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The feminine world of the epyllion

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INTRODUCTION

The Feminine World of the Epyllion

Although it has been suggested that the term "epyllion" was not used by ancient poets and scholars to designate the genre to which we now apply it,¹ the word is useful in describing a particular species of short epic. Like the traditional epic, the epyllion is a hexameter poem narrating a story based in mythology. The most obvious distinguishing feature of the epyllion is its length, which rarely exceeds 400 lines. The genre is also chiefly distinguishable from the traditional epic in the main characters whom it features. All extant examples of the epyllion feature characters who

¹ There have been attempts to discredit the term "epyllion" as describing a specific genre. In 1940, W. Allen ("The Epyllion: A Study in the History of Literary Criticism," TAPA 71 [1940] 1-26) condemned the continuing use of the term by modern scholars to denote a specific poetic genre as used by particular ancient poets. Allen's reasons for this condemnation were twofold. Firstly, he used the history of the term to demonstrate that, to the ancients, no such genre actually existed. The use of the word epyllion by ancient authors is limited to only six instances, all of which seem to indicate merely small poems. Nor is any relation to epic itself indicated, although Athenaeus does apply the word to an epic poem, Epichlides, which he says was ascribed to Homer. But according to Allen, since the ancient scholars did not apply the term to any specific genre, the specific genre to which modern scholars apply it cannot exist. Allen's second reason for rejecting the term is that no two scholars can agree on the qualities which combine to define the genre.
are, in some sense, anti-heroic. While epyllia featuring traditional heroes are possible, when these heroes appear in epyllia they are portrayed in some less than heroic, almost idiotic and bumbling fashion. Other authors of epyllia, in their apparent search for anti-heroic heroes, have adopted women as their main characters. It is upon these epyllia, in particular, that my study will focus.

Several scholars\(^2\) have considered narratives inserted into larger poems, such as certain episodes from Vergil's poems, to be epyllia in their own right. The Aristaeus episode from the fourth Georgic and Dido's story from Aeneid 4 are the passages most often cited in this context, although the adventures of Nisus and Euryalus in Aeneid 9 have also been considered in this way.\(^3\) Although Vergil certainly adapted some of the techniques of the epyllion within his longer poems, it is not feasible to consider such inset stories as epyllia. In order for the epyllion to be considered a genre in its own right, it must be limited to independent, "free-standing" poems only. Thus such narratives as these of Vergil's, and those which comprise Ovid's Metamorphoses, are not considered epyllia for the purposes of

\(^2\) These include Crump (178-96) and W.W. Briggs ("Virgil and the Hellenistic Epic," ANRW II.31.2 [1981] 948-84).

\(^3\) This is suggested by C.W. Mendell ("The Influence of the Epyllion on the Aeneid," YCS 12 [1951] 216-8) and by Barbara Pavlock (Eros, Imitation and the Epic Tradition [Ithaca, 1990] 71).
this study. Only independent epyllia are here considered as examples of the genre.

Based on the evidence from the examples which I shall examine, I shall argue that it is in the epyllion that the female characters of mythology take over the action from their male counterparts, who were the central characters in epic action. This pre-eminence of female characters is the most notable trait of the epyllion, differentiating it from other genres in which women cannot claim such a prominent role.

As typical examples of the epyllion, I will examine three poems in some detail. From the earliest stage of the genre's tradition, I shall examine Theocritus' 24th Idyll, commonly called the *Heracliscus*. Moschus' *Europa* is then studied as an example of an intermediate stage in the genre's development.

The epyllion as a genre reaches its culmination in the most complex extant example of the epyllion, Catullus' 64th poem. A study of this poem and its place in the traditions of the epyllion constitutes the final chapter of this work.

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4 Allen (1 in. 1) also agrees that chosen episodes from longer poems cannot themselves be regarded as independent epyllia.

5 For a discussion of the scholarship on the epyllion, and the various definitions thus generated, please see Appendix B, below.

6 A.S.F. Gow, in the apparatus criticus to his text of the poem (Bucolici Graeci, Oxford, 1952), notes that this title does appear in a number of the papyrus versions of the poem.
Examples illustrating the intermediate stages in the epyllion's development, slightly before Catullus' effort, are scarce, and largely confined to the Appendix Vergiliana. Of these, I have chosen to examine the Ciris, as it is the only poem of the group which is concerned with the mythological world, in which epyllia are commonly set. Because of the problems attached to this poem, and to the later developments in the epyllion in general, I have relegated my examination of this poem, and of the Latin epyllion, to an appendix at the end of my study.

The position and effectiveness of female characters in the epyllion, and the ways in which these characters appropriate heroic roles in the genre, are given especial consideration in the following study. Following upon this, I include the concentration of the authors of epyllia upon the domestic settings in which women can be most effective. As well, I will examine the dominance of female characters in two of the most prominent components of the epyllion in all of its stages of development, the secondary narrative, in which other characters and stories temporarily appropriate the poem, and the prophecy, in which the sequels to the poem's action are revealed.

The Heroine as Hero

As mentioned, it is in the position and effectiveness of women that the epyllion differs most from the traditional
epic. In the epyllion, the female characters are firmly set in the centre of the action. In those epyllia featuring traditional heroes (such as Theocritus' two epyllia featuring Heracles), these heroes' stories are told from the viewpoint of the women in the heroes' lives. More commonly, however, the women take the heroic role themselves, becoming the centre of attention. Homer did, of course, include women in his epics, some of them very prominently. But these women are actually all in supporting roles, acting peripherally to the male world of action and adventure. Thus although Helen is, naturally, an important figure in the Iliad, as the original cause of the war, she is personally relegated to the edges of the action. Priam will not even allow Helen the blame for causing the war.7 In her main scenes, Helen is seen weaving or providing a domestic background for Paris.9 And although she is the prize offered for the duel between Menelaus and Paris,10 Helen is really of little more importance to the fighting itself than Briseis is to the parallel conflict within the Greek camp.11 The other mortal women who figure

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7 *Iliad* 3.164: οὐ τι μοι αἰτίη ἔσσι, θεοί νῦ μοι αἰτιοί εἰσιν.

8 *Iliad* 3.125-6.

9 *Iliad* 3.380sq, 6.342sq.

10 *Iliad* 3.136-8.

11 C.R.Beye ("Male and Female in the Homeric Poems," *Ramus* 3 [1974] 87-101) identifies the prevalent view of women in the *Iliad* as "the notion of woman as object and possession."
most prominently in the *Iliad*, Andromache and Hecuba, are also important chiefly as adjuncts to Hector, and are especially featured as mourners for him at the end of the epic. Only once are the women of Troy asked to take some action in an attempt to affect their own lives and destinies, when Hector asks them to try to appease Athena and ask her help for the Trojan cause. The important characters in the epic, the male warriors, turn to the women only for a gesture of desperation, a gesture which is already doomed to failure: ἀνέυ δὲ Πάλλας Ἀθήνη (6.311).

Even the goddesses in the *Iliad* are given roles in the epic which are secondary to the male divinities, and especially to Zeus. However much the goddesses might interfere in the war, they are controlled by the power of Zeus and their fear of him.14 Both the goddesses and the mortal women in the *Iliad* really act ineffectually on the margins of the epic, and could be dismissed from this poem of war much as

12 *Iliad* 24.723sq.
14 Zeus' power and absolute control over the female deities are especially clear in his threats to Hera and his reminders to her of other times when she has attempted to defy him:

> ή οὐ μέμνη δ' εἰκρᾶμι ὑψόθεν, ἐκ δὲ ποδοίν ἄκμονες ἥ ή κα δώ, περί χεραί δ' δεσμῶν ἴγνα χρύσεον ἄρρηκτον; οὐ δ' ἐν αἰθέρι καὶ νεφέλησιν ἐκρέμω
> 15.18-21

Although Hera does lull Zeus into inattention at a critical time, it is worth noting that she must resort to tricks and seduction in order to influence events as she wishes, and is quick to lay the blame for the whole episode onto Poseidon (15.41sq) in order to escape Zeus' wrath.
Aphrodite is dismissed by Zeus: δυ τοι, τέκνον ἐμών, δέδοται πολεμησι ἔργα, ἄλλα σὺ γ’ιμερόεντα μετέρχεο ἔργα γάμοιο.15

Even in the Odyssey, where women play far larger roles than in the Iliad, their acts are always played out on the sidelines of the story, and are initially included in the epic because of their involvement with the adventures of the main heroes, Odysseus and Telemachus.16 Thus Nausicaa’s adventures17 are included initially because they contribute to Odysseus’ journey, although their meeting develops into her own coming-of-age adventure, as well. Even Penelope, who suffers so much while awaiting Odysseus’ return, is denied any great effective presence in his house.18 From the beginning of the epic she is dismissed from discussions and gatherings by her son Telemachus, and relegated to a very narrow sphere of influence.19 To the end of the epic, Telemachus continues

15 Iliad 5.428-9.

16 Beye ("Male and Female" 87) notes that the Odyssey operates with "the notion of woman as a needed and feared figure."

17 Odyssey 6.


19 Odyssey 1.356-9:

άλλ’εις οίκον ἰοῦσα τὰ σαύτης ἔργα κόμιζε,
ιστόν τ’ήλιακάτην τε καὶ ἀμφιπόλοισί κέλεθε
ἔργον ἐποίχεσθαι. μύθος ἐ’ἀνδρεσσι μελῆσε
πάσι, μάλιστα δ’ἐμοί. τοῦ γὰρ κράτος ἐστ’ἔνι οίκῳ
to silence his mother and prevent her participation in the affairs of her household. Penelope's only real attempt to influence the events of her life, her weaving trick, is carried out in secret and by night, eventually betrayed by another woman and stopped through the use of force by the men whose actions control her entire life.

Arete, the queen of the Phaeacians, could be offered as an example of a woman who thoroughly controls her household, as is made clear throughout the Phaeacian episode of the Odyssey. Nausicaa has no illusions about where the power really lies in her home, as she advises Odysseus to bypass Alkinoos entirely, and address Arete instead. Odysseus makes his first approach and request for help:

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20 At Odyssey 21.350-3, Telemachus again dismisses Penelope from the discussion of the contest of the bow with almost the same words as in his rebuke. As C. Heilbrun ("What is Penelope Unweaving?" in Hamlet's Mother and Other Women [New York, 1990] 106) notes, the contest here being discussed was actually Penelope's own idea. Even when the suggested plan of action originated with her, the Homeric woman can confidently expect to be dismissed from important affairs.

21 Odyssey 2.88-110.

22 Odyssey 2.105: νύκτας τ' ἀλλύεσκεν, ἔπει δαίδας παραθεῖτο.

23 Odyssey 2.108: καὶ τότε δὴ τις ἐείπε γυναίκων, ἡ σάφα ἡ δὴ.

24 Odyssey 2.110: ώς τὸ μὲν ἐξετέλεσε καὶ οὐκ ἔθελον οἰπ' ἀνάγκης.
Arete is also the first to question Odysseus about his identity and origins (τοίςιν δ’ Ἀρήτῃ λευκώλενος ἄρχετο μύθων, 7.233), while Alkinoos is occupied with planning the celebrations to come. It is clear that it is Arete who truly holds the power in her own house.

The land of the Phaeacians, however, and their customs, cannot be taken as examples of the normal situation and position of women in the heroic world. The Phaeacians are rather isolated from the rest of the world, and they certainly did not participate in the Trojan War, which otherwise seems to have been a true World War. This particular kingdom seems almost a reversal of the normal state of affairs in the world to which Odysseus is accustomed, and to which he is trying to return. Certainly Alkinoos’ statement of the attributes of his people could sound strange, when compared to “normal” heroic values and pastimes:

οὐ γὰρ πυγμάχοι εἴμεν ἀμύνονες οὐδὲ παλαισταί, ἀλλὰ ποσὶ κρατινῶς θέομεν και νησίν ἄριστοι, αἱεὶ δ’ ἡμῖν δαίς τε φίλη κιθαρίς τε χοροὶ τε εἴματα τ’ εξημοιβὰ λοετρὰ τε θερμὰ καὶ εὔναι 8.246-9

The Phaeacians constitute almost a counter-heroic society, presenting the opposite extreme of behaviour to the heroic and epic exploits of the heroes at Troy. Since they themselves are so estranged from "normal" society, it should not be surprising to find that their women also enjoy an unusually
prominent position. The episode of the Phaeacians seems to present the opposite extreme to the traditional heroic situation with regard to the status of women, and may be included to prepare Odysseus for his final encounter with Penelope, who has had, for some of her years alone, rather more control of events in her household than is normal for Homeric women.

The goddesses in the *Odyssey* are as much under the control of the more powerful male deities as those of the *Iliad*. Although Athena is the patron of both Odysseus and Telemachus, and sponsor of their successes, she is easily thwarted by Poseidon,25 and, like Thetis, must ask Zeus' help for her favourite.26 Even in the second half of the *Odyssey*, wheb Athena seems to control entirely the events of the epic, she still is given a lesser status than is possible for a divinity in her situation. For rather than simply controlling events from afar, Athena is obliged to actually participate in the events and the slaughters with her mortal favourites. The highest form of divine interference, for the god involved, is for this god to direct events from afar through selected agents. Athena does not seem to have this property in the later books of the *Odyssey*. Whether mortal or divine, the women in Homeric epic are peripheral and,

25  *Odyssey* 1.19sq, 68sq.
26  *Odyssey* 1.48sq.
essentially, ineffectual characters, subject to the control of their male counterparts.

I do not intend to suggest that all of the female characters in the *Odyssey* are portrayed as mere cyphers in the male world of the epic. Certainly such characters as Circe and Calypso are far more effective than such cyphers could ever be. They are, in fact, given considerable status and effectiveness as obstacles in Odysseus' homeward journey. These active female characters, however, are not as powerful as they could be, and are eventually thwarted in their endeavours by a combination of male gods and characters. It is in this lack of thorough control over their affairs, and efficacy in their endeavours, that the women in epic differ from the women in epyllion, who are able to become effective and powerful agents of their own destiny. In addition to this, is it apparent that, in the epyllion, the women's destinies are the matters of concern, and this, too, is a major contrast with traditional epic.

**The Domestic Setting**

In the earlier versions of the epyllion, such as those by Theocritus and Moschus, the authors' focus on female characters resulted in a focus on the domestic sphere, the homestead and the city, as areas where women are normally active. This setting was made manifest in the presentation of specific details about the domestic lives of the characters,
especially those details pertaining to eating and sleeping arrangements within the house. These earlier epyllia were essentially domestic stories of homes and families, and of women managing the lives of these homes and families. This concentration upon women and the limiting of the setting of the epyllion to spheres where women traditionally functioned resulted in a subversion of heroic ideals as they were displayed in traditional epic. Many traditions of the heroic world are parodied or made subservient to the needs and realities of the feminine, domestic setting of the epyllion. These aspects of the epyllion are especially examined in the present study in the context of Theocritus' Idyll 24, the Heracliscus.

This focus upon domestic lives is one of the traits which is transformed somewhat through the development of the genre. In a later stage of the genre's development, it seems that these central female characters move out from their original domestic settings, and set off in search of their own adventures. They become far more like the male heroes of epic adventures, abandoning their original domestic setting for excitement and adventure. But these adventures do end in a return to a somewhat transformed domestic setting. As an example of the type of epyllion featuring these more active and adventurous women, Moschus' Europa is examined in chapter two of this study.
Although very little evidence remains about the later, Latin stages of the epyllion's development, some inferences regarding the women featured in these epyllia can be drawn from the scant evidence which does exist. The poets who wrote the later epyllia seem far less concerned with the minute details of their characters' lives. Indeed, the civic and domestic settings are themselves of far less positive moment than in the earlier epyllia. In the later poems, the home background and the city of origin of the heroine seem to be introduced only so that they may be destroyed. The epyllion's world has become suddenly dangerous and dark.27

This destruction, in the epyllion, is often brought about by the heroines themselves, especially in the latest examples of the genre. While these poems still focus on female characters, as did the earlier, these later women are far more dangerous and frightening than their earlier counterparts. These later heroines are apt to become insane, and to be driven to this extreme by an erotic fascination. Driven mad by love, the heroines of the later epyllia take on themselves the responsibility for the destruction, rather than the preservation and protection, of their homes and families.

The evidence does indicate that the Latin epyllia focussed on such women and their adventures. Of the four

27 The destruction of homes and cities signals a return on the part of the poets who wrote epyllia to some of the concerns of the traditional epic, in which the destruction of civilisation and society was often an important concern.
extant titles of lost Latin epyllia, at least two, Licinius Calvus' Io and the Zmyrna of Helvius Cinna, clearly indicate that the narrative featured a female character. Q. Cornificius' Glaucus, although the title is a man's name, could also have focussed as much upon Scylla as upon Glaucus himself. Ovid's version of Glaucus' transformation (Metamorphoses 13.920sqq) demonstrates the importance that Scylla could have in a story telling of Glaucus' transformation into a sea-god. In an epyllion, it would be quite acceptable for a hero's story to be told thus, through a concentration on the women associated with him.

Valerius Cato's Dictynna, too, probably focussed upon a heroine rather than a well-known hero. It has also been suggested that Cato's poem told the same story of Britomartis, her pursuit by Minos and her dive from the cliff that Carme narrates as a digression in the Ciris. This idea may be tempting, but no evidence supporting it has yet appeared.

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28 This is not to suggest that Ovid's version of Glaucus' transformation is taken from Cornificius'. I am merely pointing out the potential for a feminine focus in Cornificius' epyllion.

The stories which Parthenius\textsuperscript{30} collected and recommended as suitable for epyllia also indicate an interest in female main characters. A random sampling of Parthenius' collection gives us the stories of Polymela\textsuperscript{31} and Evippe, and their respective seductions by Odysseus (EP 2 and 3), Oenone’s abandonment by Paris (EP 4), Pallene’s passion for Clitus (EP 8) and so on through the collection to the final story of Arganthone the huntress (EP 38). Some of these stories could be seen as relating only some little known incidents in the careers of major heroes, or telling these heroes’ stories through the women connected with them. But in the versions which Parthenius offers, the famous hero passes very soon from the story, leaving the woman alone at the centre.

\textsuperscript{30} Parthenius was apparently a major influence in the development of neoteric poetry, and of particular importance in the development of the epyllion from its Hellenistic form to its eventual Latin configuration. W. Clausen ("Callimachus and Latin Poetry," \textit{GRBS} 5 [1964] 181-96) thinks it odd that, prior to his own time of writing, so few scholars had accorded Parthenius the attention which he seemed to deserve for his contributions to Latin poetry. Although he was himself a poet, Parthenius is of particular interest in the present context for the influence he had upon the development of the epyllion. His only extant work, the 'Ερωτικα Παθηματα, was originally intended as a source of stories for the Latin authors of epyllia to turn into poetry, as his dedication of the work to Cornelius Gallus indicates: αὐτῷ τέ σοι παρέστι εἰς ἐπη καὶ ἐλεγείας ἀνάγειν τὰ μάλιστα ἐξ αὐτῶν ἀρμόδια.

\textsuperscript{31} Parthenius cites the Hermes of Philetas (circa 300 B.C.) as the source for the story of Polymela. M.M. Crump (\textit{The Epyllion from Theocritus to Ovid} [Oxford, 1931] 25-8) ponders the possibility of this Hermes having been the first of the epyllia, with Polymela's adventures narrated in a digression. Based on a variety of criteria, Crump eventually rejects this notion.
Yet another possible witness to the importance of female characters in the Latin epyllion could be found in Vergil's sixth Eclogue, in which Vergil enumerates a number of stories included in the song of the captured Silenus. The stories included in Silenus' song are prime material for the later style of epyllion, focussing as they do on mad, destructive love struck characters and their actions. And with the exception of Hylas' abduction, every one of the post creation stories which Silenus sings features a woman as the main character. It is interesting, in this light, that Silenus sings of the stones from which Pyrrha repopulates the earth (41), but does not mention Deucalion; that he sings of Phaethon's sisters and their reaction to his fall (62-3) but not of Phaethon himself or his actual disaster; and that he

32 F. Skutsch (Aus Vergils Fruhzeit [Leipzig, 1902] 28-49 and Gallus und Vergil [Leipzig, 1906] 128-45) believes that Silenus' song actually comprises a catalogue of epyllia, probably written by Gallus. This seems rather unlikely. Even if Gallus did not spend nine years on each epyllion, as Cinna is reputed to have done (according to Catullus, in poem 95), it does not seem possible that one poet, no matter how prolific, could have had time or energy enough to write epyllia including all of these stories. A.Thill ("Virgile auteur ou modele de la Ciris?" REL 53 [1975] 118) writes that "les sujets mythologiques evoques par Virgile sont beaucoup trop nombreux pour qu'un seul poete les ait traites dans un serie d'epyllia." Thill also cites Cinna's nine-year bout with the Zmyrna.


34 It is interesting that Vergil included Hylas' abduction in a poem in which Gallus as poet figures so prominently. We might recall Propertius' version of Hylas' story in elegy 1.20, which he addresses to Gallus (as Theocritus addressed his version to Nicias).
mentions Atalanta and her race (61) but not the hero who defeats her. Silenus' song also includes Scylla Nisi (74-7), but alludes to a different version of the story than that which the Ciris relates. Pasiphae's perversion, which is accorded more attention than any other story (45-55), recalls the stories involving women and cattle, which seem to have so interested the writers of epyllia.35 In all of these stories, as in the epyllia in general, it is the women who occupy the reader's attention in the narrative.

The Prophecy

In the earlier examples of the epyllion, a prophecy generally plays a very important role in the life of the heroine, and always foretells good fortune for her, as in other genres male heroes generally consulted oracles and sooth-sayers. Thus such heroines as Theocritus' Alcmena, when they are shown as receiving reliable prophecies from more than usually dependable sources, are again given the roles of heroes, hitherto reserved almost exclusively for male characters.

Although the epyllion essentially focuses upon one specific event in the heroine's career, it also ends with a look forward into her future life, highlighting her compliance

35 One thinks, naturally, of Moschus' Europa with its digression on Io, and of Calvus' Io. Servius says that line 47 of Eclogue 6, a virgo infelix, was actually taken from Calvus' Io.
with the appropriate roles prescribed for women, as wives and mothers. This prophecy always comes from an unimpeachably reliable source, so that both the characters and the reader can confidently accept the heroine’s good fortune as guaranteed in perpetuity.

The unfortunate heroines of the epyllion in its later stages are denied the comfort of such prophesied good fortune. Rather, the poems in which they are featured end abruptly, leaving the heroine trapped in the midst of her desperate adventure with no hope of better things to come. These heroines have already done violence to their appropriate spheres, and no prophet is needed to reveal their sufferings for their sins.

The Inset Tale

One of the most telling features of the epyllion in all of its incarnations is the presence of a secondary story included in the context of the main narrative. An essential characteristic of this secondary story is that it features a main character other than the one featured in the principal narrative. This inset tale, or digression, is always firmly linked with the main narrative, and has a number of elements in common with it. The two may have some characters in common, as in the *Ciris*, or some common themes linking the two stories, as in Theocritus 24. It is also possible for the inset tale to tell a story essentially similar to that
featured in the framing narrative with different characters, as a way of foreshadowing the events still to come in the original story. This is the case in Moschus' Europa. All of these inset stories, like the main narratives of the epyllia, focus upon female characters, with male heroes and gods acting on the sidelines of the story.

The methods of integrating this secondary story into the poem are various. One common method is through ecphrasis, a description of some artwork connected with the characters of the main narrative and their lives. This secondary tale can also be introduced through a story told by one of the main characters, or through a prophecy given to one of them.

Like the epyllion itself, this use of the inset tale in such a poem reaches its zenith in Catullus' 64th poem. In this poem, the inset story expands beyond all known limits to take on life as an epyllion in its own right. The original, framing narrative, that of the marriage of Peleus and Thetis, seems to follow the original pattern of the genre and feature a woman chiefly concerned with the preservation of home, family and children. The internal story, Ariadne's abandonment, features a woman who sets out in search of her own adventures, and ends up destroying her own home and family, and those of Theseus as well.

In this inset tale, the heroine is given extraordinary destructive powers, which few women have enjoyed in any genre other than the epyllion. These powers, for good or evil,
which are given to the female characters, are the real mark of the epyllion in all of its manifestations.
CHAPTER I

THEOCRITUS, Idyll 24

Theocritus' 24th Idyll is among the best of the examples of the early epyllion, and demonstrates well both the importance and the limitations of women in the genre. It is clear that the hero of the poem is either Alcmena, a domestically based woman and mother of two infants, or Heracles, who is an infant at the beginning of the poem and no more than a youth when it closes. The poet's inclusion of Heracles in many of the scenes of the poem, in activities so alien from normal heroic pursuits, has been taken, along with the usual title, Heracliscus, appended to the poem, to create the impression that the epyllion is about Heracles in separate stages of his life, leading up to his apotheosis. This has

1 The text used for this study is that of A.S.F. Gow (Bucolici Graeci [Oxford, 1952]).

2 Others of Theocritus' poems have also been considered epyllia, and studied as such by K. Gutzwiller (Studies in the Hellenistic Epyllion: Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie 114 [1981]), who included Idylls 13 and 25 in her study of Hellenistic epyllia.

There is some doubt regarding the authorship of Idyll 25. Gow (Theocritus: text and commentary [Cambridge, 1950] vol. 2, 439) notes that the ascription of the poem to Theocritus rests solely on the heading given it in one group of manuscripts. Scholars who reject the Theocritean authorship of the poem include G. Perrotta ("Studi di poesia ellenistica," RFIC 4 [1926] 50-68, 85-280) and G. Serrao (Il carme XXV del corpus teocriteo [Rome, 1962]).
caused some scholars to be troubled by the apparent tripartite and episodic structure of the poem. Gutzwiller, in particular, seems to view the poem as readily divisible, since in her discussion of the poem she deals with only the first 63 lines, the curious incident of the snakes in the night-time. The unity of Idyll 24 becomes readily apparent once we cease to consider Heracles the main character of the poem.

If, rather, we regard Heracles' mother Alcmena as the central

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3 Because Gutzwiller restricts herself to only one of the three major sections of this poem, (A. E.-A. Horstmann [Ironie und Humor bei Theokrit: Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie 67 (1976)] also considers only the first section of the poem.) her analysis of the work as a whole and as a representative of its genre is necessarily limited. She concentrates particularly upon Theocritus' adaptation of the snake episode into a domestic comedy, taking its impetus from Pindar's first Nemean ode and extant fragments of his twentieth Paean, which also included this story. Most of Gutzwiller's arguments relate to her belief that the poem is actually structured along the lines of a conventional archaic hymn, and she compares it especially to the Homeric Hymn to Hermes and the Hymn to Dionysus. Beyond this, she concentrates on the use of and any echoes (no matter how dim) of hymnal and epic language in Theocritus' poem. Even this technique she limits to the snake episode, ending her study of the poem with Amphitryon's return to his interrupted sleep.

4 Crump (63) considers the whole of Theocritus 24 to be awkward, since interest falls off drastically after the snakes are killed. A. Kurz (Le corpus Theocriteum et Homere [Berne, 1982] 49) believes "il y a simplement defaut d'unite dans le style." J. Stern ("Theocritus' Idyll 24," AJPhil 95 [1974] 348-61), however, has no problem with the unity of this poem, finding it in the constant contrasts between the mortal and divine aspects of Heracles' life and behaviour. The most apparent contrasts, as seen by Stern are between Heracles as mortal infant and as divine hero, between the divine Heracles and his mortal brother Iphicles, and between Zeus and Amphitryon as divine and mortal fathers respectively. Stern does not include, but could include, Hera and Alcmena as examples of the divine and mortal mothers.
character, then the problems with the poem's unity vanish. 
Idyll 24 becomes a narrative about Alcmena and her care and 
training of her divine son. The poem is then a fine example 
illustrating the interest which the authors of epyllia took in 
female characters and their stories.

Alcmena as Hero

Alcmena's control of her household is clear from the 
opening scene of the poem, in which she is the only adult and 
the only speaking character featured. After the household has 
retired, Alcmena's reaction to the first raising of the alarm, 
and her command to Amphitryon and his obedience enhance the 
impression of Alcmena as the leader of the household. In 
Pindar's version, too, it was Alcmena herself who leapt from 
her bed to rescue her children from the unknown danger:

εκ δ' ἀρ' ἀτλατον βέλος
πλάζε γυναίκας, ὅσα τούχον Ἀλκμήνας ἀρήγοισαι
λέχει
καὶ γὰρ αὐτά, ἀπεπλος ὁροῦσαι σ' ἀπὸ
στρωμάτι, ὅμις ἀμύνει ὑβρίν κυνηγάλων.

Pindar, Nemean 1.71-4

Pindar's Alcmena is an active participant in the drama of the 
snakes, herself performing the necessary heroic duty of 
protecting Heracles. She can be contrasted with Theocritus' 
Alcmena, who is in total control of the situation. Alcmena 
is accorded almost divine status in her "remote" control of 
the adventures taking place in her household. Like a goddess, 
Alcmena issues the commands, and some other character carries 
out her wishes. Her position in the household recalls Hera's
position in the universe, as it is shown in this poem. Although it is Hera who wishes to kill Heracles, she does not commit the deed herself. She need only issue the commands, and the two poisonous snakes do the job for her: τάμος ἄρ'αινα πέλωρα πολυμήχανος Ἡρα, κυνέαις φρίσσοντας υπὸ σπείραισι δράκοντας (13-14). As Hera seems to have some measure of control over the universe, so Alcmena has the control of affairs in her own house, sending her husband to deal with alarms in the night, rather than leaping from her bed to see to them herself.

In answer to the alarm, Amphitryon wakes and attempts to arm to meet the attack as if he were the hero of some epic. Because of the domestic scene and the demands of the genre, however, such heroic and epic responses are inappropriate and Theocritus does not allow them to come to their natural conclusions. Amphitryon’s arming scene is abortive due to a number of factors, including the need for speed in his preparations to meet the unknown emergency. Amphitryon is also hampered in his arming by Alcmena’s command μηδὲ πόδεσσι τεοῖς ὑπὸ σάνδαλα θείης (36). Amphitryon indulges his epic instincts only to the extent of lovingly and lingeringly taking his sword and sheath down from their peg above the

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5 The image of Amphitryon dashing about the house in his nightshirt is distinctly humourous, and contributes to the comic atmosphere of this section of the poem, which is continued in the slave-woman’s rousing of the other slaves (see below, p. 26).
bed. His lingering over the sword seems to take just a moment too long, however, since by the time Amphitryon considers himself adequately armed, the light has faded from the chamber and his heroic efforts are no longer required. The fading of the light, which Zeus sent to enable Heracles to see and kill the snakes, must indicate that the danger has passed, since the light is no longer necessary.

The phenomenon of this light, with which Zeus fills the house in order to protect the children (Διὸς νοέοντος ἀπαντα . . . φῶς δ’ ἀνὰ οἶκον ἐτύχη, 21-2), also serves to enhance Alcmena’s heroic reputation in this poem, at the expense of Amphitryon’s. While Amphitryon must be wakened by his wife

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6 Gow ("Theocritus’ Idyll XXIV: Stars and Doors," CQ 36 [1942] 104-10) believes that the detail of the sword on a peg may recall the fact that Odysseus’ bow is also kept hanging on a peg (Odyssey 21.47). Although this is an enterprising attempt to equate Amphitryon with Odysseus, we should note that while Odysseus’ bow is a special weapon which he did not even take to the war, where it would be appropriate, Amphitryon’s sword is apparently part of his every-day equipment, which he keeps beside him even when sleeping in his own house.

7 Gutzwiller (17) thinks likewise. Gow, however (1950 on line 46), is less certain of the particular significance of the fading of the light. "Its function," he writes, "may perhaps be ended when the alarm is raised, or when the snakes have expired."

8 Stern (355) identifies the light with the κακὸν πῦρ which emanates from the snakes’ eyes. The killing of the snakes would thus naturally extinguish any light that comes from them, and the house is plunged into darkness. Based upon this identification, Stern believes that "what we have is simply a case of an infant threatened from a fiery source," and he goes on to discuss other myths in which a child is threatened by fire in preparation for immortality. These include Demophoon in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter and Achilles at Argonautica 4.871. Although the comparison is tempting, its invocation at
to go and investigate the disturbances in the house, and
dawdles until the time for action is past, it is Alcmena
herself who is first roused by the light and the noise of the
children, and who attempts to send Amphitryon about his
duties. We should also note that the light fades, not when
Amphitryon has armed himself to meet the attack, or when
Heracles has finished his work with the snakes, but when
Alcmena and the Phoenician slave woman between them have
roused the men of the house sufficiently to deal with the
emergency.

Gow suggests, in his note on line 22, that this
supernatural illumination, divinely provided to aid a hero's
work in his own house, recalls the light which Athena provides
for Odysseus and Telemachus in Odyssey 19. Alcmena's surprise
at the light flooding her house (38-40) is expressed in terms
that reflect Telemachus' wonder at the supernatural light
which Athena provides in the armoury: 9

\[ \omega \, \pi \acute{a} \tau \varepsilon, \, \eta \, \mu \epsilon \gamma \aupsilon \, \theta \alpha \nu \iota \mu \alpha \tau \mu \alpha \, \tau \omicron \acute{d} \acute{e} \acute{d} \acute{o} \phi \beta \alpha \lambda \mu \omicron \omega \iota \sigma \iota \nu \, \omicron \omicron \bar{w} \omicron \omicron \iota. \]

this point in the poem may be somewhat premature. In the
first place, Theocritus makes a clear distinction between the
snakes, which are sent by Hera, and the light, sent by Zeus.
The genitive absolute, \( \Delta \nu \omicron \zeta \, \nu \omicron \acute{e} \omicron \omicron \nu \iota \omicron \omicron \zeta \), used to express Zeus' knowledge of and part in the events of the night, coming as it
does immediately before mention of the light which filled the
chamber, indicates that Zeus' awareness of the danger to the
children is responsible for the light. Secondly, the attempts
to confer immortality on children through fire, in the two
instances Stern cites, are noticeable failures. In Heracles'
case, the night attack was definitely not intended to
immortalise him, nor did its failure in any way hinder his
eventual ascent to Olympus.

9 As Gow (1950, on lines 22 and 38) suggests.
At the time that the alarm is raised in the house, a Phoenician grinding woman rouses the household slaves to meet the emergency: ἀνιστατε, δμωες ταλασίφρονες. αὐτὸς αὐτεῖ (50). In this Theocritus effectively lowers the tone of the poem from the heroic and epic mode. The language which this slave woman uses is notably colloquial, especially her use of the word αὐτὸς in reference to her master. The colloquialism is appropriate to the character of a household slave. Aristophanes uses the word in the Clouds, when a slave speaks thus of Socrates (Clouds 219). Menander also uses the word with this meaning at Samia 256 and 258. The word is not used meaning "the master" outside of comedy. The appearance of this comic and lowly expression is particularly striking as it follows upon the old woman’s addressing of her fellow slaves as ταλασίφρονες, an adjective usually restricted to epic heroes. It would not, in epic, be applied to slaves, but then, Amphitryon’s attempted heroic arming scene, which immediately precedes this, is no more appropriate to the domestic setting.

The use of the slaves to respond to the night’s alarms is

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10 As noted by Gow (1950) on line 50.

11 Gow (1950) on line 50. An independent Ibycus search finds only five occurrences of the word, including this one. Three of the other four uses of the word are applied to Odysseus himself.
also a lowering of the heroic tone of the story from the previous versions. In Pindar's rendition, it is not the household slaves but the chief citizens and heroes of Thebes who come to the assistance of Heracles' father: ταχὺ δὲ Καθείων ἄγοι χαλκεώς ἄθροι σὺν δύποις ἔδραμον (Nemean 1.79).

That it is a female slave, a grinding woman who rouses the household to assist the master and save the children again illustrates the importance of female characters in this house and in this poem. Just as it was Alcmena who roused Amphitryon and sent him to see to the children, it is again a woman who sends the other slaves to join the rescue mission. Theocritus makes no mention of the Phoenician woman herself rushing to the bedroom, and Alcmena apparently stays safely in her bed until all is again secure.\(^\text{12}\)

The Domestic Setting

_Idyll 24_ opens upon a seemingly normal domestic scene of a mother putting two bathed and fed children to bed. At first

\(^{12}\) Stern (358) believes that the specific mention of a Phoenician slave woman who grinds for the household is meant to recall the grinding woman in _Odyssey_ 20.105sqq, whose prayer gives an omen to Odysseus. It should be noted that in the _Odyssey_ there are at least a dozen women who grind the grain for the palace, while Theocritus mentions only this one in the house of Alcmena and Amphitryon. Theocritus gives Amphitryon only one such slave, portraying his household as a more ordinary bourgeois establishment of the Hellenistic era, than a hero's palace of the epic age. In this I oppose H. White ("Doors and Stars in Theocritus' _Idyll 24_," Mnemosyne ser.4, 30 [1977] 135-40), who believes that Theocritus wishes to emphasise the grandeur of Amphitryon's house.
sight it may not seem to matter that the names Heracles and Alcmena have been attached to two of the characters here portrayed. The only hint that the scene belongs to the heroic and epic mythological world is found in the one rather incongruous detail, that Alcmena puts the children to sleep in a shield of which Amphitryon has despoiled Pterelaus. The use of the shield as a cradle for the children not only sets the scene securely in mythological times, where shields are common property. It also emphasises the values of the epyllion in giving priority to the domestic world over the heroic. This priority is clear not only through the fact that the great Heracles, hero of the labours, is here the infant hero of a bedtime scene, but also in the diminishing of Amphitryon’s epic accomplishments. The killing of Pterelaus, and the war in which it was accomplished, were among the few great heroic feats for which Alcmena’s husband Amphitryon is known. And yet the spoils which he acquired in this fight on behalf of Alcmena’s own family are not displayed as

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13 Gutzwiller (12) recalls the only other instance in Greek literature in which a child is shown lying in a shield, that is, the infant Astyanax at Euripides’ *Troiades* 1140sqq.

14 Amphitryon’s limited heroic exploits are noted by Apollodorus (II.iv.5-8) and are mentioned by Pausanias (IX.xvii.3).

15 Amphitryon killed Pterelaus and the sons of Taphius in order to avenge Alcmena’s brothers, the sons of Electryon (Apollodorus II.iv.6). This was the task he was required to perform in order to win Alcmena. Although they were married before Amphitryon set out on his expedition, it seems that the marriage was not to be consummated until the task was completed ([Hesiod] *Scutum* 14sqq).
reminders of his heroism. Rather, they are taken over for domestic use, as a cradle for her children. Heroism and heroic feats do not carry the weight here that they normally would in the world of traditional epic, but are made subservient to purely domestic concerns, as the products of Amphitryon’s military exploits are useful only as they serve the products of Alcmena’s labours.

This same subversion of martial ideals to marital appears later in the poem, when Alcmena wakens Amphitryon to deal with the noises in the night. As a proper epic hero, Amphitryon’s first instinctive reaction upon being roused by a night alarm is to arm himself, and he embarks upon what should resemble an Homeric arming scene. The alarm to which he responds, however, is not a call to arms, but a simple domestic uproar. To the supremely ordinary domestic command "go and see why the baby’s crying", Amphitryon responds by arming himself as if to meet a Trojan attack.

One other significant descriptive detail in Amphitryon’s arming scene is the description of the harness upon which his sword hangs as \( \nu\epsilon\theta\xi\kappa\lambda\omega\sigma\tau\omicron\nu \) (44). This is unusual, since a proper heroic baldric should be made of leather (as in Iliad 7.304 and 23.825) or of metal, perhaps backed with leather (as in Odyssey 11.610).\(^{16}\) The fact that Amphitryon’s sword-belt is woven, that is, the product of women’s work in his own

\(^{16}\) According, especially, to Gow (1950, on line 44).
household,' strengthens his identification with the domestic and female worlds, rather than the heroic world of epic equipment and action, which we would expect to be his proper place.

The Prophecy

It seems customary for the authors of epyllia to include within their poems some look forward in the heroine's life, usually in the form of a prophecy, foretelling something of her future adventures and happiness. In Idyll 24, Alcmena's consultation of Teiresias provides the opportunity for such a prophecy.

This consultation scene seems a far more relaxed version of the famous consultations of Teiresias in the Odyssey and Sophocles' Oedipus Tyrannus. Teiresias, like Alcmena and Amphitryon, lives in Thebes, and although a consultation of the great prophet could be a frightening and terrible undertaking, this scene in Theocritus' poem could also be simply an appeal for help to a near neighbour. As were Amphitryon's martial exploits and spoils, the grand and potentially horrific traditions of the epic, in the consultation of the great prophet, are made part of a normal

17Weaving, of course, is the natural function of women in epic. Helen is shown weaving in Iliad 3, and Penelope's weaving trick in the Odyssey is justly famous. The place of such work as weaving in the lives of epic women is briefly discussed by M.I. Finley in The World of Odysseus (New York, 1954) 72-3.
and generally harmless domestic scene.

The female appropriation of the active and heroic roles in the epyllion is also obvious in this portion of Theocritus' poem, where it is Alcmena who takes the part of a hero in consulting the prophet. In this she recalls the actions of Achilles, who forces Calchas to speak in *Iliad* 1, of Odysseus in *Odyssey* 11 and of Oedipus in the *Oedipus Tyrannus*. Alcmena's actions also contrast with the consultation scene in Pindar's version of the story, where it is Amphitryon himself who meets with Teiresias: γείτονα δ' ἐκκάλεσεν Διὸς ψίστον προφάταν ξόχον, ὄρθομαντιν Τειρεσίαν (*Nemean* 1.80-1). Theocritus' Amphitryon shows no such initiative, leaving this, as everything else, to his wife.

Alcmena's opening address to Teiresias, in which she warns him not to be afraid to reveal what he knows, recalls both the Iliadic consultation, in which Calchas fears Agamemnon's reprisals should he reveal the truth about Apollo's anger (*Iliad* 1.74-83), and the situation in *Oedipus Tyrannus*, where Teiresias must be goaded by anger at Oedipus into revealing the cause of Thebes' troubles (316-462). In Sophocles' *Antigone*, Teiresias reveals to Creon the horrors that lie in store, but Creon refuses to heed the warnings (988-1090). In her adaptation of the heroic role, Alcmena here reveals herself as infinitely more sensible and realistic than either of Sophocles' kings, since she announces her willingness to accept whatever lies in store for her family:
Teiresias' answer to Alcmena resembles the statement which Eurymachus makes to Penelope about Telemachus at Odyssey 16.435sgq, and puts Alcmena into the category of worried heroic mothers. In each of these two cases, a mother who is addressed by a patronymic (κούρη Ἰκαρίοιο, Od. 16.435; Περσίον, Idyll 24.73), indicating her potential for heroic status, is reassured about the safety of her son in a speech telling her to have courage (θάρσει, Od. 16.435. Idyll 24.73). Teiresias also grants such status to Alcmena through the epithet which he applies to her, ἀριστοτόκεια, which seems the most auspicious epithet applicable to a woman. A variation of this epithet, δυσαριστοτόκεια, is applied to Thetis at Iliad 18.54, where she is pitied because her son is worn down by enmity and will soon die. It is almost certain that Theocritus intends to recalling Thetis' position to the readers' minds, and, by analogy, Heracles' imminent immortality and victories over obstacles are expressed in the fortunate epithet given his mother. Certainly Teiresias follows this

18 Although Penelope, like Alcmena, has the potential for heroic status, Penelope loses her chance to be a hero when her husband and son return to Ithaca, and again relegate her to her chambers and her weaving.

19 That Theocritus intends to recall the Homeric reference is more strongly proven by the fact that both of these words are used only once. The use of an unusual word would tend to turn the reader's mind to some similar use.
immediately by revealing the fame that will accrue to Alcmena through Heracles’ greatness:

It is notable that Alcmena will become a song sung by the Argive women as they work at their spinning (76-7) Homeric fame, too, comes in the form of a song sung by future generations. Theocritus intends to recall this phenomenon, and contrast the heroic songs of epic time with the women’s working songs in his own poem. In keeping with the epyllion’s focus on female characters, it is especially noteworthy that it is the songs of women as they do their women’s work that will bring the greatest fame to Alcmena for the sake of her son. This beginning of Teiresias’ prophecy about Heracles also recalls the beginning of the poem itself, which was a picture of a woman singing as she went about her household duties. The prophecy holds out to Alcmena the promise of the same safety and blessings for her children that she herself had wished for them in the lullaby. Alcmena’s wish for her

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20 Iliad 6.358: ὡς καὶ ὀπίσω ἀνθρώποιςι πελώμεθ' ἀοίδιμοι ἐσομένοις.

21 It should be noted that while Teiresias promises lasting safety and happiness for Heracles (after his completion of the labours), Alcmena’s lullaby wishes these things for the children for one night only. Another point of contact between the prophecy and the opening scene is found in the sensory detail of the wool which the Argive women are spinning as they sing (76), and of which
sons was that they would come safely through the dangerous
time, through the night time, to the dawn: ὁλβίοι εὐνάξοισθε καὶ ὁλβίοι ἀδ ἐκοισθε (9). This, in particular, is echoed in
Teiresias’ prophecy that Heracles will come successfully
through his labours and the dangers of life to happiness among
the gods: ὁδεκα δι τελέσατι πεπρωμένον ἐν Διὸς οἶκεῖν
μόχθους, θυητὰ δὲ πάντα πυρὰ Τραχύνιος ἔχει. γαμβρὸς
δ’ ἀθανάτων κεκλήσεται (82-4). The woman’s preeminence is also
clear here, since the initiative in originally requesting
these things does lie with her. The prophet merely reports
the events to come.

Teiresias also foretells Heracles’ future greatness over
both humans and beasts: οὐ καὶ θηρία πάντα καὶ ἄνερες ἡσονες
ἄλλοι (81), in terms which may recall both his killing of the
snakes while his mortal brother whimpers in terror, and the
final scenes of the poem, in which the young and immortal hero
is taught by a team of aging and decrepit former heroes, all
of whom he will eventually surpass in greatness. The fact
that the young hero sleeps on the skin of a lion, a conquered
beast (136), also recalls this original prophecy.

According to Teiresias’ forecast, Heracles’ twelve
labours will bring him to his divine father, Zeus (82-3), and

the blanket lining the shield is made (25, 62-3).

Even the fact that Teiresias swears by the light, which
was supernaturally taken from him at the beginning of his
prophetic career, connects with the supernatural light which
enables Heracles to begin his heroic career in the first
section of the poem.
this parallels the original first labour, that of the snakes, which brought Heracles' mortal father Amphitryon running to his bed (56-9). It is also noteworthy that, at the end of his life, Heracles will be called (κεκλησεται, 84) the son-in-law of the immortals, while during his youth at Thebes he is called (κεκλημένος, 104) the son of Amphitryon.22

The ritual of purification which Teiresias prescribes to Alcmena (88-100) also looks both forward and backward in both the poem and Heracles' life. The backward look is obvious in Teiresias' command that the snakes be burned at the same time, midnight, when they planned to kill Heracles (92). Once again, as when the snake attack occurred, Theocritus is careful to set the exact time of the events. The purification ritual also looks forward to the funeral pyre at Trachis (to which he has already referred at line 83) which will, at the end of his labours, purify Heracles of the stains of mortal life.23

This ritual, as so much else in the poem, casts Alcmena

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22 The parallel between the infant and adult labours, and the mortal and divine fathers whom they summon, recalls Stern's analysis of the poem as a contrast between the mortal and divine aspects of Heracles.

23 At this point it is appropriate to recall the two stories in which an infant is prepared for immortality through an experience with fire. Demophoon, in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter, is put into the fire by night by the disguised goddess, and Achilles, at Argonautica 4.871, is given the same treatment by Thetis. Although both of these attempts are foiled by mortal ignorance, the intent behind the treatment is obviously the same as that prompting Heracles' pyre on Trachis, that is, to burn away the impure remnants of mortality.
in an heroic role. The vision which Teiresias evokes of Alcmena purifying the house after her son's slaughter of the snakes and her own disposal of their remains recalls Odysseus' cleansing of his house at Ithaca after he and his son have disposed of the suitors. The use of sulphur (θεείω, 96) as a fumigant for the house, in particular, recalls Odysseus' directions to Eurycleia to οἰσε θέειον (Odyssey 22.481) to cleanse the halls.

Teiresias' parting words to Alcmena, that she should sacrifice a pig to Zeus (99-100) in order to obtain eternal mastery over her foes may be considered rather odd. That pigs are somehow connected with purification is clear from Aeschylus' Eumenides 283 and in Circe's cleansing of Jason and Medea at Argonautica 4.705.⁴ Such a small and specific detail would be consistent with the concern for realistic detail which has evoked the necessary domestic atmosphere of the epyllion throughout the poem, but this point, too, seems to identify Alcmena with Odysseus. Teiresias' last advice to Odysseus, in that hero's consultation, was that he should sacrifice a ram, an ox and a pig to Poseidon (Odyssey 11.130) in order to ensure a safe final arrival. In both cases, the sacrifice serves as a seal on all that Teiresias has prophesied: all of the things which he has foretold will

⁴ Gow (1950, on line 99) notes the connexion of pigs with purification. As well, shoats were used in the purifying process at the Eleusinian mysteries. Please see W. Burkert, Greek Religion (Cambridge Mass., 1985) 286.
happen, but the hero concerned had best sacrifice to the god most interested, just in case.

It is also significant that the sacrifice of a pig is particularly connected to a peculiarly female festival at Athens, the Thesmophoria. Burkert\textsuperscript{25} notes that "Pig-sacrifice is above all (emphasis mine) part of the Thesmophoria, . . . in which women celebrated among themselves apart from the men." Theocritus' heroine, while taking the heroic role and making her own sacrifices, also reminds the reader of her femininity by making this sacrifice one which is particularly feminine.

The Inset Story

One of the prominent and distinguishing features of the epyllion is the presence of a secondary story connected to the main narrative. The poet diverts attention from the original story and the original hero to focus for a short while on some other character's life and adventures. The third section of the poem (lines 103sgq), Alcmena's training of the young hero, constitutes such a digression from her own story, as it tells of the life of the young Heracles himself. The two stories are especially connected through the character of Heracles, who appears as Alcmena's infant in the first scene, and as her favourite son in this third section.

This last extant portion of the idyll contains a series of short scenes depicting the education of Heracles: Heracles learning to write (105-6); Heracles learning to shoot (107-8); Heracles learning to sing (109-10), to fight (111-8), to drive (119sqq).26

26 One important note of realism which is manifest in Theocritus' description of Heracles' education is that all of the hero's tutors are mortal. The fantastic element which allows Achilles and Jason (Pindar [Nemean 43sg, 53sg] describes the centaur's tutelage of both these heroes, along with Asclepius.) to receive their heroic training from the centaur Chiron has no place in this more realistic, essentially middle-class world in which Heracles is growing up. The particular concern for realism is also seen in the fact that every one of Heracles' instructors is getting old. Although old men, like Priam or Nestor, are found in the Iliad, there is an essential difference from Theocritus' portrayal of the aged heroes. Those Homeric heroes who are past their fighting prime are always portrayed as advisors, as in the case of Nestor, who plays the same role for the Achaeans that Priam and the other elder Trojans play for the Trojan army (Iliad 3.145sqq). But an active Homeric hero is never seen to grow old. If he is not killed in the fighting in his heroic prime, he at least drops out of sight before he begins to decay and lose his heroic status. Hector and Achilles and their ilk are never condemned to teach their trade to the next generation, as has happened to the heroes who teach their special skills to Theocritus' Heracles. The very great age of each of Heracles' tutors is emphasised in the poem, and with it the fact that they are no longer the greatest at their respective arts. Thus Heracles is taught by γερων Linus (105), by Amphitryon who had once been the best of charioteers, until age caught up with both him and his chariots (124), and by Castor, who had in his youth been the best of the semidivine fighters (132-3). Stern (359-60) takes the emphasis placed upon the weakening of Heracles' mortal instructors as yet another indication of the contrast to be found in the poem between the mortal and divine aspects of Heracles. All of the tutors, according to Stern, do their best for Heracles, but because of their mortality, their skills are not equal to the task of instructing the future god. But all of these former heroes are exactly the sort of teachers whom, were they available in the area, a mother like Alcmena would procure to teach her exceptional son.
Theocritus' list of the subjects taught to the young Heracles differs significantly from the standard heroic curriculum as mentioned in the Iliad. Phoenix' training of the young Achilles emphasised both speaking and fighting, to the apparent exclusion of all else (Iliad 9.443). Hector is more specific when boasting to Ajax of his own accomplishments, which seem to be typical of those expected of an epic warrior:

\[
\text{αὐτὰρ ἐγὼν εὗ οἶδα μάχας τ' ἀνδροκτασίας τε. οἴδ'ἐπὶ δεξία, οἶδ'ἐπ'ἀριστέρα νωμήσαι βῶν ἄγαλην, τό μοι ἐστὶ ταλαύρινον πολεμίζειν. οἶδα δ'ἐπαιχαὶ μόθον ἵππων ὑκείας. οἶδα δ'ἐνι σταδίη δηίω μέλπεσθαι Ἀρηὶ.}
\]

Iliad 7.237-41

The curriculum through which Alcmena puts Heracles, however, is more appropriate to the training of a Hellenistic gentleman than of a hero destined for epic labours. It should be noted that it is a knowledge of letters and literature, in particular, that the typical Hellenistic mother in Herodas' third Mime attempted to have taught to her son in her eagerness to make a gentleman of him. The contemporary reality of the education given to a wealthy young Hellenistic Greek has, in Theocritus' poem, almost completely overshadowed

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27 Gow (1950, vol.2, 431) indicates that Theocritus' summary of the subjects taught Heracles parallels that given by Apollodorus, Library II.iv.9: ἐδιάδαχθη δὲ Ἦρακλῆς ἀρματηλατεῖν μὲν ὑπὸ Ἀμφιτρώνος, παλαιεῖν δὲ ὑπὸ Αὐτολύκου, τοχεύειν δὲ ὑπὸ Εὐρυτοῦ, ὃπλαμαχεῖν δὲ ὑπὸ Κάστορος.

the epic traditions of a hero’s education such as that Achilles or Jason would have received. It is obviously the mother’s taste in educators, and her ambitions for her son, which govern the training which the young hero receives. It is probable that Amphitryon, who himself teaches the boy to drive a chariot, would have wanted a more traditional heroic training for his (supposed) son. It may at first seem odd that it is Heracles’ mother, rather than Amphitryon, who supervises the young hero’s training. But Alcmena’s control over Heracles’ education is in accordance with her prominence throughout the poem and her control of the affairs in her house.

The last extant scene of *Idyll 24* continues the picture of the rearing of young Heracles, with a brief description of his life at home, placing the hero in the context of a domestic setting seldom found in traditional epic. This

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29 Gow ([1950] on line 134) thinks it odd, and Stern (359) "surprising" that it is Alcmena rather than Amphitryon who arranges Heracles’ education. But White (*Theocritus XXIV: A Commentary* [Amsterdam, 1979] on line 134) finds it just another example of Theocritus’ "humour", exemplified in his attempts to reduce the hero to the norms of contemporary bourgeois society. White accepts Herodas’ third mime as presenting the typical Alexandrian customs, according to which a mother would arrange her son’s education. Stern (359–60) views Alcmena’s involvement here, along with the increasing decrepitude of the boy’s instructors, as yet further proof of the inadequacy of the mortally oriented education he is given as a preparation for divinity.

30 The ending of the *Odyssey*, of course, depicts Odysseus’ return to his normal domestic setting, but due to all of the "mopping-up" which is required upon his return, normalcy is not re-established within the scope of the poem. A comparable scene from epic is found in Phoenix’ reminiscences about
short sketch of Heracles at home alludes to a number of the best known characteristics of the hero, illustrating the earliest manifestations of these characteristics in his life. The skin of the Nemean lion, Heracles' trademark dress, is here alluded to in the lion's skin upon which the young Heracles sleeps. His prodigious appetite, which Aristophanes mentions especially in the Frogs,31 and which Euripides uses as a typically Heraclean trait in the Alcestis, is here represented by the specific descriptions of the meals with which Alcmena sustains the young hero.

The poet's choice of a hero for his poem seems to indicate a new approach to narrative poetry. The choice of a woman, even the mother of a great hero, as the main character of the poem has caused Theocritus to limit the scope of his story to the domestic sphere. Theocritus has thus concocted an epic-style poem in which the woman's world is of prime importance. Alcmena's importance has been pointed out throughout these pages, and it is of particular interest that it is she who is most positively identified with a traditional hero. Amphitryon, who seems to be endowed with the instincts

31 As noted by Gow (1950) on line 137, this also recalls Epicharmus frag. 21, and Callimachus' Hymn 3.146.
of a more traditional epic hero, is actually portrayed as a rather ineffectual character, unable or unwilling to deal with the domestic situation in an effective manner. The characteristics of an epic hero, in particular Odysseus, are appropriated for Alcmena and applied to her specifically unheroic circumstances. Thus in these early stages of the epyllion, a woman is allowed to be heroic in her own sphere, and to control the events appropriate to her own life. The traditional type of hero, like the whole of the heroic tradition, is being subverted and almost parodied in this, a completely different sort of epic with a completely different sort of hero and adventure.
The importance of the female world which informed Theocritus' poem is also abundantly clear in Moschus' *Europa*.

As was noted, Theocritus' Alcmena displays heroic qualities while staying securely in her own domestic realm. Europa's heroism seems to consist in extending the boundaries of her sphere, in going beyond the areas to which women are usually confined in epic. Moschus' heroine leaves her father's house to go after her adventure, rather than meeting it at home as Alcmena did. The domestic milieu which was the setting of the Theocritean epyllion is quickly left behind in the course of Moschus' poem for the wider world into which Europa strays. Another important development in Moschus' poem is that, while Theocritus' Alcmena was repeatedly given attributes and characteristics reminiscent of the male heroes of epic, Europa's own heroic antecedents are exclusively female.

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1 The text used for the *Europa* is also that of A.S.F. Gow (*Bucolici Graeci* [Oxford, 1952]).

2 *Europa*, dating from approximately 150 B.C., represents the next identifiable stage in the development of the epyllion and its heroines.
abducted by a god while picking flowers, recalls that of the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter,*¹ and Moschus is generally considered to have used the situation in the hymn as a model. The dream which Aphrodite sends to Europa to begin the poem's action is another scene which Moschus is thought to have adapted from another source. Some scholars⁴ have noted that this dream does recall that by which Athena convinces Nausicaa to go to the shore at *Odyssey* 6.13-40. Medea's dream at *Argonautica* 3.616-35 has also been identified as having influenced Europa's dream,⁵ although some scholars⁶ view both of these as examples of Hellenistic adaptation of the Homeric source.⁷

The identification with such a female character as Nausicaa is particularly appropriate for Europa at this stage of her story, for she is now still in the same situation as


⁵ Buhler on lines 8-15.

⁶ These include Webster (*Hellenistic Poetry* 153) and Gutzwiller (64).

⁷ Atossa's dream in Aeschylus' *Persae* has also been suggested (by Buhler, on lines 8-15) as a possible influence on Moschus' dream sequence. But it appears that Moschus owes only the personification of the continents as women (if that) to Aeschylus. As R. Schmiel (*"Moschus' Europa,"* *CP* 76 [1981] 261-71) points out, there are beyond this no parallels of either phrasing or content between the two dreams.
Nausicaa was when Odysseus arrived at Scheria. Like Nausicaa, Europa is still a young girl in her father's house, waiting for something to happen. This is an entirely appropriate situation for a young woman of good family in epic. While Nausicaa is never allowed to move beyond this stage, Europa is about to make this move as her adventures continue.

Although Europa's dream does bear some notable similarities to those of Nausicaa and Medea, there are also some significant variations. The most important of these is that both Medea and Nausicaa are sent their dreams by a goddess so that they will play the appropriate part in the adventures of a coming hero. Contrasting with this, Europa's dream prepares her to take part in her own adventure. Nausicaa was told in her dream exactly what she should do so that she would be in the right place at the right time to help Odysseus. Medea, who had already been afflicted by an infatuation with Jason (Argonautica 3.280sg), was shown a dream which represented symbolically what she would do for Jason and against her family (3.616sgq). Medea understands her dream and puts it into action soon after waking.

Europa's dream also recalls those which Io describes as having come to her in Aeschylus' Prometheus Vinctus (645sgq). Io's dreams, like Nausicaa's, addressed her directly and gave her explicit instructions: that she should go to a certain meadow in Lerna (PV 652-3) and meet the smitten Zeus. Like Europa, Io was frightened by her dreams but, unfortunately for
her, she did not comply with the god's plans for her. 8

In contrast to the sure action with which Medea and Nausicaa followed up their dreams, Moschus' Europa is terrified and confused (16-21) by what she saw in her dream, and cannot follow the instructions because she does not understand what is meant. 9 The dream's purpose is twofold: it is a foreshadowing of the events to follow in Europa's life, and it is meant to prepare her mentally for whatever strange adventures may follow. Europa realises that she was "not unwilling" (οὐκ ἀέκουσαν, 14) to participate in whatever adventures are foretold, and recognises the desire she felt to follow the strange woman (25-27). Schmiel 10 notes the active role which Europa thus is prepared to play in her own abduction, in contrast to previous heroines, who were prepared only to help the heroes or please the gods in the stories in

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8 The dreams which Zeus sent to Io and their similarity to Europa's dream was also noted by Schmiel (267) and by N.Hopkinson (A Hellenistic Anthology [Cambridge, 1987] 201).

9 Europa is not to be blamed for her confusion, given the highly symbolic nature of her dream. Even Atossa, whom Aeschylus portrayed in the Persae as an infinitely more experienced and intelligent woman than Moschus' Europa seems to be, resorted to the Persian elders for help in interpreting her dream. The fact that Europa's dream is symbolic rather than literal indicates a departure from the practice of the Homeric poems, in which dreams are usually literal and explicit (as pointed out by E.R.Dodds, The Greeks and the Irrational [Berkeley, 1951] 104-7).

10 Schmiel (268).
which they appeared."

Europa's dream again demonstrates the importance that female characters have in the epyllion in controlling the action of the poem. This influence is especially clear from the fact that it is Aphrodite who controls the entire story of Zeus' infatuation with and abduction of Europa. It is, in the first place, Aphrodite who begins the story by sending the dream to Europa: Ἠρώπη ποτὲ Κύπρις ἐπὶ γλυκὺν ἢκεν ὅνερον (1). It should be noted that, throughout the poem, the gods do what they can to assist in one another's love affairs. Examples of this co-operation include Hephaestus' manufacture of the flower basket for Poseidon to give to Libya (39-40) and his depiction on that basket of Hermes' slaying of Argus, which aided Zeus in his pursuit of Io (55-7). Poseidon's

"The most telling contrast with Moschus' Europa is Persephone, who was abducted unwillingly by Hades: Ἀρπάξις δ' ἀκουσαν ἐπὶ χνοθείαν δόχοισιν Ἡγ' ὀλοφυρομένην. (Homeric Hymn to Demeter, 19-20).

In spite of this difference Schmiel does use Persephone and her fate as analogies for Europa's adventures. In light of Persephone's fate, Schmiel believes that Europa's apparently inexplicable desire to go and pick flowers with her friends upon waking indicates a willingness on her part to have an encounter similar to Persephone's. He expects that Europa is aware of Persephone's fate and the circumstances surrounding it, and that she can actually learn from the other girl's experience. Gutzwiller (66) is another who connects Europa's dream with the events to follow in the poem, as it symbolises her departure from her home. Gutzwiller does put a somewhat stronger psychological significance onto the dream than is actually necessary, emphasising the "conflict between the two mother figures" and Europa's "wish for freedom and escape". These emotional states are not apparent in Europa's conduct or in Moschus' description of the girl at any time. Still in this psychological mood, Gutzwiller will continue to see sexual innuendo and double entendre throughout the poem, particularly in the flower and bull scenes."
assistance to the bovine Zeus in crossing the sea with Europa (116sqq) also demonstrates this divine co-operation. Yet it is clear that Aphrodite's sending of the dream to Europa is not just a favour done for Zeus. It is Aphrodite herself who also causes Zeus' infatuation with the girl, after she has gone to the meadow:

Rather than merely assisting in Zeus' affairs, Aphrodite appears herself as the architect of some intricate plot of her own. It appears that Aphrodite is actually manipulating Zeus in order to arrange Europa's adventures and final status, as Athena manipulated Nausicaa in order to arrange Odysseus' affairs satisfactorily.

The apparent result of Europa's dream and its confusion is her plan to go and pick flowers with her friends. She almost immediately dismisses her fear and confusion which result from her dream, and goes to gather her friends for the expedition:

This expedition constitutes the next stage of the poem, but Moschus does not narrate the actual trip to the meadow. What is most important in this sequence is Europa's place among the
group of girls, and her natural superiority to the rest of the group. These are the elements which actually cause her adventure, and so these are the elements on which Moschus expends his energies.

A detail of the expedition which indicates Europa’s uniqueness in the group is that fact that, while the rest of the girls are picking saffron, only Europa herself presumes to pick the roses (69-71). Schmiel\(^\text{12}\) identifies this fact with the prominence of the colour red in Moschus’ detailed descriptions, especially as they are connected with Europa herself. Other instances include the blood of Argus on Europa’s flower basket, the name Phoenix which is given to Europa’s father,\(^\text{13}\) and the specific mention of the red folds of Europa’s cloak (127). The point of this dominance of red is to draw attention to Europa and make her stand out from the other girls. Moschus also accomplishes this through the simile by which he compares Europa among her friends to Aphrodite playing among the Graces (71). Raminella\(^\text{14}\) believes that this simile is taken from the Homeric simile comparing Nausicaa to Artemis with the nymphs (Odyssey 6.102-10). But the simile also recalls the earlier description of Nausicaa sleeping, in which she is said to resemble one of the

\(^{12}\) Schmiel (270).

\(^{13}\) The name is also an adjective meaning purple or crimson. I think Schmiel is reaching just a bit on this point.

\(^{14}\) Raminella (262-3).
goddesses, with her maidens sleeping either side of her like Graces. I believe that it is quite possible that Moschus intends to identify Europa with both Nausicaa and Aphrodite here. As previously noted, Europa already brings Nausicaa to mind through the incident of her dream, and the restricted sphere of Nausicaa’s activity is also evident in Moschus’ poem. Europa’s life is still, in the early stages of the poem, limited to approved female activities and the companionship of young women of her own age. This is, however, the last episode of her old life, and she is about to pass into the power of Aphrodite. The goddess has already begun the action, has started the events which will change Europa and her life, and is about to claim the girl for her own purposes.

The description of Europa’s flower basket, which forms the inset story portion of this poem and will be discussed in greater detail below, also emphasises Europa’s position as a singular character and the hero of the poem. That an article so closely related to her natural attributes is so thoroughly described clearly identifies Europa as a hero of potentially epic proportions. Such an ecphrasis of a hero’s equipment naturally recalls Achilles and his wondrous shield, in Iliad

15 Odyssey 6.15-19:

... ὃ ἔνι κοὺρη
κοιμήτ᾽ ἄθανάτῃς φυήν καὶ εἴδος ὁμοίη,
Ναυσικᾶ, θυγάτηρ μεγαλήτορος Ἀλκινόοι,
πάρ δὲ δύταμφιπολοί, χαρίτων ἀπὸ κάλλος ἔχουσαι,
σταθμοῖν ἐκάτερθε.
18. The detailed description of Achilles' shield helps to set him apart from the mass of other fighters at Troy, both Trojan and Achaean. We know that all of these other warriors possess shields, and some of these shields are probably pictorial. But none of these are described in detail. Achilles' shield is special, and is the mark of a special character. Similarly, we might safely assume that the rest of Apollonius' Argonauts possess cloaks, but only Jason's is described in detail (Argonautica 1.730-68), illustrating his various characteristics and marking him out as the special character of the story. The same holds for Moschus' description of Europa's flower basket. Moschus has specifically said that each of the girls in the group carries a flower basket to the meadow (καὶ δὲ ὁ Αἰας φάνθεν. ἔχον δὲν χεραίν ἐκάστῃ ἀνθοδόκου τάλαρον [33-4]). But only Europa's basket is described in detail, reinforcing her position as different and special, and not simply part of the crowd of girls.

Europa's special status among the maidens in the meadow, which is established immediately before the description of the basket, is answered by the description of Zeus as a bull which appears immediately after the basket description:

τοῦ δὴ τοι τῷ μεν ἄλλῳ δέμας ξανθόχροου ἔσκε,
κύκλος δ' ἀργύφεος μέσῳ μάρμαρε μετώπῳ,
δασὶ δ' ὕπογλάνσακε καὶ ἱμερὸν ἀστράπτεακεν.
Ἰα τ' ἐπ' ἀλλήλοις κερά ἀνέτελλε καρήνον

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16 As were the shields carried by the heroes in Aeschylus' Septem.
The description of Zeus illustrates the unusualness of this bull, matching the special status of the girl whom he will carry off. Zeus the bull strongly resembles another herd of Hellenistic divine cattle, those which Helios' daughter Phaethusa is seen herding as the Argonauts pass by, at Argonautica 4.976-8: οὐδὲ τι ἤνεν κυνήγη μετὰ τῆς δέμας πάσαι, δὲ γάλακτι εἴδομενα χρυσέοισι κεράσαι κυνιάσκον. Since Zeus could obviously not become the sort of bull that is put to work for mortals, he must become the sort of creature kept by such immortals as Helios. The pleasant aroma which the bull exudes (91-2) and the musical notes of his lowing (98-9) emphasise the uniqueness of the creature, and Moschus notes that this bull is as much beyond the ordinary run of bulls as Europa is beyond the ordinary run of maidens:

οὐχ οἶος σταθμοῖς ἐνιφέρβεται, οὐδὲ μὲν οἶος ὑκλα διατηρήσει σύρων εὐκαμπτες ἄροτρον, οὐδ' οἶος ποίμνης ἐπὶ βάσκεται, οὐδὲ μὲν οἶος δατις ὑποδημθεῖς ἐρύει πολύφορτον ἀπήνην

80-83

The implication is that neither is meant for ordinary purposes, and that their experiences are to be linked. This is reinforced by the fact that, as soon as Europa's impending loss of virginity is mentioned (72-3), Moschus introduces Zeus

17 The reference to the moon may have sexual connotations. For the sexual possibilities of the full moon, please see J. Bremmer, "The Full Moon and Marriage in Apollonius' Argonautica," CQ 37 (1987) 423-6.
for the first time (74).

The Domestic Setting

The domestic setting in which Europa begins her adventure is made clear in the first scene of the poem, where Europa is identified in her family context (φοινικός θυγάτηρ, 7), and the specific sleeping arrangements are noted (τήμος ὑπονομφόισιν ἐνι κνώσουσα δόμοισι, 6). This same concern for where and how the inmates of a house sleep, a domestic detail of some considerable concern, was also seen in Theocritus' *Idyll* 24, and helps create the atmosphere of an established family setting, with each character playing their appropriate parts. Homer also had Penelope express such care about the sleeping arrangements in the palace at Ithaca, when she puts the still-disguised Odysseus to sleep in the hall (*Odyssey* 19.319-20). These arrangements become a matter of concern in the *Odyssey* just when the domestic setting of Odysseus and his family is being returned to its proper state in Ithaca.

The movement of the epyllion in general away from the limited domestic sphere into the world at large seems to be implied in the parallel movement of Europa herself. Her story begins in her own bedroom and moves in gradual stages through her father's house to the meadow by the sea. From this meadow, Europa and her friends are able to see and hear the sea (κύματος ἥχη, 26). From there, through the divine
intervention of the miraculous bull, the heroine is able to cross the sea and enter the world outside of her father's influence, taking the genre in which she is featured with her. But still consistent with the original domestic focus of the genre, it is her abandonment of her home and family which disturbs Europa most during her wild ride:  ή ρά τε δώμα πατρός ἀποπρολιποῦσα (146-7).

The Prophecy

The reliable prophecy, looking forward to the happy ending for the heroine which also seems customary for the earlier examples of the epyllion, appears in the final scene of the poem, during Europa's ride upon the bull which has abducted her from the meadow.

Europa at first tries to relate the Wunderstier upon which she rides to the bulls with which she is familiar:

. . . νησίν γὰρ ἔπιδρομός ἦσι θάλασσα ὥκυάλοις, ταῦροι δ' ἀλίην τρομέονσιν ἄταρπόν. ποίον σοι ποτόν ἡδί; τίς ἔξ ἄλος ἐσαετ' ἐδωδή; Ἦ ἄρα τις θεός ἐσσί; θεοὶς γ' ἐπεοικότα μέγεις 137-40.

Europa's mental processes are revealed through the questions she asks about the bull, and she is thus shown coming to the conclusion that this bull is actually some one of the gods. Having made this discovery, Europa proceeds to analyze the peculiarities of her situation, and concludes that the events are even stranger than they had seemed at first. She had taken the same approach after her dream, when she attempted to
identify the strange woman she had seen and to analyze the strange desire she had felt.

A brief lament¹⁸ for what she has done follows Europa’s speculative foray into the nature and habits of bulls. Europa here seems to blame herself for abandoning her home and family in search of this adventure.¹⁹ Such behaviour in a woman is not, after all, considered acceptable, and was, in Helen, a source of blame and the cause of a long and bloody war. Europa’s speech is a commonplace expression of a woman’s regret at betraying or abandoning her home, and Buhler²⁰ cites as the prototype Helen’s speech to Priam in Iliad 3:

Iliad 3.173-5

Gutzwiller cites the fact that it is a bull instead of a man which Europa has followed from home as evidence that Moschus here intends a to exploit the overwhelming and irrational passion of the commonplace "abandoned maiden" speech. This bizarre detail, along with the peculiar detachment which enables Europa to calmly speculate on the bull’s potential for flight while it carries her over the sea (ἡ τάχα καὶ γλαυκής ὑπὲρ ἡρος ψός ἀερθεῖς εἰκελος αἰψηροῖς πετησει οἰωνοῖς [144-5]), do indeed put a great distance

¹⁸ The element of lament in this speech is noted by Buhler (on line 147) and by Gutzwiller (72).

¹⁹ According to Gutzwiller (73).

²⁰ Buhler (on line 135sqq).
between this picture and any scene in traditional epic. A woman’s mere abandonment of her traditional sphere, and the consequences of such action, are no longer as serious as once they were.

Zeus' eventual response to all of Europa's questions answers all of her concerns and foretells Europa’s destiny and eventual fame:

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. . . Κρήτη δέ σε δέχεται ἡδή
ἡ μεθρεψε καὶ αὑτοῦ, διὰ νυμφήια σείο
ἐσσεται. ἐξ ἐμέθεν δὲ κλυτοὺς φιτύσεαι νίας
οἱ σκηπτοῦχοι ἀπαντες ἐπιχθονίοισιν ἔσονται.
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Since the bull has now identified himself as Zeus, this prophecy is at least as reliable as was that of Teiresias in Theocritus' poem. Thus the poet need end the poem with only ὡς φάτο καὶ τετέλεστο τά περ φάτο (162). Zeus has already revealed what will come next. Further elaboration is unnecessary. It has been suggested both that this summary is far too abrupt to be the actual ending of the poem, and that such a sudden stop is an essential element in the genre. In fact, once the prophecy has been made, the statement that it was fulfilled concludes the poem sufficiently. An epyllion typically narrates one event in a heroine's career with only a nod at the future, in the form of a prophecy that all will

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21 It was Wilamowitz who disapproved of this line as an ending of the poem, while Perrotta (214) considered it entirely appropriate. Wilamowitz (100) suggested that the poem looked still further forward, naming Europa’s children and explaining clearly the origins of the name of the European continent.
be well with her. The forward look, through prophecy or summary, is all that is necessary by way of conclusion. The summary wraps up the poem neatly, in a manner reminiscent of the "happily ever after" of later stories, and responding exactly to the πορεία with which Moschus opened the poem.

The mere allusion to such "weighty" events as Europa's sons and the naming of a continent, especially when such triviata as girls' dreams and flower-picking are treated in such detail, is symptomatic of the epyllion's concentration upon women's concerns. This concern was behind Theocritus' inclusion of such domestic detail as sleeping arrangements, grinding women and screaming infants in Alcmena's house.22

The fact that Europa's future children are merely alluded to, rather than being discussed in detail, also seems to indicate the epyllion's movement away from the purely domestic concerns of Theocritus' poem. Even though Alcmena was the central character of that poem, it was clearly stated that all of her future fame would come through her association with her famous son. Even the epithet applied to her, ἀριστοτοκεία, identifies her simply with her role as Heracles' mother, rather than as a heroine in her own right. By contrast, Europa has had her own adventures, and the bearing of children is merely an adjunct to these adventures, rather than

22 A.S.Hollis (Callimachus' Hecale [Oxford, 1990], Introduction, 25-6) also noted that, in the epyllion, "important" events pertaining to the story at hand are often passed over in favour of such trivial incidents as may occur along the way.
comprising her sole role and identity.

The Inset Story

The inset section of Moschus' poem again emphasises the dominance of female characters in this version of the myth, in its concentration upon Europa's female ancestors as heroes of their own adventures with gods. The stories of Libya and, especially, Io, are recalled in the ecphrasis with which the poet describes the scenes depicted on Europa's wondrous flower basket.

Because of the scenes depicted on the basket, and because of the basket's own history, it comprises both a preparation for and a foreshadowing of Europa's adventures, and should thus be considered as parallel in meaning to her dream. The purpose of the scenes on the basket is to illustrate Europa's future using her own family's past. The basket, with its scenes depicting Io and her abduction by Zeus, was originally made by Hephaestus for Poseidon to give to Libya on the occasion of her own divine abduction. Thus the artefact

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23 Gutzwiller (67) notes separately the roles of both the dream and the basket as preparation for Europa's adventures.

24 Gutzwiller (67) views the use of the gift manufactured by Hephaestus and given to Europa as derived from the necklace, also made by Hephaestus, which Zeus gives to Europa in the pseudo-Hesiodic Catalogue of Women.

25 The introduction of Hephaestus at this point again suggests Moschus' humorous exploitation of traditional epic machinery in this poem. Rather than manufacturing weaponry and arms, as is his usual role, Hephaestus is here portrayed as making trinkets to aid the other gods in their seduction of
made for one divinely abducted woman who became the eponymous mother of a particular race, depicting an ancestor with a similar history, is passed through the female line to the third woman in the same family to share this fate.

Both the scenes depicted on the basket and its genealogy reflect the tendency to replicate elements from the main narrative in the digression, but there are some important differences between Europa's adventures and Io's. The most important contrast between the two stories is that, while Europa is simply carried off by the divine bull, Io must herself become the cow and, driven by the gadfly, provide her own bovine transportation to Egypt. And as Europa herself explains to Zeus, a sea voyage is neither natural nor easy for cattle. The difficulty of Io's journey is emphasised by Moschus' description of the effort which she must expend in her swimming: φοιταλίη δὲ πόδεσαιν ἐφ' ἀλμυρά βαίνε κέλευθα, νηχομένη λιέλη (46-7). In contrast to this, Zeus moves as naturally in the water as he does on land, travelling as a dolphin would, as if in his own element:

η δὲ τότ' ἐρχομένοιο γαληνιάσακε θάλασσα,
κήτεα δ' ἄμφις ἀταλλε Διὸς προπάροιθε ποδοῖν,
γνθόσυνος δ' ύπερ οίδμα κυβίστεε βυσσόθε δελφίς.

115-7

mortal women.

Some of these are noted by Crump (70) and Schmiel (269).

... πῶς δὲ κέλευθα ἁργαλὲ' εἰλιπόδεσαι διέρχει οὐδὲ
θάλασσαν δειμαίνεις; (135-7) and οὐθ' ἔλυοι δελφίνες ἐπὶ χθονὸς
οὔτε τι τάρτροι ἐν πόνῳ στιχώσαι (141-2)
Europa's journey is made that much easier by the apparent ease and naturalness of her ride. The key to this difference between Europa's journey and Io's seems to lie in the degree of willingness of the woman involved. As we have seen, Europa, though puzzled by her circumstances, is willing to accept whatever her dream may herald. It is, after all, Europa's own suggestion that the girls should attempt to ride the bull: δευθ' ἐτάραι φίλιας καὶ ὃμηλικες, ὅφρ' ἐπὶ τῷ ἔτοιμαι ταῦρῳ τερπώμεθα (102-3). Europa is apparently happy to accept whatever might happen. In contrast to Europa's happy excitement, we may cite Io's resistance to Zeus' designs, which Aeschylus made clear in his version of the story. In view of the similarity of the dream episodes in the two works, it is especially tempting to believe that Moschus does have Aeschylus' version of Io's adventures in mind, and does consider Io to be reluctant to comply with Zeus' demands.

Despite this major contrast, the tales of the two abducted maidens in Moschus' poem have, essentially, the same

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28 As Schmiel (268) notes, Europa's advances to the bull when it appears seem to indicate a willingness to experiment. I cannot, however, agree with Schmiel that Europa is fully aware of the possibility of abduction, and actually hopes to be carried off.

29 Prometheus Vinctus 640sqq.

30 The difference between Io's terror and reluctance in Aeschylus' play, and Europa's willing and active participation in her own adventure in Moschus' poem, is also noted by Schmiel (269).
ending. At the end of their respective stories, both Io and Europa are transformed by a simple touch from Zeus. The second scene on Europa's basket shows Zeus touching Io and thus restoring her to her proper form. It was by this touch, too, that Zeus impregnated Io with her famous son Epaphos, from whom the Egyptian race is descended. This scene is echoed in the final scene of Moschus' poem, where Zeus restores himself to his own proper form and then transforms Europa into the mother of famous children:

... Ζεύς δὲ πάλιν σφετέρην ἀνελάξετο μορφήν
λύσε δὲ οἱ μύτηρν καὶ οἱ λέχος ἐγένος Ἐπάφος.
ἡ δὲ πάρος κοῦρη Ζηνὸς γένεστ’αὐτίκα κυρφή,
καὶ Κρόνιόθ τέκνα τίκτε καὶ αὐτίκα γίνετο μήτηρ
163-6

This theme of transformation is also found in the third scene on the basket in which, by Hermes' "touch", Argus is transformed from a cowherd into a wondrous bird. The transformation of Argus' blood into the bird's feathers also provides a frame for the events on the basket, since the

Both Schmiel (269) and Gutzwiller (69) express particular interest in the connexion between Zeus' touch which restores Io to her senses and her proper form, and Europa's touch which tames the bull. Gutzwiller in particular sees Europa's touch as "an explicitly sexual act", and a reflection of the action by which Zeus impregnates Io.

Gutzwiller (67) also notes the transformation theme in the third basket scene. Schmiel (271) suggests that the bird arising from Argus' blood is actually a phoenix rather than the traditional peacock. Since Moschus mentions that Europa's father was named Phoenix (7), this would provide a "genealogy" for her father's name to match that given for her mother's family in the basket's own history. Schmiel notes that Herodotus (2.73) had said that the phoenix had wings of red and gold, while Moschus' bird originates in the blood and spreads its feathers over the rim of the golden basket.
bird’s plumage becomes flowery (πολυναυθεί, 59) and surrounds the basket’s rim (61). The parallel between the two stories is thus emphasised, as the worlds inhabited by both Europa and Io are framed by flowers and sea.

The story on the basket again illustrates the pre-eminence of the female characters in the poem. The entire basket, of course, relates the adventures of Io. But the events shown demonstrate the machinations of Hera, who caused them all. It was, after all, for fear of Hera that Zeus originally transformed Io into a heifer, and it was then Hera who set Argus to guard the creature thus created. That Hera’s part in the story is not mentioned explicitly in Moschus’ poem does not negate her importance. Rather, she seems by this distance to become an even more powerful figure, controlling the events without herself becoming involved, just as she did in Theocritus’ poem, in which she was also not mentioned explicitly. Although Hera’s involvement is in reaction to events affecting her, while Aphrodite initiates

33 Gutzwiller (67-8) mentions the importance of the flowers and water as framing devices in both parts of the poem.

34 Zeus’ fear of Hera is certainly a factor in Ovid’s version of the story: coniugis adventum praesenserat inque nitentem Inachidos vultus mutaverat ille iuvencam (Ovid, Metamorphoses 1.610-1).

35 Hera’s assigning of Argus to the post is also a feature of Ovid’s version of the story:

Paelice donata non protinus exuit
omnem diva metum timuitque Iovem et fuit anxia
furti,
donec Arestoridae servandam tradidit Argo.

Metamorphoses 1.622-4.
the events of the entire poem on her own initiative, the two goddesses are similar in their importance to the poem, and their management of the affairs in which they are involved. As was Theocritus' poem, Moschus' epyllion relating the adventures of women is largely controlled by female divinities.

One of the chief developments in the genre since the time of Theocritus' poem is the expansion of the poems' sphere beyond such specific domestic detail as abounded in Idyll 24. Although Moschus' poem begins in a specific and circumscribed household, focussing on its concerns, the dream which Aphrodite sends to Europa in the opening lines indicates that larger spheres are opening for the heroine. Her progress from her bedroom at home to the island of Crete, whence she will cause an entire continent to begin, is indicative of the change in the status of the genre's heroines. It is also an explanation of the omission of Europa's children from her story. Alcmena's story, by contrast, concentrated exclusively on her raising of her heroic son, as was natural since the birth and raising of Heracles constituted her only adventure. Europa had an adventure of her own before even beginning her life as a mother of famous sons.

The interests of the heroines have thus also been transformed with the genre. Theocritus' Alcmena was thoroughly absorbed in the interests of her male household.
Her greatest concern was the welfare and education of her sons. In the service of these interests, Alcmena consulted the local prophet, who is usually connected in some way with heroic events, and enlists a host of former heroes as Heracles' tutors. Europa, by contrast, displays no concern at all for the affairs of her father and brothers, no husband to consider, and no particular interest in the children she will bear.

Still, the heroines of these Hellenistic epyllia are still both, in essence, women who bear children and are important to mythology for the children they will raise. Alcmena's greatest fame is for her son Heracles, and Europa's chief contribution to human history will be through her sons, Minos and Rhadamanthys. This creative function of the heroines is the element most to be transformed in the development of the Latin forms of the genre.

The efficacy of the goddesses who govern the action of the epyllion has also changed from Theocritus' poem to Moschus'. Although it was Hera who sent the snakes to strangle Heracles, her purpose was thwarted by a mere infant. By contrast, even Zeus himself accepts Aphrodite's plans for him and Europa in Moschus' narrative. The governing goddess has developed into a much more powerful and effective figure. This may, of course, be simply a function of the goddess in question. For although Hera does enjoy some primacy in Moschus' story of Io, here, too, she is eventually thwarted.
The prime position of the goddess in the poem may in fact be limited to Aphrodite alone. But even this looks forward in the development of the epyllion, since the power of Aphrodite will play an even greater part in the later epyllia. Her power, like the nature of the heroines in the poems, will also become increasingly destructive as the epyllion develops.

36 If this power is limited to Aphrodite, it recalls the statement regarding her prowess in the Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite:

τῶν δ' ἄλλων οὐ πέρ τι πεφυγμένων ἔστ' Ἀφροδίτην
οὔτε θεῶν μακάρων οὔτε θνητῶν ἀνθρώπων
καὶ τε παρὲκ Ζηνός νῦν ἡγαγε τερίκεραύνον
δατε μέγιστος τ' ἐστι μεγίστης τ' ἐξιμορε τιμῆς

34-7
CHAPTER III
Catullus 64

Catullus' 64th poem, "Peleus and Thetis", is unique among epyllia in that, in this poem, the inset story is so expanded as to become (almost) a separate entity, a second epyllion in its own right. And in the two epyllia thus linked, Catullus features two very different types of women. The original epyllion, the framing story, focuses on Thetis, who follows the patterns appropriate for women as heroes of the other epyllia which I have examined. She is established in a family setting and very much concerned with her family and, while very much the centre of attention in her portion of the poem, she succeeds in her endeavors without recourse to drastic or destructive measures. Catullus deliberately contrasts Thetis

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with Ariadne, whom we find in very desperate straits indeed, having taken drastic action and destroyed her home and family in pursuit of her own ends.

Along with this contrast in his heroines, Catullus presents a telling contrast between the worlds in which the two women move. Thetis is an integral part of a settled and comparatively civilised family group. Ariadne, by contrast, originally from the sort of strange and dysfunctional family more common to epic and tragedy, is pictured in a chaotic setting, and her civic and domestic backgrounds are presented only so that she might destroy them.

The two stories present opposing pictures of life in general, and of life in the heroic age in particular. Thetis’ story is almost comic, in the same sense as New Comedy, in its assurance of the possibility of happy endings for its central characters. By contrast, Ariadne’s story is dark and despairing, presenting a vision of almost gothic horror for all mortals. The way in which Catullus combines the two stories, integrating Ariadne’s into the centre of Thetis’, negates the possibility of either being considered a true vision of mortal destiny. But if the effect of the happy wedding story is saddened by the knowledge of the war to come and the possibility of such actions as Theseus’ and Ariadne’s, even so is the horror of these events made more bearable by the prospect of occasional happy endings, such as Peleus and Thetis here enjoy.
Catullus opens his poem with a brief introductory passage, establishing the background to the story of Peleus and Thetis:

Peliaco quondam prognatae vertice pinus
dicuntur liquidas Neptuni nasse per undas
Phasidos ad fluctus et fines Aeeteos,
cum lecti iuvenes, Argivae robora pubis,
auratam optantes Colchis avertere pellem
ausi sunt vada salsa cita decurrere puppi,
caerula verrentes abiegnis aequora palmis.
diva quibus retinens in summis urbis arces
ipsa levi fecit volitantem flamine currum,
pinea coniugens inflexae texta carinae.
1-10.

Through this much of the poem all is background. The story itself does not actually begin until the mutual sighting of the nymphs and the mariners:

emersere freti candenti e gurgite vultus
aequoreae monstrum Nereides admirantes.
ila, atque <haud> alia, viderunt luce marinas
mortales oculis nudato corpore Nymphas
14-7.

With this vision of the nymphs, Catullus introduces into his poem the same mood of light and harmless adventure which characterised (in particular) Moschus' *Europa*, thus creating the atmosphere of the earlier style of epyllion. At the same time Catullus narrows the focus of the narrative. Through line 17, there are two large groups participating in the action: the Argonauts and the Nereids. After the mutual sighting, the narrator is concerned only with one individual from each group: Thetis and Peleus, whose romance and marriage constitutes the external, framing portion of the poem:
Having thus introduced all of the necessary characters and the mission which brought Peleus into contact with Thetis, Catullus proceeds quickly into the essential events of the story to be told. In this case, the wedding itself is of prime importance. All else is background to the story of Thetis and her marriage.

**Thetis as Hero**

Thetis' part in the original encounter and the resultant marriage is given at least as much attention as Peleus'. *Tum Thetis humanos non despexit hymenaeos* (20) follows immediately upon, and is given the same stress as, *tum Thetidis Peleus incensus fertur amore* (19). This contradicts exactly the statement in the *Iliad*, that Thetis married Peleus against her will.\(^2\) As well, Pindar\(^3\) and Ovid\(^4\) mention the struggles by which Peleus finally conquered Thetis.\(^5\) But an admission of

\(^2\) έκ μέν μ’άλλασάν αλιάσαν ανδρί δάμασσεν, Αιακίδη Πηλή, καί ἔτην ανέρος εύνην πολλά μάλ' οὐκ ἔθελοσα.  

\(^3\) *Nemean* 3.35-6: καὶ ποντίαν θέτων κατέμαρψεν ἕγκοντι.

\(^4\) *Metamorphoses* 11.238sgg.

\(^5\) These other variations on the story are also noted by D. Konstan (*Catullus' Indictment of Rome: The Meaning of Catullus 64* [Amsterdam, 1977] 4), who cites R. Reitzenstein, "Die Hochzeit des Peleus und der Thetis," *Hermes* 35 (1900) 73-105.
an unhappy or enforced marriage would not only place Thetis in a subordinate position in the partnership. It would also neutralise the relaxed and happy atmosphere which Catullus is at pains to create in this part of the poem. If Thetis were forced into this marriage, it would be rather more difficult to believe that she, as well as Peleus, would be eternally happy in this union.

We might also note that it is specifically Thetis' wedding, not that of Peleus and Thetis, which Apollo and Diana refuse to attend: nec Thetidis taedas voluit celebrare iugalis (302). Catullus clearly intends that Thetis be considered the star character in this story.

It is also noteworthy that it was the Nereids who first saw the Argonauts, rather than vice versa: emersere freti candenti e gurgite vultus aequoreae monstrum Nereides admirantes (14-5). The women seem always to be the active agents in the work. This emphasis upon female characters as central to all portions of the narrative is apparent even from the opening lines of the poem, where Athena's role as protector of Athens and originator of the Argonauts' journey, and thus of all the subsequent events, is emphasised:

diva quibus retinens in summis urbibus arces
tipsa levi fecit volitantem flamine currum,
pinea coniugens inflexae texta carinae.

8-10.

We should also note the incidental reference to Amphitrite, rather than Neptune, as representative of the sea: illa rudem cursu prima imbuit Amphitriten (11).
In this "outer epyllion", after the ecphrasis which comprises the internal epyllion, Catullus continues his emphasis on female characters and their precedence over the male in the picture of the Parcae, who arrive to sing the epithalamium for Thetis and Peleus:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{cum interea infirmo quatientes corpora motu} \\
\text{veridicos Parcae coeperunt edere cantus.} \\
\text{His corpus tremulum complectens undique vestis} \\
\text{candida purpurea talos incincherat ora,} \\
\text{at roseae niveo residebant vertice vittae,} \\
\text{aeternumque manus carpebant rite laborem.} \\
\text{Laeva colum molli lana retinebat amictum.}
\end{align*}
\]

305-11.

In other versions of the story of this wedding, it was always Apollo who sang the marriage hymn for Thetis and Peleus. Catullus introduces in Apollo's stead the Parcae, old women who devote their time and energies to the wholly feminine and domestic pursuit of wool-working. The Parcae participate in the same sort of approved feminine pursuits which Alcmena (and, to an extent, Europa) follows, and which such maddened heroines as are found in Parthenius' stories, and in certain later epyllia, actively reject. The only apparently remarkable thing about the Parcae is the fact that their spinning is of cosmic, rather than purely domestic, significance.\(^6\)

\(^6\) Other versions of the story are mentioned by Homer (Iliad 18.429sgg, 24.60sgg), Pindar (Nemean 3.34, 4.62) and Ovid (Metamorphoses 11.238).

\(^7\) J.C. Bramble ("Structure and Ambiguity in Catullus LXIV," PCPS 196 [1970] 28) believes that everything about the Parcae in this poem is paradoxical. As he writes, "Their clothing is bright: but their bodies are old. They sing of the happiness
The Domestic Setting

The introductory passages, besides giving the background of Thetis' story, also establish the importance of civic and family relations within this poem. In this opening, as mentioned above, Catullus refers to Athena as *diva retinens in summis urbis arces* (8). This recalls Athena's role as protector of Athens, and may indicate that the ensuing story will feature the preservation of social relations in the positive, constructive context of the city and the families which make up the city. The importance of such a settled and ordered atmosphere is also introduced with the first sighting of Thetis, who first appears as part of a group of her sisters, the sea-nymphs. Thetis' acceptance of her family's interest in her affairs, and their (almost universal) acceptance of her marriage, also reinforces the importance of settled domestic harmony. Catullus takes particular care to indicate the approval with which Thetis' divine family regards the union. Jupiter himself, father of all the gods, gives Peleus to Thetis (*Thetidi pater ipse iugandum Pelea sensit*, 21), and Thetis' immediate maritime family also approves the match: *suam Tethys concessit ducere neptem, Oceanusque* (29-30). Thetis' involvement with her family and her concern for their contented well-being seem as sincere and thorough as were Alcmena's in Theocritus' poem.

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of Peleus and Thetis: but they also sing of the ambiguous *virtus* of their son."
Although no member of Peleus' family is mentioned in the poem, he, too, is established in the context of human relations through the presence of all of his Thessalian subjects at the wedding:

\[
\text{quis simul optatae finito tempore luces advenere, domum conventu tota frequentat Thessalia, oppletur laetanti regia coetu: dona ferunt praee se, declarant gaudia vultu 31-4.}
\]

Peleus' importance to the Thessalians has in fact been clear from his earliest appearances in the poem, when Catullus calls him \textit{Thessalia column Peleu} (27). The fact that the marriage is actually performed on his home ground, in his own house, also indicates the intimate connexions with his home on Peleus' part, paralleling Thetis' involvement with her own family.*

The Prophecy

The songs which the Parcae sing about Achilles as they spin recall the songs which the Argive women sing about Heracles as they go about their work, in Theocritus 24:

\[
\text{πολλαὶ Ἀχαϊάδων μαλακὸν περὶ γούνατι νῆμα χειρὶ κατατρίψουσιν ἀκρέπερον ἀείδοισιν Ἀλκμήνα νομαστὶ, αἶβας δ' ἔση Ἀργείασι 76-8.}
\]

As was the case in Theocritus' poem, the glories of the son as sung by the women directly reflect the glories of the hero's...
mother. The future glorious exploits of Achilles as they are sung by the Parcae serve largely to enhance the glories of Thetis in Catullus' poem. We should also note Catullus' return to the importance of children in a woman's life and adventures. The future glories of Thetis' son are as integral a part of the woman's life within the context of the poem as were the future glories of Heracles' to Alcmena in Theocritus' poem. The indifference of such a woman as Europa to such considerations has no place in Catullus' poem at this point.

The song which the Parcae sing, prophesying the future glories of Achilles, especially emphasises the women whose lives will be affected by his exploits. Chief among these is Thetis, of course, but by far the most striking example of Achilles' affect on women is the description of Polyxena and her death at Achilles' tomb:

nam simul ac fessis dederit fors copiam Achivis
urbis Dardaniae Neptunia solvere vincla,
alta Polyxena madefient caede sepulcra,
quae, velut ancipiti succumbens victima ferro,
proiciet truncum submisso poplite corpus.

366-70.

The last event which brings glory to Achilles also brings destruction to a young woman. But it is also clear that Achilles' final accomplishment is due to the actions, voluntary or not, of Polyxena.

Most of Achilles' victories are most graphically illustrated in the Parcae's song through the effects that these victories will have on the mothers of his victims:

illius egregias virtutes claraque facta
Although it is the young men who die at his hand, they seem to
be important only as far as they affect their mothers. Here,
as in the rest of the poem, it is the female characters who
are of primary importance. Achilles' fame, like that of
Heracles in Theocritus' poem, is transmitted chiefly through
women.

The concern for the fate of the children which is clear
in Catullus' poem, both in the mourning of the mothers and in
the concentration of the epithalamium on the future offspring
of the match, rather than on the couple themselves, is also
indicative of the epyllion's focus on the women's sphere and
women's concerns, as it was seen in Theocritus' *Idyll* 24 and,
eventually, *Europa*. The apparently gratuitous prophecy of the
Parcae about Achilles recalls Teiresias' solicited statement
about the fate of Heracles. To provide even greater cause for
pride to Achilles' parents, the Parcae devote a significant
portion of their song to Achilles' future prowess in
athletics, war and hunting:

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9 That the mothers in Catullus' poem are shown mourning at
the actual funerals of their fallen sons clearly recalls
Homer's Hecuba, since she was the only Trojan mother in the
*Iliad* whose mourning for her son was actually depicted (*Iliad*
24.747sgq). This description of the mourning mothers may also
recall the only mother of an Achaean hero who is shown
grieving in the *Iliad*, Thetis herself. Catullus makes no
mention of Thetis mourning her son at all. He clearly intends
to submerge her potential sorrow in that of the mothers of
Achilles' rivals.
This passage both recalls and expands upon Teiresias' prophecy that Heracles will be نفذ وكي تهروا پاندا آنیرهς ήςονες άλλοι (Theocritus 24.81). It may also serve the same purpose as Teiresias' prophecy shared with that of Eurymachus at Odyssey 16.435sqq: to provide some confidence and encouragement to the parent of the young man whose success is thus foretold. Catullus emphasises the happiness and encouragement which the Parcae bring to Peleus, especially, through their prophecy: Talia praefantes quondam felicia Pelei carmina divino cecinerunt pectore Parcae (382-3).

The song of the Parcae also indicates Catullus' adherence to another tradition of the epyllion, the provision of a reliable summary of the future life of the heroine of the story. Theocritus introduced Teiresias, the best known of all the seers, into his poem to summarise for Alcmena the life of Heracles, that is, her own future through her son. Moschus had Zeus himself lay out for Europa the fame which awaited her, especially through her future children. Both of these prophets can be relied upon to give the most reliable of prophecies. Catullus could have included an equally reliable prophecy had he used Apollo, as other poets did, to sing the hymn at the wedding. But the presence of the Parcae goes.
beyond even Apollo, the patron of prophecy. While Apollo could foretell the future with unerring accuracy, the Parcae actually create the future as they sing it. Catullus has, in the quest for the most reliable prophet, gone straight to the source of these events. The Parcae can never be wrong.

Catullus specifically emphasises the truth of the prophecy of the Parcae, from the very introduction of the song: *Opis carissime nato, accipe, quod laeta tibi pandunt luce sorores, veridicum oraclum* (324-6). Bramble originally finds it odd that Catullus take such trouble to point out that the Parcae tell the truth. We do not, after all, expect the Parcae to lie or err. It is our expectations, Bramble believes, which prompt Catullus' protestations of veracity, because the song of the Parcae contains so many elements alien to both the mood of the wedding and the expectations of a prophecy in an epyllion. There is, in the song, too much of blood and destruction. We and the guests would not, perhaps, believe that these things were possible, if they came from any other source.

I consider that Catullus states so explicitly that the prophecies about Achilles, his glories and his destruction, are true because they are far more true than anything else in the poem. This prophecy is the only episode where good and bad fortune, happy and tragic life, creative and destructive forces are mingled freely. In the poem as a whole, the happy

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10 Bramble (28).
and the tragic aspects of life are segregated, kept separate by the two opposite heroines. This prophecy of things to come presents the integration of these two aspects of existence. In these scenes Catullus joins the lives of both fortunate women, such as Thetis,\textsuperscript{11} with the most unfortunate of women, represented by the Trojan women in general and by Polyxena in particular. What the Parcae sing is the truest picture of life in the entire poem.

It could be argued that the Parcae's prophecy deviates from the epyllion's tradition in that it foretells, in the end, slaughter and destruction and human sacrifice (343sgg). Not only does their song seem to violate the tradition of a prosperous and happy future foretold for the heroine, it also seems to introduce into the poem the sort of civic and domestic destruction which is alien to the earlier epyllion, but which seems to develop in the later examples. This civic destruction culminates in the Parcae's description of the Trojan war:

\begin{quote}
. . . Phrygii Teucro manabunt sanguine rivi, 
Troicaque obsidens longinquo moenia bello 
periuri Pelopis vastabit tertius heres.
\end{quote}

344-6.

The presence of such devastation in a supposedly innocent epyllion can be considered rather less anomalous, when we note that none of the destruction and distress which the\footnote{In the Homeric tradition, Thetis was not considered fortunate. But, as I have noted, Catullus removes from his version of the story most of the references to the disastrous ending of this marriage.}
Parcae foretell will actually effect the main characters of the poem, Peleus and Thetis themselves. The only portion of the prophecy that pertains to their lives is the knowledge that they will have a famous and glorious son:\(^{12}\)

\[
\text{nascetur vobis expers terroris Achilles,} \\
\text{hostibus haud tergo, sed forti pectore notus,} \\
\text{qui persaepe vago victor certamine cursus} \\
\text{flammea praeventet celeris vestigia cervae.}
\]

This prophecy should be as reassuring to Thetis and Peleus as Teiresias' prophecy was to Alcmena, as no hint of real evil is given. Even the certainty of Achilles' early death, of which Thetis is clearly aware in the *Iliad,\(^{13}\) is omitted from the prophecy.\(^{14}\)

The prospect of the destruction which Achilles will wreak among the Trojans will, in fact, actually contribute to the good fortune of Thetis and Peleus. As the mother of a son who will become an epic hero, Thetis is expected to delight in her son's martial exploits, as Hector expects that Andromache will

\(^{12}\) Achilles' primacy is especially seen in his domination not only of the other fighters, but also of nature itself:

\[
\text{testis erit magnis virtutibus unda Scamandri,} \\
\text{quae passim rapido diffunditur Hellesponto,} \\
\text{cuius iter caesis angustans corporum acervis} \\
\text{alta tepefaciet permixta flumina caede.}
\]

\(^{356-60}\)

\(^{13}\) ... ἔπει νῦ τοι αἴσα μίνυνθα περ, οὐ τι μάλα δήν. νῦν

\\
δ' ἀμα τ' ῥκύμορος καὶ ὀἴξυρος περὶ πάντων ἐπλεο (Iliad 1.416-7).

\(^{14}\) This was also noted by J. Boes ("Le mythe d'Achille vu par Catulle: Importance de l'amour pour une morale de la gloire," REL 64 [1986] 104-15).
rejoice in those of Astyanax, as he brings to her his bloody spoils: ... φέροι δ’ ἐναρα βροτόεντα κτείνας δήιον ἀνδρα, χαρεῖ η δὲ φρένα μήτηρ (Iliad 6.480-1). The joy which Peleus takes in the exploits of the Achaean warriors, and especially (we must believe) of his son, is also a matter of epic record:

ἡ κε μέγ’οιμώζειε γέρων ἱππηλάτα Πηλεύς,
ἐσθός Μυρμιδόνων βουληφόρος ἡδ’ ἀγορητής,
ὡς ποτὲ μ’ εἰρόμενοςμεγ’ ἐγηθεν ο ενι οίκω,
pάντων Ἀργαίων ἐρέων γενεήν τε τόκου τε.
Iliad 7.125-8.

As the parents of an epic hero, especially of the greatest epic hero, Peleus and Thetis can take only joy from the knowledge that they will have such a son. The sorrow which he will bring to the world will, apparently, affect them not at all.

It could be suggested that Thetis could only be saddened by such a prophecy, through empathy for the mothers who will see their sons destroyed by Achilles. In any other context I would consider this a distinct possibility. In this case, however, there is a great natural separation between Thetis and the Trojan women who will be so affected by her son, by virtue of the fact that she is an immortal, while they are mere mortal women. Despite Catullus’ assertions about the free mixing between gods and mortals in the heroic age, there is a gulf separating them.

The horrors of the Trojan war are still further distanced from Thetis and Peleus themselves by Catullus’ omission of any mention of the causes of this war. The tradition that the war
began with Eris' actions at this same wedding is nowhere apparent in Catullus' version. G.B. Townend\(^\text{16}\) believes that Catullus does in fact come to the very brink of introducing Eris and the origins of the Trojan war into this portion of the poem, and writes that "it is clear that she made her ominous appearance while the wedding-song was still being sung: that is to say, precisely at the point where Catullus breaks off his account." Townend's theory would make the war and its horrors, by the author's intention, far more immediate than they actually seem to be. In any case, by Catullus' avoidance of its origins, the Trojan war and the sorrow it will bring to so many is removed from the immediate concerns of Peleus' and Thetis' marriage into the realm of stories, no more real and of no more immediate consequence to the principals than the story of Ariadne which appears on their bed covering.

The harmlessness of the events foretold by the Parcae is enhanced by the fact that only the family of the gods hears of them. The mortals, those who are subject to horrors and war and death, have been carefully removed from the scene before

\(^{15}\) In fact, the only explicit source remaining for this tradition in Hyginus, *Fabulae* 92.1:

Io vis cum Thetis Peleo nuberet ad epulum dicitur omnis deos convocasse excepta Eride, id est Discordia, quae cum postea supervenisset nec admitteretur ad epulum, ab Ianua misit in medium malum, dicit quae esset formosissima attoleret.

the possibility of such events is admitted: quae postquam cupide spectando Thessala pubes expleta est, sanctis coepit decidere divis (267-8). Only the gods, who are immune to such suffering, and who will, in fact, regard these events with a certain amount of detachment and amusement, are present to hear of the horrors to come. And to them this, too, is simply a story.17

With such horrors removed into the distance, the song of the Parcae becomes little more than a traditional marriage hymn, wishing good fortune and happiness for the couple involved, if not for anyone else.

It is significant in this respect that Catullus avoids even the hint of the marital discord which mars this marriage in other versions of the tradition. He does not mention the story which Apollonius tells, in which Thetis left Peleus after a disagreement over her methods of child care,18 or any hint of Thetis’ repeated complaints about her situation.19 In fact, according to Catullus and his Parcae, Peleus and Thetis will enjoy extraordinary domestic felicity:

nulla domus tales umquam contexit amores,  
nullus amor tali coniunxit foedere amantes,  
qualis adest Thetidi, qualis concordia Peleo.  
334-6.

---

17 The exception to the divinity of the audience for this song is Peleus himself, who has joined the divine family, and whose joy at the future exploits of his son is strongly noted.

18 Argonautica 4.869sqq.

19 Especially at Iliad 18.429sqq, 24.60sqq.
Peleus and Thetis are destined for an eternally happy and productive union, based on a reasonable and socially acceptable mutual love.

The Inset Tale

With the ecphrasis describing the coverlet on the marriage bed, Catullus introduces into the poem a story featuring a love affair which is the exact opposite to this. The story of Ariadne and Theseus presents a destructive vision of love and life.

This internal epyllion begins with an introductory passage, as did the poem as a whole, in which Catullus describes the background and reasons for Theseus' journey to Crete:

nam perhibent olim crudeli peste coactam
Androgeoneae poenas exsolvere caedis
 electos iuvenes simul et decus innuptarum
Cecropiam solitam esse dadem dare Minotauro.
Quis angusta malis cum moenia vexarentur,
ipse suum Theseus pro caris corpus Athenis
 proicere optavit potius quam talia Cretam
funera Cecropiae nec funera portarentur.

76-83.

Ariadne as Hero

Like Thetis, like Andromache, Ariadne enjoys the central and most prominent position in her own "epyllion". Ariadne's position as the hero of the piece is obvious from the introduction of the story. The bedspread is described as depicting the deeds of heroes (*haec vesta priscis hominum variata figuris heroum mira virtutes indicat arte, 50-1*), and
admittedly Theseus is the first character mentioned. But his name is in the accusative case, indicating that he is the recipient of whatever great deeds virtutes heroum might refer to. Ariadne herself is the first subject noun to appear, and it is thus clear that she is the agent of these doings. She is clearly the hero, the active character, in the story that follows.20

The overwhelming importance of Ariadne is also obvious in Catullus' almost exclusive concentration on her in the poem. Not only does the passage open with a picture of Ariadne,21 the narrative portion of the epyllion seems to exist only to provide a background for her predicament at the opening of the story. This much is indicated by the word nam (76) linking the story of Theseus' actions to the scene of Ariadne on the beach.

20 C. Deroux ("Mythe et vecu dans l'epyllion des 'Noces de Thetis et de Pelee',' Hommages a Jozef Verremans: Collection Latomus [1986] 82) doesn't believe that either character is meant to be the hero: "Ni l'un ni l'autre ne sont glorieux. Catulle demystifie; indicare ce n'est pas seulement 'montrer', c'est aussi 'demasquer'; 'faire voir ce qui se cache derriere les apparences'."

21 namque fluentisono prospectans litore Diae
Thesea cedentem celeri cum classe tuetur
indomitos in corde gerens Ariadna furores
...
saxea ut effigies bacchantis, prospicit, eheu
prospicit et magnis curarum fluctuat undis,
non flavo retinens subtilem vertice mitram,
non contacta levi velatum pectus amictu
non tereti strophio lactentis vincta papillas,
omnis quae toto delapsa e corpore passim
ipsius ante pedes fluctus salis alludebant.
50-66.
Catullus also concentrates almost exclusively on Ariadne’s reactions throughout Theseus’ adventures on Crete. Thus although it is to Minos that Theseus comes (ad Minoa venit sedesque superbas, 85), it is Minos’ daughter whose response is reported:

hunc simul ac cupidó conspexit lumine virgo regia . . .
non prius ex illo flagrantia declinavit lumina, quam cuncto concepit corpore flammam funditus atque imis exarsit tota medullis.

When Theseus goes into the labyrinth to meet the Minotaur, it is also Ariadne’s terror at the prospect which is emphasised (quanto saepe magis fulgore expallit auri, 100), rather than the feelings of Theseus or any of the other Athenians who accompanied him. Theseus, in fact, does not seem to be emotionally involved at all with any of the events. Even his reaction to his father’s death is related as simply a reflexion of Ariadne’s own distraction:

Sic, funesta domus ingressus tecta paterna morte, ferox Theseus, qualem Minoidi luctum obtulerat mente immemori, talem ipse recepit.

22 We would expect that Theseus’ companions would watch his foray into the labyrinth with some trepidation. This was certainly the attitude of his companions when Theseus dove into the sea in Baccylides’ poem about the expedition to Crete:

τρέσσαν δ’ Ἀθαναίων
ηῆθέων -- γένος, ἐπεὶ
ήρως θόρευν πάντοτε, κα-
tα λειρίων τ’ ὀμμάτων δα-
κρυ χέον, βαρεῖαν ἐπιδέγμενοι ἀνάγκαν
Bacchylides 17.92-6.
Catullus also indicates that Ariadne's assistance was instrumental in Theseus' success, in his mention of the string by which Theseus found his way out of the labyrinth:

inde pedem sospes multa cum laude reflexit
errabunda regens tenui vestigia filo,
ne labyrintheis e flexibus egredientem
tecti frustraretur inobservabilis error.

112-5.

Although Catullus does not state explicitly at this point that Theseus' triumph was due to Ariadne's assistance, Ariadne herself takes to herself a share of the blame (or credit) for the death of the monster and the destruction of her family. In the rhetorical question *quemne ipsa reliqui, respersum iuvenem fraterna caede secuta?* (180-1), Ariadne blames herself not only for her abandonment of her home, but also for the very spattering of the blood, which, of course, Theseus himself actually accomplished (105-11).

Ariadne's father, Minos, is a remote and essentially ineffectual figure. Minos' only part in the events narrated in poem actually occurred in the distant past, and not within the context of the poem's time frame at all. His actions against the Athenians are reported merely as background and explanation of Theseus' expedition (76-85). Even this is narrated in the passive, so that Minos' name need not be mentioned until the end of the explanation. Androgeos appears (77), the Minotaur appears (79); but Minos himself is absent until Theseus approaches his halls, some thirty lines after the appearance of Ariadne herself. Minos' chief function is
simply as the father of the heroine, an obstacle in her pursuit of her passion, to be removed by betrayal.

A large part of this secondary epyllion is taken up by Ariadne’s lament on the shore, and in this, too, Catullus emphasises her central position in the poem. The very fact that she speaks for herself in the poem marks her out. Only she and the Parcae, at Thetis’ wedding, actually speak in Catullus’ entire poem. The Parcae speak only of the lives of others, and pronounce blessings upon them, while Ariadne describes her own predicament and pronounces her own curses. She thus engages the reader’s attention more than any other character in the work.

Ariadne’s lament contains many of the elements which are featured throughout the internal epyllion. Within the lament, these elements seem to be gathered around the theme of human, and especially male, infidelity:

 iam iam nulla viro iuranti femina credat, 
 nulla speret sermones esse fideles; 
 quis dum aliquid cupiens animus praegestit aspici, 
 nil metuunt iurare, nihil promittere parcunt: 
 sed simul ac cupidae mentis satiata libido est, 
 dicta nihil metuere, nihil periuria curant

143-7.

This theme of dishonesty and faithlessness contrasts with the situation portrayed in the external epyllion, but it is reflected in the epilogue with which Catullus finishes the poem:

 sed postquam tellus scelere est imbuta nefando 
 iustitiamque omnes cupida de mente fugarunt, 
 perfudere manus fraterno sanguine fratres,
destitit exstinctos gnatus lugere parentes,
opavit genitor primaevi funera nati,
liber ut innuptae poteretur flore novercae,
ignaro mater substernens se impia nato
impia non verita est divos scelerare penates.
omnia fanda nefanda malo permixta furore
iustificam nobis mentem avertere deorum.
quare nec talis dignuntur visere coetus,
hec se contingi patiuntur lumine claro.

397-408.

In her lament, Ariadne does not simply complain of her situation. Rather, she takes some action, as did the heroines of the other epyllia. As Alcmena consulted the prophet about her son, as Europa set out gaily to meet whatever adventures might come, Ariadne takes some active part in her own adventure, however hopeless the situation may appear. To this end, she pronounces a curse upon Theseus, in return for his betrayal of her:

quare facta virum multantes vindice poena
Eumenides, quibus anguino redimita capillo
frons exspriantis praeporat pectoris iras,
huc huc adventate, meas audite querellas,
quas ego, vae misera, extremis proferre medullis
cogor inops, ardens, amenti caeca furore.
Quae quoniam verae nascuntur pectore ab imo,
vos nolite pati nostrum vanescere luctum,
se d vel solam Theseus me mente reliquit,
tali mente, deae, funestet seque suosque.

192-201.

It is through this curse that Catullus introduces the events which follow upon Theseus’ return to Athens:

haec mandata prius constanti mente tenentem
Thesea ceu pulsaev ventorum flamine nubes
aereum nivei montis liquere cacumen.
at pater, ut summa prospectum ex arce petebat,
anxia in assiduos absumens lumina fletus,
cum primum infecti conspexit linnea veli,
praecipitem sese scopulorum e vertice iecit,
anissum credens immiti Thesea fato.

238-45.
These events, including Aegeus' dive into the sea, are not included to illustrate the importance of Theseus and his family, but rather to illustrate the possible destructive effects of a woman maddened with a passionate love, and the potency of Ariadne herself.

Catullus' is the only version of this story in which Aegeus' death is connected in any way with the fate of Ariadne.\textsuperscript{23} Putnam\textsuperscript{24} suggests two possible reasons for Catullus' linking of the two events. The more superficial of the two is that the poet needed a bridge between the two parts of the poem. The other is that "it helps to show the reactions of two people to one figure who betrays them both." Although this latter is a plausible explanation, it does tend to make Theseus the most important figure in the triangle. This is an assumption easily made, in view of Catullus' statement introducing the ecphrasis, that the bedcover depicts \textit{heroum} . . . \textit{virtutes} (51), and Harmon\textsuperscript{25} does in fact expound on the virtues of Catullus' Theseus as a hero. But, as I have shown, Catullus here intends Ariadne to be the central figure and most effective character of this portion of the poem.

\textsuperscript{23} Apollodorus states merely that Theseus forgot about the sail in his grief over Dionysus' abduction of Ariadne (\textit{Lupusmeneos} δὲ θηευς ἐπ' Ἀριάδνη, \textit{Epitoma} 1.10). Pausanias corroborates this: \textit{τούτω}ν λήθην ἔσχεν Ἀριάδνην ἀφηρημένος (1.22.5). Plutarch attributes the omission to Theseus' joy at coming safely home to Athens (\textit{Theseus} 22.1).

\textsuperscript{24} Putnam (179).

\textsuperscript{25} Harmon (318-9).
Thus it is important that Catullus makes Ariadne herself and her curse, rather than Theseus and his forgetfulness, the active agents in Aegeus’ death. Only in Catullus’ version, the epyllion version of the story, has Ariadne become powerful and important enough to destroy Theseus’ family, as she destroyed her own.

The Domestic Setting — Reprise

This destruction of domestic and civic settings is a major theme of this portion of Catullus’ poem. Catullus takes care to first establish, and then destroy, these domestic and civic backgrounds for both Theseus and Ariadne.

In the flashback explaining Theseus’ voyage to Crete, Catullus attempts to show the hero as a civic creature, thoroughly involved in the life and welfare of his city. It is because of this trait that Theseus originally set out for Crete:

\[
\text{quis angusta malis cum moenia vexarentur,}
\text{ipse suum Theseus pro caribs corpus Athenis}
\text{proicere optavit potius quam talia Cretam}
\text{funera Cecropiae nec funera portarentur.}
\]

But it seems that Theseus quickly forgot his high purpose when he arrived at Crete. When he went forth to meet the monster, Theseus seemed concerned not so much with freeing his city from its obligation as with winning glory for himself: \textit{cum saevum cupiens contra contendere monstrum aut mortem appeteret Theseus aut praemia laudis} (101-2). With this Theseus seems
to become more like Achilles or any epic hero, fighting to win personal glory, and becomes even more of a contrast with the "hero", the central male figure of the external epyllion. Peleus retains his connexions with his Thessalian countrymen even upon his marriage to a god, while Theseus seems to forget his fellow Athenians for a time when glory calls. As well, the Argonautic heroes, of whom Peleus was one, were always more effective as a group, and not given to the sort of individual action that Theseus is here pursuing.

Theseus' domestic background is more firmly established in a later flashback, explaining the background to the working of Ariadne's curse, with the touching parting scene between Theseus and his aged father Aegeus:

```
namque ferunt olim, classi cum moenia divae
linquentem gnatum ventis concrederet Aegeus,
talia complexum iuveni mandata dedisse:
"gnate mihi longa iucundior unice vita,
gnate, ego quem in dubios cogor dimittere casus,
reddite in extrema nuper mihi fine senectae,
quandoquidem fortuna mea ac tua fervida virtus
eripit invito mihi te, cui languida nondum
lumina sunt gnati cara saturata figura,
non ego gaudens laetanti pectore mittam
212-21.
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This especially identifies Theseus not only as the hero of Athens, but also as the only son of an aging and doting father. But by the time this scene appears, we have already seen the destructive capabilities of all of the characters in this story, and can be sure that such affection simply asks to be betrayed in some way. And it seems ironic that Catullus should so nearly approach the happy domesticity characteristic
of the earlier epyllion on his way to the utter destruction of the setting, which he effects with a graphic description of Aegeus' suicide:

\begin{quote}
  at pater, ut summa prospectum ex arce petebat,
  anxia in assiduos absumens lumina fletus,
  cum primum inflati conspexit lintea veli,
  praecipitem sese scopulorum e vertice iecit.
\end{quote}

241-4.

Such domestic happiness as is here so quickly destroyed was originally introduced with the poet's presentation of Ariadne herself, who is first described as a treasured and pampered daughter of the Cretan royal house:

\begin{quote}
  . . . virgo
  regia, quam suavis exspirans castus odores
  lectulus in molli complexu matris alebat,
  quales Eurotae praecingunt flumina myrtus
  aurave distinctos educit verna colores
\end{quote}

86-90.

A different type of domestic felicity is next suggested by Ariadne herself, in her lament, as she reminds Theseus of the marriage which he promised her:

\begin{quote}
  at non haec quondam blanda promissa dedisti
  voce mihi; non haec miseram sperare iubebas,
  sed conubia laeta, sed optatos hymenaeos
\end{quote}

139-41.

Her words, of course, recall Thetis' situation, and especially Thetis' happy marriage and the statement that Thetis humanos non despexit hymenaeos (20). But such comfortable situations and happy domesticity as Thetis enjoys are inappropriate to the destructive world in which Ariadne and Theseus move, and so the promise of marriage, along with all male promises, is dismissed contemptuously: iam iam nulla viro iuranti femina
credat (143).

Ariadne is so far gone in her frenzy that she even contemplates the possibility of going as a slave to Theseus' house:

attamen in vestras potuisti ducere sedes,
quae tibi iucundo famularer serva labore,  
candida permulcens liquidis vestigia lymphis,  
purpureave tuum consternens veste cubile.  
160-3.

The women of the earlier epyllia would never have considered such a possibility, so secure were they in their comfortable domestic settings. No more would Thetis, a goddess and happy wife of a hero, consider such a thing. The possibility of a woman becoming slave to a conquering invader is characteristic of the destructive and horrible world of the heroic epic, and is indeed the fate which Hector fears will befall Andromache after his death, at Iliad 6.454-8:

. . . δε κεν τις Ἀχαιῶν χαλκοχιτῶνων  
δακρυόσσαν ἀγητα, ἐλεύθερον ἡμαρ ἁπούρας,  
και κεν ἐν Ἀργεί ἑοῦσα πρὸς ἀλης ἵστον, ὑφαίνοις,  
και κεν ὑδρω φορέοις Μεσσηίδως ἢ Ὑπερείης  
pολλ’ ἀκαζομένη . . .

It is noteworthy that this fate, which Andromache fears and which Ariadne would gladly accept as a consolation prize, seems to be usually contingent upon the utter destruction of the woman's own home and family. Ariadne rejects and helps destroy her happy domestic life in the events which Catullus refuses to narrate:

. . . linquens genitoris filia vultum,  
ut consanguinae complexum, ut denique matris,  
quae misera in gnata deperdita laeta<batur>  
117-9.
Repeated references to Ariadne’s family and home throughout her story have helped to establish her, too, in a domestic context, so as to make her betrayal of these all the more striking. Ariadne’s potential for such disruption is first made evident in her mad scene. This madness is made clear from her first appearance in the poem, as Catullus describes her as *indomitos in corde gerens* . . . *furores* (54). Shortly thereafter, Catullus pictures the woman as like a Bacchant: *saxea ut effigies bacchantis* (61). The description is particularly appropriate, since Ariadne will eventually be claimed by Iacchus and become a Maenad in actuality (250sqq). This Bacchic behaviour also indicates a rejection of normal human society, as Bacchnats are known for their roaming in the hills and the wilds.

Catullus very clearly identifies Ariadne as a mad woman through his uses of the verb *externare* (71, 165) to describe her. As Harmon\(^6\) points out, *externare* can be regarded as synonymous with *alienare* and *abalienare* which share, among other meanings, the sense of irrationality and insanity.\(^7\)

Ariadne’s madness is obviously erotically inspired, and thus carries with it the possibilities of a most destructive

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\(^6\) Harmon (318-9).

\(^7\) Harmon cites *alienare* as taking these meanings in its use by Livy (10.29.2) and Caesar (*BG* 6.41).
kind of passion. This origin of Ariadne's affliction is obvious from the description of Ariadne's first attack of passion, at her first sight of Theseus:

non prius ex illo flagrantia declinavit lumina, quam cuncto concepit corpore flammam funditus atque imis exarsit tota medullis.

91-3.

Catullus actually addresses Cupid (and his mother) as characters, and lays upon them the blame for Ariadne's frenzy:

heu misere exagitans immiti corde furores, sancte puer, curis hominum qui gaudia misces, quaeque regis Golgos quaeque Idalium frondosum, qualibus incensam iactastis mente puellam fluctibus

94-8.

Ariadne's erotic insanity should come as no surprise when we consider the family to which she belongs. Catullus makes

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28 There exist a number of similarities between Catullus' portrayals of his mad heroine Ariadne and his mad hero Attis, in poem 63. These similarities are especially discussed by Putnam (168-70); T.P. Wiseman ("Catullus' Iacchus and Ariadne," LCM 2[1977] 177-80) and P.Y. Forsyth ("Catullus: The Mythic Persona," Latomus 35 [1976] 555-66). The identification of the two mad figures is tempting, especially in view of Catullus' portrayal of both characters waking on deserted shores to discover that they have destroyed all that they valued (63.52sgg, 64.56sgg). That both of these characters wrought their destruction while in the grip of madness is also interesting. But we should note that Attis' madness has (temporarily) passed while he slept, enabling him to realise the enormity of his actions (ita de quiete molli rapida sine rabie simul ipsa pectore Attis sua facta recoluit, 63.44-5), while Ariadne is actually still mad upon waking. Another important difference between Catullus' two lunatics is that, while Attis' frenzy is religious in origin, Ariadne's is erotically inspired.

29 We might note the similarity to Scylla's response to Cupid's arrow and Minos' arrival at Megara: quae simul ac venis hausit sitientibus ignem et validum penitus concepit in ossa furorem (Ciris 163-4). (See Appendix A).
no secret of the strangeness of this family. Ariadne’s mother, Pasiphae, and her adventures with the bull are prime examples of this same kind of strange madness. Catullus does not specifically mention Pasiphae by name in this poem, but her presence and her actions loom over the action nonetheless. Catullus does, however, make repeated mention of Ariadne in connexion with her mother. Ariadne is referred to as one quam suavis expirans castus odores lectulus in molli complexu matris alebat (87-8). Pasiphae also receives special attention in the portion which Catullus refrains from narrating, Ariadne’s flight from home: denique matris, quae misera in gnata deperdita leta (118-9). The repeated references to the Minotaur which Theseus kills, with Ariadne’s help, also emphasises the strangeness of her family. The creature’s very existence, of course, recalls Pasiphae’s perversion, although again the relationship is not explicitly stated at the first mention of the monster: electos iuvenes simul et decus innuptarum Cecropiam solitam esse dapem dare Minotauro (78-9). In fact, the monster is not treated by the poet as a part of Ariadne’s family throughout the entire narrative of the slaughter, but is simply the savage monster (saevum cupiens contra contendere monstrum, 101) whom her hero must destroy. It is only later, when Theseus has become, in Ariadne’s mind, the villain of the piece, that Ariadne herself establishes this connexion and claims the Minotaur as her brother: potius germanum amittere crevi (150); respersum
In making this connexion, Ariadne takes to herself the credit for the kind of domestic destruction which would have been thoroughly reprehensible to such heroines as Alcmena and Europa.

Ariadne is also repeatedly identified with her father in Catullus' poem, but it is interesting that such references occur only after she has betrayed him. Prior to this, at her first appearance in the poem, Ariadne is identified as simply virgo regia (86). It is only after she leaves him\(^3\) that Ariadne identifies herself with her father, as was also the case with her brother the Minotaur. Ariadne also despairs of ever again receiving help from her now betrayed father: an patris auxilium sperem (180). And in her final appearance in the poem, Ariadne is identified not by her name, but only through her connexion with Minos: Theseus qualem Minoidi luctum obtulerat mente immemori talem ipse recepit (247-8).\(^3\)

\(^3\) Ariadne's action recalls Apollonius' Medea, who was responsible for the death of her own brother Apsyrtus at the hands of the aliens (Argonautica 4.420sgg). Apollonius, in fact, gives Medea full credit for Apsyrtus' death: πῶς γὰρ δὴ μετιόντα κακῶ ἔδάμασεν ὀλεθρὼ Αψυρτον; (Argonautica 4.449.50).

In view of their similar adventures, the identification of Ariadne and Medea is obvious, and has been made by several scholars, including Curran (185) and Kinsey (915-7).

\(^3\) linguens genitoris filia vultum (117).

\(^3\) Harmon (319) believes that the use of the patronymic indicates simply that "Ariadne is the means of Theseus' revenge upon her father," and that his abandonment of her is his triumph over the Cretan king. I disagree with this on the ground that it makes Theseus and Minos the central figures of the poem. This role is much more correctly assigned to Ariadne.
The stories of Ariadne's family, like Ariadne's own deeds, also recall the catalogue of contemporary sins with which Catullus ends the poem (397-406), and thus once again link Ariadne's story with the frame Catullus has constructed around it.

Through her erotic madness, Ariadne also removes herself from human society, instead of participating in it as did the heroines of the earlier epyllia. Ariadne's isolation from other mortals is clear from our first sighting of her, alone on the shore of Dia: *desertam in sola miseram se cernat harena* (57). This picture of isolation is reinforced by Ariadne's own complaint later in the poem:

praeterea nullo colitur sola insula tecto,
nec patet egressus pelagi cingentibus undis.
nulla fugae ratio, nulla spes: omnia muta,
omnia sunt deserta, ostendant omnia letum.

184-7.

Both of these passages emphasise Ariadne's complete alienation from human society. Ariadne's loneliness is emphasised by the emptiness of the sea which she regards from the shore. We

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33 This was noted by Curran (174). Curran also notes how Ariadne dwells upon language of marriage and family, and how Catullus repeatedly uses such language in reference to Ariadne. Curran believes that Catullus intends to present Ariadne's experience as a travesty of marriage, motherhood and normal home life.

34 The desertion of the shore and the sea surrounding Ariadne recalls the emptiness of the Thessalian countryside as all of the inhabitants attend Peleus' wedding: *rura colit nemo, mollescunt colla iuvencis,*
*non humilis curvis purgatur vinea rastris,*
*non glebam prono convellit vomere taurus,*
may here compare this to the sea as it is seen by both Thetis and Peleus, who see, respectively, the Argo full of heroes, and the crowd of Nereids, and, especially, each other.\textsuperscript{35}

On this deserted shore, as she watches her last human contact recede into the distance, Ariadne also displays a singular disregard for the state of her attire:

non flavo retinens subtilem vertice mitram,  
non convecta levi velatum pectus amictu,  
non tereti strophio lactentis vincta papillas,  
omnia quae toto delapsa e corpore passim  
ipsius ante pedes fluctus salis alludebant.  
\textsuperscript{63-7.}

It is clear that such lack of interest in her clothing carries weighty connotations. By rejecting those things which should properly concern a young woman of her position, Ariadne has actively removed herself from the society in which she held that position and in which such activities were required of

non falx attenuat frondatorum arboris umbram,  
squalida desertis rubigo infertur aratris.  
\textsuperscript{38-42.}

The difference, of course, lies in the fact that Ariadne’s deserted land- and seascape enhance her loneliness and isolation, while the deserted Thessalian countryside creates a joyful, holiday atmosphere, (The contrast between the two landscapes is mentioned by Curran [179]) since all of the inhabitants have gone to the wedding feast. This atmosphere is enhanced by the lines which follow: \textit{ipsius at sedes, quacumque opulenta recessit regia, fulgenti splendent auro atque argento} (43-4).

\textsuperscript{35} This contrast is suggested by J.-P. Boucher, "\textit{A propos du carmen 64 de Catulle}," \textit{REL} 34 (1956) 190-202.
her. Clothing matters far less, when the society in which they were important has been destroyed.

Although Ariadne has now been left alone by Theseus, she seems to have always before been somewhat isolated, even when in the midst of her family. She is the only young woman featured, and the only character from Crete to speak, although it later appears that she does have a sister (linguens . . . consanguinae complexum, 117-8), who could just as easily have become involved and assisted in her adventure. This is a great contrast to the situation of Thetis, who always seems to be part of a crowd. She is originally part of the crowd of Nereids, playing in the waves with her sisters, seeing the crowd of sailors in the Argo. Even at the wedding, after she has been singled out for adventure, Thetis is never left alone. She is, naturally, always with Peleus, and they are always attended by crowds of guests, divine and mortal. This social setting is common in the epyllion, in which a crowd always seems to accompany the heroine. Europa has her own retinue of contemporaries (Europa 28-9); Alcmena has a throng of slaves in her house to be summoned in the event of danger (Theocritus 24.45sgq).

Ariadne's alienation from human society goes so far that she foresees for herself the ultimate isolation: she will

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36 Thomson (56) believes that Ariadne's clothing actually symbolises her home: "with these clothes there slips away the domus which Ariadne had known, her mind's rest and the source . . . of her inward security."
have no proper burial. Rather, her corpse will be left to the birds and beasts: *pro quo dilaceranda feris dabor alitibusque praeda, neque inlacta tumulabor mortua terra* (152-3). Ariadne’s final reward for abandoning her home and family will essentially duplicate that of Sophocles’ Polyneices, who actively attacked his native city.37

Within her lament, Ariadne depicts Theseus as a wild creature, as totally removed from human society as she imagines herself to be. This is a result of his betrayal of the obligations he bears her:

*quaenam te genuit sola sub rupe leaena,*  
*quod mare conceptum spumantibus exspuit undis,*  
*quae Syrtis, quae Scylla rapax, quae vasta Carybdis,*  
*talia qui reddis pro dulci praemia vita?*38

154-7.

Ariadne acknowledges that the betrayal of obligations does and should result in alienation from society, and sees such isolation inherent in Theseus. Although he seems to begin as

37 . . . Πολυνείκη λέγω,  
δς γην πατρόν και θεούς τόυς ἐγγενείς  
φυγὰς κατελθὼν ἠθέλησε μὲν πυρὶ  
πρῆσαι κατακρας . . .  
. . .  
τοῦτον πόλει τῆς ἐκκεκήνθηκται τάφω  
μὴτε κτερίζειν μήτε κωκύσαι τινα,  
ἔαν διὰθαπτον καὶ πρὸς οἰωνῶν δέμας  
καὶ πρὸς κυνῶν ἐδεστὸν αἰκίσθεν τ’ ἰδεῖν.  
Sophocles, Antigone 198-206.

Ariadne, of course, may be exaggerating the extreme circumstances of her situation in her complaint, in order to make herself and her situation seem even more tragic than it actually is.

38 The image, of course, is another reflection of epic. It has its origins in Patroclus’ accusations of Achilles: γλαυκὴ δὲ σε τίκτε θάλασσα πέτραι τ’ ἤλιβατοι (Iliad 16.34-5).
a civic hero and social being, Theseus does eventually seem to be as isolated from other beings as Ariadne herself. He is the only hero from Athens mentioned as coming to Minos' halls, and the only one to actually do anything, although to do this he must have separated himself from the group of young men sent from Athens,\(^{39}\) in order to perform these solitary actions. In this, Theseus contrasts with Peleus as Ariadne did with Thetis. Peleus begins his adventures as simply part of the group of Argonauts and, like Thetis, is always with other people.

**The Second Inset Tale**

Since the Ariadne portion of Catullus' poem, by virtue of its length\(^{40}\) if for no other reason, does appear to qualify as an epyllion in its own right, it should properly possess all of the attributes of an epyllion, including a digression of its own. But before actually digressing from Ariadne's story, Catullus appears to deliberately avoid such a digression. Catullus once gives the impression of being about to describe in detail Ariadne's departure from home, but ostentatiously

\(^{39}\) Certainly, in Bacchylides' version of the journey to Crete, Theseus is part of a crowd:

\[\text{κυνανόπωρα μὲν ναῦς μενέκτυπον}\
\[\text{θησέα δις ἐπτὰ τ’άγλαοίς ἄγουσα}\
\[\text{κούρους ἱαύνων}\
\[\text{Κρητικὸν τάμε πέλαγος}\

Bacchylides 17.

\(^{40}\) Comprising, as it does, a full 214 lines of the 408 line poem.
returns to his main topic: \textit{sed quid ego a primo digressus carmine plura commemorem (116-7)}. But after this false digression, and after Ariadne's lament, Catullus actually does depart from Ariadne's story into that of Theseus and Aegeus. This interlude satisfies all of the criteria for a formal digression, being a secondary tale focussing on some character other than the main character of the epyllion at large. It also has both an intricate connexion with the main story (in this case, that of Ariadne on the shore) and a number of factors in common with it. The common themes of the family setting and the destruction of the domestic milieu, the two major themes of both stories, have already been noted. And the most intricate connexion is obvious in the intertwining of the lives of Ariadne and Theseus. They each have an essentially destructive effect on the other, and Ariadne's pronouncements are directly responsible for the events in Theseus' story.

Theseus' story could almost qualify as a digression even by Lyne's exacting standards, by which he would limit the

\footnote{1 As C. Deroux ("Some Notes on the Handling of Ekphrasis in Catullus 64," \textit{Collection Latomus} [1986] 247-58; p.249) puts it, "the poet is well aware of the liberties he takes with the tradition of the ekphrasis, as can be seen from his exclamation in lines 116-117.".}

\footnote{2 Catullus just as consciously and ostentatiously passes up another opportunity for a poetic commonplace within the context of the digression to follow, when he deliberately avoids an aetion. He brings the poem to the very brink of one with his description of Aegeus' suicide (241-4), but returns to Theseus himself without actually stating that Aegeus' dive causes the name of the Aegean sea.}
digression to "an ecphrasis which develops via a description of a work of art." Theseus' story could be included by this criterion simply because it, like the picture of Ariadne herself, is part of the overall ecphrasis of the bed-cover. As well, the entire tale of Theseus and his return home develops from a scene witnessed by Ariadne herself, and she is presented as in the poem an audience watching the ship recede. The Ariadne epyllion itself begins with Ariadne watching Theseus (Thesea cedentem celeri cum classe tuetur indomitos in corde gerens Ariadna furores, 53-5); her watching is again mentioned at line 61 (saxea ut effigies bacchantis, prospicit, eheu); and the last scene of Theseus and Ariadne in the poem, the coda to this particular story, again describes Ariadne watching his departure: quae tum prospectans cedentem maesta carinam multiplices animo volvebat saucia curas (249-50). The entire story of Theseus' adventure to Crete and his disastrous return is developed through what Ariadne herself sees from the shores of Dia. This technique of developing a narrative beginning and ending in a character's view of something is, of course, the same one which Catullus uses to develop Ariadne's own story from the bed-cover at Thetis' wedding.

43 Lyne (Ciris on 303-5).

44 This excuse of Theseus' story as a digression is rather forced, and I would rather not resort to it. I offer it solely for those who consider Lyne's definition of a digression correct and necessary.
The Second Prophecy

The final scene of the ecphrasis, the approach of Bacchus and his retinue (251-64), could perhaps be considered another digression within the ecphrasis. It certainly comprises a short scene apparently focussing on different central characters. The only clear link with the main story is the character of Ariadne herself: she, the heroine of the original story, is the goal sought by the characters in the second: *te quaerens, Ariadna, tuoque incensus amore* (253). The Bacchus passage could even be considered an ecphrasis, since Catullus carefully indicates its position on the bed-cover: *at parte ex alia* (251); *talibus amplifice vestis decorata figuris pulvinar complexa suo velabat amictu* (265-6) to emphasise that this scene is also a part of a visual artefact, a subsection of the original ecphrasis. Bacchus, too, is the only character other than Ariadne herself to be specifically featured in a scene on the bed. Any other characters who figure in the narrative are extrapolated from the appearance of Ariadne herself.

I cannot, however, concede that the arrival of Bacchus can properly be considered a digression from Ariadne’s story. The poet does not return from it to again focus on Ariadne herself, but instead returns directly to the external wedding story. Thus it must be considered simply a digression from this external story, or, more correctly, part of the digression itself. This scene also provides the necessary
ending to Ariadne's own adventures. The original style of epyllion rounds off the characters' adventures with a prophecy of the happiness that is to follow, as we have seen in the cases of Alcmena, Europa, and even Thetis and Peleus. Catullus seems to have had a more frightening ending in mind for Ariadne, and introduces Bacchus and the thiasos to round off Ariadne's story. It would have been bad enough, horror enough, and quite in keeping with the tone of later epyllia, to leave Ariadne forever on the shore of Dia, looking out to sea. But most versions of the myth have her ending her life as the consort or captive of Dionysus, and so Catullus introduces the god as an opportunity to leave Ariadne in even worse straits at the end.

Critical opinion is divided as to the tone of this ending to Ariadne's adventures. Many scholars agree that it is at the very least a ravishment. Others consider that this is in fact a rescue, and that Ariadne is being rewarded with a divine marriage. This, however, would be too happy an ending, and would not be appropriate to the character of

45 As reported by T.B.L. Webster ("Myth of Ariadne from Homer to Catullus," G&R 13 [1966] 22-31).
46 These include Bramble (34), Curran (100) and Wiseman ("Catullus' Iacchus," passim), as well as P.Y. Forsyth ("Catullus 64: Dionysus Reconsidered," Collection Latomus [1980] 98-105).
47 These include Wheeler (Catullus and the Traditions of Ancient Poetry 130), G. Williams (Tradition and Originality in Roman Poetry [Oxford, 1968] 227), Quinn (Catullus: An Interpretation, 263) and Kinsey (921).
Ariadne as she has been created by Catullus. Ariadne must be left in her misery. Thus Ariadne is taken by Bacchus, who is as inflamed with love for her as she was herself for Theseus, to live in the eternal frenzy of his thiasos:

... volitabat Iacchus
cum thiaso Satyrorum et Nysigenis Silenis,
te quaerens, Ariadna, tuoque incensus amore.
... . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
quae tum alacres passim lymphata mente furebant
euhoe bacchantes, euhoe capita inflectentes.

251-5.

The poet continues with a description of the frenzied madness of the throng:

harum pars tecta quatiebant cuspide thyrsos,
pars e divolso iactabat membra iuvenco,
pars sese tortis serpentibus incingebant,
pars obscura cavis celebrabant cistis,
orgia quae frustra cupiunt audire profani;
plangebant aliae proceris tympana palmis
aut tereti tenuis tinnitus aere ciebant;
multis raucisonos efflabant cornua bombos
barbaraque horribili stridebat tibia cantu

256-64.

Here, certainly, is no hint of comfort for an abandoned girl, so close to madness herself.

This passage also clearly continues the main theme of isolation from human society which was a feature of Ariadne's story throughout. If, as I have suggested, the comparison of a mad heroine to a Bacchante also indicates her separation from and potential hostility towards human society, then the leader of the Bacchantes, Bacchus himself, obviously carries the same connotations into the poem with him. Thus the disruption of human society and all human associations which Ariadne has experienced since her first sighting of Theseus,
and which Catullus has emphasised since our first sighting of Ariadne, is enhanced still further as she is claimed by Bacchus and his frenzied throng. No matter what the outcome of his arrival, there can be no more question of Ariadne’s returning from Dia to her family, or to any other human society, after her encounter with him. She is inextricably bound to Bacchus and the madness that attends him.

In many versions of her story, Ariadne ends as Bacchus’ divine consort. Given the "theme" which Catullus claims to expound in this poem, that the gods now no longer mix with mortals because of mortal sin, such an apotheosis as Hesiod describes would separate Ariadne from her fellow mortals as much as her own actions have already done. But after praising the time when gods mixed freely with mortals, Catullus describes the human atrocities which ended this time (397-404), with a catalogue which closely recalls Ariadne’s own trespasses. Ariadne has herself helped to construct the divide which separates her, whether as mortal or divinity,

48 For example, we read in Hesiod’s version:

Χρυσόκόμης δὲ Διώνυσος Ζανθήν Ἀριάδνην,
κόυρην Μίνωως, θαλερήν ποιήσατ’ ἀκοίτην
τὴν δὲ θεὰν ἀνάμματον καὶ ἀγὴρος θῆκε κρονίων
Theogony 947-9.

49 praestentes namque ante domos invisere castas
heroum, et sese mortali ostendere coetu,
caelicolae nondum spreta pietate solebant
praesentes namque ante domos invisere castas
heroum, et sese mortali ostendere coetu,
caelicolae nondum spreta pietate solebant
384-6.

50 As noted by Curran (175) and L. Richardson (Poetical Theory in Republican Rome [New Haven, Conn., 1944] 55sqq).
from her fellow humans.

I have noted a number of the contrasts between the Ariadne story and its frame, the wedding of Peleus and Thetis. The main contrast between Ariadne and Thetis results in an entirely different atmosphere in each of the two epyllia of which Catullus constructs his poem. Thetis starts her story within a family setting, with her sisters, and ends her adventures as an apparently responsible member of a similar milieu.\footnote{It is partly because of the importance of the heroine’s future as a mother in a Hellenistic-type epyllion that Thetis’ later abandonment of Peleus and Achilles is omitted from Catullus’ account.} Apparently, the best possible ending for a heroine in an epyllion is as a mother, in the manner of Europa and Alcmena. It is partly for this reason that the song of the Parcae focuses so extensively upon Thetis’ son Achilles, emphasising that she will properly fulfil this destiny. Ariadne also completely fills the role which seems to be required of the heroine of a later kind of epyllion. She begins, as do all other heroines, firmly ensconced in her family setting, and ends, as did Scylla, by causing the destruction of this milieu.

This contrast between the heroines and their stories, resulting in the contrast between the two types of epyllion which Catullus uses, causes some scholars\footnote{Including Duban, Putnam and Bramble.} to find in Catullus’ poem the explicit contrast between a happy and a
tragic love story. Also, some critics seize upon Catullus' epilogue as support for their argument that the poet intends to contrast the heroic past with the decadent present. Another explanation of Catullus' purpose is that of S.Knopp, who believes that the entire poem explores the conflicting claims of passion and virtue. In Knopp's view, Peleus and Thetis are threatened by this conflict, the Parcae warn of it, and Ariadne displays its dangers.

The most reasonable suggestion regarding Catullus' purpose is that he intends to use Ariadne and her adventures to cast a shadow over the sunny picture of the heroic age which he draws in the wedding story. Bramble indicates how, in his opinion, Catullus casts this shadow even over the wedding story itself, especially through the absence of Apollo, the presence of Prometheus and all that it implies about divine-mortal relations, and Peneus' gift of cypress trees, which are more appropriate to funerals than to weddings. According to Bramble's analysis, then, Theseus' betrayal of Ariadne simply reinforces the already strong sense

53 Including Putnam, Bramble and Harmon.

54 In connexion with this, Harmon (327) makes the interesting point that the infidelity and slaughter in Catullus' heroic age are all particular, performed by specific individuals, while the contemporary evils which the poet catalogues are general, as if universal in the poet's time.


56 Bramble (30-3).
of doubt about the glories of the heroic age.

Catullus does indeed seem to want to cast a shadow over the happiness of Peleus and Thetis and the wedding story by narrating the abandonment of Ariadne within it. The picture on the bed cover could be intended as a reminder, both for Thetis and Peleus and for the audience, that such things as Ariadne’s betrayal of her family and Theseus’ betrayal of Ariadne, with all of the destruction that attends these actions, can happen. And these things can happen in any age, whether heroic or not, whether the gods mix with mortals or not. But the picture is only a picture, as Catullus repeatedly emphasises, and probably cast no pall of fear over the wedding guests. But this mixed picture, this poem including both the best and worst of the heroic age, creates by far the most realistic, most balanced picture of the world that has been represented in any epyllion extant. The masterful mixture of the styles creates this balanced vision.
CONCLUSION

The chief importance of the epyllion in literary history lies in its status as the ancient genre which focusses most exclusively upon women, their worlds and their works, from what might be considered a female perspective. As was previously noted, the epic tended to relegate women to the margins of the action, bringing them in only when absolutely required for the heroes' purposes. Even tragedy, which often features women as central characters, focusses almost exclusively on women in a man's world. The effect of the actions and passions of male characters on the female is one of the moving forces in tragedy.

The Latin love elegy, as practised by Tibullus and Propertius, is indeed a genre very much concerned with women. But here, again, the women presented act in a masculine world, not in their own, and are viewed from a masculine perspective. The women in elegy never act alone or independently from men, and their effects upon the male poets who create the characters are of chief importance.

Even in New Comedy, where the domestic sphere, in which women are most effective, it is the actions of young men and male slaves which are given greatest emphasis. Women are usually either prizes to be attained by the young heroes, or
wives to be deceived by the men.

It is only in the epyllion that the scattered pieces of the feminine presence, including female main characters, a setting appropriate to these characters, female action and control and a more feminine perspective actually come together. Thus in this one genre we find women with a strong domestic base, taking action on their own initiative which strongly affects this domestic milieu and the characters therein. The male characters encountered, so naturally powerful in other genres, are reduced to ineffectualness, even invisibility, in the epyllion.

From the evidence of the poems herein discussed as examples of the epyllion, it seems apparent that some sort of development in the genre took place, from the contented Alcmena, controlling and protecting her domestic sphere, to the mad Ariadne, destroying all of her own life and connexions to human society. This development in the heroines of the genre seems connected in some way to the development of the genre itself.

The epyllion, as an independent genre, flourished for approximately two and a half centuries -- from Theocritus to Catullus. I use Catullus as the closing figure advisedly, even though the Ciris postdates him, and Calvus and Cinna were his contemporaries. For although the genre was used after Catullus, it was the technique within the genre that he pioneered in his 64th poem began the transformation of the
epyllion from genre into sub-genre. The pairing of two separate epyllia in one poem originated in the standard epyllion practice of incorporating a secondary tale into the main narrative. It was also the beginning of the final trend towards the incorporation of entire epyllia into other, longer poems of various genres.

Vergil was the first author to make use of this new trend in the epyllion by integrating the narrative about Aristaeus and his bees into his Fourth Georgic.¹ The Aristaeus episode shares a number of the traits of the epyllia which we have examined. The major variations occur in the heroes whom Vergil depicts in both the story and the inset tale. Even here, although Aristaeus and Orpheus are both male, they are also both closely involved with women who control their adventures. Aristaeus, like Achilles, immediately takes his problems to his mother (mater, Cyrene mater . . . quid me

¹ I see no reason to accept that the Aristaeus narrative was a second edition substitution for an excised panegyric of Cornelius Gallus. The only source for such a notion is Servius, in his comment on Eclogue 10.1:

[Gallus] fuit autem amicus Vergilii, adeo ut quartus Georgicorum a medio usque as finem eius laudes teneret; quas postea iubente Augusto in Aristaei fabulam commutavit,

and on Georgics 4.1:

sane sciem sens, ut supra diximus, ultimam partem huius libri esse mutatam: nam laudes Galli habuit locus ille, qui nunc Orphei continet fabulam, quae inserta est postquam irato Augusto Gallus occidit.

praecclara stirpe deorum . . . invisum fatis genuisti, Georgic 4.321-4), while Orpheus is torn with grief at the loss of his wife (rapta graviter pro coniuge saevit, 4.456) and is later torn apart by the maddened Thracian women:

. . . spretae Ciconum quo munere matres
inter sacra deum nocturnique orgia Bacchi
discerptum laetos iuvenum sparsere per agros
Georgic 4.519-22.

Aristaeus’ story also includes the domestic and civic basis which characterised the epyllion in its independent manifestations. Aristaeus himself is the manager of a hive of bees, symbolising a settled society, and his sole concern is for the replacement of this hive. And the scene of Cyrene with her nymphs spinning yarn and stories (4.335sgg) is touchingly domestic. And the spinning, of course, recalls the spinning women of the earlier epyllia, and the women in the later who rejected such pursuits.

As did Catullus in poem 64, Vergil contrasts two types of stories, inserting the destructive tale of Orpheus into the reconstructive story of Aristaeus and his bees. But the integration of Orpheus’ is much less realistic and essential than in the epyllia themselves, since Aristaeus learns nothing useful to him from the story told by Proteus.

In the Aeneid, too, Vergil incorporates an epyllion into

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2 That the women who dismember Orpheus are Bacchantes also recalls the other maddened women of the Latin epyllia.

3 The domesticity of Cyrene in her cave is especially noted by J. Seaton (A Reading of Vergil’s Georgics [Amsterdam, 1983] 153).
a larger poem. The story of Aeneas' interlude in Carthage in *Aeneid* 4 shows every indication of having been influenced by the techniques of the later epyllion. These include Dido's domination of the events in the story, her erotically inspired madness, and her identification with Bacchantes. The destruction of homes and families which results from Dido's distraction also recalls the disastrous effects of the heroines of later epyllia. The development of the epyllion from a genre into a sub-genre is also apparent, in the position of Dido's story in the *Aeneid*. Rather than dominating the entire poem, the "epyllion" of Dido presents just another obstacle in Aeneas' path to Italy and the establishment of the Roman race.

Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, with its conglomeration of stories, actually represents the final stage in the

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4 *Aeneid* 4.469-70: *Eumenidum veluti demens videt agmina\nPentheus et solem geminum et duplices se ostendere Thebas.*

5 In her rage at his desertion, Dido ascribes to Aeneas the ruin of her house (*miserer domus labentis* 4.318), and warns him that, because of his betrayal, her entire city is in danger: *an mea Pygmalion dum meonia frater destruaut aut captam ducat Gaetulas Iarbas?* (4.325-6). Her last words foretell the most bitter enmity that the Romans will ever know, and the wars which will destroy her own city:

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tum vos, o Tyrii, stirpem et genus omne futurum
exercet odilis, cinerique haec mitit nostre munera. nullus amor populis nec foedera suunto.
exoriare aliquis nostris ex ossibus ultor
qui face Dardanios ferroque seguare colonos,
nunc, olim, quocumque dabunt se tempore vires.
litora litoribus contraria, fluctibus undas
imprecor, arma armis: pugnent ipsique nepotesque.
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4.662-9.
development of the epyllion. It would be erroneous to believe, as Crump\(^6\) does, that the *Metamorphoses* is simply a collection of independent epyllia with little connecting tissue.\(^7\) The final step in the genre's progress did not consist of simply stringing a number of epyllia together. Rather, the poet has fully integrated the short, mythological and erotic narratives, which so often recall the epyllion in both its early and later manifestations, into an epic poem of much larger design and consequence. Following upon Vergil's integration of a few epyllion-like narrative episodes into his long epic and didactic poems, Ovid's approach is the natural final extension of Catullus' original doubling up of the early and late forms of the genre.

\(^6\) Crump (197-8).

\(^7\) The notion that the *Metamorphoses* is simply a collection of epyllia is debunked by, *inter alia*, Otis (*Ovid, passim*) and P.E.Knox (*Ovid's Metamorphoses and the Traditions of Augustan Poetry* [Cambridge, 1986] 2).
The Dangerous Women of the Latin Epyllion:
A Study Based Largely upon The Ciris

An exact assessment of the properties of the Latin epyllion is difficult because of the paucity of extant examples. Only titles remain of most of the epyllia written by poets of Catullus' generation. These include the Zmyrna of Helvius Cinna, which Catullus himself praises in his poem 95, the Dictynna of Valerius Cato, Licinius Calvus’ Io and

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1 The text of the Ciris used is that of F.R.D. Goodyear, in the 1966 Oxford edition of the Appendix Vergiliana.

The dating of the Ciris is problematic, but the poem seems best assigned to the mid-first century B.C. Opinions on the date of the poem range from A. Thill’s ("Virgile auteur ou modele de la Ciris?" REL 53 [1975] 116-34) that the poem was indeed written around the time of Vergil, if not by Vergil himself, to Lyne’s (The Ciris: A Poem Attributed to Virgil with Introduction and Commentary [Cambridge, 1978] 55-6), that the poem is actually a most derivative and cleverly imitative piece from the third century A.D. Brooks Otis (Ovid as an Epic Poet [Cambridge, 1970] 62) believes that the Ciris was "neoterically conceived", while in Virgil: A Study in Civilised Poetry (Oxford, 1964) 395 he asserted that it was "likely a work of Tiberian date." Although Lyne’s arguments are interesting, I am more inclined to agree with Thill’s, if only because of the poets awareness of and apparent total absorption in the literary ambience of the time.

2 Zmyrna mei Cinnae nonam post denique messem quam coepta est nonamque edita post hiemem, milia cum interea quingenta Hortensius uno

.......

Zmyrna cavas Satrachi penitus mittetur ad undas, Zmyrnam cana diu saecula pervolvent. at Volusi annales Paduam morientur ad ipsam et laxas scombris saepe dabunt tunicas.

Catullus 95.
Because of the loss of so many apparently important examples of the genre, an analysis of the specific characteristics of the later epyllion and its heroines is difficult at best. These later epyllia, however, seem to have shared a number of characteristics with the Ciris of the Appendix Vergiliana, the sole remaining complete example of the later epyllion.

The Ciris tells the story of the transformation of Nisus' daughter Scylla into a bird, the ciris, after her betrayal of her father, resulting from her passion for Minos. It seems clear that the Ciris is indebted to the Greek poet Parthenius and his version of this same story, which he told in his Metamorphoses. The scholiast on Dionysius Periegetes 1.420 relates Parthenius' story of Scylla:

Thus although Parthenius is not himself a subject of the

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1 R.O.A.M. Lyne ("The Neoteric Poets", CQ 28 [1978] 167-87) believes that "it would be perverse to doubt that the Glaucus was an epyllion."

4 The debt which the author of the Ciris owes to Parthenius is also accepted by N.B. Crowther ("Parthenius and Roman Poetry," Mnem 69 [1979] 69). Lyne, in his commentary on the poem, also quotes the scholiast's summary of Parthenius' version (Lyne, Ciris 8).
present study, it is clear that his collection and the stories that he told there must be considered. Parthenius and his work form part of the "missing link", contributing greatly to the epyllion's development. I propose to refer to Parthenius' stories when they seem particularly relevant to the study of the Latin epyllion in general, and the Ciris in particular. In order to avoid the pitfalls of an exhaustive discussion of poems which exist only in small fragments, I also propose to deal with the fragmentary neoteric epyllia in the same manner. Their titles and stories will be invoked when appropriate, but not dwelt upon.

Although the later epyllia resemble the original in their concentration on female characters, they also share in the epic traditions of destruction and violence. These two traits combine in their stories, in which female characters bring about the same results as the heroes of traditional epic, but in their own ways and for different reasons. In order to establish the appropriate atmosphere for this type of narrative, the Ciris-poet begins the poem with a rather unnecessary recusatio, rejecting traditional epic adventures, even when they are performed by Minerva.

This ecphrasis in the opening of the Ciris, although it is not included in the narrative itself, does participate in one of the possible roles for an ecphrasis, or indeed a digression of any sort, in an epyllion. Rather than reproducing the elements of the main story, as the later
digression on Britomartis will do, the peplos of Minerva here contrasts with the story of Scylla in a number of important ways. This is especially apparent in the prominence of Athens and Minerva herself in the ecphrasis, as symbols of order and civilisation and in contrast to the chaos and destruction which Scylla herself will cause. Also, although Minerva’s victories over the Giants are bloody and violent (*horrida sanguineo pinguntur proelia cocco*, 31), they are, in a sense, "clean" victories, achieved through straightforward confrontation. Here is no treachery, no betrayal, such as will win Megara for Minos in the main narrative. The most prominent contrast between the ecphrasis and the central story lies in the loyalty of Minerva to her city, and the labours and battles which she undertakes on its behalf. This is a direct contrast to Scylla’s treachery, by which she betrays her father and hands her city over to an invading enemy.

Juno’s part in punishing Scylla’s transgressions and thus causing all that is narrated in this poem is of interest. Her role again reinforces the importance given by authors of *epyllia* to female characters, mortal and divine alike. This poem, like *Europa* and, to an extent, Theocritus 24, is possible because of the actions of a goddess who begins the action. And Juno, too, like Hera and Aphrodite in the poems previously examined, controls the action by having some other character carry out her wishes. Here it is Juno who intends to punish Scylla, but it is Cupid who actually carries out the
sentence (160sq).

In addition to Juno's pre-eminence in the Ciris, we should also note the prominence of Diana/Dictynna. She appears, naturally, in the digression in which Carme relates Britomartis' story, both because of Britomartis' eventual fate (alii, quo notior esses, Dictynnam dixere tuo de nomine lunam, 304-5), and because Britomartis was originally a hunter (297-300), and thus under the protection of Diana. More than this, perhaps because of this, Carme names Dictynna as the chief of the gods and source of any good fortune she herself has had (Dictynna praesentia numina, 245). It seems that Diana is as much a controlling influence in Britomartis' story as Juno is in Scylla's.

Beyond the emphasis on the roles played by Juno and Diana, the importance of female deities in this poem is evident in the prominence of Amphitrite, rather than Neptune, as governor of the seas. It is Amphitrite who eventually takes pity on Scylla as she is dragged through the sea, and turns her into a bird in order to protect her:

donec tale decus formae vexarier undis
non tuit ac miseroms mutavit virginis artus
caeeruleo pollens coniunx Neptunia regno.

481-3

And Amphitrite does this to protect Scylla not from any of Neptune's sea creatures, but from her own: nimium est avidum pecus Amphitrites (486). She clearly controls matters in the sea. Amphitrite's role in Scylla's transformation in this story is foreshadowed by the role she plays in one of the
Scylla stories which the author rejects:

. . . etiam iactis speciem mutata venenis
infelix virgo (quid enim commiserat illa?)
ipse pater timidam saeva complexus harena
coniugium castae violaverat Amphitrites
at tamen exigit longo post tempore poenas,
ut, cum cura sui veheretur coniugis alto,
ipsa trucem multo misceret sanguine pontum

70-6.

Besides originating from the actions of female deities, the Ciris is, like Europa or Theocritus 24, a story in which the only active characters are women. Although the story itself opens with the siege of Megara, by which Mino attempts to reclaim Polyidas (110-5), this war is merely background to the main story, throughout which Minos does not himself appear. He is visible only through his effects on Scylla. Her reaction to the sight of Minos is described (Scylla novo correpta furore . . . o nimium cupidis Minon inhiasset ocellis, 130-2), since it is the catalyst which sets off Scylla’s madness. At the end of the poem, Scylla rages against Minos, blaming him for what this madness has done to her:

verum istaec, Minos, illos scelerata putavi,
si nostra ante aliqui nudasset foedera casus,
facturos, quorum direptis moenibus urbis
o ego crudelis flamma delubra petivi.
te vero victore prius vel sidera cursus
mutatura sus quam te mihi talia captae
facturum metui.

421-6.

Between these two stages, Minos does not himself appear except as a force acting upon the heroine. The same is true in Carme’s tale of Britomartis. Although Carme rages against
Minos (O mihi nunc iterum crudelis reddite Minos, o iterum nostrae Minos inimice senectae, 286-7) and blames him for her daughter’s fate (numquam te obnixe fugiens Minois amores praeceps aerii specula de montis abisses, 301-2), he was again in that instance merely a force: Britomartis could have been fleeing from anyone or anything. It is not important to her or her story, but only to Scylla’s, that it was Minos whom she fled.

The only other man in the poem, Scylla’s father Nisus, is made even more of a marginal character. A description of his head is included early in the poem, so that the enormity of Scylla’s offence in clipping his lock is appreciated:

. . . roseus medio surgebat vertice crinis:
cuius quam servata diu natura fuisset,
tam patriam incolurum Nisi regnumque futurum
concordes stabili firmarant numine Parcae.

But once the situation has been established, Nisus’ entire function in the poem seems to be as an obstacle to his daughter’s passion, to be overcome in whatever ways present themselves.

These ways which Scylla uses to obtain her ends seem to be typically female approaches to problems. She first begs her father to make peace because of her fear of war:

temptantur patriae submissis vocibus aures,
laudanturque bona pacis bona . .

. . .
nunc tremere instantis beli certamina dicit
communemque timere deum; nunc regis amicis,
iamque ipsa verita est

355-60.
This is the reaction to war which men in the heroic age would expect from women, and is in fact the reaction which the women of Thebes displayed in Aeschylus' *Septem*. The women beg Eteocles for help with θρευματο φοβερα μεγαλ'αχη (78), and continue for many lines in much the same vein as Scylla must have used with her father. Once her fear has failed to move him, Scylla also directly approaches her father with the suggestion that she marry Minos in order to provide Nisus with grandchildren: *orbunflet maesta parentem, cum Iove communis qui non dat habere nepotes* (360-1).

As Scylla's chief and only assistant in the matter, Carme turns to magic to help her mistress achieve her ends:

At nutrix, patula componens sulpura testa, 
narcissum casiamque herbas contundit oelentis 
terque novena ligans triplici diversa colore 
fila, "ter in gremium meum," inquit, "despue, virgo, 
despue ter, virgo: numero deus impare gaudet."

369-73

Lyne records the efforts of a number of scholars to either establish or discredit the authenticity of Carme's rituals. But what is important in the sequence is not what rites the nurse uses, but the fact that she resorts to magic at all. The use of magic as a method of influencing events is peculiar to women in literature, who would be unable to use force, political power or influence to bring about any desired results. Before resorting to magic, Scylla did indeed try all

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5 Lyne (*Ciris* on 369-77). The other authors whom Lyne cites include R. Wunsch ("Zur *Ciris* v.369-77," *RhM* 57 [1902] 468-73) and F. Leo ("Vergil und die *Ciris*," *Hermes* 37 [1902] 42sqq).
of the more public avenues available by which she might possibly have gained her ends.

Magic, a very private and personal operation, is well suited to the position and limitations of women. The contrast between personal and public action is seen in the contrast between Scylla's actions on her own behalf and Nisus' on behalf of his city. Nisus carries on the war to protect his city from Minos, while Scylla performs secret rituals by night in order to win what she desires. That this will cause the death of her father and city never bothers Scylla. This "feminine" course of action, however, is no more effective than were Scylla's entreaties and deceptions. Eventually Scylla and Carme give up on feminine action, and resort to more violent and direct methods of attaining their ends. They return to the original plan of offering Nisus' vital lock to Minos:

Verum ubi nulla movet stabilem fallacia Nisum, nec possunt homines nec possunt flectere divi, (tanta est in parvo fiducia crine cavendi), rursus ad inceptum sociam se adiungit alumnae, purpureumque parat rursus tondere capillum tam longo quod iam captat succurrere amori 378-82.

Scylla's treachery marks a departure from the standard of the earlier epyllia. Although Alcmena and Europa were the

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6 One of the best literary representations of a woman attempting to influence events through magic appears in Theocritus' second Idyll, where Simaetha tries a number of magical remedies in order to regain the wayward Delphis. Scylla is essentially using the same methods to attain the same ends.
dominant characters in their respective poems, there was nothing about these women, as they were portrayed by the Hellenistic poets, which would make them objects of fear. Europa left her home and father, but she destroyed nothing and actually ended by founding a new family. Neither of these women in the Hellenistic epyllia betrayed or destroyed their cities, homes and families in the way that Scylla does in the Ciris.

Although Crump believes that such stories of daughters betraying their fathers through infatuation with invading strangers were "evidently extremely popular with the Alexandrians,"7 the earliest versions of this kind of story are preserved by Parthenius for a generation of authors to use. Parthenius' story of Leucippus (E.P. 5) ends with Leucophrye's betrayal of her father's city to Leucippus. Parthenius' collection also includes the stories of Pisidice, who let Achilles into her city (E.P. 21) and of Nanis, who did likewise for Cyrus at Sardis (E.P. 22).

This destructiveness which the heroines of the later epyllia demonstrate, in contrast to their counterparts in the Hellenistic epyllia, originates in the wild passionate love to which they all fall victim. Such destructive passion, such erotically based madness, seems a key component in the later

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7 Crump (161).
epyllia, and is definitely an important feature in all of the stories in Parthenius' collection. This collection includes a number of stories of women overwhelmed by bizarre and misdirected passion. These include Biblis and her passion for her brother (E.P. 11), on which Parthenius himself wrote an epyllion; Cleobea's infatuation with a hostage in her father's court (E.P. 14), and Periander's mother's unnatural desire for him (E.P. 17). Judging from the Ciris and the fragments, this interest in erotic madness was of first importance in the Latin epyllia. The pairing of mania with an erotic impulse was the basis of Cinna's Zmyrna, and even Calvus' Io seems to have included some indication of mental inbalance on the heroine's part. The appearance of Pasiphae, with her fascination for a bull, in Vergil's sixth Eclogue, is also indicative of the interest of these poets in erotically based madness.

This same tendency is clear in the description in the Ciris of Scylla's erotic frenzy:

Quae simul ac venis hausit sitientibus ignem
et validum penitus concepit in ossa furorem,

8 Crump (27) notes this interest in the erotic as a development in the genre effected by the Romans and the later Alexandrians.

9 Parthenius includes some of his own hexameter lines on Biblis in his summary of the story in his collection.

10 Both Pinotti (3-7) and Crump (161) consider such an interest in overwhelming and misdirected passion an essential feature of the later epyllia.

11 mens mea dira sibi praedicens omnia, vecors.
The manifestations of Scylla's madness indicate an important deviation on the part of the Latin poets from the practices inherent in the original style of epyllion. As we have seen, the earlier epyllia had a noticeable domestic focus. The Latin versions, however, seem to have as their ultimate goal the abandonment or destruction of the domestic and civic settings, as was also the case in Ariadne's story, in Catullus 64. The narrative portion of the Ciris begins by establishing the civic setting, with a description of Megara itself:

Sunt Pandoniis vicinae sedibus urbes
Actaeos inter colles et candida Thesei
purpureis late ridentia litora conchis,
quarum non ulli fama concedere digna
stat Megara, Alcatthoi quondam murata labore,
Alcatthoi Phoebique.

101-6.

But following immediately upon the description comes Minos'

12 Lyne (Ciris on 71) notes the echo of Calvus' Io and Vergil's sixth Eclogue in the phrase infelix virgo, but does not extract the obvious conclusion from the coincidence: that the poet intends to recall these other mad women, and identify Scylla with these other raging heroines. A. O'Brien-Moore (Madness in Ancient Literature [Weimar, 1924]) catalogues and analyses the uses of madness by various ancient authors, classifying the instances as manifestations of four particular elements: divine and Erinyic visitation, orgiastic frenzy and mantic inspiration. Scylla's passion combines three of these four elements.
assault upon the city and attempt to destroy it, as if this were a major theme in the poem: *hanc urbem, ante alios quium florebat in armis, fecerat infestam populator remige Minos* (110-1). This establishment of a domestic and civic background, only to destroy it, was done by Catullus for both Ariadne and Theseus.

Scylla’s own potential for destroying her family and city is first indicated in the description of her behaviour when first struck with madness. In the course of her frenzy, she deliberatley turns against all the pursuits which would be appropriate to a girl of her position, abandoning her domestic responsibilities entirely:

nulla colum novit, carum non respicit aurum,
non arguta sonant tenui psalteria chorda,
non Libyco molles plauduntur pectine telae.
nullus in ore rubor

177-80.

Scylla’s refusal to weave is particularly striking because of the importance of weaving to a woman’s life in the epic world. Her rejection of normal female activity is clearly connected with the fact that, once struck by madness, Scylla becomes the sort of woman who abandons civilisation and goes outside of the city: hence the poet’s comparison of the mad girl to a Bacchante or a follower of Cybele (165-7). Scylla’s actions in her madness recall the Bacchic frenzy of Euripides’ Agave, in the *Bacchae*, who kills not only her own son, but the king of Thebes, thus destroying in one set of strokes both her civic and her domestic bases. Scylla is about to do likewise
by severing Nisus’ purple lock.

Scylla’s initial abandonment of her home and normal pursuits presages her final separation from such things, and indeed from human society in general, after she has become a bird:

numquam illam post haec oculi videre suorum purpureas flavo retinentem vertice vitas, non thalamus Syrio fragrans accepit amomo, nullae illam sedes: quid enim cum sedibus illi? 510-3.

Scylla’s neglect of her appearance, of course, recalls Ariadnes, and is indicative of the same madness and isolation as in Catullus’ poem. The final question, quid enim cum sedibus illi?, adequately summarises Scylla’s relations with a normal home and family, female pursuits, and human life at large. In her erotic and destructive frenzy, she has abandoned them all.

Following closely upon Scylla’s abandonment of normal pursuits comes her plan to deliver her father’s vital purple lock to Minos, in order to win his favour. The importance of this lock to the safety of the city has been established early in the narrative (122-5). It is clearly in the poet’s mind that it is but a short step from Scylla’s wilful abandonment of normal female pursuits such as spinning to the active destruction of her home and family.

\[13\] Actually, the poet specifically questions whether Scylla though of this herself, or had the task assigned her by Minos as a proof of affection: namque haec condicio miseræ proponitur una, sive illa ignorans (187-8).
Scylla's lament while being dragged behind Minos' ship, after the sack of Megara (404-58) indicates both this poem's concern with such destruction, and the heroine's role in bringing it about. The opening of this lament, like the opening of the narrative itself, sets a civilised and properly domestic scene. Scylla addresses herself to her ancestors\textsuperscript{14} (409-10), and identifies herself by both her family (\textit{illa ego sum, Nisi potentis filia, 411}) and her place in civilised society: \textit{certatim ex omni petit quam Graecia regno, qua curvus terras amplectitur Hellespontus} (412-3). Scylla also attempts to legitimise her social position still further by claiming that she had actually contracted a marriage with Minos: \textit{illa ego sum, Minos, sacrato foedere coniunx dicta tibi} (414).\textsuperscript{15} After so strongly affirming her identity and place in society with the triple repetition of \textit{illa ego sum}, Scylla admits her role in the collapse of that society: \textit{sic patriam carosque penates hostibus immitique addixi ignara tyranno} (419-20). The dominant role which the heroines of the Hellenistic epyllia played in the domestic world on which those epyllia were based is here so expanded as to encompass the destruction of that world. This has happened to such an extent that Scylla does not even allow Minos the credit for destroying Megara, instead taking this to herself: \textit{o ego}

\textsuperscript{14} These ancestors, Procne and Philomela, are appropriately invoked in Scylla's situation, since they, too, became birds.

\textsuperscript{15} Again, the poet remains vague on whether or not such an agreement was actually made.
crudelis, flamma delubra petivi (424). It is interesting that, even at this extreme end of her fortunes, Scylla is still aware of the bonds of social behaviour which she has violated, and indeed expects that she should be punished for this: verum istaec, Minos, illos scelerata putavi, si nostra ante aliquis nudasset foedera casus, facturos (421-3).\textsuperscript{16}

The story of Carme, Scylla’s nurse, could very well have been included in the poem as a digression, with elements supporting the major themes of Scylla’s own story. Instead, only allusions are made to Carme’s own story. But these allusions are enough to confirm her presence as emphasising the overwhelming theme of destruction. Carme was once brought to Megara as a captive from a destroyed city (tam longe capta atque avecta . . . tam grave servitium, tam duros passa labores, 290-1), and once she is convinced that Megara must be sacrificed to Scylla’s passion, Carme wishes to return again to Crete by means of violence and treachery: non minus illa tamen revehi quod moenia Cressa gaudeat (384-5). In order to facilitate this, she aids Scylla in her plotting to destroy Nisus and Megara. First, however, she tells to Scylla the story of her own daughter Britomartis, and her flight from Minos, with also demonstrates the destruction theme in the poem. Although the reasons for her actions were different, Britomartis was another woman who, like Scylla, went roving in

\textsuperscript{16} Oddly enough, Scylla still seems shocked that Minos was able to violate a perceived marriage contract, when she so easily had destroyed a very real social contract.
the hills and abandoned normal female pursuits:

atque utinam celeri nec tantum grata Dianae
venatus esses virgo sectata virorum,
Cnosia nec Partho contendens spicula cornu
Dictaeas ageres ad gramina nota capellas!

297-300.

And, obviously, the destruction of Britomartis and her world of hunting and roaming the hills is, like Scylla's end, clearly connected with the figure of Minos.

The digression should also reflect a number of elements in common with the main narrative, as was the case in Moschus' and Theocritus' poems. Some common elements of Scylla's and Britomartis' stories have already been noted, such as the destruction of each girl's "normal" life through a mixture of Minos and passion. Although in Britomartis' story it is Minos himself, rather than the girl, who is inflammed with passion, this in no way invalidates the similarity of the stories. We should recall that Moschus used a similar reversal technique in *Europa*, so that in one story the girl becomes a bovine, and in the other Zeus himself does.

Carme herself, as the narrator of Britomartis' story, is the common element linking the two stories, since she is a marginal figure in one and central to the other.\(^{17}\) This

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\(^{17}\) Lyne (*Ciris* on 303-5) believes that Carme's story of Britomartis' fate is rather too odd and pedantic for an old woman relating her only child's tragic ending. Lyne finds particular fault with the fact that Carme seems unsure of Britomartis' final fate, and mentions a possibility of a variation to the story as she originally tells it:

numquam tam obnixe fugiens Minois amores
praeceps aerii specula de montis iisses,
unde alii fugisse ferunt et numen Aphaeae
naturally recalls the position of Heracles as the common element in Theocritus' poem. It is also Carme who provides the necessary reason for the introduction of Britomartis' story, relating it as a necessary cautionary tale for Scylla. We should note that the Latin poet is more concerned with a realistic integration of the digression than were the Hellenistic poets. It is tempting to suggest that this became standard practice among the Latin writers of epyllia, but again we are hindered by the lack of examples.

Crump\textsuperscript{18} notes the previous appearance of Britomartis in Hellenistic poetry, in Callimachus' \textit{Hymn to Artemis}. The \textit{Ciris} version, however, provides far more background on Britomartis herself. Britomartis is established in her own milieu, where she will be destroyed, in the same way as the poet established Scylla's own civic and domestic background before having her destroy these.

One important development in the epyllion from its earlier days is that the happy endings which were assured for the earlier heroines are now no longer possible for women such as Scylla and Britomartis. The darker mood and more dangerous heroines of the later poems combine to condemn these women to

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{18} Crump (162).}
death or eternal persecution. Britomartis' fate foreshadows Scylla's as Io's foreshadowed that of Europa. Initially, it appears that Britomartis was killed falling from a cliff, fleeing from Minos: *numquam tam obnixe fugiens Minois amores praeceps aerii specula de montis abisses* (301-2). That other possibilities are later introduced creates ambiguity about the girl's ultimate fate, which is worse than any certainty could be, because it leaves her in limbo. Scylla, like Britomartis, seems to go to her end on the cliffs. This death is not described, but after Amphitrite transforms her into a bird (490-508), Scylla is said to recover from her death:

\[
\text{infelix virgo nequiquam a morte recepta} \\
\text{incultum solis in rupibus exiguit aevum,} \\
\text{rupibus et scopulis et litoribus desertis.} \\
\text{517-9.}
\]

And as in the second version of Britomartis' ending, Scylla continues to exist after her death to human society. But as befits a woman who has betrayed her father and destroyed her city, Scylla is doomed to eternal pursuit, and is left at the end of the poem caught in the enmity and vengeance of her father, also transformed:

\[
\text{sic inter sese tristes haliaeetos iras} \\
\text{et ciris memori servant ad saecula fato.} \\
\text{quae eumque illa levem fugiens secat aethera pennis,} \\
\text{ecce inimicus atrox magno stridore per auras} \\
\text{inesequitur Nisus; qua se fert Nisus ad auras,} \\
\text{illa levem fugiens raptim secat aethera pennis.} \\
\text{536-41.}
\]

Despite the distressing lack of examples of the later forms of the genre, a number of traits which distinguish it from its earlier counterpart are discernible. The interest in
women as the main and active characters is common to the epyllion in all stages of its development. But in the later epyllia, these women have become destructive forces, dangerous and mad, presenting a danger to the domestic setting in which they were based in the Hellenistic epyllia. The madness that makes these women so dangerous is erotic in origin. This development in the Latin period of the epyllion's development may largely be due to the influence of Parthenius and his collection of erotic stories, Ερωτικα Παθηματα, which he recommended to the poets for use in epic and elegy.
Appendix B
Bibliographical Notes

The best known critical work on the epyllion in this century has been that of W. Allen,¹ who condemned the use of the term by modern scholars to designate a specific ancient genre. Allen used the history of the word "epyllion" itself to demonstrate that, to the ancients, no such genre actually existed. Because ancient scholars did not apply the term to any specific genre, the genre to which modern scholars apply it did not then exist.

Allen's other objection to the use of the term epyllion is that no two scholars can agree on the characteristics of the genre. As well, according to Allen, no characteristic which any scholar considers essential to the genre can be found in every example. A brief examination of the more prominent scholarship in the field indicates this.

One of the first scholars of this century to write on the epyllion, C.N. Jackson,² posited that a main attribute of the genre is that it is actually a mixture of the attributes of a number of genres. Thus Catullus 64 mixes epic characteristics with those of both elegy and epithalamium; the Aristaeus

episode of Vergil's 4th Georgic is a mixture of epic with elements of lament poetry; the Ciris of the Appendix Vergiliana combines epic with lyric and the Culex epic with pastoral elements. Jackson also notes that the characters of the epyllion are usually gods and heroes acting as if they were ordinary mortals -- normal human characters, according to Jackson, are very rare in the epyllion. Jackson's most important insight is his division of the epyllion into Greek and Latin versions (as is implied in the title of his paper) and into two streams, the "heroic" and the "romantic". The heroic epyllion is limited to the Greek stage of the epyllion's development, and extant examples are limited, according to Jackson, to Theocritus' Idylls 24 and 25, which both feature Heracles. The unpopularity of the heroic epyllion Jackson assigns to its reminiscence of the "unpopular and antiquated heroic epic". The romantic epyllion is by far the more common and important, and features epic manners and language, divine machinations, invocations, catalogues and similes, brought to the aid of a romantic story which usually tells of a woman's unrequited love and its results. Jackson believes that the influence of Apollonius Rhodius and his portrayal of Medea upon the romantic epyllion was considerable.

3 Jackson (41).
G. Perrotta also notes a number of characteristic traits of the Hellenistic epyllion. These include the brevity and rapidity of the narration. Perrotta also notes the tendency of the epyllion to open directly on a scene of the action and to end just as abruptly, still within the actual narrative. Because of this peculiarly abrupt closure, Perrotta does not believe that a lacuna is necessary to explain the sudden ending of Theocritus' *Idyll* 24. Perrotta also notes that many of the Hellenistic epyllia open with a particular distancing formula, which may be considered equivalent to the "Once upon a time" formula familiar from fairy tales. Perrotta also notes the "bourgeois" tone of the extant epyllia, by which the exploits of traditionally heroic characters are placed in a more normal, domestic, middle-class setting.

M.M. Crump, author of the most comprehensive study of the epyllion in this century, details what she considers the exact characteristics of the genre. By Crump's definitions, the epyllion is a short narrative poem, not exceeding 500 lines, focussing upon some little-known episode in the life of a hero or heroine. The later Alexandrians and the Romans tended to prefer love stories and to focus especially upon the heroine's problems. The style of the epyllion is usually strictly narrative, but may include descriptive scenes, and it

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occasionally verges upon the dramatic, so that direct speech (at least one long speech is common) plays an important role. Contrary to Jackson, Crump writes that the characters of the epyllion are almost exclusively human. While a god may occasionally appear, no particular emphasis is placed upon divinity as opposed to humanity.\textsuperscript{6}

Crump believes that the single most important feature of the epyllion is the digression from the main narrative stream, which often takes the form of an ecphrasis, but may be a story told by one of the characters in the main story. The connexion between the digression and the main story usually lies in the parallelism of the stories told, but the details often contrast. It is also possible, writes Crump, that two completely contrasting stories be linked through the digression. Here Crump apparently has Catullus 64 in mind. It is Crump, especially, whom Allen targeted in his attack on the disseminators of the label "epyllion".

K. Gutzwiller produced the century's second major study of the genre,\textsuperscript{7} wisely limiting her attentions to the Hellenistic epyllion only, in recognition of the significant variations which later authors made in the genre.

While Gutzwiller does not go as far as did Crump in limiting participation in the epyllion's action to human

\textsuperscript{6} Crump believes that is this lack of emphasis on any god's divinity which distinguishes an epyllion from a hymn.

\textsuperscript{7} Gutzwiller, Studies in the Hellenistic Epyllion.
characters, she does note that all of the genre's active characters, who are drawn from the heroic and mythological traditions, operate on a common level which is limited to that of the middle class humanity of the Hellenistic period. The most important features which Gutzwiller sees in the Hellenistic epyllion are the lightening of the tone to the humorous or semi-humorous, and the naturally unheroic behaviour of traditionally heroic characters. Gutzwiller views this subversion (or inversion) of traditional epic ideals as extending to include in the epyllion the same domestic and humorous qualities which appeared in the Homeric Hymn to Hermes, which she considered a contributing ancestor of the Hellenistic epyllion.
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