and powerful love that apart from transcending dimension, challenges the natural laws.

3.1.3. Differences and similarities

Now that an analysis of the 2 poems has been carried out, we shall compare and contrast them in order to see whether some patterns are repeated.

To begin with, both Catullus' and Barrett Browning's poems have a pretty similar structure (in terms of content rather than form, for one has 12 lines and the other is a sonnet). Both poems present us a question that will be answered throughout the poem by means of enumerations and hyperboles. Although the questions revolve around love, the treatment it receives is essentially different in each of them: whereas Lesbia asks Catullus how many kisses are enough to him, Elizabeth Barrett Browning measures her love by using abstract concepts like feelings or everyday experiences. Catullus presents a far more materialistic and carnal *eros* that can only be satisfied with infinite number of kisses, while Barrett Browning is more concerned with a spiritual kind of love.

These differences may be partly explained through the differences between each author's relationship with their partners. Fernández Corte and González describe Catullus' and

Lesbia's relationship as asymmetrical, since his interest for his mistress is much bigger than hers, and she wants to know the exact number of kisses she has to give him in order to get rid of him (514). This is a reflection of their relationship: a madly in love Catullus and an unfaithful wife whose list of lovers included her own brother (Martínez Blázquez (287-288). On the contrary, Barrett Browning's poem portrays of a mature and healthy relationship in which both participants love and care about each other. Just like his wife, Robert also wrote and dedicated Elizabeth poems such "One Word More", a "great poem of conjugal love" (Kiss 176).

It is also relevant to note how the imagery conveyed in the poems—the representation of day-night cycle—differs from one to another. Whereas in Barrett Browning's poem the images of the "sun and candle-light" indicate a happy, full, public relationship; Catullus' "desert" and "silent" night portray a hidden, tumultuous, empty relationship, not satisfying at all.

Finally, the activity or passivity of the poets should be taken into consideration. As we have seen, Catullus as an author represents himself as a passive object, and Lesbia as the agent of the kissing, while Barrett Browning portrays herself as an active subject and her husband as the receiver of the action of loving. In Barrett Browning's case, because of her context, it is no surprise that the voice of her poems is her own active voice. As in her times, feminism was starting to strengthen, especially after the publication of Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women.* Women started making their way in writing despite their difficulties, and consequently, started to recover the voice that had been denied to them, vindicating and denouncing the silence to which they had been subjugated.

The most prominent example is Christina Rossetti's 'sonnet of sonnets', "Monna Innominata". In her poem, Rossetti describes a love story from the woman's perspective, pointing out at its introduction that muses from the past such as Beatrice or Laura did not have the chance to speak up and show themselves. Thus, this idealized image of the author has prevailed, whereas the woman's perspective has been silenced.

That is why it is surprising to see an active woman passivizing the man in Catullus' poem. However, it is necessary to explain that the active Lesbia of this poem is described by Catullus, not by Lesbia herself. Hence, the woman depiction denounced by Christina repeats again, for regardless of her activity, she will be portrayed from a male perspective.

3.2. The 'disappointment' phase

Once those first beautiful stages of love and high levels of endorphins are over, couples start realizing that what seemed so idyllic and perfect at first, is not real. Many couples cannot overcome the irreconcilable differences—that seemed minuscule in a beginning—and broke up, others may look for a third person. We shall now see what happened to Catullus and Siddal to be part of this phase.

3.2.1. Carmen 85

Carmen 85[18] is probably one of the most famous poems written by Catullus—together with the previously mentioned *bassia* and *passer* poems. It is an elegiac couplet that consists only of 2 lines, a hexameter and a pentameter, yet manages to express sorrow and frustration like no other poem in history.

It is a poem that does not contain any noun, Fernández Corte and González explain, for there are 8 verbs that "denote common actions", equally distributed in the 2 lines and inversely divided (753). This way, *odi et amo* (l.1) correspond to *sentio et excrutior* (l.2), *fieri* (l.2) to *faciam* (l.1) and *requiris* (l.1) to *nescio* (l.2) (753). Just like the previously mentioned Carmen 7, poem 85 also has a question, except it is unknown by whom it is asked. What we do know is that both poems have totally different syntactic movements, for Carmen 85 begins with an assertion and then moves to an interrogation—*Odi et amo.Quare id faciam, fortasse requiris* (l.1)—, then from interrogation to negation—*Nescio* (l.2)—and finally from negation to assertion—*sed fieri sentio et excrutior* (l.2)—(753).

Once those idyllic first stages of the relationship are gone, Catullus now faces the truth. The deep love that blindfolded Catullus and did not allow him to see the reality, has now become a knife sharp enough to hurt him, knowing that Lesbia does not want to be with him. Catullus feels so betrayed by her that writes in his Carmen 58 "that same Lesbia, whom Catullus loved […] now loiters at the cross-roads and in the backstreets/ ready to toss-off the grandsons of the brave Remo" (l.2,5-6). Not only he calls her a prostitute, but also literally describes her in Carmen 72 as "less substantial and insignificant" (l.10). But it is not him the one speaking, it is the rancour and the pain the she has caused him.

[18] See Text 3 in Appendix.

Actually, although he states that he no longer loves her, the fact that he continues writing poems about her makes us think that it is just an excuse he tells himself. If we followed Catullus' logical thinking of Carmen 83[19], we would get to the conclusion that Catullus has not moved on, though he claims to have done so.

It should also be taken into consideration that when making an enumeration, we tend to locate the most important elements or the ones that we want to remember at the end of it. That is the reason why, Elizabeth Barrett Browning says, "I shall but love thee better after death", because above all she wants her husband to know that her love for him will transcend physical barriers. Therefore, Catullus does not hate Lesbia; in fact, he is still deeply in love with her. What he hates is the enormous amount of pain Lesbia has caused him by leaving him. The pain is so horrendous for him that it is compared to being crucified—that is the reason why Catullus uses the word *excrutior*. Catullus may say that his mistress is a prostitute or insignificant, but nonetheless, the love he feels for Lesbia prevails hate.

3.2.2. "Love and Hate"

"Love and Hate"[20] is a poem that Lizzie Siddal presumably wrote for her husband Dante Gabriel Rossetti during a tumultuous period in their relationship. The exact year in which the poem was written remains uncertain, as her poems were collected shortly after her death by William Michael Rossetti—her brother-in-law—although it is believed to have been written few years before Siddal's death. It would not be a surprise to think that Lizzie wrote this when she discovered Rossetti's infidelity. In fact, she is also believed to have written "The Lust of the Eyes", whose first two lines go "I care not for my Lady's soul/Though I worship before her smile", when she realized Dante Gabriel Rossetti had slept with Annie Miller.

The poem is a ballad, one of the most classical patterns in the English metre. It is therefore divided in 5 stanzas of 4 lines and follows the following rhyme scheme: abab abcb abcb abcb abab. Although the poem follows the typical ballad form that alternates the iambic tetrameter and trimetre, there are some instances in which the rhythm is altered for poetic

[19] A proud Catullus states "Lesbia in her husband's presence says the utmost ill about me […] If she had forgotten about us and were silent, she would be all right: now because she snarls and scolds, not only does she remember, but, […] she is angry" (l.1,3-5,6)
[20] See Text 4 in Appendix

purposes—there are instances of trochees where Siddal makes a few commands. She also makes use of parallelisms on the first lines of the first three stanzas—"Ope not thy lips thou foolish one" (l.1), "Take thou thy shadow from my path" (l.5) or "Lift up thy false brow from the dust" (l.9)—, as well as anaphors just after the previously mentioned parallelisms—"Nor turn to me thy face" (l.2) "Nor turn to me and pray" (l.6). Other stylistic devices such as hyperboles—"The blasts of heaven shall strike me down" (l.3)—or alliteration—"the wild wild winds" (l.7)—are also present in the poem.

Following her Pre-Raphaelite companions' interest in nature, Siddal uses a very natural imagery to convey her message: she bears great hate, bitterness and anger to the person she used to love the most. She would rather be struck by thunder and lightning than forgiving her partner for his treason; or rather listen to this mournful melody produced by the wind than asking him to stay. She also compares him with a "poisonous tree" (l.19) that "stole [her] life away" (l.20), that is, he and his infidelities are the reason why her life is falling apart[21]. Just like in Barrett Browning's poem, there are a few allusions to Christianity such as "blasts of heaven" (l.3) or "pray" (l.6,18) . However, these references do not play a major role in the poem and are not as indispensable Browning's ones, so in a way it could be said that Barrett Browning was more devote than Siddal.

As mentioned at the end of the previous section, the order in which elements are displayed makes a difference in the meaning. In this case, the element that prevails in the title is the word "hate". Lizzie only seems to feel resentment and hate for that person that has arguably betrayed her. The pain is such that she hardly believes she can forgive Dante Gabriel Rossetti, for he "stole [her] life away".

3.2.3. Similarities and differences

We have seen how these two different, yet similar poems revolve around the same idea, that of a frustrated love and the indifference or hate towards a person previously loved. In a way, both poems are perfect examples that show that there is a thin line between love and hate. Besides, the poems' titles are very much alike, for they only differ in the order of the elements—Love and Hate and *Odi et amo.*

[21] This is not the first time in which Dante Gabriel Rossetti is compared to "a poisonous tree" that is able to take lives away. His own sister, Christina Rossetti, defined him as a kind of 'emotional vampire' by describing in her poem "In an Artist's Studio" how "he feeds upon her fase by day and night" (l.9).

Whereas Siddal needs the space that a ballad can provide her, Catullus manages to convey more information in less space —in just 2 lines and no nouns—. Simplicity and subtleness at its maximum splendour. Though both poems give account of a love triangle, probably the main difference that lies between them would be to whom the poets are writing to, and what kind of role they are playing.

In "*Odi et amo"* Catullus is referring to his love-hate relationship with Lesbia, an aristocratic married woman with whom he had a turbulent affair. After being criticised for not being virile enough, once his relationship with Lesbia is over Catullus' takes a more active role. On the contrary, on Siddal's "Love and Hate" we find a married woman who has presumably been betrayed by her husband's infidelity and now feels furious. Not happy with the role she has been assigned by the society—that of the perfect, devoted and unselfish wife who should forgive her partner's actions—Siddal stands up for herself and expresses the hate she bears to Dante Gabriel Rossetti after his treason.

4. Conclusion

As we have seen at the beginning of the paper, we cannot fully determine the influence Catullus may have had on Siddal and Barrett Browning, but we can definitely draw relations among their writings. For example, the Roman poet and Barrett Browning use very similar structures to convey similar meanings in their respective poems. The repetition of the rhetorical questions at the beginning to set the topic of the poem, together with the 'counting' structures that they use may point to Browning's knowledge of Catullus' lines.

A second prominent element that we can relate among the poems is the expression and treatment of love. On the one hand, in Catullus' "Carmen 7" we have a very passional love, while Elizabeth Barrett Browning presents a much more spiritual, pure love that perhaps could have been shaped by the strict Christian moralism of her time. On the other hand, Lizzie Siddal writes about a hurtful and resentful relationship that arguably is over, whereas Catullus presents us the incoherencies of love, the paradox of loving and hating at the same time. Being this the difference, Siddal remarks it in her title—"Love and Hate"—with a possible reference to Catullus' poem—*Odi et amo*—just changing the order of the words, placing the 'hate' in the prominent final position.

A third important element that should also be noted is that, just like Lesbia—who rebelled against the traditional Roman society by not fully fulfilling her faithful-wife role—, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Lizzie Siddal also questioned women's role in a society that was mainly ruled by men, by having an active attitude and a voice.

Closely related to the prior point is the education to which Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Lizzie Siddal had access during the 19th century. In the case of Barrett Browning, for she had direct contact with classical authors since an early age—she knew Sappho—, it could be the case that she had read Catullus. Lizzie Siddal, on the contrary, started having more contact with the classics due to her encounters in Pre-Raphaelite meetings, where authors such as Keats—highly influenced by Catullus—were read aloud; therefore, she could have received an indirect Catullian influence.

In conclusion, we have found some relations that could be symptomatic of some degree of influence, whether direct or indirectly, of Catullus on the Victorian poets. However, there is still a lot of space to carry out further research. If we can explain better Catullus' transmission and reception, we may more certainly discover authors who ere influenced by him which would lead us to a deeper understanding of those authors.

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Appendix

Text 1: Carmen 7 by Gaius Valerius Catullus

You ask, my Lesbia, how many of your kisses

Are enough and more than enough for me.

As big as a number as the Libyan grains of sand

That lie at silphium producing Cyrene

Between the oracle of Sultry Jupiter

And the sacred tomb of old Battus;

Or as many stars that see the secret love affairs of men,

When the night is silent.

So many kisses are enough

And more than enough for mad Catullus to kiss you,

These kisses which neither the inquisitive are able to count

Nor an evil tongue bewitch.

Quaeris, quot mihi basiationes

Tuae, Lesbia, sint satis superque.

Quam magbusgnus numerus Libyssae harenae

Lasarpiciferis iacet Cyrenis

Oraculum Iouis inter aestuosi

Et Bati ueteris sacrum sepulcrum;

Aut quam sidera multa, cum tacet nox,

Furtios hominum uident amores:

Tan te basia multa basiare

Uesano satis et super Catullo est,

Quae nec pernumerare curiosi

Possient nec mala fascinare lingua.

Text 2: Sonnet 43 by Elizabeth Barrett Browning

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways

I love thee to the depth and breadth and height

My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight

For the ends of being an ideal grace.

I love thee to the level of every day's

Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.

I love thee freely, as men strive for right.

I love thee purely, as they turn from praise.

I love thee with the passion put to use

In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.

I love thee with a love I seemed to lose

With my lost saints. I love thee with the breath,

Smiles, tears, of all my life: and, if God choose,

I shall but love thee better after death.

Text 3: Carmen 85 by Gaius Valerius Catullus

Odi et amo. Quare id faciam, fortasse requiris.

Nescio, sed fiere sentio et excrutior.

I hate and I love. Why I do this perhaps you ask.

I do not know, but I sense that it happens and I am tortured.

Text 4: Love and Hate by Elizabeth Siddal

Ope not thy lips, thou foolish one,

Nor turn to me thy face:

The blasts of heaven shall strike me down

Ere I will give thee grace.

Take thou thy shadow from my path,

Nor turn to me and pray:

The wild, wild winds thy dirge may sing

Ere I will bid thee stay.

Lift up thy false brow from the dust,

Nor wild thine hands entwine

Among the golden summer-leaves

To mock the gay sunshine.

And turn away thy false dark eyes,

Nor gaze into my face:

Great love I bore the; now great hate

Sits grimly in its place.

All changes pass me like a dream,

I neither sing nor pray;

And thou art like the poisonous tree

That stole my life away.