V THE *CARMINA MAIORA*

We saw in Chapter 1 that the ancient evidence – such as it is – seems to point to an original circulation of (some or all of) Catullus' 'long' poems, 61–8, as self-standing *libelli*. Conversely, no ancient authority makes reference to a book of *carmina maiora*, which would, indeed, be something of an anomaly among the Greek and Roman poetry books known to us.[1] But, while there is no close precedent for a collection of poems so unequal in length, incorporating hexameters, elegiacs, and lyric metres, and while recent scholarship has, if anything, inclined to see poem 65 as the opening programme-cum-dedication for an elegiac collection, in which the longer elegies, 65–8, were combined with the epigrams, 69–116, cogent arguments can be made for reading these eight (or nine[2]) poems as a coherent group.

Not only length, but a certain formality and stylistic elevation sets the *carmina maiora* apart from both polymetrics and epigrams: this is most obvious in the case of 64, with its elaborately stylized word order and epicizing diction, but the same may be said – with the notable exception of the gossipy personified door of poem 67 – of all the poems in this group.[3] A further contrast lies in the largely impersonal voice adopted by the poet, as master of ceremonies (poem 61), third-person narrator (63, 64), or internal audience (67); poems 62 and 66 take the form of alternating 'amoebaean' dialogue and dramatic monologue respectively, with no narrative frame in either case.[4] And, as has long been observed,

[1] Cf. Schafer 2020: 134 (who nevertheless argues for authorial issue of 61–4 as an independent book, with 65–8 forming the first part of an elegiac *libellus*).

[2] Depending on whether 68 is considered to be one poem or two ('68a' and '68b'). On the unity problem, see n. 16 below.

[3] A further partial exception is '68a', which begins with an ostentatiously prosaic epistolary formula, *quod . . . mittis epistolium* ('in regard to your letter'), in keeping with its (probable) function as a covering letter for '68b'. A similar formula occurs at line 27 (*quod scribis*, 'as for what you write, that . . .'); cf. e.g. Cic. *Fam.* 1.9.1: *quod autem tibi grata mea erga te studia scribis esse*, 'as for what you write, that you are grateful for the goodwill I have shown you'. For stylistic contrasts between the *carmina maiora* and the shorter poems, see Sheets 2007; Chahoud 2021: esp. 118–20. On the elevated diction of and prominent use of the 'golden' line in 64, see Trimble 2025 (Introduction, section 2[d]), with further bibliography; see also Van Sickle 1968 on marked verbal patterning in poems 65, 66, and 68. Fedeli 1983: *passim* draws attention to the distinctive combination of elevated and informal language in poem 61.

[4] The 'covering letter' 65 and the complex and innovative 68 are again exceptions here. For the controversial question of who speaks the final lines of poem 62, see n. 11 below.

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striking thematic continuities – most obviously, a pervasive concern with the marriage tie and its violation – run through this part of the collection.[5] To be sure, links can also be identified both with specific poems and with running themes of the polymetrics and epigrams; but, as this chapter will argue, approaching the *carmina maiora* as a cohesive sequence pays clear interpretative dividends – whether or not this was what Catullus himself intended.

1. Marriage and its transgressions

The sequence as we have it begins with two poems, 61 and 62, which focus explicitly on the marriage rite. Both can loosely be characterized as epithalamia, though it may be technically more correct to describe 61 as a combination of cletic hymn (to the marriage god Hymen or Hymenaeus; 1–75), *hymenaeus* (a processional song accompanying the *deductio domum* or transfer of the bride to her new home; 76–183) and epithalamium (properly, a song sung outside the marriage chamber of the newly-weds; 184–228).[6] Poem 62, an amoebaean or antiphonal contest between rival choruses of youths and girls, is less easily located within the marriage ritual, but presents itself in the opening lines as taking place after the marriage feast and apparently before the *deductio domum* (3–4).

Until relatively recently, discussion of these two poems revolved largely around issues of performance and relation to Greek and Roman ritual practice: does either poem correspond closely to what actually happened at Roman weddings, or are they literary fantasies, drawing on Greek models but introducing clearly Roman elements such as the *Fescennina iocatio* (ribald joking at the groom's expense), enacted at 61.119–48? Poem 61 celebrates the nuptials of a real couple, Iunia (or

[5] For thematic continuities across the *carmina maiora*, see esp. Lieberg 1958; Wiseman 1969: 17–25; Most 1981: 118–20. Wiseman 1969 considers the possibility of publication as a separate *libellus*, though he later modified this view (see now Wiseman 2023: 42); cf. e.g. Schafer 2020: 147–55, who sees continuity of theme and structural balance across book division at 64/65. Wasdin 2018: 29–53 persuasively traces connections between the framing poems, 61 and 68; Newman 1990: 204–47 and Dettmer 1997: 115–50 (among others) argue for structural and thematic unity separately from questions of publication.

[6] The terminology was not always so narrowly applied even in antiquity, however: for this, and the division of the poem (a somewhat contentious issue), see Fedeli 1983: 8; Thomsen 1992: 26–9; Wasdin 2018: 19–20, 30–1. Thomsen identifies a further subdivision – what he refers to, in the light of the refrain, *prodeas noua nupta*, 'come forth, bride!', as the '*prodeas* song' – at 76–113. (Note: line numbering for poem 61 is complicated by the lacunae following lines 78 and 107. Modern editions generally number the transmitted lines continuously, with a second set of line numbers given in brackets to indicate the numeration with the missing lines allowed for. Some older editions – e.g. Kroll – use the latter numeration only.)

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Vinia, or Vibia) Aurunculeia[7] and Manlius Torquatus (in 62, by contrast, the bride and groom are anonymous and generic): was it composed for 'live' performance at the wedding itself? These debates have now largely been abandoned, a broad consensus having been reached that both poems combine Greek and Roman elements; neither can have been performed in the way that was envisaged by (some) earlier scholars, but should instead be viewed in the context of 'mimetic' poems such as Callimachus' *Hymns* 2, 5, and 6. Both poems, that is, are performative in the sense that the ritual is enacted by the text itself, with the speaker (or the two choruses in the first stanzas of 62) playing the role of master of ceremonies and engaging the reader as a kind of virtual participant.[8]

More recent criticism has turned its attention instead to the poems' handling of gender roles and – in particular – their focus on (female) desire and resistance to marriage.[9] Important studies of the epithalamia by Ole Thomsen (1992) and more recently Karen Wasdin (2018) lay emphasis on the role of the two poems – and the ritual in general – in acculturating the bride into the role of *matrona*. Whereas Roman girls were supposed to prize and at all costs preserve their virginity, the bride is expected to play the role of desiring subject as well as object, though within the strict constraints of the marital relationship: Catullus seems notably sympathetic towards the anxieties that this, and the rapid transition from girlhood to maternity, is likely to have produced in young brides. Imagery of delicate and vulnerable plants and flowers, drawn, perhaps directly, from the epithalamia of Sappho, and references in both poems to the *raptio* or ritual seizure of the bride from her mother's arms, arguably gesture towards fears more explicitly voiced in the rhetorical question posed by the girls' chorus at 62.24, *quid faciunt hostes capta crudelius urbe?* ('What crueller deed does the enemy commit in a captured city?').[10]

[7] The oldest manuscripts (OGR) give the bride's name as Iunia (16) Aurunculeia (82–3); the alternative readings Iulia and Vinia appear in the *recentiores*. For the emendation *Vibia* (Syme) and further discussion, see Neudling 1955: 185.

[8] For the 'Greek or Roman?' debate, see e.g. Fedeli 1983: 3–7 and *passim* on poem 61; Goud 1995: 32 on 62. On the Roman wedding ceremony in general, see esp. Treggiari 1991: 161–70; Hersch 2010. On the 'mimetic' poem, see now McCarthy 2019: esp. 81–133; Gramps 2021. Wasdin 2018: 22–3 argues that the 'MC' role played by the speaker in poem 61 is traditional, and can be traced back to Sappho.

[9] See esp. Stigers 1977; Thomsen 1992; Panoussi 2007; Caldwell 2015: 139–53; Wasdin 2018: esp. 29–53, 81–103.

[10] Comparisons between the bride and groom and e.g. deities or hero(in)es were a conventional element of the *hymenaios*/epithalamium; but fruit and flower similes appear to have been associated particularly with Sappho (see frs. 105a and b Voigt, and note the testimonia of Himerius and Michael of Italy at 105a and 194a Voigt). On this aspect of the epithalamium, see esp. Stigers 1977; Fedeli 1983: 34–6; Feeney 2013: esp. 71–5; Wasdin 2018: 82–93, 139–42. For the *raptio* or ritual seizure of the bride (sparsely attested in ancient sources), see Treggiari 1991: 166 n. 56; Hersch

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At the same time, the bride's reluctance to leave her parental home, attributed at 61.79 to her *ingenuus pudor* ('well-bred modesty'), is in tension with the sexual arousal that her husband is expected to inspire in her, and her new role as mistress of the house and more specifically as mother. The two poems negotiate this conflict in slightly different ways. In 62, the boys both assert that the girls' protestations are disingenuous (*at lubet innuptis ficto te carpere questu*, 'but unmarried girls take pleasure in carping at you [*sc.* Hymen], with feigned complaints'; 62.36), and counter their use of the conventional flower simile with more functional, though equally traditional, agricultural imagery (62.49–58), as well as more bluntly asserting the importance of familial authority and obedience due to parents (62.28, 59–66).[11] In 61, the bride's transition to adulthood is in effect enacted in the course of the epithalamium itself, as Iunia is transferred from her mother's embrace (*a gremio suae/matris*; 58–9) to the new home where she will shortly (*breui*; 204) become a mother herself, dandling her own infant in her lap (*matris e gremio suae*; 210). At the same time, the Fescennine raillery in the central part of the poem points to a parallel moment of transition for the groom, who must abandon the (unproductive) *amores* of early manhood and devote himself instead to his new, familial role and the production of legitimate heirs (61.134–43).[12]

Poem 61's almost startling emphasis on Iunia's desire for Manlius, and on their sexual 'play', is counterbalanced and normalized by repeated references to the legitimacy of their union: Iunia will be a faithful Penelope (219–23); Manlius will not engage in unsanctioned relations with other men's wives (97–105); their child will bear an unmistakable resemblance to its father (214–18); and – above all – their mutual desire is regulated and constrained by the 'good' Venus (44)[13] –

2010: 144–8. Particularly suggestive is the juxtaposition *rapis teneram* ('you carry off the tender [girl]') at 61.3; and compare 61.56–9: *fero iuueni in manus* / . . . / . . . *a gremio suae* / *matris* ('. . . from her mother's embrace, into the hands of a wild youth') with 62.20–4.

[11] On the question of who speaks the final stanza (the boys' chorus, the narrator, or a third party?), see Fraenkel 1955; Goud 1995.

[12] For the role of the abandoned *concubinus* as a kind of analogue for the groom, whose transition to adulthood doubles or stands in for that of Manlius himself, see Thomsen 1992: 49–50; Panoussi 2007: 282–3. For the transition from youthful *amores* to dutiful adulthood, cf. Cicero's depiction of the young Caelius in the *Pro Caelio*, esp. 39–43. As scholars have observed, the 'abstinence' from homoerotic relations enjoined on the groom (134–43) should not be envisaged as an absolute ban, but as emblematic of his abandonment of adolescent pleasures and his embrace of his new responsibilities as *paterfamilias*: the sexual symmetry implied by Catullus' poem does not reflect the differential expectations of sexual fidelity in husbands and wives typical of Roman sources in general.

[13] Cf. 61.195, and the insistent repetition of the adjective *bonus* throughout the poem (in addition to the two passages cited, see 19–20, 62, 159, 179–80, 197–8, 219–20, 225–6).

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the goddess, that is, of productive, marital sex. But while we may agree with critics such as Panoussi that poems 61 and, to some extent, 62 offer an idealized image of marriage as an institution, indicating a 'renewed faith in . . . its ability to provide personal fulfilment and promote social stability', there is already in these two poems a shadow side.[14] The figure of the *mala adultera* ('wicked adulteress'; 61.97–8) lurks in the background as the negative counterpart of *bona Venus*, even if Iunia is reassured that – provided that she complies with her husband's sexual demands (144–6) – Manlius will never pursue such shameful relations; and there are hints elsewhere in the poem of the dangers of sexual passion, as a force that may not be fully contained within the regulatory institutions of society. Most obviously, the bride is compared to Venus *as she appeared at the judgement of Paris* ('the Phrygian judge'; 18–19): the adulterous Helen is inevitably an absent presence here, as the negative counterpart to the virtuous Penelope of the poem's closing stanzas.[15]

Helen has a more explicit part to play in the last of the *carmina maiora*, the complex and experimental 68, which (with its tantalizingly slippery conflation of myth and personal experience) was to prove profoundly influential on the love poets of the next generation. The poem begins as an expression of gratitude to a friend, Mallius or Allius, but centres on an account of the beloved's arrival at the house which (M)Allius has lent the couple as a venue for their assignations.[16] This soon develops into a hugely extended comparison with the mythical couple Protesilaus and Laodamia, which in turn gives way (via a brief reference to the Trojan War and the abduction/elopement of Helen) to lamentations for the death of Catullus' brother, which apparently took place in the Troad. From this central panel, the poet works back again – in a symmetrical, 'recessed-panel' or 'Chinese box' structure – to the Trojan War, Helen

[14] Panoussi 2007: 276.

[15] Panoussi 2007: 280–1, 284 notes, too, the (ominous?) echoes of poems 7 and 11 at 199–203 and 87–9 (with 62.39–47 and Sappho fr. 105b Voigt). Ready 2004: 156 argues that the comparison with Penelope 'cancels the discordant implications of the first simile'; but we may legitimately wonder whether the troubling undercurrents are in fact so easily dismissed.

[16] The expression of gratitude is perhaps preceded by an apologia for an inability to provide the love poetry for which his friend has asked, owing to his grief for the recent death of his brother – if '68a' is considered to be either part of the same poem or a closely linked 'covering letter', bearing a similar relation to '68b' as 65 does to 66. The poem's unity, or otherwise, continues to be a matter of debate: see, most recently, Leigh 2016, with copious citation of earlier bibliography. Particularly intractable is the issue of the addressee's/addressees' name(s), which appear at 68(a).11 and 30 as *mali* (i.e. Mallius or Manlius?), whereas the manuscript readings at 68(b).50 (*alli*, O; *ali*, X) and 66 (*allius*, O; *manlius*, X) suggest the form 'Allius' (the two remaining passages where the *laudandus* is apparently named are corrupt [*quam fallius*, 41; *aliis*, 150]). Leigh 2016: 217–23 offers a lucid account of the difficulties presented by the confusion of the manuscripts and various attempts to repair them.

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and Paris, and Laodamia's love for her doomed husband (the first of the Greeks to die in the war). Further comparisons present themselves, in a somewhat bewildering array: Laodamia's love is deeper than the drainage ditch dug by Hercules at Pheneus in Arcadia (109–16); her husband was as dear to her as the grandson born of his only daughter to an elderly *paterfamilias* (119–24), or a dove to its mate (125–8). At this point we finally return to Catullus and his beloved, who is said not to fall short, or only a little short (*aut nihil aut paulo . . . concedere digna*; 131), of the mythical heroine – even though she is not faithful to her lover, who resolves nonetheless to bear with her 'occasional lapses' (*rara . . . furta*; 136). The poem ends with further thanks and good wishes to (M)Allius.

This profusion of comparisons, and particularly the evident slippages between *comparanda*, have been variously interpreted by critics.[17] In particular, Laodamia seems more closely to resemble Catullus himself than his beloved, even though she is the overt tenor of the simile. Laodamia's all-consuming love and the loss of her husband bear obvious similarities to Catullus' 'fiery' passion (50–4; cf. 73: *flagrans amore*) and the death of his brother at Troy. At the same time, several of the other similes suggest comparisons beyond their overt reference: notably, the themes of marriage, adultery, family, and the *domus* ('home', 'household') resonate through the poem, to the extent that 68 (or 68b) can be read as a companion piece to 61, framing the *carmina maiora* with 'optimistic' and 'pessimistic', or normative and transgressive, images of marital relations.[18]

The comparison between the beloved and the bride Laodamia is already anticipated in the language of 68.67–72, where she is represented as a 'shining goddess', setting her foot on the threshold of the *domus* whose mistress, *domina*, she will figuratively become. Iunia, too, is compared to a goddess (61.17–19), and urged to step lightly over the threshold of the new home (61.159–61) to which Hymen is summoning her – with the same paronomasia, *domum dominam uoca* (61.31).[19] But the beloved in 68 appears, ominously, to set her foot *on*

[17] On the Protesilaus–Laodamia simile, see esp. Macleod 1974; Lyne 1980: 56–60, 1998: 200–9; Feeney 1992: 39–42; Janan 1994: 119–42; Miller 2004: 44–8; Hunter 2006: 106–8.

[18] For a persuasive reading of the two poems along these lines, see Wasdin 2018: 29–53; cf. Miller 1994: 115–16; Feeney 2013: 79–80. For marriage and the *domus* as central to poem 68, see also Lyne 1980: 56–60; Most 1981: 118–19.

[19] According to Plutarch (*Quaest. Rom.* 29), it was customary to lift or carry the bride over the threshold; cf. Luc. 2.359; Varro *ap.* Serv. *ad Ecl.* 8.29; Fedeli 1983: 106–7; Hersch 2010: 180–2. Tripping or stumbling in the doorway was considered particularly ill-omened; but Varro suggests that setting foot on the threshold at all at such a critical moment was something to be avoided.

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the threshold, where she is left suspended for some sixty lines while Catullus turns to the (equally, if differently) ill-omened union of Laodamia and Protesilaus, whose marriage – or, more literally, 'house' (*domus* again; 74) – was 'begun in vain' (*inceptam frustra*; 75), presumably because it would not fulfil its purpose in producing children.[20]

The unravelling sequence of similes that follows alludes to other less than happy couples: the adulterous Helen and Paris (87 and especially 103: *abducta . . . moecha*, 'seduced adulteress'); Hercules and Hebe, who can only be united through the hero's death (and following his murder of his own children; 116); and Juno, who is forced to swallow her anger at her husband's philandering (138–40). The *eikasmos* or comparison, especially to deities and heroes, traditional in the epithalamium again finds a darker counterpart here: the bride-like *domina* of this poem is in in fact no bride but an adulteress, forever entering the borrowed *domus* to which she has not been escorted in a formal *deductio* or wedding procession (*nec . . . mihi dextra deducta paterna*, 'nor was she escorted to me by her father's hand'; 68.143).[21] The *munus* or 'duty' of marriage, which aims at the production of legitimate children (61.43, 227) is replaced by the *furtiua munuscula*, 'stolen love gifts', pilfered from the very *gremium* ('lap', 'bosom') of the girl's husband (68.145–6), in a kind of parodic inversion of Hymen's parting of the bride from her mother's embrace (*a gremio suae / matris*; 61.58–9).

Recent interpretations of the poem have laid particular emphasis on Laodamia's childlessness, which – in connection with the death of Catullus' brother – suggests a submerged anxiety around the continuity of the family line.[22] The *domus* theme in 68b is anticipated in the 'covering letter' by the poet's grief-struck outcry, *o misero frater adempte mihi, / tu mea tu moriens fregisti commoda, frater, / tecum una tota est nostra sepulta* domus ('o my brother, taken from me to my sorrow, in dying, you have wrecked all my pleasures, with you our whole *house* lies buried'; 68.20–2) – lines partially repeated, strikingly, at the centre of

[20] Catullus' phrase echoes the Homeric δόμος ἡμιτελής ('a house half-finished'; *Il.* 2.701), the meaning of which was disputed in antiquity. Among several explanations put forward by the ancient commentators was that the house(hold) was 'incomplete' in the sense that no child had been conceived: see Eustathius and the Venetus A scholia *ad loc.*

[21] Cf. Feeney 1992: 33–4, 2013: 79–80; Wasdin 2018: 36–44. On the *eikasmos* as a traditional component of the epithalamium from Sappho onwards, see n. 10 above.

[22] See esp. Janan 1994: 115–42; Skinner 2003: 53–7; Gale 2012: 205–6; Leigh 2016: 208–13. Compare Oliensis 2009: 46–54, who reads the poem's subliminal anxiety differently, as a submerged expression of guilt in relation to the death of Catullus' brother and the impossibility of mourning him adequately.

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68b (92–4). A strong hint can be detected here that the brother has died childless, leaving Catullus alone to continue the family line. His *domina*, however, is a Helen, not a chaste Penelope,[23] and there will be no legitimate heir – no *Catullus paruulus* (cf. 61.209: *Torquatus . . . paruulus*, 'a baby Torquatus'), no *caput seri . . . nepotis* ('life of a late-born grandchild'; 68.120) will come from this union. If, as Panoussi suggests, poem 62 urges the rival claims of individual needs (the girls' desire to maintain their virginity and the female friendships of their childhood) and societal demands (the boys' assertion of parental rights: compare the praise of Hymen at 61.66–75 as preserver of familial continuity and the security of the *patria*), a similar clash may be seen to structure poem 68, where Catullus represents himself as, ultimately, prepared to sacrifice his paternal *domus* in favour of an unsanctioned and inevitably sterile 'quasi-marriage'. Poem 61's attempt to contain (female) desire within the constraints of a socially validated union contrasts with the disillusion of 68, where the ideal of mutual fidelity collapses, and *amor* overspills the bonds of marriage, entailing the destruction of the Trojan War and, symbolically, of Catullus' own *domus*.

These themes resonate to a greater or lesser extent through poems 63–6: notably, the word *domus* occurs twenty-six times in the *carmina maiora*, as against only five in the rest of the corpus. In poem 63, the young Attis has left the civilized *domus* where he enjoyed the status of an admired and much-courted *ephebe* (63–7) for the wild and alien landscape of Phrygia, the *domus* (20, 35, 58) of Mistress Cybele (*Dindymenae dominae*; 13). Having castrated himself in an ecstatic frenzy, along with his companions (who, however, soon disappear from the poem), he can never become husband or father, or properly fulfil any of the social roles he mournfully catalogues at 62–9:

> *quod enim genus figuraest, ego non quod obierim?*
> *ego mulier, ego adulescens, ego ephebus, ego puer,*
> *ego gymnasi fui flos, ego eram decus olei:*
> . . .
> *ego Maenas, ego mei pars, ego vir sterilis ero?*

What kind of likeness is there that I have not borne? I a woman, I an adolescent, I an *ephebe*, I a boy-child; I was the flower of the gymnasium, the glory of the wrestling ground . . . Shall I be henceforth a Maenad, a part of myself, a sterile man?

[23] Indeed, if there is a Penelope-figure in this poem, it is the speaker himself, whose weeping at 68.55–6 resembles that of Odysseus' wife, who similarly 'melts like snow on a mountain-top' (*Od.* 19.204–9).

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The only role he can play henceforth, as the poem's chilling conclusion confirms, is that of slave, *famula* (90; cf. 51–2, 68), to *domina Cybele*.[24]

One productive way to read this poem is against the gender discourse of the first-person love poems, not least 68: Catullus' passion (as we saw in Chapter 2) effeminizes him, so that he willingly plays the role of Laodamia to the beloved's Protesilaus; Attis more literally *becomes* a woman, or rather a 'fake woman' (*notha mulier*; 27), characterized by feminine grammatical forms from line 8 onwards.[25] Attis' self-castration resonates disturbingly, too, with the image of the cut flower at the end of poem 11, which in turn links the speaker to the deflowered virgin implied by the simile of 62.43.[26] On this reading, Cybele is a mythical analogue for Lesbia, and her self-emasculated devotee for the Catullus of the love poems. In adopting the conventionally female role, moreover, Catullus (like Attis) has rejected, perhaps betrayed, his expected familial and societal duties: the concluding *apopompe* or 'averting prayer' of 63, where the poet prays that the goddess will inflict her frenzy on others, and spare his own *domus* (91–3), is shot through with irony, particularly when read in the context of the *domus*/marriage theme that pervades the *carmina maiora*.

Poem 64, discussed in more detail below, also opens itself to ironic readings, particularly of the nostalgia that the speaker expresses for the Age of Heroes (64.22–4) and the apparently rosy portrayal of the wedding of Peleus and Thetis that is the main subject of the narrative.[27] The 'heroic virtues' (51; cf. 348: *egregias uirtutes*; 357: *magnis uirtutibus*)

[24] J. S. Clay 1995 compares Attis to *ephebic* figures such as Hippolytus and Meleager, who similarly fail to complete the transition to adult manhood. Cf. Quinn 1972: 249–51; Skinner 1997: 136–40; Fantuzzi and Hunter 2004: 480–1.

[25] The manuscripts give masculine forms at lines 42, 45, 88, and 89: most editors correct these to feminines (see e.g. Fordyce 1961: 264 *ad* 63.8), though some critics have argued for a deliberate fluctuation between genders: see e.g. J. S. Clay 1995: 146–8; Skinner 1997: 138.

[26] Cf. Janan 1994: 106–7. For interpretation of the cut -flower simile of poem 11 as suggestive of castration and effeminization, see Chapter 2, pp. 45–6, above. Putnam 1974: 80 connects the image with Attis' self-characterization as 'the *flower* of the gymnasium' (*gymnasi . . . flos*; 63.64). A slightly different, though related, interpretation, advanced particularly by Skinner in her influential article of 1997, understands Attis' castration as an emblem of political impotence in the face of aristocratic, perhaps especially Triumviral, monopolization of power in the closing decades of the Republic.

[27] For 'ironic' readings, see esp. Curran 1969; Bramble 1970; Konstan 1977; Gaisser 1995. *Contra*, Jenkyns 1982 and Fitzgerald 1995: 140–68, both of whom emphasize the poem's voluptuously sensuous character and deny that it is primarily concerned with the moral status either of the Age of Heroes or of the poet's contemporary society. For similarly aestheticizing readings, see M. Heath 1989: 60–2; Martindale 2005: 90–100; see also Schmale 2004: esp. 284–90, who accounts for the poem's incongruities by drawing a sharp distinction between internal and external audiences, and between narrator and author, and Fernandelli 2012: esp. xvii–xxxiv.

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depicted on the coverlet of the marriage bed, in the famously extended ecphrasis of lines 50–264, resolve themselves into Theseus' callous abandonment of Ariadne and the curse that she in turn calls down upon him and his family (the killing of the Minotaur is passed over in a five-line simile, 105–9);[28] and the future exploits of the happy couple's son, Achilles, are foreseen in a prophecy filled with gore and maternal lamentation, culminating in the vividly described slaughter of the virgin Polyxena (366–70) – itself a perversion of the marriage rite.[29]

Poems 66 (with its covering note, 65) and 67 can be seen to form a contrasting pair, portraying as they do a mutually devoted, albeit temporarily separated couple, Queen Berenice and her husband, Ptolemy, and the ultimate in transgressive marriages, compromised – according to the animated house door that is the poem's main speaker – by impotence, incest, and serial adultery.[30] The adulterous bride of this latter poem both anticipates the less-than-faithful mistress of poem 68 (esp. 135–46) and gives substance to the shadowy figure of the *mala adultera* ('wicked adulteress') who haunts poem 61. The doorway motif forms the most obvious connection between the three poems: while the (literally) liminal position of the speaker in 67 plays on comic more than epithalamial models,[31] the transgressive *matrona* invites comparison with both the virginal bride of 61 and the *domina* of 68, with the associated symbolism of the threshold in each case. Strikingly, too, the door itself is addressed in terms which momentarily suggest a bride (*o dulci iucunda uiro, iucunda parenti, / salue*, 'Greetings, o cherished by a darling husband, cherished by a father'; 67.1–2), an ambiguity which is

[28] On the complexities of the simile, and the ultra-Callimachean shifting of narrative weight from the hero's exploits to the marginal figure of Ariadne, see esp. Hunter 2006: 99–100.

[29] As is suggested particularly by its Lucretian intertext, Lucr. 1.84–101, where the sacrifice of Iphigenia is similarly described and explicitly contrasted with the wedding in which Agamemnon's daughter *should* be participating. For verbal echoes between the two passages, see Skinner 1976; Morisi 2002. On Lucretian intertexuality in poem 64 more generally, and the difficult issue of chronological priority, see Gale 2007: 69–70, with further bibliography; see now also the methodologically innovative study of Tamás 2016.

[30] The details of the scenario elaborated in the poem are somewhat unclear, and have given rise to considerable controversy: particularly disputed are the identity of the Caecilius mentioned in line 9 as the house's current owner and his relation to the two Balbi; and whether or not line 20 implies a previous marriage on the part of Balbus' wife. For discussion and bibliography, see e.g. Laguna Mariscal 2002: 16–18; Lewis 2009: 40–4 (the latter argues that the obscurity is deliberate, thematizing the unreliability of gossip and the nature of literary communication). For further points of contact between poems 66 and 67, see Macleod 1983: 192–3; Levine 1985: 69–71; King 1988: 388; Fitzgerald 1995: 205–7; Höschele 2009: 129–34.

[31] For comic elements in poem 67, see Maynes 2016 (surprisingly, the poem is not discussed in Polt 2021); cf. esp. Plaut. *Curc.* 15–157 for direct address of the personified house door.

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only resolved by the vocative *ianua* in line 3.[32] Literal or figurative references to the *gremium* ('lap', 'bosom'), which (as we saw) recur in 61 and 68, again mark the contrast between the transgressive marriage of 67 and the virtuous union of 66: the incestuous father-in-law of 67 is described – with the crudity proper to invective – as having 'pissed in his own son's lap' (*ipse sui gnati minxerit in gremium*; 67.30),[33] whereas the personified lock of Berenice's hair that is the speaker of 66 finds itself in the 'chaste lap of Venus' (*Veneris casto . . . gremio*; 66.56) – that is, of Berenice's deified predecessor, Arsinoe-Aphrodite.[34] More disturbingly, the Lock's playful mockery of Berenice's 'fraternal' relationship with her new husband (66.21–2) is echoed in the father-in-law–daughter-in-law incest of poem 67.[35]

The themes of childlessness and sterility explored above in relation to poems 63 and 68 recur here, too, most explicitly in the figure of the impotent husband of 67.20–2 but also in the densely metaphorical language of poem 65. In apologizing to his correspondent, Hortalus, for inability to comply with a request for a poem, Catullus describes his reaction to his brother's death in terms evocative of both sterility and infanticide (65.1–4, 12–14):

[32] Cf. esp. 62.58: *cara uiro magis et minus est inuisa parenti*, '[the girl who is married off] is more dear to her man and less burdensome to her father'. See also Wiseman 1969: 22. Fantuzzi and Hunter 2004: 476 note that the opening lines of 67 recall the conclusion of Callimachus' 'Lock of Berenice', the model for Catullus' translation in poem 66, which, as printed by most editors, omits the lines in question. Critics are divided as to whether (i) Callimachus removed the concluding lines of his poem in adapting it for incorporation in the *Aetia* (see also n. 42 below) – presumably the version that Catullus read; or (ii) Catullus translates the lines but moves them to the beginning of 67, creating an allusive link between the two poems (so Fantuzzi and Hunter); or (iii) the Catullan lines should in fact appear at the end of poem 66 (so Agnesini 2011; Du Quesnay 2012: 181–3; Portuese 2013: 102–6, 141–4; Heyworth 2015: 135–7; Fo 2018: 933–6). Even if the proposal to reassign the lines is accepted, however, assimilation between door and bride is still suggested by the phrase *facta marita* (lit. 'once you were made marital', i.e. were married/belonged to a married couple) at line 6.

[33] Roman notions of *incestus* were broader than their modern equivalent, embracing near relations by marriage as well as blood relatives: see Watson 2006: 40 n. 35.

[34] See e.g. Marinone 1997: 160–4.

[35] And the incestuous relations which the narrator of 64 represents as typical of his own, degenerate age in the poem's coda, 64.401–4. Berenice and Ptolemy were in fact cousins rather than brother and sister, but their union is assimilated to the sibling marriages typical of Egyptian dynastic tradition. This section of the *Coma* (poem 66) also resonates with the theme of 'false tears' (an epithalamial *topos*) in 62: the boys' insinuation that, though young girls 'take pleasure in carping at [Hymen], with feigned complaints', they secretly long for marriage (36–7) is reiterated by the Lock, which professes exaggerated surprise that Berenice's resistance to marriage (implied by the language of erotic violence in 13–14, as well as the 'abundant tears' of brides in general in 15–18) has so quickly given way to longing for her absent husband.

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Etsi me assiduo confectum cura dolore
seuocat a doctis, Ortale, uirginibus,
nec potis est dulcis *Musarum* expromere fetus
mens animi . . .
. . .
semper maesta tua [sc. fratris] carmina morte canam,
qualia sub densis ramorum concinit umbris
Daulias, absumpti *fata gemens* Ityli.

Although my sorrow parts me from the learned maidens [*sc.* the Muses], worn out as I am by unceasing grief, Hortalus, and my mind cannot *bring forth the delightful offspring* of the Muses . . . Yet, [my brother,] I shall forever sing songs made sorrowful by your death, like those the Daulian bird [*sc.* the nightingale] pours forth in the branches' heavy shade, mourning the fate of *dead Itylus*.

Catullus' grief has hindered the figurative coupling with the virginal Muses, which – like the marriage of Manlius and Iunia – would have produced a 'child', the *fetus* of line 3: in this sense (in addition to the loss of his brother), he resembles the bereaved mother of Itylus, who has likewise lost a son.[36] Catullus' figurative sterility turns out to be only relative, since he has in fact produced a poem, albeit a translation of Callimachus, poem 66, rather than a wholly new work.[37]

The poem's closing simile, in which Hortalus' request is troped as an apple sent to a young girl by her fiancé,[38] picks up the opening imagery of childbirth. The 'chaste virgin' of the simile hides the apple in her *gremium*, but absent-mindedly lets it fall as she jumps up to greet her

[36] For this interpretation of *fetus*, see e.g. Fordyce 1961: 326, *ad loc.*; Syndikus 1984–90: ii.195; Fitzgerald 1995: 192–3. As Fordyce points out, however, the term may equally refer to the 'fruit' of trees or other plants: *expromere*, 'bring forth', suggests the metaphor of bringing fruit out of a store, and anticipates the accidental 'production' of the apple in the concluding simile. Woodman 2012: 135 asserts that the characterization of the Muses as virgins effectively rules out the former interpretation; but, in the epithalamial context of the *carmina maiora*, we might well think of a progression from virginity to maternity; moreover, the poem's characteristic inversions of gender (on which see esp. Wray 2001: 197–203; Young 2015: 131–2; Seider 2016: 289–96) suggest that the maternal figure in this scenario is the poet rather than the Muse.

[37] In addition, of course, to poem 65 itself: several scholars have commented on the paradox entailed in apologizing for not being able to produce a poem in a poem which is itself a masterpiece of allusive complexity and polished artistry, not to mention the implication (12) that the brother's death will in fact inspire future songs of lamentation. See esp. Selden 1992: 474–5; Skinner 2003: 3–5.

[38] The precise reference of the simile is much disputed: does the apple represent the promised poem or Hortalus' request? Does Hortalus himself play the role of the *sponsus* or the girl's mother? For a clear, if somewhat schematic, statement of the alternatives, see Laursen 1989. As will be clear from the discussion above, I believe that the text of the poem simultaneously invites both interpretations, neither of which can be definitively ruled out. On the culture of literary exchange presupposed by the poem, see Chapter 3, pp. 54–5, above.

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mother – as though proleptically giving birth to the baby she will bear after the marriage takes place.[39] The language of gift-giving (*munere*; 19) suggests a secondary association between the apple and the poem that follows: Catullus' obligation to his correspondent, like the girl's respect for her mother, is strong enough, it seems, to bring forth poetry after all, even in the face of overwhelming grief (or, in the girl's case, of her innocent complicity with her lover).[40] At the same time, the troubling implications of the nightingale simile persist in spite of the poem's consoling conclusion. As the commentators note, Catullus conflates two versions of the aetiological myth to which he alludes here. According to one account, Aedon, daughter of Pandareus, accidentally kills her own child Itylus, mistaking him for the son of her sister Niobe, of whose fecundity she is jealous. In the other, more familiar, story, Procne's husband, Tereus, rapes his sister-in-law, Philomela; in revenge, the two sisters murder Procne's son Itys and serve up the child's dismembered body to his father.[41] In both versions, however, Aedon/Procne is herself responsible for the loss of her child, and it is this element in particular that, once again, resonates with poem 68 and the childlessness of both Laodamia and (apparently) Catullus himself. The poem's maternal imagery, then, hints both at a sense of responsibility, even guilt, for the end of the family line (Procne/Aedon's infanticide) and at a compensating figuration of poetic composition as childbirth (poetry as 'offspring of the Muses'): the immortality conferred by commemoration in verse, a theme developed more explicitly in the opening lines of 68b, is weighed against, but does not cancel out, the failure of the *domus* entailed on the more literal level by death and childlessness.

[39] It is noteworthy in this connection that the noun *gremium* (literally, the lap or bosom) can also refer to the female genitalia (presumably the sense at 67.30, the wife's vagina being regarded as the husband's property) or uterus (see Adams 1982: 92; *OLD* §3; *TLL* 6.2322.36–56).

[40] For a sensitive analysis of Catullus' negotiation of conflicting loyalties – to his *amicus* and to his dead brother – in the poem's closing lines, see Fitzgerald 1995: 189–96, who however interprets the metaphors of conception and pregnancy somewhat differently from the reading outlined above. See also Oliensis 2009: 25–32; Seider 2016: 289–96.

[41] See e.g. Fordyce 1961: 326–7, *ad loc.* Catullus' phrasing (as well as the name Itylus) closely recalls Penelope's speech at *Od.* 19.518–23, where she compares herself to the unfortunate Aedon; but the epithet 'Daulian' suggests the alternative version of the myth, according to which Tereus was king of Daulia in Phocis (so Thuc. 2.29.3). As Woodman 2012: 142 observes, too, the participle *absumpti* applied to Itylus at 65.14 can mean 'devoured' as well as merely 'carried off by death', and thus points implicitly to Tereus' cannibal feast.

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2. Translation, appropriation, and alienation

A number of scholars have pointed to a rather different way in which the closing simile of poem 65 serves to connect the covering letter with the translation that follows: that is, through intertextual echoes of the *Aetia* of Callimachus, where Catullus (probably) encountered the original 'Lock of Berenice'.[42] While the scenario that Catullus describes has no close parallel (as far as we know) in the Greek poem, the details of the rolling apple (65.23) and the girl's blush (24) irresistibly recall the Acontius and Cydippe narrative of *Aetia* 3.[43] Acontius, prompted by Eros, inveigles the beautiful virgin Cydippe into marriage by writing 'I swear to Artemis that I shall marry Acontius' on an apple and rolling it before her feet at the sanctuary of Artemis, so that – taking the bait and reading the inscription aloud – she unwittingly commits herself to him. As Tony Woodman has observed, this story has no obvious correspondence with the situation in Catullus' poem;[44] but, *pace* Woodman, that cannot prevent the connection from occurring to the reader, particularly when the simile immediately follows an explicit reference to 'poems of Callimachus' (*carmina Battiadae*; 16). On one level, the phrase evidently refers to the translation that follows; but on another, we could understand poem 65 a self-fulfilling prophecy, in so far as it is itself a kind of 'Callimachean poem', one that selects and recombines elements from one of Callimachus' best-known passages, redeploying them in a context quite different from the original but still bearing recognizable similarities to it.[45]

[42] 'Probably' because – as noted above (n. 32) – two versions of the Callimachean poem apparently existed in antiquity, an original, separate publication and a (slightly modified?) version incorporated into the end of *Aetia* 4. For details, see e.g. Marinone 1997: 41–2; Harder 2012: ii.799–800.

[43] The relevant section of the text has not survived, but Aristaenetus' version of the story (*Ep.* 1.10 = Callim. *Aet.* fr. 75b Harder), which can be assumed with some confidence to be based closely on that of Callimachus, mentions Acontius' rolling (*diekulisas*) of the apple and dwells at length on Cydippe's blush, occasioned by the mention of marriage; Cydippe's nurse, who initially picks up the apple, is also said to wonder whether one of the other girls has let the apple fall from her *prokolpion* (cf. 65.20: *casto . . . e gremio*). The apple as 'secret gift' (65.19) is more generally reminiscent of Acontius' stratagem (*furtiuo* is roughly equivalent to the *lathrā*, 'secretly', 'stealthily', of Aristaenetus): cf. also Ov. *Her.* 20.5–6, 97, 21.112 (the blush), 20.209 (the rolling apple). See further Daly 1952; Barchiesi 1993: 363–5; Hunter 1993. Others (e.g. Syndikus 1984–90: ii.197–8) are sceptical.

[44] Woodman 2012: 150–1.

[45] Here we might compare Propertius' reworking of the Acontius–Cydippe story at 1.18, where the poet represents himself as wandering, like Acontius, in a lonely place and carving the name of his beloved on trees (cf. Callim. *Aet.* frs. 72–3 Harder); in other respects, however, his relationship with Cynthia bears no similarity to that of Acontius with Cydippe.

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Taken together, poems 65 and 66 thus offer us two very different models of 'translation' (to use the term loosely). In the latter case, the surviving fragments of the *Aetia* suggest a relatively close, almost word-for-word (or at least line-for-line) correspondence between the Greek source-text and Catullus' Latin version – as is also the case in the Sappho translation, poem 51.[46] In poem 65, the relationship between source and target is much looser: instead of taking over the model-text wholesale, Catullus appropriates Callimachean motifs to his own ends. In that sense, the two poems taken together exemplify the very wide range of translation practices, or, more broadly, intertextual relations with Greek models, self-consciously employed by Roman writers from at least the time of Plautus, as recent scholarship has emphasized.[47] This, in turn, may be related to broader themes of cultural transfer, separation, and alienation that are – again – brought to the fore when we read the *carmina maiora* as a connected sequence.

Poem 66 itself has largely been treated by scholars as a kind of mine from which the details of lost sections of the Callimachean original might be extracted, and/or commended (or criticized) on its success (or failure) in reproducing the verbal texture of its model.[48] In recent years, however, under the influence of postcolonial and translation theory, and prompted to some extent by reconsideration of Virgil's controversial quotation of lines 39–40 in *Aeneid* 6, it has become more fashionable to see Catullus as recontextualizing and even remaking Callimachus for an elite Roman readership.[49] In this connection, the sense of displacement and dislocation expressed by the Lock can be read metapoetically, as a comment on the expropriation of Greek culture by the Roman upper classes. Regine Höschele (drawing on earlier work on Callimachus)

[46] For a line-by-line comparison of poem 66 and the surviving fragments of the Callimachean model, see e.g. Warden 2006: 100–18. For elements of Callimachean style in poem 65, see King 1988: 384–5; Barchiesi 1993: 363; Hunter 2006: 101–2. For poems 65 and 66 as representing different points on a 'continuum of allusive practices', see also Fantuzzi and Hunter 2004: 474–5 (quoted phrase at 474); Young 2015: 128–65, esp. 164–5.

[47] See esp. Fantuzzi and Hunter 2004: 467–74; McElduff 2013: esp. 15–16 (range of translation practices) and 132–4 (Catullus 65 and 66); Young 2015: 6–19; Feeney 2016: esp. 45–64.

[48] Marinone 1997 goes so far as to print the two poems with lines interleaved where the Greek text is extant, though cautioning against the assumption that Catullus' version offers a transparent window onto the Callimachean original (35–6). For an account (and critique) of scholarly attempts to use Catullus to reconstruct Callimachus, see esp. Bing 2009. For a full discussion of the controversial Catullan lines 66.79–88, which have no equivalent in our text of Callimachus, see Du Quesnay 2012: 162–75, with further bibliography at 163 nn. 54–7. For debate around the poem's ending, see n. 32 above.

[49] See esp. Höschele 2009; Young 2015: 139–65. On Aeneas' quotation of the Lock's *inuita, o regina* at *Aen.* 6.460, see esp. Lyne 1994: 187–93; Griffith 1995; Wills 1998; Pelliccia 2011; Hardie 2012: 229–35.

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points out that the Lock in its Callimachean instantiation has already undergone a 'fourfold displacement from origin' (Berenice's move from Libya to Alexandria; separation from the queen's head; removal to the lap of Arsinoe-Aphrodite; and ultimately catasterism); this is compounded by the separation of Catullus' version of the poem from its original (political, literary) context and his redeployment of the Callimachean source-text as part of a personal narrative of separation and loss and, simultaneously, a broader story of cultural appropriation on the grand scale.[50]

The densely intertextual make-up of other *carmina maiora*, considered from this perspective, points to other kinds of 'translation' and showcases the range of ways in which Greek literary texts might be naturalized and assimilated to the Roman context. We have already noted how poems 61 and 62 fuse the conventions of the Greek wedding poem with elements of Roman ritual (the characteristic dress of the bride – and of Hymen as a 'bridal' figure – in 61; references to the symbolic seizing of the bride from her mother in both poems; the inclusion of Fescennine mockery).[51] Poems 64 and 68 both draw on an extraordinarily wide range of Greek (as well as Roman) literary predecessors, reforging them into what are, in certain respects, highly individual and deeply Roman works. In the case of 64, the once popular idea that the poem is either wholly or partly a translation of a lost Greek original has now largely been abandoned; but Catullus' importation of the so-called 'epyllion' (or miniature epic) form pioneered by Callimachus in the *Hecale* remains fertile ground for reflection on Roman responses to Greek culture. The agonistic view of Catullan intertextuality developed by Richard Thomas and others (considered in Chapter 1), according to which Catullus sets out to rival or 'correct' his various, mainly Greek models, is also relevant here.[52] The poem's coda

[50] Höschele's warning (2009: 126) against the unexamined assumption that the poet's personal experience is primary – that he chose the *Coma* to translate because it happened to chime with his own preoccupations – is salutary, however: as is clear from the complex intertextuality of poem 65, Catullus' depiction of his own grief and sense of alienation is as much *conditioned by* his reading of Greek literature as it is *determinative of* the texts he selects as components of his literary self-fashioning.

[51] Cf. Fedeli 1983: 52–3, 86–9.

[52] On intertextuality in poem 64, see esp. Thomas 1982; Zetzel 1983; Gaisser 1995; Clare 1996; De Brohun 2007; Fernandelli 2012: esp. 160–210. For the coverlet as *mise-en-abyme* of the poem as a whole, and hence as a metapoetic symbol of Catullus' importation of a 'decadent' foreign poem-type, see Young 2015: 26–39. Dufallo 2013: 39–73 similarly reads the ecphrasis as dramatizing the clash between Hellenizing and traditional Roman value systems in contemporary culture. Conversely, Fitzgerald 1995: 140–68, esp. 142–6, argues that the poem embodies a nostalgic sense of alienation from the seductive world of Greek myth.

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most obviously recontextualizes the mythical material by connecting it with the characteristically Roman (and particularly Late Republican) idea of moral decline, on which Augustus was to capitalize so effectively in the next generation.[53] Poem 68 more explicitly draws on (mainly Greek) myth and literature as a means of framing personal experience – of desire, loss, and gratitude.[54] And poem 65, as we have seen, makes similarly complex use of intertextual resonances.

Elizabeth Young has recently sought to relate this pervasive pattern of intertextual appropriation in the *carmina maiora* to the prominence of west–east (and east–west) movements and voyages in this part of the collection, most notably the Argonautic myth, which looks set to be the main theme of poem 64 before the narrative is hijacked by the Peleus and Thetis story, and allusions to the Trojan War in 68; Attis in 63, too, sails from Greece to Asia Minor, though soon finds that the return voyage is closed to him by his self-emasculation.[55] This failure to complete the loop and return triumphantly to Greece (Italy) – as, for example, Virgil represents himself as doing in the opening lines of *Georgics* 3 – tends, however, to complicate the picture of Catullus as 'heroic' translator that Young sketches. Whereas Cicero, Virgil, and others typically represent their literary endeavours as a kind of (re)conquest of Greece, Catullus' heroes seem doomed throughout the *carmina maiora* to tragic or failed homecomings: Peleus and Thetis' son will die at Troy, like Laodamia's husband in poem 68; Attis is bound in eternal servitude to Cybele; Theseus returns to a home (*domus* again; 64.246) that is in mourning for the death of his father; and the Argonauts, though successful in their quest for the Golden Fleece, will also bring back Medea, whose 'absent presence' haunts the ecphrasis of the coverlet at the centre of 64 (as discussed below).[56]

This recurring pattern perhaps reflects anxieties, as well as triumphalism, in relation to Greek-influenced cultural production (as, indeed, Young suggests), but it is also related to Catullus' tendency

[53] Interpretation of poem 64 as an 'indictment of [contemporary] Rome' is most fully developed by Konstan 1977.

[54] On myth and intertextuality in poem 68, see esp. Macleod 1974; Tuplin 1981; Skinner 1984; Shipton 1985; Janan 1994: 119–39; Vandiver 2000; Gale 2012.

[55] Young 2015: 25–51. Catullus' depiction of Attis as Greek appears to be an innovation: in other accounts, he originates from Phrygia. See e.g. Harrison 2004: 520–3. For the cult of Attis and other versions of the myth, see L. E. Roller 1999: 237–59; Bremmer 2004, with a brief survey of earlier scholarship at 534–5.

[56] For cultural imperialism in Cicero and Virgil, see esp. Cic. *Tusc.* 1.1–6, 2.5–7; Virg. *G.* 3.10–15. Cf. Young 2015: 6–19.

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to identify – and invite his readers to identify – with the victims and the bereaved rather than the 'heroic' victors of these narratives of quest and conquest. This is particularly striking in the case of poem 68, where the focus is on the widowed Laodamia, left at home to mourn her loss.[57] Grieving mothers figure prominently, too, in the Song of the Parcae, at 64.349–51, and we might also note the disproportionate focus on the abandoned Ariadne, at the expense of the 'heroic' Theseus, in the central ecphrasis of poem 64. Here we may compare the ambivalent handling of Roman imperialism, and the related tendency to adopt the victim position, discussed above in relation to poem 11: Catullus' depiction in that poem of the foreign Other, and of Roman hegemony, I suggested, at once confirms and calls into question contemporary imperialist and gender discourses.[58] So, too, the *carmina maiora* may be said to explore the experience of deracination, dislocation, and alienation as much as they celebrate the poet's triumphant appropriation and mastery of his Greek models. However incongruous and humorously exaggerated the complaints of the Lock in 66, for example, her experience of separation from her 'sisters' (*comae . . . sorores*; 66.51), together with Berenice's longing for her 'brother' Ptolemy (*fratris cari flebile discidium*, 'your tearful separation from your dear brother'; 66.22), can be seen to replay in a different register the anxieties of the young brides in 61 and 62, and, more startlingly, the poet's own bereavement.[59] Much is made in poems 65 and 68 of the brother's distant resting place – buried not 'among familiar tombs or near the ashes of his kin' (68.97–8; cf. 65.7), but on the far-off shore of the Troad. Similarly, the Lock is quite literally removed from its roots (*me afore semper, / afore me a dominae uertice*, 'I shall always be separated – separated I shall be from my mistress' head'; 66.75–6), and Attis, too, is destined to spend the rest of his days amid the profoundly alien landscape of Phrygia, under the dominion of the never fully Romanized deity Cybele, and in a

[57] For the argument that Catullus' account of the Trojan War in this poem draws on the choruses of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, with their similar focus on the cost of the war to the families left at home, see Gale 2012: esp. 196–207.

[58] See above, p. 46. Relevant in this connection is the gender change of the Lock: in the process of translation, the Greek (masculine) *plokamos* is converted into the Latin (feminine) *coma*.

[59] For the argument that Callimachus' Lock echoes the laments of female poets (Sappho, Erinna) separated by marriage from their companions, see Gutzwiller 1992, esp. 374–6. Berenice's longing also recalls that of Ariadne, who – like the *coma* – has been taken from her home and family: compare 66.23: *quam penitus maestas exedit cura medullas!* ('how deeply anxiety consumed your sorrowful heart!') with 64.93: *imis exarsit tota medullis* ('from the depths of her heart her whole being caught fire').

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body no longer wholly his own (*ego mei pars*, 'I, a part of myself'; 63.69).[60]

Attis' alienation from his surroundings prompts comparison not only with the Lock's longing for its 'sisters' but also with the sense of displacement articulated by the poet himself in 68a. Apologizing to (M)Allius for his inability to provide the requested poem, Catullus explains that a part of his difficulty lies in the fact that, having returned to his native Verona in the wake of his brother's death, he does not have his library with him (68.34–5):

> *hoc fit, quod Romae uiuimus: illa domus,*
> *illa mihi sedes, illic mea carpitur aetas.*

This is so because I live in Rome: that is my home, that is my dwelling place, that is where I spend my life.

The emphatic tricolon powerfully conveys a feeling of deracination: no longer at home in his provincial birthplace, Catullus longs for his 'dwelling' in the capital. As we saw in Chapter 1, however, the poet repeatedly represents himself as an outsider to the metropolis and seat of aristocratic power: like Attis, he seems not fully at home anywhere. These lines point to another aspect of the *domus* theme which, as we have seen, runs so prominently through the *carmina maiora*: Catullus offers us a rather less optimistic take on the shared loyalty to 'two *patriae*' which Cicero explores at the beginning of Book 2 of the *De legibus*.[61] For Cicero, there is as clear a hierarchy between natal and civic identity, as between family and state: however fond he may be of Arpinum, Rome commands, and should command, his primary loyalty. Catullus, in contrast, suggests a sense of profound unease occasioned by what Emma Dench terms the 'hyphenated identities' of the Italian and provincial elite: caught between Verona and Rome, the poet's plight is

[60] On landscape and alienation in poem 63, see Janan 1994: 104–6; Rosivach 2012; De Villiers 2017; O'Hearn 2021a. For Roman perception of Cybele – or at least certain aspects of her cult – as 'oriental', see Vermaseren 1977: 96–7; L. E. Roller 1999: 301–9. The ecphrasis of Bacchus and his train at 64.251–64 similarly stresses the threatening 'foreignness' of his orgiastic cult (esp. 264: *barbara . . . tibia*): for the suggestion that Dionysiac overtones are present in poem 63, via intertextual connections with Euripides' *Bacchae* (a work similarly concerned with 'the cultural clash of East and West'), see Harrison 2004: 520–7; cf. also Panoussi 2003.

[61] Cic. *Leg.* 2.5; cf. *Off.* 1.57–8 for the analogous hierarchy between familial and patriotic duty. Catullus' joyful homecoming to Sirmio in poem 31 paints a notably different picture of his relation to his provincial roots.

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suggestively figured in both the alienated Attis of poem 63 and the (literally) severed Lock of 66.[62]

3. Poem 64: the textual labyrinth

If Attis, Catullus' brother, Berenice's Lock and the poet himself (writing, in poem 68, from Verona) are all, in their different ways, displaced and isolated, the figure of whom this is most obviously true is Ariadne in poem 64. Abandoned by Theseus on the desolate island of Dia, she cannot return to Crete or hope for help from the family she has betrayed (64.178–81):

> *Idaeosne petam montes? at gurgite lato*
> *discernens ponti truculentum diuidit aequor.*
> *an patris auxilium sperem? quemne ipsa reliqui*
> *respersum iuuenem fraterna caede secuta?*

Should I make for the mountains of Ida? But the angry expanse of the sea lies between, cutting me off with its broad flood. Or should I hope for my father's help – the father whom I abandoned to follow a youth spattered with my brother's blood?

Theseus, she claims, perfidiously cheated her of the marriage that he had promised when she helped him to kill the Minotaur (the 'brother' mentioned in the lines quoted above): no woman should trust a man's promises when he is out for what he can get (139–48). Ariadne's sentiments here suggest yet another instance of cross-gender identification on the poet's part, strongly flagged by the inversion in these lines of the misogynistic sentiments expressed *in propria persona* in poem 70, where it is a woman's words that are condemned as untrustworthy (70.3–4):

> *sed mulier cupido quod dicit amanti*
> *in uento et rapida scribere oportet aqua.*[63]

What a woman says to her eager lover deserves to be written on the wind and running water.

[62] See further Dench 2005: esp. 329–42 on Catullus. Also relevant in this connection is the provincial setting of poem 67; for the door's speech (particularly the grandiose personifications of 32–4) as a send-up of local pretensions, see Dench 2005: 340–1.

[63] Cf. 64.142–6: *quae [sc. promissa] cuncta aerii discerpunt irrita uenti./nunc iam nulla uiro iuranti femina credat/ . . . dum aliquid cupiens animus praegestit apisci,/nil metuunt iurare, nihil promittere parcunt* ('the airy winds have torn apart all his promises and brought them to nothing. Now indeed no woman should believe a man's oaths . . . While their eager mind is urgent to obtain some end, they do not shrink from oaths and spare no promises'). The accusations of *perfidia* with which Ariadne begins her speech also echo the 'betrayal of friendship' poems discussed in Chapter 3, esp. poem 30: see pp. 55–6 above.

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Michael Putnam, in a ground-breaking article, suggested that these and numerous other echoes between the epyllion and the first-person poems point to an autobiographical element in 64, which he reads as a 'personal document', in which the poet's lived experience is transposed into the more conventional format of mythological epic.[64] On this reading, Ariadne's betrayal by Theseus is a kind of metaphor – like the Laodamia myth in 68 – for the relationship between the poet and Lesbia. Conversely, the love of Peleus and Thetis represents the ideal of perfect reciprocity propounded in poem 109 and elsewhere: Putnam particularly compares the juxtaposition of the two narratives with poem 70, where Lesbia claims to prefer Catullus to Jupiter himself (just as the god concedes the love of Thetis to Peleus, 64.26–7), yet is no more trustworthy in her promises than Theseus, as we saw above. But the unity that Putnam perceives here, in accordance with then-innovative New Critical principles, has been challenged by more recent criticism, which has tended to emphasize the poem's fractures, complexities, and inconsistencies, taking the labyrinth – with its confusing twists and turns, false starts, and dead ends – as an emblem for the reader's experience of the poem.[65]

Structurally, the poem has something in common with the recessed-panel construction of 68. Beginning with the voyage of the Argonauts (1–30), the epyllion soon focuses in on the marriage of Peleus and Thetis. An extended description of the arrival of the wedding guests, human (31–49) and divine (278–302), is punctuated by a lengthy ecphrasis (50–266) of the coverlet of the marriage bed, depicting the abandoned Ariadne, which in turn incorporates a flashback to Theseus' arrival in Crete and victory over the Minotaur (76–115), a long speech by Ariadne (132–201), a further flashback to Theseus' parting from his father, Aegeus, including another passage of direct speech (212–37), and a flash-forward to the working out of the curse

[64] Putnam 1961: 200.

[65] Bibliography on poem 64 is immense, and I have not attempted to do more than cite a sample of particularly important or influential discussions. In addition to Putnam 1961, Klingner 1956 advances powerful arguments for the unity of the epyllion – which in earlier scholarship (e.g. Wheeler 1934: 130–2) had regularly been faulted for its lack of cohesion. Inconsistency and competing 'voices' are analysed with particular incisiveness by Gaisser (1995), from whom the image of the textual labyrinth is taken; see also Theodorakopoulos 2000; O'Hara 2007: 33–54. Fernandelli's large-scale study of the poem (Fernandelli 2012) renews the argument for poetic unity, playing down 'incongruities' as a by-product of Catullus' (successful) 'totalizing' integration of a wide range of intertexts, and his focus on the narrating 'I' rather than the events narrated.

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that Ariadne calls down on her lover and his family, with the death of Aegeus (238–48). Finally, we return to the ecphrasis proper, with the arrival of Bacchus with his train of satyrs and maenads, to claim Ariadne for himself (251–64). At the end of the ecphrasis, the departure of the human guests and arrival of the gods and demigods leads into a second long inset, looking this time to the future, in the form of the Fates' prophecy of the birth and exploits of Achilles (305–83). The poem concludes – without resuming the narrative of the wedding – with a coda, in which the narrator laments the decline from a time when the gods mingled freely with mortals to what Catullus represents as the moral depravity of the present day (384–408).

Among the many interpretative challenges posed by this complex structure is the question of how the Theseus–Ariadne story on the coverlet relates to the framing narrative of Peleus' and Thetis' marriage, and indeed what exactly we should imagine as depicted on the coverlet. Plausible answers to the latter question are suggested both by the detail of the text and by intertextual – or rather, in this case, intermedial – parallels. In the first place, as Gaisser points out, the numerous verbs of speaking and the lack of specifically visual detail in all but the opening and closing sections of the ecphrasis suggest a double perspective: that of the viewers depicted within the poem, who see only two scenes – Ariadne on the shore, Bacchus approaching with his train; and that of the reader, for whom the narrative context is supplied by the narrator.[66] In the second place, the numerous visual representations of Ariadne which have survived from Pompeii and elsewhere typically depict either Ariadne sleeping on the shore or looking out to sea at Theseus' departing ship, or Bacchus' approach (in one instance, the two are combined in the same scene, as in Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne*).[67] The ancient reader, then, will likely have been prompted by familiarity with these scenes (as modern readers might by the paintings of Titian, Kauffmann, Waterhouse, and others) to imagine analogous

[66] Verbs of speaking: *perhibent* (76), *commemorem* (117), *perhibent* (124), *ferunt* (212); see Gaisser 1995: 600–1.

[67] *LIMC* iii.1.1056–65 (departure of Theseus and advent of Bacchus in the same scene: no. 97). The importance of visual models for Catullus' handling of the narrative was observed by Klingner 1956: 32–43; more recent scholarship has drawn attention to the thematization of the gaze, both within the ecphrasis and in the framing account of the Thessalian wedding guests as internal readers/spectators (see esp. Fitzgerald 1995: 140–68; Elsner 2007: 68–73). Trimble 2025 expands in various ways on Klingner's insights (esp. section 1[f] of the Introduction).

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representations on the coverlet, and to understand the narrator's filling in of the backstory as a supplement to the ecphrasis proper.

This dual perspective points in turn to complexity and uncertainty in the relationship between ecphrasis and narrative setting: the (intradiegetic) viewer sees one thing, while the (external) reader is offered a different perspective.[68] At the same time, any clear-cut distinction between ecphrasis and narrative is blurred by what Andrew Laird has termed the 'disobedience' of the ecphrasis: both the opening description of Ariadne and the closing scene of Bacchus' approach contain elements (sound, movement, direct speech) which we cannot easily imagine to be part of the visual representation.[69] Indeed, the whole issue of representation is foregrounded particularly by the simile of line 61, where Ariadne is compared to a stone statue of a bacchant. One representation (the embroidered Ariadne) is compared to another (the statue); in both cases, the potential for movement and violent action seems to be at issue, given the association of bacchants, like those of lines 254–64, with frenzied activity. Thus, it becomes difficult to maintain an unambiguous contrast between depicted scenes and narrated backstory: even the more obviously descriptive parts of the ecphrasis blend into the narrative elaboration, as the 'frozen' Ariadne moves, speaks, and interacts with her surroundings.

In so far as we can posit such a contrast, however, the experience of internal viewer and external reader might be mapped onto different ways of interpreting the relationship between ecphrasis and surrounding narrative. Aligning ourselves with the presumptive perspective of the wedding guests, we can understand the coverlet as celebrating Ariadne's rescue by and union with Bacchus, as a parallel for what the narrator insistently characterizes as the happy marriage of Peleus and Thetis. Alternatively, taking an 'external' perspective, and given the narrator's emphasis on Ariadne's suffering rather than her future happiness, we might perceive a contrast between happy and unhappy love, between one couple's divinely and socially sanctioned union and the betrayed promises of the other.[70] Or, again, the failure of the (promised) marriage between Theseus and Ariadne might be taken to foreshadow the impending failure of that of Peleus and Thetis, which – as ancient readers would have been well aware – was destined to be among the most spectacularly unsuccessful unions in the whole of Greek

[68] A dichotomy particularly emphasized by Schmale 2004.
[69] Laird 1993.
[70] For Klingner 1956 (esp. 66–77), the poem's essential unity arises both from the similarities and from the contrasts between the two stories.

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mythology: already in the *Iliad* the couple are apparently estranged, and the son born of their union is doomed to die young.[71]

The resonances that Putnam identifies with other Catullan poems are likewise complicated by intertextual echoes, especially of Apollonius' *Argonautica*, but also of Euripides and Ennius. As we saw in Chapter 1, the opening lines of the poem evoke a whole range of earlier texts: the most obvious connections, however, are with the famous opening lines of Euripides' (and Ennius') *Medea*.[72] Medea is in the background again in Ariadne's despairing series of rhetorical questions (178–81, quoted above), which – while very widely echoed by other abandoned heroines in texts both earlier and later than Catullus – have their origin in Euripides (*Medea* 502–5; cf. Enn. *Tragedies*, fr. 104 Jocelyn): particularly noteworthy is the rather startling reference to the Minotaur as 'my brother', which underlines the parallel with Medea and her involvement in the murder of *her* brother, Apsyrtus. Still more striking is Ariadne's near-quotation of the opening lines of Ennius' *Medea* at 171–2:

> *utinam ne tempore primo*
> *Cnosia Cecropiae tetigissent litora puppes*

If only at the start the Athenian ships had never touched the Cretan shore.

> *utinam ne in nemore Pelio securibus*
> *caesa accidisset abiegna ad terram trabes,*
> *neue inde nauis inchoandi exordium*
> *cepisset, quae nunc nominatur nomine*
> *Argo* . . . (Ennius, *Tragedies*, fr. 103.1–5 Jocelyn)

If only the fir tree, cut by axes in the woods of Pelion, had never fallen to the ground, nor the ship which is now called Argo taken the origins of its construction from there . . .

These and other echoes tend to assimilate Ariadne to Medea, so that the intertext offers another 'competing voice', in Gaisser's phrase: the narrator's sympathetic treatment of Ariadne, indicated particularly by the 'subjective' interventions at 71 (*a misera*, 'ah, poor girl') and 94–5

[71] The aged Peleus appears to be living alone in Phthia (*Il.* 19.334–7), while Thetis has returned to her father's house beneath the sea (1.358, 18.36, 24.83–6); cf. Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 4.866–79. The irony is underlined by the blithe assurance at the end of the Parcae's prophecy that Thetis' mother need have no anxieties about the couple's sleeping apart (*secubitu*; Catull. 64.380), and by Catullus' suppression of the otherwise widely attested unwillingness of Thetis to enter into a match with a mortal – here, the couple's desire and devotion are instead emphatically represented as mutual (334–6; cf. 20: *non despexit*).

[72] See pp. 23–4 above (with bibliography at n. 73).

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(*heu misere exagitans immiti corde furores, / sancte puer*, 'alas, divine boy [*sc.* Cupid], with merciless heart you stir up mad passion, inflicting misery'), is complicated by the implicitly Medea-like aspect of her character and situation. Ariadne represents herself as a helpless victim, but the Euripidean/Ennian intertext suggests a more frightening, punitive agency – a hint which is ultimately fulfilled in the curse she lays on Theseus and its working out in the death of Aegeus.

Further conundrums for the reader are presented by the narrative misdirection which marks the poem's opening,[73] and the apparent conflict – noted above – between the Parcae's insistence on the felicity of Peleus and Thetis' match and the glorious future awaiting their child, on the one hand, and the actual content of their song, on the other. Many critics, too, have detected considerable irony in the framing contrast between the 'all too longed-for age' of heroes (22) and the grim present (397–408): in particular, the intrafamilial violence supposedly characteristic of the present day seems oddly reminiscent of Ariadne's betrayal of her 'brother' (*perfudere manus fraterno sanguine fratres*, 'brothers drenched their hands in brothers' blood'; 399 ~ *respersum iuuenem fraterna caede secuta*, 'following the youth spattered with my brother's blood'; 181), while the reiterated idea that the gods 'showed themselves at the gatherings of mortals' in the Heroic Age (384–6; cf. 407–8) has been seen as undercut by the curious separation imposed between human and divine guests at the wedding (267–77).[74]

Finally, the poem's handling of mythological chronology is notoriously problematic. Most obviously, there is an evident contradiction between the emphasis in the opening lines on the Argo's primacy as the very first ship (*prima* [11], with the following description of the Nereids' wonderment at this *monstrum* or 'marvel' [15]) and the prior existence of the ship in which Theseus sails to Crete, as depicted on the coverlet.[75] Gaisser and Weber point to other, subtler anachronisms: the imported luxuries of Peleus' palace (43–9, esp. 48: *Indo . . . dente*), in an age notionally prior to transport by ship, and the anomalous ordering of

[73] As Zetzel argues, the dense intertextuality of the opening lines leads us to expect an *Argonautica*, or perhaps a *Medea*, rather than a *Marriage of Peleus and Thetis*: it is not until we reach lines 19–21, with their emphatic polyptoton *tum Thetidis . . . tum Thetis . . . tum Thetidi* that the poem's true subject is revealed (Zetzel 1983: 261).

[74] For these ironies, see esp. Bramble 1970.

[75] The inconsistency is already noticed by Haupt 1876: 73. On the chronological issue, see esp. Weber 1983; Gaisser 1995; Feeney 2007: 123–7; O'Hara 2007: 34–41. See also the 'Epilogue' in Trimble 2025 for stimulating discussion of the poem's representation of time and space in general.

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events, with both the Argonautic expedition and the exploits of Theseus falling *before* the marriage of Peleus and Thetis.[76] Among other difficulties created by this resequencing of the narrative, Medea's story seems to belong simultaneously to the past (of Theseus and Ariadne) and the future (of the Argonautic narrative): in other versions of the story, her first meeting with Jason takes place only after the Argo reaches its destination in Colchis; subsequently abandoned by Jason, she flees to Athens after killing their children in revenge, and here attempts to forestall the reunion between Theseus and his father, Aegeus, by poisoning the former.[77] Catullus, however, relegates the meeting of father and son to a flashback within the inset narrative (217): thus, it must *precede* Theseus' abandonment of Ariadne, which in turn precedes the Argonautic expedition and Medea's first glimpse of Jason.

Almost equally puzzling are the overtones of the Golden Age implicit in the evocative lines 38–42, where agriculture is described as suspended for the duration of the wedding celebrations: the phrase *rura colit nemo* ('no one works the land'; 38) and the negative enumeration at 39–41 of tasks not carried out are particularly reminiscent of versions of the Golden Age myth from Hesiod on.[78] But the rusting plough (42) must belong by definition to the Iron Age, while the *nimis optato saeclorum tempore* ('all too longed-for age'; 22) in which the poem is set is clearly the Age of Heroes, generally represented as preceding the Iron Age of the writer's present day. Time in this poem is not even running backwards, as it does in Virgil's version of the Song of the Parcae in *Eclogue* 4:[79] in Catullus' epyllion, it seems entirely out of joint, and fluctuates unpredictably from one part of the poem to another.

Given the poem's many internal contradictions and uncertainties, any attempt to pull together its disparate threads into a coherent overarching reading may be doomed to failure, though, of course, many scholars have endeavoured to do so. For the sake of clarity, however, we can identify three broad lines of interpretation that have dominated studies of the poem since the 1950s. One option open to us is to take the

[76] In Apollonius, for example, Peleus is already married before the expedition sets out, and Chiron brings the baby Achilles to wave his father off (*Argon.* 1.553–8).

[77] For Medea's role in this phase of the myth, see e.g. Callim. *Hecale* fr. 232–4 Pf., with the diegesis (*Dieg.* 10.20–1).

[78] Cf. Hes. *Op.* 90–2, 112–18; Aratus, *Phaen.* 108–13; Lucr. 5.933–6; Virg. *Ecl.* 4.40–5; Virg. *G.* 1.125–8; Tib. 1.3.37–48; Ov. *Met.* 1.91–106.

[79] For bibliography on Virgil's reception of Catullus 64 in *Eclogue* 4, see Chapter 6, n. 21, below.

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narrator's pronouncements about the happiness of Peleus and Thetis, and the Heroic Age in general, at face value: on this reading, the ecphrastic centrepiece must be understood either in wholly positive terms (Ariadne's distress is a brief interlude, preceding a presumptively happy union with Bacchus) or as a foil which throws the bright colours of the framing wedding scenes into relief. The poem's coda darkens the mood, as nostalgic hankering after the lost glories of a mythical past slides into condemnation of the corrupt present; but the sense of alienation experienced by the narrator in these closing lines – like the longing of Ariadne and Attis for their abandoned homes – only intensifies the idealized images painted in the main part of the poem. Conversely, we can choose to emphasize the ironic incongruities noted above: the narrator's introduction of the scenes on the coverlet under the rubric of 'heroic virtues', and the clash between the bloody content of the Parcae's wedding song and their blithe predictions of happiness for the bridal couple. On this reading, the narrator must be seen as unreliable, naïve, or disingenuous, and the coda is ironized in turn: the present may be corrupt and brutal, but have things ever really been any better? Ariadne's lament might be seen thematically, as well as structurally, as the heart of the poem: her bitter complaint both mirrors those of the poet himself elsewhere in the collection (inviting sympathy?) and foreshadows the similarly unhappy ending of the overtly joyful marriage celebrated in the framing narrative.

A third possibility, a kind of middle way, is to see the poem as either undecidable or inextricably mixed: elements of both nostalgia and irony are present, and the poem's slippages and fractures underline a more general instability of meaning. Intertextuality has a part to play here, too, as – with a turn of the kaleidoscope – the innocent Ariadne becomes a vengeful Medea. So, too, the shimmering scenes of Peleus' and Thetis' mutual love and happy union dissolve into a Homeric and tragic future of desertion, death, and human sacrifice. The coda's unexpected shift forward to the present day leaves the reader in some perplexity: are we to see the union of Peleus and Thetis as representative of a happier time or as the beginning of the end? Or is the Hesiodic model of decline from a paradisal past comprehensively ironized, so that, far from offering an interpretative key, the coda is just one more turn in the labyrinth?

Taken as a whole, poem 64 is notable for the coexistence of controlled elegance of form with conflicts and slippages of chronology,

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theme, and narrative.[80] In this respect, it is – perhaps surprisingly – similar to the invectives considered in the previous chapter, where at least part of the impact is typically generated by clashes between form and subject matter or diction. Equally, the range of critical responses that the epyllion has elicited is perhaps not merely a function of changing fashions in scholarship: arguably, this is a poem that *allows for* and even *invites* different kinds of reading – through connections with other poems in the collection, through intertextual (and intermedial) echoes, and through the various almost overt contradictions that Catullan scholars have detected in the framing of the narrative. I have suggested in this chapter that we can productively read it in the context of the *carmina maiora* as a group; this approach is not intended to be prescriptive, however, though it is only possible here to gesture towards the range of interpretations that have been advanced in the decades since Klingner's seminal defence of the poem's unity.[81] The flood of publications on Catullus' epyllion shows no sign of abating, and no doubt new readings will continue to be put forward in accordance with changing emphases in the study of both Hellenistic and Roman poetry.

[80] For the elegance of the poem's form (full discussion of which is precluded here by constraints of space), see esp. Jenkyns 1982; for a general account of the poem's style, see also Trimble 2025: Introduction, section 2(d).

[81] Klingner 1956.

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