

ABSTRACT

Weaving the Labyrinth: Paradoxes and Parallels in Catullus 64

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This thesis examines poem 64, the longest poem written by Catullus, and analyzes its internal structure as well as the allusions made to Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica* and Euripides' *Medea*. While Catullus is perhaps more well known for his love poems to Lesbia, C. 64 gives a unique insight into the poet's personal interpretation of other works, as well as his outlook on love, sorrow, and the accompanying emotions. This poem narrates the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, the parents of the hero Achilles. On the marriage bed lays a purple coverlet, which retells the sorrowful love story of Theseus, the Athenian prince and Ariadne, the princess of Crete. Though, given their contrasting images of love, these two couples seem incompatible, I will show how they are analogous through paradoxes and parallels within the structure of the poem. In addition, I will examine the allusions to the *Medea* and *Argonautica*, considering how Catullus has used these works to forge a place for his name within poetic tradition.

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WEAVING THE LABYRINTH
PARADOXES AND PARALLELS IN CATULLUS 64

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SUMMARY OF CATULLUS 64

Catullus 64 begins with the outset of the Argonauts from Athens on their quest for the Golden Fleece of Colchis. As they sail across the sea, the sea nymphs swim up from the ocean to look at the ship, and Peleus falls in love with Thetis, who does not reject the idea of marriage to Peleus. The poem quickly jumps to the day of their wedding in Peleus' home, where the mortal guests leave behind their everyday work and instead spend time at the palace.

The main attraction inside is a purple coverlet splayed across the marriage bed of Thetis, displaying a scene that will take up almost half of the poem. On this coverlet is the abandonment of Ariadne, the princess of Crete by Theseus, the hero who defeated the Cretan Minotaur, on the island of Dia. Catullus displays many emotions through his description of Ariadne and through the speech she makes berating Theseus for his forgetfulness and his lack of fidelity. After her speech, the scene shifts to Aegeus, Theseus' father, as he watches the sea, desperately trying to see his son's returning ships. A short flashback to his speech to Theseus gives the reader an idea of what Aegeus wants to see, but when he sees black sails on the ship, he throws himself off a mountain in mourning. The coverlet scene ends with Theseus returning home for his father's funeral and the god Bacchus, followed by satyrs and nymphs, appears on the island to take Ariadne as his bride.

Accordingly, the reader is returned to the wedding as the mortal guests leave after observing the coverlet, and the immortal guests arrive. Many characters, such as Chiron and Prometheus, bring gifts for the happy couple, and many of the gods themselves

attend the wedding, except for Apollo and Diana. Also in attendance are the Parcae, also called the Fates. They begin a wedding song for Peleus and Thetis, which quickly shifts to praise the exploits and killings of Achilles. The poem comes to a close as Catullus describes the atrocities that follow in the days after the wedding, such as civil war, incest, and every other kind of evil possible. The poet ends with a bleak outlook of the present day with the gods no longer mingling with mortals because of these evils.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Catullus 64 has been considered the masterpiece of the Catullan corpus for its unusual style and the depth of its allusions. As the longest of Catullus' poems, C. 64 combines the stylistic elements of Alexandrian poetry with features of classical epic in an epyllion, also called the "little epic," a tradition begun by the Hellenistic poets. The influence of Alexandrian authors, such as Callimachus and Apollonius of Rhodes, has been noted by many scholars such as Boyle 1993, Gaisser 1995, O'Connell 1997, Putnam 1961, and Zetzel 1983, and Catullus uses this older, Hellenistic tradition alongside Roman conventions to form his poem. This thesis will explore the structure of the poem, in particular the poem's internal paradoxes and echoes, as well as allusions to earlier works, e.g. Apollonius of Rhodes' *Argonautica* and Euripides' *Medea*, to determine the significance of the poem as a whole.

Through these elements, Catullus combines the features of several genres, particularly epic and tragedy, not only following what appears to have been the style of neoteric poets in Rome,¹ but also forging a place for himself among those poets. With the exception of a few fragments and the epyllion of Aristaeus inserted into Virgil's *Georgics*, C. 64 is a single, complete example of Hellenistic poetic style that has survived into the modern day.² Because so few epyllions are extant, C. 64, which has endured

¹ Quinn 1959: 7.

² Crump 1931: 115.

from the end of the Roman Republic, is all the more significant. C. 64 also provides the foundation upon which authors like Vergil built their work, as seen in the depiction of Dido in Book Four of the *Aeneid*, which contains many similarities to Catullus' Ariadne.

This chapter will begin with a brief overview of the poem, highlighting some salient points and important details. Following this summary, I shall provide a short summary of my sources. Afterwards, I shall outline the subsequent chapters, beginning with the paradoxical structure of the poem in the first chapter. Next, I shall consider the coherent nature of the work through the parallelism of the poem's two "halves." Once this examination has been completed, in the final chapter, I shall describe the ways in which Catullus conflates the genres of epic and tragedy through his allusions to Apollonius' *Argonautica* and Euripides' *Medea*, thus providing a model for future Roman authors.

Survey of Scholarship

As mentioned just above, the scholarly work on this slender poem is anything but slender. Works considered in the present examination are sometimes specific to C. 64, and other times are meant to highlight the connections between the present poem with the complete Catullan corpus, as well as the relationship of Catullus' poetic style to that of his contemporaries. Though these are sporadically highlighted throughout the thesis, they have been instrumental in my understanding of the world of poetry at the end of the Roman Republic.

Inasmuch as Apollonius profoundly influenced Catullus, this study necessarily has availed itself of research pertaining to the *Argonautica*, especially in regards to its

clear influence on poets like Catullus. I have focused particularly on the characters of Ariadne in Catullus and Medea in Apollonius as they share numerous characteristics. Both of these heroines owe a common debt to Euripides' *Medea*, the oldest extant complete portrayal of Medea, a portrait also important to Catullus in his construction of Ariadne.

For sources on the inconsistencies or paradoxes in C. 64, I first compared the traditional mythological stories to Catullus' versions in the poem. The most noticeable difference was the love story of Peleus and Thetis, which changed the dynamic of the couples in relation to one another. Julia Gaisser's and Clifford Weber's articles were of particular import. In "Threads in the Labyrinth: Competing Views and Voices in Catullus 64," Gaisser calls attention to specific contradictions in C. 64, such as the misleading beginning of the poem and the chronologies of the frame story and the ephrasis. Weber's "Two Chronological Contradictions in Catullus 64" focuses specifically on the paradox involved with the ship expeditions. He also considers the inconsistencies in the *Argonautica* and their influence upon C. 64, as well as the noticeable differences between the two works.

For a general analysis of the poem, Warden's "Catullus 64: Structure and Meaning" was particularly helpful, as he parsed smaller sections of the poem. Most valuable to me is his examination of the two halves of the poems and the similarities seen within smaller sections from each part. For example, he highlights the unity between the "beginnings" of each half, the descriptions of the sailing of the Argonauts and the celebration of the wedding.¹

¹ Warden 1998: 399.

T.E. Kinsey's "Irony and Structure in Catullus 64," which presents the differences and similarities between the two halves of the poem, particularly aided my study of Ariadne and Aegeus, as well as their relationship to Theseus. Richard Thomson also displays the unity within C. 64 in his article "Aspects of Unity in Catullus 64," specifically how the coverlet and the song of the Fates relate to one another, and by extension, how Theseus and Achilles are somewhat similar.

Also helpful in assessing the unity of the poem was Jaś Elsner's article "Viewing Ariadne: From Ekphrasis to Wall Painting in the Roman World," which emphasizes the importance of viewing and its effects on the readers, in particular the various colors of the poem. Because over half of C. 64 depends on the images provided by the coverlet, gaze and color work to unify the otherwise incongruent stories. Michael O'Connell's article, "Pictorialism and Meaning in Catullus 64," which examines how gaze is used in Alexandrian style poetry and how Catullus uses it to heighten emotions, is valuable for its understanding of the effects colors have on the narrative, in addition to how they weave the poem together like the images of the coverlet.

For sources on the *Argonautica*, Richard Hunter's book, *The Argonautica of Apollonius: Literary Studies*, is highly important because he offers an in-depth study of the epic. His work on Medea's anguish over her desire for Jason greatly assisted my own examination of Ariadne's lament in C. 64. In his work, he examines how *eros* affects the character of Medea, transforming her from a weak, virgin princess to a dangerous, formidable witch.² Ray Clare's article "Catullus 64 and the Argonautica of Apollonius Rhodes: Allusion and Exemplarity" examines many allusions to the *Argonautica* in C.

² Hunter 1993: 59.

64, such as the similarities between Jason and Theseus and between the weddings present in each story.

In addition to Clare's work on allusion, DeBrohun's article "Catullan Intertextuality: Apollonius and the Allusive Plot of Catullus 64" and Theodorakopoulos' article "Catullus 64: Footprints in the Labyrinth" discuss the difficult content present in the poem and how it contains elements from the *Argonautica*, the *Medea*, as well as influences from traditional mythology and other epyllia, such as Callimachus' *Hecale*, Calvus' *Io*, or Cinna's *Zmyrna*.³ Smith's book *Poetic Allusion and Poetic Embrace in Ovid and Virgil* offers significant insights on how poets display their knowledge of other works, a method which Catullus employs to his advantage in ways similar to Ovid's references to Virgil. In addition to Smith's insights, Conte's book, *The Rhetoric of Imitation: Genre and Poetic Memory in Virgil and other Latin poets*, aided my understanding of how poets acknowledge the older works that inspired them and the clues which pointed towards a learned understanding of a predecessor's work. Conte's work clearly influenced Smith's study in ways not unlike one poet influencing another.

Finally, for references to the *Medea*, Gaisser and Theodorakopoulos highlight the ghostly presence of Medea that seemingly permeates the beginning of C. 64 with the opening description of the Argonauts. Gaisser in particular asks the question of whether or not the poem will lead to Medea by the end, even though its focus has shifted to Peleus and Thetis.⁴ DeBrohun emphasizes the connections between the mental state of Ariadne and Medea towards the end of Ariadne's lament. Quinn's classic work, *The Catullan Revolution*, has particular value because it suggests that the genres of epic and tragedy

³ DeBrohun 2007: 293.

⁴ Gaisser 1995: 581.

were often combined in Roman poetry, an insight that partially explains Catullus' purposeful references to both the *Argonautica* and the *Medea*.

While not a complete list of scholarship, found in the works cited page (p. 67), all of these works offer a large body of footnotes and sources. Some of these works disagree on the purpose and meaning of C. 64 because scholars have read the poem with different morals in mind. My work attempts to include as many viewpoints as possible both to support my own conclusions and to provide counterarguments. With these sources recognized, I shall continue this chapter with brief outlines of the subsequent chapters, beginning with the paradoxes of the poem.

Paradoxical Structure

The structure, or organization, of C. 64 can be identified in many different ways. For example, it can be understood as two unrelated 'halves,' the wedding and the coverlet. This division, however, does not help in understanding the poem as a whole. It can also be divided based upon contradictory or complementary sections, paradoxes and parallels within C. 64. The first division I shall make concerns the contradictory statements given by the poet and emotions displayed by the characters. To begin, the somewhat hazy awareness, or perhaps lack thereof, of time pervades throughout the entire epyllion. Through these undefined boundaries of time, Catullus causes the chronology of the stories of Peleus and Ariadne to become confused both in terms of how they relate to one another and also how they require one another for every event to occur. In addition to the two explicitly outlined relationships, Catullus alludes to a third, that of Jason and Medea. Catullus leaves behind clues throughout the poem, such as names (e.g.

Aeetos, 3 and *Colchis*, 5) and the sailing of the Argo, to keep the spirit, or perhaps madness, of Medea present.

A second paradox is the presence and purpose of the coverlet at the wedding. Why would a calamitous love story be at the center of a happy and Jove-approved relationship? In addition to its incongruent content, the issue of time becomes more apparent through the images on the coverlet. Changes made that differ from traditional mythology arise from this limbo of space and time, such as the unresolved confusion about the sailing of the first ship and the distance between the stories of Peleus and Ariadne. While this occurs simply from Catullus displaying his range of mythological knowledge and his readership of other authors, it could also offer evidence of his commentary on the differences or similarities between distinct time periods. The range of emotions experienced because of love, sorrow, and anger are not restricted to one group of people or to one age of man. Instead, these passions exist in every time period and affect all ages, races, and classes of people.

Parallel Structure

In addition to the various paradoxes within the poem, a second type of division I shall make concerns the parallels, or complementary sections, within the different sections and stories presented in C. 64. The most noticeable similarities, statements, descriptions, or passions present in both ‘halves’ of the poem, lie between the characters, such as Peleus to Ariadne, and Ariadne to Aegeus. For both pairs, the comparison arises from the emotions that each of these characters displays and experiences throughout the poem, specifically love and sorrow. To some extent, the confusion of time examined in

the previous chapter is continued through these parallels because similar events and actions seem to be occurring at the same moment, even if they are logically impossible. Nevertheless, these connections between the characters and the visual elements, such as the burning gaze of Peleus and Ariadne and the continuation of specific colors, help unite the poem.

The two halves of the poem (one containing the story of the coverlet, the other the wedding song of the Fates) are also unified through the deeds of the heroes, Theseus and Achilles. Although the poet summarizes their courageous actions and instead focuses on their less heroic moments, the two ‘halves’ of the poem are united through the mention, and lack, of *virtutes*. Therefore, while at first the coverlet seems to have no place at a wedding, perhaps it not only unites the two stories through the emotions of Peleus and Ariadne and the actions of Theseus and Achilles, it also, in addition to the mention of the Argonauts at the beginning, serves as an allusion to the story of Jason and Medea. The Golden Fleece served as the coverlet for the wedding of Jason and Medea in the *Argonautica*, the allusions to which will be explored in the following chapter.

C. 64, the Argonautica, and the Medea

My final chapter examines the allusions to Apollonius’ *Argonautica* and Euripides’ *Medea*. These allusions, similar to the paradoxical changes Catullus makes to traditional myth, including the story of the Argonauts, display Catullus’ knowledge of other works and his reaction to them. They also suggest that Catullus is attempting to surpass his predecessors, perhaps forging a place for himself within the Roman tradition of epic poetry.

His most important allusion to both of these older works centers upon the character of Ariadne, who slowly changes from the innocent, virgin Medea of the *Argonautica* into the vengeful, raging Medea of the *Medea*. However, the fact that Medea herself is never mentioned by name makes his allusions to her more powerful; her spirit alone lingers throughout the epyllion, never allowing the reader forget her and the destruction she caused. A second character allusion appears with the character of Theseus and his personality. Though Jason never abandoned Medea, she always feared he would at some point. For Ariadne, that fear of abandonment became a reality when Theseus forgot his promise of marriage and left her, just as Medea accused Jason of planning on doing. Again, Catullus wants his readers to feel the presence of Medea, thus making Ariadne's anger more frightening and more magical.

Having provided brief summaries of each chapter, in the next chapter, I shall begin to examine the paradoxes in C. 64 more thoroughly, followed by an analysis of the parallels, and then finally, I shall consider the allusions to the *Argonautica* and the *Medea*. Numerous examples of each category occur throughout the poem, and those I provide are by no means the only instances in the poem. I have included as many as possible, and have emphasized those that I believe are the most significant to validate my conclusion that Catullus was attempting to make a place for himself among not only his circle of poets, but also the great epic and tragic poets to whom he alludes and respects. While C. 64, with its unusual nature and incongruity coupled with Catullus' elegiac poetry, has challenged its analysis, I consider C. 64 the most influential of all his poems and that through this poem, he succeeded in placing himself among the great poets and securing his poetic reputation for many years into the future.

CHAPTER TWO

Wandering the Labyrinth: Paradoxes

The most evident paradoxes within Catullus 64 are caused by the ambiguous nature of time the poet creates. Many examples of this confusion of time occur within the poem, from the simple insertion of Greek characters into a Roman poem, to the clear disjunction regarding the various ship voyages, and finally, the disconnect between the emotions of two relationships of the poem. Through these ambiguities, the poet has blurred the already hazy chronology of the stories, as well as characteristics of his heroes, to create his complicated atmosphere. While this blurring causes the reader to question when each story is occurring in relation to the other, at the same time, the poet has displayed that the time period is insignificant when love and sorrow are the focus. In this chapter, I shall demonstrate how the poet renders time nearly irrelevant through the use of paradoxes.

The settings and individuals portrayed in the poem evoke the heroic past rather than commemorate a contemporary event. Within this heroic past are references to earlier works well known in Catullus' day, and to be explored later in this thesis. He begins his recollection of his predecessors and the foundation that even they built upon in their works with the first word of the poem, *Peliaco* (64.1), Mt. Pelion.¹ The knowledgeable reader would be aware that Mt. Pelion, located in Greece, is the place

¹ Catullus 64 text is from Mynors 1958 and any translations are my own.

where the centaur Chiron, the tutor of heroes such as Jason and Theseus, is thought to have lived.¹

This opening reference to Mt. Pelion has led many scholars to note the similarity between Catullus' first line (*Peliaco quondam prognatae vertice pinus*) and the first line of Ennius' version of Euripides' *Medea* (*Utinam ne in nemore Pelio securibus*), that concerns the previously mentioned hero Jason and the sorceress Medea, as seen by the title.² Thomas noted that, although the structure of the sentence is in his own style, Catullus has indicated the traditions and previous authors upon whom he relied on for this poem with his use of *Peliaco*, "conflating them into a single line, yet preserving recognizable traces of the two originals."³ Fordyce also supported this idea of conserving these almost conventional epic methods, stating that Alexandrian poets relied heavily on past traditions, though the path Catullus followed was somewhat unusual.⁴ Even the poem's first word broadly suggests the tradition that Catullus will build upon and expand through his poetry.

The reader can already begin to assume the subject matter of the poem based on *Peliaco*. Here is where the paradox begins: Catullus, a Roman poet, has chosen Greek mythology and heroes as his topic. In light of the group of poets Catullus is associated with (the "new" or neoteric poets), perhaps it is no surprise that he has chosen these Greek subjects. These neoteric poets, in an attempt to move away from the epic style of Ennius toward the Alexandrian style used by Callimachus, wrote shorter poems like this

¹ Tripp 1970: 456.

² Quinn 1970: 299.

³ Thomas 1982: 155.

⁴ Fordyce 1961: 276.

epyllion, and used more Greek stories and characters.⁵ The epyllion, often categorized as a short epic poem, “seems to have been an essential neoteric genre: a poem in dactylic hexameter...on an ‘unepic’ subject, a story of unhappy love.”⁶ Therefore, although Catullus’ use of Alexandrian style may be expected, his choice to include hardly any obvious Roman elements is paradoxical because there were Roman materials available to him. The famous Roman poet Ennius, according to Zetzel, “provided the Roman equivalent for the Alexandrian’s use of Homeric diction.”⁷

Even with the works of Ennius available to him, Catullus chose to write a Hellenistic poem, an epyllion, and Greek characters for his Roman poem (though, as noticed by the first line, he did not entirely disregard Ennius). Gaisser suggests a possible direction that Catullus wants his neoteric readers to follow as he (perhaps purposefully) evokes the story of the Argonauts, Jason, and Medea, a direction also seen in the locations Catullus highlights (*Phasidos*, 64.3; *fines Aeeteos*, 3; *Colchis*, 5; *Thessaliae*, 27, etc.).⁸ Harmon also noted that in Ennius’ *Medea*, the passage from where Catullus drew his beginning was the moment that began the unhappy love story, the outset of the Argo’s journey.⁹ This observation strengthens the idea of an unhappy love story because educated readers would be aware of the connection and the disaster that was the relationship of Jason and Medea. The journey of the Argo in C. 64, however, will result in the happy marriage of Peleus and Thetis, but only after the completion of the unhappy love story of Theseus and Ariadne.

⁵ Zetzel 1983: 251.

⁶ Gaisser 2009: 17.

⁷ Zetzel 1983: 252.

⁸ Gaisser 1995: 92.

⁹ Harmon 1973: 312.

In addition to the various Greek locations mentioned within the poem, the characters (Peleus and Thetis, and Theseus and Ariadne) are also taken from the Greek Heroic Age, one of Hesiod's Five Ages of Man. As seen by the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, mortals and gods during this age mingled in the light of day (*tum Thetidis Peleus incensus fertur amore/tum Thetis humanos non despexit hymeneos*, 19-20). The use of this mixing of gods and men, as well as the use of *quondam* ("once," 1),¹⁰ *dicuntur* ("they are said," 2),¹¹ and *fertur* ("it is said," 19), seems to "emphasize the remoteness of the scene,"¹² creating a more mythical and almost dream-like setting for the poem. Catullus has taken this story from the far-away mythical age, and the long passage of time blurs truth and fiction. This remoteness will affect the remainder of the poem, causing the reader to question when certain events happen in relation to each other. Readers will be returned to reality only when the poet chooses to release them from the labyrinth.

This paradox of character choice occurs because Catullus has chosen not only Greek heroes as his subjects, but also characters whose existence is questionable even for a Greek. In addition to the distance between the time period of the poem and that of the poet's life, Catullus further complicated the paradox in his description of the palace of Peleus (*pulvinar vero divae genial locatur/sedibus in mediis*, 47-48). This description is similar to that of a Roman home, through which "the hero of antique saga and his immortal watery bride step easily into the roles of Roman notables."¹³ Duffalo agrees with this statement, adding that it is an entirely Roman feature in a wedding, and there is

¹⁰ Quinn 1970: 300.

¹¹ See also Gaisser 1995: "*dicuntur* acknowledges less the fame of the Argo legend than its status as a fiction."

¹² Ross, Jr. 1969: 101.

¹³ Konstan 1993: 62; see also Fordyce 1961: "Catullus thinks in Roman terms of the *lectus genialis* which stood in the *atrium* during and after a Roman wedding."

no mention of this sort of setup in a Greek context.¹⁴ Instead of continuing his track of choosing Greek subjects and ideas, Catullus seems to complicate this paradox further through his almost Roman-style home and wedding. The reader must carefully follow the signs in Catullus' labyrinth to catch the various twists and turns the poet creates and understand the poem as a whole.

A second paradox occurs when the poet describes the purple coverlet on the marriage bed of Peleus and Thetis. The purpose of the coverlet provokes a major question regarding the poem because the poet neglects to offer many important pieces of information such as “where it came from and how it got here,”¹⁵ the maker, the relationship of the coverlet to the happy couple, and even its purpose at the wedding. In addition, the poet states that the coverlet “declares the virtues of heroes” (*heroum mira virtutes indicat arte*, 50), yet there is no indication of heroism on the coverlet; it is all assumed and projected through the image the poet creates.¹⁶ After describing the joy of the mortal wedding guests (*dona ferunt prae se, declarant gaudia vultu*, 35), the coverlet weaves a story of the sorrow and anger of Ariadne as she, “watches Theseus withdrawing in his swift ship” (*Thesea cedentem celeri cum classe tuetur*, 54) and “perceives herself deserted and wretched on the lonely shore” (*desertam in sola miseram se cernat harena*, 58). Catullus has introduced the unhappy love story in his poem, but the question still remains whether or not the wedding will end as happily as it began.

¹⁴ Duffalo 2010:105-106.

¹⁵ Gaisser 1995: 588.

¹⁶ Gaisser 1995 (592): “the coverlet promises *virtues*; we are shown *amores* instead.”

The reader may perhaps recall or expect the falling-out between Peleus and Thetis after the birth of Achilles to be foreshadowed within the image of Ariadne.¹⁷ However, a digression from the main story provides not an unexpected shift in this type of poem: as Trimble states, the digression, or a second story, is often “contained within the first and frequently quite unconnected with it in subject.”¹⁸ As will be shown, however, the main story and the digression are connected in many ways throughout this epyllion. For now, consider the mention of Theseus’ ship (*celeri cum classe*, 54) and Catullus’ apparent confusion concerning the chronology of the ship voyages.

At the beginning of the poem, Catullus mentioned that the trees from Mt. Pelion are the first to cross the “inexperienced” sea in the form of a ship (*illa rudem cursu prima imbuit Amphitriten*, 11). Here, the poet has explicitly stated to his audience that the Argonauts’ ship is the first that ever touched the sea (*prima*, 11). It is such a marvel that the sea nymphs swim to the surface to see the *monstrum* (15); the sea is more amazed by this sight than the men on the boat (*admirantes*, 11).¹⁹ Now, returning again to the description of the coverlet, the ecphrasis displays Ariadne watching Theseus’ ship sail away from her (*Thesea cedentem celeri cum classe tuetur*, 54).

Catullus seems to have inverted the chronology of these voyages; again, how can Theseus already have a ship, if the Argo’s sailing is earlier according to the tradition?²⁰ In addition to this problem, when expanding upon the events that led to Ariadne’s desertion, Catullus mentioned that the Athenians were forced to pay tribute to Minos, the

¹⁷ Curran 1969 (181): “it would be difficult to imagine a worse omen for the success of the marriage than the fact that the couch is literally enshrouded in a covering of such sinister import.”

¹⁸ Trimble 2012: 75.

¹⁹ Burl 1941: 225.

²⁰ Weber 1983 (265): “mythological tradition yielded an earlier date for Peleus’ sea voyage and wedding than for Theseus’ exploit in Crete.”

king of Crete, for the death of his son Androgeon (*Androgeoneae poenas exsolvere caedis/electos iuvenes simul et decus innuptarum/Cecropiam solitam esse dapem dare Minotauro*, 78-80). The geography of the area around Greece and Crete suggests that many more ship voyages must have happened first in order for this line to be true, all apparently many years before the Argo was built. Weber also points out that the figures on the coverlet are described as “ancient figures of men,” (*priscis hominum variata figuris*, 50), those who came even before the mythological characters Catullus has chosen.²¹

Again, some ambiguity occurs concerning the order of the ship voyages and why Catullus insisted the Argo was the first ship. Because the scene described on the coverlet is almost myth to those observing it, then the Argo could not have been the first ship on the sea; if Theseus is an ancient figure, he must have sailed years, possibly centuries, before the Argo. However, one intriguing discrepancy occurs within the Catullan manuscripts. In one manuscript, the Codex Oxoniensis, instead of *prima (illa rudem cursu prima imbuit Amphitriten)*, the word *proram*, “stern,” appears instead.²² This change is unlikely, because Catullus seems too purposeful to have meant something other than *prima*, but it could help rectify the problem. The Argo would no longer be the first ship, but merely a part of a long line of sea-crossing vessels. Although the reason why Catullus has constructed this chronological confusion is unknown, it does continue the distant nature of Catullus’ subject. Possibly, he simply draws the voyage of the Argo, and thus the story of Jason and Medea, into the story of Theseus and Ariadne, both of

²¹ Weber 1983: 264.

²² Noted by Cornish in Loeb 1976.

whom seem to be present at the wedding of Peleus and Thetis.²³ Regardless of his reasoning, Catullus has made all the relationships within the story dependent upon one another, to the point where one could not have occurred without the others.²⁴

As mentioned earlier, Alexandrian style relied heavily upon tradition, and often employed a very thorough, learned style.²⁵ If the reader notices the clear allusions that lead to Jason and Medea (*Aeetos*, 3; *auratam pellem*, 5; *Colchis*, 5), another paradox concerning the chronology of the stories arises. As seen by the ship voyages, when these stories happen in relation to one another is unclear. It almost seems as if all three stories happen within the same time, possibly even the same moment.²⁶ The question now relates to how these various stories connect.

Many instances occur when these characters cross each other in the mythology. According to multiple sources, the quest for the Golden Fleece had already occurred and the relationship between Jason and Medea ended long before Theseus' adventures, because Medea married Aegeus, Theseus' father, before Theseus reached Athens.²⁷ Aegeus was unaware that Theseus was his son when he arrived in Athens, and only just before Medea succeeded in poisoning Theseus was the truth was revealed. Catullus would have known this version of the myth through the now lost epyllion of Callimachus, *Hecale*, alluded to in the beginning of Aegeus' speech (*'reddite in extrema nuper mihi fine senectae,'* 217).²⁸ In addition to this connection, how and why Theseus sailed to Crete in the first place could be solely because of his father. According to Tripp, Aegeus

²³ Gaisser 1995: 593.

²⁴ Gaisser 2009: 153.

²⁵ Boyle 1993: 59.

²⁶ Gaisser 1995: 580.

²⁷ Tripp 1970: 361; also Weber 1983: 264.

²⁸ Weber 1983: 265.

was ruling Athens when Minos' son Androgeon perished, possibly by Aegeus' command,²⁹ and as punishment for his death, the Athenians were forced to send tributes (*Androgeoneae poenas exsolvere caedis*, 77). Although Aegeus did not force Theseus to go, it seems almost like an exchange of sons between the kings; only with the help of Ariadne was Theseus able to defeat the Minotaur and escaped from the Labyrinth.

While this possibility does not solve the problems concerning the ship voyages or the story's chronology, it does demonstrate the range of myths, authors, and poems with which Catullus was familiar, and perhaps the Hellenistic tradition he built upon. He has exhibited here his extensive knowledge of mythology and of older authors, perhaps because Apollonius of Rhodes specifically does so through his allusions to Jason and Medea. This use of allusion "suggests that a 'readership' of one text by the author of the subsequent text helps to define the relationship between the latter text and the former."³⁰ In other words, as already noted, Catullus has displayed his ability as a poet by his incorporation of the *Argonautica* by Apollonius of Rhodes and by his dependence on many other works as seen through various other allusions throughout the poem, a technique of reference that will be copied by subsequent poets.³¹ This aspect of Catullus' poem will be explored later in this thesis.

A third set of paradoxes concerns the relationships between many of Catullus' chosen characters. The first set contains Peleus and Thetis, and Ariadne and Theseus. While it is not surprising that Catullus created an ecphrasis in his poem, it is paradoxical that he chose a calamitous love story to share nearly half the poem with the apparently

²⁹ Tripp 1970: 17; also Quinn 1970: 314-315.

³⁰ Smith 1997: 83.

³¹ Gaisser 2009 (151): poem contains "echoes from Apollonius Rhodius, Euripides, Callimachus, and Ennius;" also Konstan 1993 (70): "Catullus 64 is thus pivotal in the evolution of multiple and intersecting traditions."

joyous wedding of Peleus and Thetis. Given the nature of the two relationships as described by the poet, the reader cannot help wondering at the clear disconnect between the happy marriage and the failed “marriage.” The presence of an unhappy love story in an epyllion is perhaps expected, as was argued earlier; it is the important role this sad story plays in the telling of the wedding that is the paradoxical element, especially because the viewers at the celebration have no issues with the images of failed love.

When admiring the coverlet, given its purple color, the reader would perhaps expect an auspicious image, one that supports the “heightened happiness of the fairytale romance,”³² especially because this marriage has been blessed by the gods themselves (*Iuppiter ipse/ipse suos divum genitor concessit amores*, 26-27). The first image that greets the viewer, however, is that of Ariadne standing alone on the shore, with her clothes in disarray (*non flavo retinens subtilem vertice mitram/non contacta levi velatum pectus amictu/non tereti strophio lactentis vincta papillas*, 63-65). Although the viewers in the poem seem unconcerned by the display, this picture does not seem to be one that would encourage cheerful thoughts about the wedding happening just outside the epyllion. Curran stated that this insertion of Ariadne creates tension not only within the story of the poem, but also with the view of the heroic past.³³

This tension is created through the nearly opposite natures of both relationships. A clear disconnect appears when comparing the meetings of the couples, when Peleus sees Thetis while on the ship, and when Ariadne sees Theseus arrive at the Cretan palace. For the former couple, both of the individuals seem to share a mutual love for one another, though Thetis is more passive concerning her emotions (*Tum Thetidis Peleus*

³² O’Connell 1977: 749.

³³ Curran 1969: 174.

incensus fertur amore/tum Thetis humanos non despexit hymenaeos, 19-20). For the latter couple, however, only Ariadne expresses a sort of desire or love in the relationship (*non prius ex illo flagrantia declinavit/lumina, quam cuncto concepit corpore flammam/funditus atque imis exarsit tota medullis*, 91-93).³⁴ The heart of this paradox lies in the fact that, as Kinsey noted, “Thetis is marrying a hero and Ariadne has been abandoned by a hero.”³⁵ While the love he feels for Thetis overwhelms Peleus, there is no mention of Theseus’ feelings toward Ariadne, not even passively like Thetis, who merely does not despise marriage to a human (as seen in the poem, which disregards the traditional challenge Peleus had to undergo to marry Thetis). Rather, Theseus appears unemotional, altogether outside of his bravery displayed when he leaves from Athens as a sacrifice. Naturally, this discrepancy would cause the reader to notice this paradox regarding the purpose of the appearance of the forgotten Ariadne at the wedding of apparent mutual lovers.

Within the character of Ariadne, a smaller paradox arises. As she laments her abandonment and curses Theseus, she seems to confuse who or what is the true monster of her story. Traditionally speaking, the Minotaur was the monster not only because of his half-human, half-animal nature, but also because he hid in the Labyrinth and killed anyone unfortunate enough to be trapped there. Theseus was the Greek hero who freed his people from both the terrible Minotaur and the punishments given to Athens by the more terrible King Minos.

For Ariadne, however, these roles are reversed. The Minotaur, though he was a monstrosity, was still Ariadne’s half-brother and a member of her *domus*. Theseus was

³⁴ Putnam 1961 (172): “not a word is uttered of such a desire on the part of Theseus.”

³⁵ Kinsey 1965: 916.

the evil prince who killed her brother, broke his promise of marriage to her, and subsequently abandoned her on a deserted island. Thomson suggested that the type of grief Ariadne expresses is *luctus*,³⁶ specifically defined as grief expressed over the loss of someone else.³⁷ In Ariadne's version of the story, however, she does not seem to be mourning the loss of Theseus, but rather of the Minotaur and, by extension, her family. In contrast to her sadness over her losses, she curses the monster that took her from them, the hero Theseus.³⁸ She questions which terrible creature bore Theseus (*quaenam te genuit sola sub rupe leaena,/quod mare conceptum spumantibus exspuit undis,/quae Syrtis, quae Scylla rapax, quae vasta Charybdis*, 154-56), thus portraying Theseus as the half-human, half-animal creature instead of the one she called her "true brother" (*germanum*, 150),³⁹ the actual half-human being. So, who is the real monster of the story?

Also given a place among these characters is Jupiter, whose intentions are presented paradoxically. The first presentation of Jupiter is one who behaves as if he wanted Peleus and Thetis to be married (*Tum Thetidi pater ipse iugandum Pelea sensit*, 21). Catullus even praised Peleus for his character because Jupiter himself restrained his intense desire for Thetis so she would become Peleus' bride instead (*teque adeo eximie taedis felicibus aucte/Thessaliae columen Peleu, cui Iuppiter ipse/ipse suos divum genitor concessit amores*, 26-28). This seems to be unusually generous of Jupiter, whom most readers would expect to continue pursuing Thetis and not concern himself with the mortal who desires her as well.

³⁶ Thomson 1961: 55.

³⁷ Lewis & Short.

³⁸ DeBrohun 1999: 424.

³⁹ DeBrohun 1999: 423.

In the second half of the poem, however, Jupiter's reasons are perhaps revealed through the presence of Prometheus (295-97).⁴⁰ According to tradition, in order to be freed from his punishment in the Underworld, Prometheus warned Jupiter that the son of Thetis would grow to be greater than his father,⁴¹ something Jupiter would prefer to avoid, given his own experiences. The presence of these two characters together calls into question the true intentions of Jupiter, and the reasons why Catullus first portrayed him as uncharacteristically generous. Nevertheless, only because of Prometheus and Jupiter are Peleus and Thetis being married, so perhaps their presence is appropriate, even though Jupiter's character is partially paradoxical.

Through these paradoxes, Catullus has artfully woven a poem that influenced many poems and poets after him. His deliberate allusions to previous authors begin a style that younger poets, like Vergil and Ovid, follow in their own poems. Catullus' paradoxes allow the poet to display his knowledge and his ability as a poet in creating a different story. Catullus is the first poet to introduce the love story of Peleus and Thetis as a result of the journey of the Argonauts,⁴² thus creating a story entirely his own, unlike that of his famous predecessors and unlike the typical mythological tradition, as seen through his unusual characterization of Jupiter. Not only contradictions, however, give this poem its unique nature. As I shall demonstrate in the next chapter, Catullus also uses many parallels throughout his poem not only to unify his epyllion as a whole, but also to display the poet's opinions of passion and sorrow, emotions not reserved for specific time periods or genres.

⁴⁰ Kinsey 1965: 923.

⁴¹ Tripp 1970: 500.

⁴² Fordyce 1961: 280.

CHAPTER THREE

The Unification of Peleus and Ariadne: Structural Parallels

The presence of the unhappy love story of Ariadne at the joyful wedding of Peleus and Thetis highlights the major complication, and focus, of C. 64. These two stories divide the poem into distinct sections, the outer story of the wedding and the inner story of the coverlet that, at first glance, appear unrelated. Catullus, however, has created a variety of connections within these sections of the poem to draw attention to specific points in the epyllion, especially moments related to love and sorrow. These similarities unify the stories of Peleus and Ariadne, as well as the poem with Catullus' present time, through the poet's subtle, or perhaps not so subtle, inclusion of his poetic persona. In this chapter, I shall show how the structure of the poem displays the poet's view of love and sorrow and his belief that these emotions are not reserved for a specific age of time or certain individuals.

First, Catullus has connected the sailing of the Argo and the marriage of Peleus and Thetis. In these situations, mortals conquer the sea as a whole through the use of the world's first ship and by the marriage of Thetis, the granddaughter of Tethys, a sea goddess, and Oceanus,¹ the personified ocean who encircles the world (*tene suam Tethys concessit ducere neptem/Oceanusque, mari totum qui amplectitur orbem*, 29-30) to a mortal husband. The Argo, assuming it is absolutely the first ship to sail, symbolizes

¹ Tripp 1970: 395.

man's inventive power over the sea. Ships allow them to journey to locations previously cut off by large expanses of water.

Catullus made a point of calling the sea "unexperienced" or "untried" (*rudem*, 11) because no vessel had crossed the ocean like the Argo would. Konstan believes "Thetis' submission to a union with the mortal Peleus seems analogous to the conquest of the oceans by mankind...by the invention of seafaring."¹ His idea is supported by the fact Catullus called the sea *Amphitriten* (11), the wife of Neptune.² The sea itself becomes a goddess overcome by human beings. Thetis' almost automatic acceptance of marriage seems to replicate the ocean's approval of the ship, because the Nereids are amazed by it and rise from the sea to get a closer look at the ship (*emersere freti candenti e gurgite vultus/aequoreae monstrum Nereids admirantes*, 14-15). They are not frightened by the sudden appearance of this *monstrum* in the middle of the sea; instead, the poet displays the love ignited between Peleus and Thetis, brought about by the sailing of the ship.

This idea of conquest could also be applied if another version of the myth of Peleus and Thetis is considered. Instead of accepting Peleus as her husband, some accounts state that Peleus had to conquer Thetis by force.³ Only after he defeated her, although she changed herself into many different forms to compel Peleus to release her from his grasp, did she consent to marry him.⁴ While this is not the account of the myth that Catullus has presented, the struggle of Thetis against Peleus perhaps looms in the reader's mind, even though the goddess appears to be a willing participant (64.20). Just

¹ Konstan 1993: 63.

² Ibid.

³ Konstan 1993: 62.

⁴ Tripp 1970: 575; also DeBrohun 2007: 305.

as there was peace between the sea and the ship, there is harmony between the sea nymph and the mortal.

The poet does not, however, merely let this relationship fade into the background with the story of the coverlet. Rather, he compels the reader to compare the two relationships in terms of their inceptions and conclusions. The relationship between Peleus and Thetis begins with Peleus burning with love for the nymph, and Thetis being willing to marry a human being (*tum Thetidis Peleus incensus fertur amore/tum Thetis humanos non despexit hymenaeos*, 19-20). Love and desire overcome Peleus upon seeing Thetis. That is the extent of their love story before the marriage. The poet rapidly shifts to their wedding day, purposefully omitting the adventures of the Argonauts.⁵ He wanted his readers to have the fast paced romance fresh in their minds when he introduced the next couple, Theseus and Ariadne.

Upon seeing Theseus, Ariadne “did not lower her eyes from him before she completely took the flame into her whole body, and all of her glowed in her deepest marrows” (*non prius ex illo flagrantia declinavit/lumina, quam cuncto concepit corpore flammam/funditus atque imis exarsit tota medullis*, 91-93). Just as Peleus at first glance is burned by his desire for Thetis, the poet has reused this burning desire for Ariadne’s emotions towards Theseus when he first arrives at the palace on Crete. Theseus himself also evokes the meeting of Peleus and Thetis because he seems to shine with the light or flame that Ariadne ardently takes into her bones,⁶ a flame that recalls the glimmer of the sea around Thetis and the Nereids as they arose from beneath the waves (*emersere freti*

⁵ Mendel 1965: 45.

⁶ Quinn 1970: 316.

candenti e gurgite vultus, 14). Both Peleus and Ariadne, as if entranced by the sight before them, gaze at their desired partner.

There is no mention of reciprocal affection towards Ariadne on the part of Theseus,⁷ similar to the understood acceptance of Thetis' marriage to a mortal. In addition, the heroic adventure of Theseus is passed over to focus on the love story with Ariadne instead, just as the journey of the Argonauts was omitted for the romance of Peleus and Thetis and their subsequent wedding. Although the relationship with Theseus was short lived, Ariadne is not abandoned on the island forever. On another part of the tapestry, Bacchus arrives with his entourage (*At parte ex alia florens volitabat Iacchus/...te quaerens, Ariadna, tuoque incensus amore*, 251-253). Described in a way recalling Peleus (*Peleus incensus fertur amore*, 19), Bacchus burns with desire for Ariadne and has come to claim her from the empty island. Gaisser suggests that perhaps Theseus may have given up Ariadne on Bacchus' orders, similar to the way Jupiter relinquished Thetis (21).⁸ This scene is, however, the last depicted on the coverlet. There is no mention of the eventual wedding of Ariadne and Bacchus, another marriage between a mortal and a divinity, but the viewers can assume the outcome of the image from the mythology.

In addition, a connection can be made between Catullus' Ariadne and Aegeus. As Ariadne watches Theseus sail away from her, Catullus describes her emotional state: "she, sad, climbed the steep mountains from where she could stretch out her gaze on the vast swells of the sea" (*ac tum praeruptos tristem conscendere montes/unde aciem in pelagi vastos protenderet aestus*, 126-127). After her speech, the readers still see her

⁷ Putnam 1961: 172.

⁸ Gaisser 1995: 596.

“sad, gazing at the withdrawing ship” from her place on the mountaintop (*quae tum prospectans cedentem maesta carinam*, 249). Elsewhere in the tapestry, Theseus’ father Aegeus watches for a sign of white sails from Theseus on another mountaintop (*at pater, ut summa prospectum ex arce petebat/anxia in assiduos absumens lumina fletus*, 241-42). He, too, morbidly watches the sea because he does not believe Theseus would return to Athens alive, but nevertheless, he hopes for a miracle. Both are described as *anxia* (203, 242) as they watch for the ship of the man whom they both love so dearly. Kinsey notes only Aegeus’ love for his son is stated, just as only Ariadne’s desire is mentioned.⁹ Aegeus expressed the deepest paternal love for Theseus, but all Theseus brought to him was sorrow and death¹⁰ in the same manner he caused Ariadne grief. There is no mention of Theseus’ feelings towards either of these two characters, an omission that makes his treatment of them appear all the more callous.

Inasmuch as the poet shifted the scene from Ariadne to Aegeus so quickly, the reader is left wondering, when are these two characters on their mountains, searching for Theseus, in respect to one another? Already, the poem has framed many chronological issues, where all events seem to occur simultaneously.¹¹ A similar phenomenon occurs with the geography of the tapestry. In the case of Ariadne and Aegeus, there is a strange sense that they are watching the ship at the same time, even though geographically it would be impossible.¹² This element makes Ariadne’s curse on Theseus more terrifying. It is almost as if she could see the result of her curse, Aegeus’ suicide (*praecipitem sese scopulorum e vertice iecit*, 244), with her own eyes.

⁹ Kinsey 1965: 920.

¹⁰ Daniels 1967: 355.

¹¹ Gaisser 1995: 580.

¹² Gaisser 1995: 606.

Ariadne begs that her prayer will cause Theseus to feel the same sorrow he brought on her, the loss of family and home. She laments that she has lost every place she could call home (*nam quo me referam...an patris auxilium sperem...coniugis an fido consoler memet amore/quine fugit lentos incuruans gurgite remos*, 177, 180, 182). She cannot return home since she helped Theseus murder her half-brother and abandoned her family afterwards. It seems, however, that her lover never intended to take her to Athens with him either. Her plea for vengeance is that Theseus suffers from the same, intense grief he caused her (*vos nolite pati nostrum vanescere luctum/sed quali solam Theseus me mente relinquit/tali mente, deae, funestet seque suosque*, 200-201). She does not wish for his death because the sorrow caused by the “bereavement of family is the appropriate punishment for one who destroys a *domus*.”¹³ After the loss of Aegeus, the poet writes that Theseus felt “the sort of grief he had caused to the daughter of Minos,” the loss of family and home (*Theseus qualem Minoidi luctum/obtulerat mente immemori, talem ipse recepit*, 247-48), implying that perhaps Theseus does have feelings after all. Konstan notes “no one before Catullus seems to have connected the story of the sails with the abandonment of Ariadne.”¹⁴ Suddenly, these two lovers, who could not seem more different in other aspects, have become equal in the grief they cause one another.

The arrival of Bacchus ends the first section of the poem, and the second begins with a scene slightly familiar to the reader. The poet returns to the wedding, where “the chief Chiron came from the peak of Mt. Peleus carrying wooded gifts” (*princeps e vertice Peli/advenit Chiron portans silvestria dona*, 278-79). In addition to Chiron, Peneus, the

¹³ Thomson 1961: 56.

¹⁴ Konstan 1993: 66; also Crump 1931: 117.

Thessalian river god,¹⁵ also brings flowering gifts, which “he placed, interwoven, widely around the seats” (*haec circum sedes late contexta locavit*, 292). This image, as well as the choice of words by the poet, recalls the beginning of the poem (*Peliaco quondam prognatae vertice pinus*, 1) and the description of the Argo (*pineae coniungens inflexae texta carinae*, 10). Vital to our understanding of this passage is the repeated word *texta*. The image of weaving appears many times throughout the poem between the ship, the coverlet, and the song of the Fates; even the poem itself is a result of the skillful weaving of words by Catullus.¹⁶

These two sections are connected through the mention of *virtutes*. Warden points out that each section tells the deeds of a hero, the first being Theseus, the second being Achilles, who has not yet been born.¹⁷ The coverlet claims it will tell the “virtues of heroes with marvelous art” (*heroum mira virtutes indicat arte*, 51), and the Fates declare, “mothers will confess the distinguished virtues of him and his clear deeds” (*illius egregias virtutes claraque facta*, 348). Both of these sections, however, portray images that contradict the idea of *virtutes*. The coverlet and song instead “unmask the things that heroes do.”¹⁸ Instead of glorifying the victory of Theseus over the Minotaur (*sic domito saevum prostravit corpore Theseus*, 110), which Catullus reduced to a mere seven-line summary in total, his heroic qualities seem to decline as the coverlet’s story continues.¹⁹ His heroism begins at its climax with his willingness to sacrifice himself for Athens (*ipse suum Theseus pro caris corpus Athenis/proicere optavit*, 81-2) and his conquering of the

¹⁵Tripp 1970: 460.

¹⁶ See Smith 2005: 172-181 for a discussion concerning Aeneas’ shield, a *non enarrabile textum*, which creates a similar relationship between the poet and the reader.

¹⁷ Warden 1998: 404; Thomson 1961: 52; Knox 2007: 167.

¹⁸ Konstan 1993: 68.

¹⁹ Warden 1998: 411.

Minotaur, but his heroic nature soon plummets with the abandonment of Ariadne and the consequences of that action.

The same procession is seen in the second half of the poem. Catullus highlights two specific moments in the heroic deeds of Achilles: the destruction of Troy (*cum Phrygii Teucro manabunt sanguine campi*, 344) and the sacrifice of Polyxena (*alta Polyxenia madefient caede sepulcra*, 368).²⁰ In neither situation do the heroes of the story behave like heroes, at least not according to the modern expectation. Perhaps the definition of heroism was different for Catullus, instead referring to “one who loves (after the gods) *pater* and *patria* above all else.”²¹ Although Theseus and Achilles are not the same characters in regards to the purpose of their heroics, their actions match one another through their destruction of families and their treatment of Ariadne and Polyxena (even after the death of Achilles) respectively.

Alongside this idea is the comparison between Ariadne and Polyxena. Both are foreign princesses sacrificed, figuratively and literally, for the heroics of a Greek youth. Daniels describes the two as the “willing” and “unwilling” brides of their respective partners, “marriages” which both result in a barren relationship.²² The reader cannot help feeling pity for these two princesses because of the deep emotion the poet creates within them.

Catullus’ use of color in the poem offers a further way that the poem is structurally knit together. The first colors, gold, silver, ivory, and purple are found all throughout Peleus’ palace (*fulgenti splendent auro atque argento/candet ebur solis...tincta tegit roseo conchyli purpura fuco*, 44-45,49). All of these colors create an

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Harmon 1973: 319.

²² Daniels 1972: 101.

atmosphere of royalty and wealth, an almost expected scene for a hero and a goddess. Gold was mentioned earlier in the poem (*auratam optantes Colchis avertere pellem*, 5), and this second mention supports the idea of glorifying the heroism and marriage of Peleus.²³ Harmon also noted that these ornaments would be used as cult decoration, making the home appear like a temple for the gods to visit later in the poem.²⁴ The color that stands out against the rest is purple, because it is not sparkling or shining like the gold, silver, and ivory. O'Connell noted that this color does not suggest anything somber or threatening, but rather a richness to heighten the coverlet as the focal point of the palace.²⁵ The positioning of the coverlet in the center of the palace also directs the reader's attention towards it, showing that the reader and the guests must look at it before continuing on with the celebration.

On the coverlet itself, the same colors appear, but they are different from the sparkling gold, gleaming silver, and polished ivory found in the palace. When Ariadne is first seen, the poet describes her as a maiden “not retaining her delicate headdress on her blonde head...not fastened in respect to her white breasts with a smooth band” (*non flavo retinens subtilem vertice mitram...non tereti strophio lactentis vincata papillas*, 63, 65). The *aurum* of Peleus's splendid palace has been muted to the *flavus* of Ariadne's uncontrolled hair, as well as to the *argentum* reduced to *lactens*.²⁶ A later description of Ariadne provides a contrast to her deserted state: before she is deserted, “how often she grew more pale than the brightness of gold” when she was concerned about Theseus (*quanto saepe magis fulgore expalluit auri*, 100). She was once as bright as the palace or

²³ Harmon 1973: 316.

²⁴ Harmon 1973: 314.

²⁵ O'Connell 1977: 749; also Crump 1931: 128.

²⁶ O'Connell 1977: 750.

the Golden Fleece; her abandonment by Theseus, however, has drastically changed her appearance. These subdued versions of these wedding colors would seem to emphasize the sorrow of Ariadne,²⁷ because her fairytale marriage, promised by Theseus, has been stolen away as her beloved hero rapidly departs from the island, leaving her behind.

Purple and white are the next two colors that must be considered. Elsner pointed out that these two colors appear together every time they are mentioned.²⁸ *Purpureus* has been used once already to describe the coverlet in the palace (49), but it appears again in Ariadne's lament, in a context similar to the first. Ariadne complains that Theseus could simply have taken her as a prize of his victory and made her a slave:

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

C. 64.160-63

Nevertheless, you could have led me into your seats,
I, as a slave girl, could have attended to you with pleasing work,
rubbing your fair feet with clear water
or spreading a purple blanket on your bed.

²⁷ Daniels 1972: 97 states the song mourns over the broken pledge of marriage.

²⁸ Elsner 2007: 23.

Catullus reminds his readers of the first coverlet with this line, because he has pulled his readers deep into the story on the blanket, also a combination of purple and white for the hero and his lover:

pulvinar vero divae geniale locatur
sedibus in mediis, **Indo** quod dente politum
tincta tegit roseo conchyli **purpura fuco**,

C. 64.47-49.

The nuptial couch of the goddess is placed
In the middle of the home, which polished with Indian ivory
A purple coverlet, dyed with the red paint of shellfish, covers.

Again, the purple and white could signify the fortune and royalty of both Theseus and Peleus.²⁹ In contrast to the happiness and fantastic love story of Peleus and Thetis, however, Ariadne's purple blanket seems to represent the depth of her desire for Theseus, because she is willing to be his servant if she can be with him. The image of white paired with this *purpureus* is that of Theseus' feet (162). For Ariadne, white represents the godlike beauty she believes Theseus possesses³⁰, and she merely wants to be in Theseus' presence, even if she cannot marry him. This color, however, as well as a dark purple like color, represents something dramatically different for Aegeus.

²⁹ O'Connell 1977: 751.

³⁰ Ibid.

The first mention of these colors occurs in the description of the sails that Aegeus asks Theseus to hang as he leaves (*carbasus obscurata dicet ferrugine Hibera*, 227). While the poet has not used *purpureus* as he did before, *ferruginus* stands out just as the coverlet did in the palace. Fordyce noted that the meaning of *ferruginus* is somewhat puzzling, as later authors, Virgil specifically, use it to describe not only an “iron-rust” color, but also a dark purple.³¹ If Catullus has applied the same ambiguity regarding the color of *ferruginus*, he could have intended Theseus’ sails to be purple, the same purple of the two coverlets. The poet pairs these sails with the white sails Theseus is supposed to raise in place of the dark ones (*funestam antennae deponent undique vestem/candidaque intorti sustollant vela rudentes*, 234-35) and the white of Aegeus’ hair (*canitiem terra atque infuso pulvere foedans*, 224). Now, the earlier connotations of purple and white no longer apply.

Purple has become the sign of death because it becomes connected with three important points in the poem: the *funestam vestem* of Theseus, the image of Aegeus’ sorrow, becomes the means by which Ariadne’s curse is fulfilled, a curse that compels Theseus to forget his father’s commands and Aegeus to commit suicide.³² The meaning of white has also changed. For Ariadne, it was a symbol of the beauty Theseus portrayed. On the other hand, for Aegeus, it was the sign that signified the victory of his son over the Minotaur, or over death itself.³³ It too, however, becomes associated with sorrow, as he covers his white hair with ashes to express his grief over the loss of Theseus.

³¹ Fordyce 1961: 304.

³² O’Connell 1977: 752.

³³ O’Connell 1977: 752.

Moving on from the coverlet's images, purple and white appear again during the wedding party. The Parcae enter the scene with this description: "a white garment with a purple border, embracing their trembling bodies from everywhere, had girded their ankles" (*his corpus tremulum complectens undique vestis/candida purpurea talos incinxerat ora*, 307-8). While not describing the typical image of the Fates, Catullus has used *purpureus* and *candidus* once again to help weave his poem together as a whole. Elsner argued that the logic of the purple fabrics "culminates in a third textile associated with destiny itself."³⁴ Fordyce also noted that while in older adaptations, the Muses would sing the wedding hymn, the poet here has attributed the song to the Fates to carry his story into the future with the prediction of Achilles.³⁵ Joining these colors to the first mention of them in the coverlet, the reader also cannot help connecting the later meanings of these colors, death and sorrow, to this description here as well.

Catullus also adds the color of red, an appropriate addition for the bloodshed to be caused by Achilles (*cum Phrygii Teucro manabunt sanguine campi*, 344). Just like the discrepancy noted with the color *ferruginus*, there is some confusion concerning to what modern hue of red the poet refers. *Sanguis* does refer to blood, but the exact color is questionable. Harmon noted that the deep color of the coverlet, the regal treasure of the palace, points the reader towards the description of actual blood.³⁶ With the mention of the white hair of the distraught mothers (*cum incultum cano solvent a vertice crinem*, 350), there is a hint that Catullus has created yet another pairing of purple and white. The topics of death and sorrow continue, as seen by the mothers and the running of blood, as

³⁴ Elsner 2007: 23.

³⁵ Fordyce 1961: 317.

³⁶ Harmon 1973: 317.

the Parcae “concentrate upon the sufferings caused by Achilles’ heroic valor.”³⁷ The white heads of the mothers recall the white head of Aegeus. Both sets of characters believe their sons were lost in an unequal battle, Theseus against the Minotaur and the Trojans against Achilles.³⁸ Again, Catullus has used these colors in order to bind together each individual part of his poem, creating a coherent unit as opposed to a disjointed story.

The final mention of these colors appears in the description of Achilles’ tomb and the sacrifice of Polyxena. The Parcae predict that his “tomb, piled up by the lofty rampart, will receive the snow-white limbs of the slaughtered virgin” (*teres excelso coacervatum aggere bustum/excipiet niveos percussae virginis artus*, 363-4), and “the high tomb will be moistened with the blood of Polyxena” (*alta Polyxenia madefient caede sepulcra*, 368). Putnam noted that the poet purposefully causes the reader to imagine the tomb from the ground up, ending with the image of the white-limbed Polyxena.³⁹ Purple, red, and white have come together to display the effects of the glorified actions of heroes, the suffering of even innocent figures. O’Connell argued that Catullus’ poem “plays with the meanings of these colors in the same way it plays with moral judgment.”⁴⁰ These colors, which began as a display of the opulence of Peleus, have now shifted in meaning and reflect the darker allusions and emotions present in C. 64, calling into question their presence at the wedding; perhaps the wedding is not as happy as it first appeared.

³⁷ O’Connell 1977: 753.

³⁸ Ibid: 754.

³⁹ Putnam 1961: 194.

⁴⁰ O’Connell 1977: 755.

The next item to consider is the span of time between the earlier poem and Catullus' present day. This need for consideration arises from both the character of Theseus and the unusual end to the poem. The poet narrates that Theseus was willing to sacrifice himself to prevent any further deaths of Athenian youths and to defend Athens (*ipse suum Theseus pro caris corpus Athenis/proiecere optavit potius quam talia Cretam/funera Cecropiae nec funera portarentur*, 81-3). Harmon argued that Theseus is "reminiscent of an old Roman like those fondly idealized in their literature,"⁴¹ similar to men like the Horatii, one of whom is best known for his defense of Rome against Alba Longa.⁴² Romans would be able to relate to this passion for the fatherland, and they would excuse Theseus' treatment of Ariadne because of this devotion. Such interpretation would resonate specifically with young Roman men, almost teaching them to value *pater* and *patria* above all else,⁴³ and showing the best example for them to emulate. Perhaps Catullus has displayed Theseus as a true hero after all, and a modern interpretation causes readers to think otherwise. On the other hand, perhaps Theseus is the man he wished he could have been, instead of the poet who wrote the love poems to Lesbia.

Dufallo, however, takes up another line of argument, stating that the Heroic Age, as presented in this poem, was viewed by Catullus as already corrupt.⁴⁴ This condemnation of the heroic age arises from the list of vices and atrocities Catullus mentions at the end of the poem, all of which caused everything to be "soaked with unspeakable wickedness and all chased away justice from their greedy mind" (*sed*

⁴¹ Harmon 1973: 318.

⁴² Tripp 1970: 307.

⁴³ Harmon 1973: 319.

⁴⁴ Dufallo 2010: 104.

postquam tellus scelere est imbuta nefando/ iustitiamque omnes cupida de mente fugarunt, 397-98) and continue into the present age. The vices Catullus has described seem very familiar to the reader because they have already been hinted at before in the coverlet.⁴⁵ The first one is “brothers sprinkling their hands with brotherly blood” (*perfudere manus fraterno sanguine fratres*, 399). While the poem has not referred to brothers, it has referred to aid Ariadne gave Theseus in order to kill her “brother” the Minotaur. Passion and desire for Theseus caused her to give up her family, the human members, and to arrange the death of her monstrous family member.⁴⁶ Catullus could have drawn on the Civil War between Sulla and Marius that occurred just before his present day, or possibly even the Civil War between Caesar and Pompey, though Catullus’ dates are uncertain. Even later authors like Lucan note the bloody nature of this war because many brothers and fathers killed one another, destroying many families.

Connected to the corruption of familial bonds is the perversion of love, seen by the “impious mother coupling herself with her ignorant son” (*ignaro mater substernens se impia nato*, 403). Kinsey noted that this could refer to the well-known story of Oedipus and Jocasta,⁴⁷ which would be a perfect example of the downfall of the sanctity of family. It could also, however, refer to Pasiphae, Ariadne’s mother and the mother of the Minotaur, another woman who violated family ties. While Pasiphae did not desire her own son (her other daughter, Phaedra, will desire her stepson Hippolytus later in mythology),⁴⁸ she was a prime example of an *impia mater* for having offspring with a bull. This leads the reader into the next impious acts humans commit regarding marriage.

⁴⁵ Gaisser 1995: 613.

⁴⁶ Harmon 1973: 327.

⁴⁷ Kinsey 1965: 929.

⁴⁸ Tripp 1970: 306.

The final atrocity the poet mentions is again one that breaks the bonds of family, when “the father wished for the funeral of the youthful son so then he, free, could enjoy the flower of the unmarried stepmother” (*optavit genitor primaevi funera nati/liber ut innuptae poteretur flore novercae*, 401-2). This instance seems to be more closely related to an event that occurred within Catullus’ day. Quinn noted that it could be an allusion to a story of Sallust concerning the marriage of Catiline to Orestilla, the daughter of his mistress, and he killed his son so that he could marry her.⁴⁹ While this comparison does not exactly fit, it does highlight Catullus’ concern with the perversion or corruption of love and marriage, an important matter in C. 64.

Reading the previous line with 403 (*ignaro mater substernens se impia nato*, 403), the reader sees a complete upheaval concerning the sanctity of marriage and familial bonds. The question about which age is worse remains, but the poet has now opened up his persona as a poet to the readers through the emotions of his mythological characters. He has stated the matters in life about which he is most concerned

Catullus has used the structure of the poem not only to unify the different parts of his poem, but also to give his audience a glimpse into life, heartbreak, and his skills as a storyteller. The structure of the poem begins to dispel the confusion concerning the connections between the adventure of the Argonauts, the wedding, and the adventure of Theseus. By unifying elements of the wedding and coverlet, the poet shows that the sorrow caused by the destruction of familial bonds is not reserved for a certain age, as seen from the examples of the heroic age and what appears to be Catullus’ contemporary day, and the happiness and fortune of one often leads to the grief of another.

⁴⁹ Quinn 1970: 350; Kinsey 1965: 928.

CHAPTER FOUR

Becoming Medea: The Transformation of Ariadne

Catullus 64 pays homage to predecessors whose stories inspired many different aspects of the epyllion. The characteristics of Ariadne and Theseus reflect those of a similar couple, Medea and Jason. Throughout his mini-epic, Catullus has created parallels to Apollonius of Rhodes' *Argonautica*. Yet, the *Argonautica* does not mark the first time, of course, that this couple had made its appearance in literature. Euripides' *Medea*, a play raising profound psychological issues, had presented troubling versions of each of these lovers. Through many allusions, Catullus not only displays his own poetic knowledge, but also his prowess as a poet through the alterations he makes to his Hellenistic and classical predecessors. By making the changes he did in his allusions to the older works, Catullus situates his work within the epic tradition.

The *Argonautica* is the story of Jason and his men on their quest to take the Golden Fleece from Colchis. The epic, consisting of four books, begins with Jason's arrival at Iolcus and the sailing of the *Argo*, built by the shipmaster Argus and Athena, accompanied by familiar heroes such as Hercules and Peleus. The story recounts Jason's various adventures from his departure from Iolcus to his arrival in Colchis. Aided by the Colchian princess Medea, Jason conquers the challenges set forth by the king and manages to steal the Golden Fleece. On the return trip, Jason and Medea are married, and the fleece draped is over their bridal bed. The epic ends on the island of Aegina as the men begin athletic competitions.

By opening with the story of the “chosen youths, the strength of Argive youth, desiring to steal the Golden Fleece from Colchis” (*lecti iuvenes, Argivae robora pubis/auratam optantes Colchis avertere pellem*, C. 64. 4-5), Catullus initially tricks the reader into believing that the adventure of the Argonauts is the focus of C. 64. DeBrohun suggests this is the poet’s immediate mention of his predecessor and the inspiration for his poem (χρύσειον μετὰ κῶας ἐύζυγον ἤλασαν Ἄργω, Arg. 1.4).¹ Catullus causes the reader to think of Jason and Medea, perhaps not an entirely misguided thought. Even his description of the ship’s voyage nearly parallels Apollonius’ version, because the nymphs watch the sailing in both (ἐπ’ ἀκροτάτησι δὲ νύμφαι/Πηλιάδες κορυφῆσιν ἐθάμβεον, Arg. 1.549-50; *emersere freti candenti e gurgite vultus/aequoreae monstrum Nereides admirantes*, 64.14-15). The difference lies in the direction of the nymphs’ gaze; one set is looking down from the mountains, the other looking up from the sea.² Perhaps Catullus is already hinting at his intentions to invert and rewrite the stories presented by Apollonius.

The poet quickly shifts his focus away from the adventure when he mentions the appearance of the nymphs and the instant relationship between Peleus and Thetis (64.15-21). While this short voyage and quick romance is used to link the poem to Apollonius’ epic, Catullus also slightly breaks away from his predecessor, creating a discord between the words of the text and the allusions presented by the poet’s deliberate acknowledgement of his inspiration.³ Through these various allusions, the poet displays not only his poetic ability, but also reflects how he read and responded to Apollonius’

¹ DeBrohun 2007: 293; Argonautica text is from Loeb 1912 and any translations are my own.

² Clare 1997: 62-63.

³ Gaisser 2009: 152; Clare 1997: 62.

poem, a traditional method for many poets.⁴ It also exhibits the way by which Catullus intends to create his own place within the traditional realm of these myths.

Catullus takes various opportunities to manipulate the flow of time and the chronology of the stories as a method of distancing his poem from the *Argonautica*. This technique is first seen within the first 30 lines of the poem where instead of focusing on the Argonauts, Catullus elects to pass over the action of the adventure to focus on the wedding of Peleus and Thetis.⁵ In addition to omitting the Quest for the Golden Fleece, Catullus has also inverted the chronology of the relationship between Peleus and Thetis from the order presented in the *Argonautica*.

In Apollonius' epic, the marriage and separation of Peleus and Thetis has already occurred, and Achilles is in the care of Chiron when Peleus leaves with the Argonauts (αὐτὰρ ὄγ' ἐξ ὑπάτου ὄρεος κίεν ἄγχι θαλάσσης/ Χείρων...Πηλεΐ δην Ἀχιλῆα, φίλῳ δειδίσκετο πατρί, *Arg.* 1.553-8). In addition to the lack of romance between the couple, Clare argued that the only meeting of Peleus and Thetis in Book 4 of the *Argonautica* occurs in the final conversation between the two (4.852-868).⁶ In Catullus' epyllion, however, the timing of the wedding and the voyage has been reversed,⁷ and the birth of Achilles is only foretold by the Parcae (64.338-341). This inversion has caused the two normally independent stories to become dependent on one another; it is because of the voyage that Peleus and Thetis meet and the wedding can occur.

⁴ Smith 1997:83-84.

⁵ DeBrohun 2007: 295.

⁶ Clare 1997: 64.

⁷ Gaisser 2009: 153; DeBrohun 2007: 299.

This romance has become, as Gaisser argues, an episode of the Argonauts' story,⁸ and Catullus uses this small episode as the focus of his epyllion. He has also changed the method by which Thetis is given to Peleus. Traditionally, Peleus had to coerce Thetis into marriage, which she agreed to, though unwillingly. In C. 64, however, Jupiter gives his assent to their union (*tum Thetidi pater ipse iugandum Pelea sensit*, 21). While his motives may be selfish, because the child of Thetis was prophesized to be greater than his father, Konstan notes that this mention of Jupiter signals the novelty of Catullus' account of the myth.⁹ He has not, however, entirely discarded the example set by Apollonius, who inverted the myths of Theseus and Jason in his own epic.¹⁰ By manipulating the timing of the wedding and the voyage, Catullus has woven together the stories of Jason, Peleus, and Theseus into one large epic, where it is difficult to tell which story happened first; rather, it seems these stories are all happening at once.¹¹ In doing so, Catullus has paid his respects to Apollonius as his predecessor, but the Argonauts will be left behind after the meeting of Peleus and Thetis in the first 20 lines and Catullus will continue to form his own story.

In the *Argonautica*, a dynamic beyond the heroic adventures is created in Books Three and Four, namely Medea's struggle between her passion for Jason and her obligations to her family. When Jason approaches Medea to ask for her help, he mentions another maiden who helped a hero not unlike himself and became famous for her deeds. This couple serves as the focus of more than half C. 64, Ariadne and Theseus. While the outcome of their relationship is not mentioned in the *Argonautica*, the small

⁸ Gaisser 2009: 153.

⁹ Konstan 1993: 62.

¹⁰ DeBrohun 2007: 300.

¹¹ Gaisser 2009: 154.

mention of the two provided by Apollonius allows Catullus to weave his own story, one that will attempt to surpass its predecessor, while acknowledging the *Argonautica* as the inspiration.

Among the most interesting parallels between the *Argonautica* and C. 64 is the depiction of the female characters, Medea and Ariadne. According to traditional mythology, Medea was the daughter of Aeëtes and Ariadne was the daughter of Pasiphaë, sister of Aeëtes.¹² Both princesses fall in love with a foreign hero on a mission and aid the hero in the challenges he must face. In the process, however, both heroines kill their brother, abandon their families, and in turn, are abandoned by their hero. Although Catullus never mentions Medea by name, the reader is aware of the irony that these cousins find themselves in nearly identical situations, and yet neither appears to know the story and heartbreak of the other.

Passion for their respective hero drives both women to betray their family and cause the death of a brother. Apollonius and Catullus describe the sudden onslaught of love for a foreign hero in similar ways, both using the eyes and an image of a flame to indicate the gravity of the desire both Medea and Ariadne feel.¹³ In the *Argonautica*, Apollonius names Eros in particular as the instigator of Medea's problems because his "bolt burnt deep beneath the maiden's heart, similar to a flame" (βέλκος δ' ἐνεδαίετο κούρη/νέρθεν ὑπὸ κραδίη, φλογὶ εἴκελον, *Arg.* 3.286-87). Her physical response to this sudden fire is an inability to tear her "flashing" eyes away from Jason (ἀντία δ' αἰεὶ/βάλλεν ὑπ' Αἰσονίδην **ἀμαρύγματα**, *Arg.* 3.288). In C. 64, Catullus does not blame Eros by name for Ariadne's struggle, yet like Medea, Ariadne did "not lower her

¹² Tripp 1970: 15.

¹³ See Elsner 2007: 64 presents a "deep focus on gaze and desire."

burning eyes from him until she took the flame into her body” (*non prius ex illo flagrantia declinavit/lumina, quam cuncto concepit corpore flammam*, 92-93). This comparison relies not only on the parallel in the emotional states of both princesses but also in the apostrophe to the divine figure responsible for their troubles.

The Eros of Apollonius is σκέτλι”Ερωσ, “cruel” or “merciless Eros,” who brings only troubles and pain.¹⁴ The *sancte puer* of Catullus, on the other hand, “mixes the joys of men with cares” (*curis hominum qui gaudia misces*, C. 64.95). The two divine figures show a continuation of Catullus’ process of acknowledging his inspiration without direct mention. Catullus, however, has forged his own tradition by making Ariadne responsible for her own actions rather than by placing that blame onto a divinity. The spirit of Medea, nevertheless, has yet to lose its strength.

Catullus uses Apollonius’ mention of Ariadne as a way to parallel Theseus to Jason. In the *Argonautica*, Jason retells the story of Ariadne to persuade Medea to help him obtain the Fleece (δή ποτε καὶ Θησῆα κακῶν ὑπελύσατ’ ἀέθλων/παρθενικὴ Μινωῖς εὐφρονέουσ’ Ἀριάδην, *Arg.* 3.997-98). He avoids mentioning the sorrowful ending that Ariadne and Theseus experienced, but instead uses Ariadne’s love for Theseus and her subsequent fame as a means of obtaining Medea’s help. Though Catullus, conversely, never openly mentions Medea, her presence permeates her cousin’s reaction against Theseus. Ariadne prays that Theseus will feel the same pain he caused her, the loss of family (C. 64.200-01), with an anger similar to that of Medea, who murders her own children and Jason’s new bride, depriving him of family as well.

¹⁴ Clare 1997: 70.

Clare suggests that Jason's deliberate omission of Ariadne's abandonment displays his "forgetful" nature, one that turns Medea into another Ariadne.¹⁵ This same characteristic is highlighted in the personality of Theseus in C. 64 both by Catullus and his Ariadne (*immemor at iuvenis*, 58; *liquerit immemori discedens pectore coniunx*, 123; *immemor a*, 135). While there may be some question about whether or not Theseus purposefully forgot Ariadne (because he was influenced by Jupiter to forget the white sails, he could have been influenced to leave Ariadne, as one tradition suggests¹⁶), Apollonius does not give Jason the same flexibility. When Medea asks about the rest of Ariadne's story, Jason purposefully seems to avoid it:

ἀλλὰ τίη τάδε τοι μεταμῶνια πάντ' ἀγορεύω
ἡμετέρους τε δόμους τηλεκλείτην τ' Ἀριάδνην,
κούρην Μίνωος, τόπερ ἀγλαὸν οὔνομα κείνην
παρθεικὴν καλέεσκον ἐπήρατον.

Arg. 3.1096-99

"why do I say all these vain things,
of our home and the far-famed Ariadne,
daughter of Minos, which famous name
they were calling that lovely maiden."

¹⁵ Clare 1997: 67.

¹⁶ Fordyce 1961: 286.

Bulloch suggests that Jason's deliberate silence about Ariadne's fate signals his treachery regarding his relationship to Medea, which has barely begun.¹⁷ Catullus has adapted Jason's "forgetful" nature and amplified it in his Theseus, making the empty promises to both princesses all the more cruel. Theseus, like Jason, could have planned to abandon Ariadne once she had ceased to be useful to him.

Another parallel between Apollonius and Catullus is the purple robe used to lure Apsyrtus to his death and the purple coverlet at Peleus and Thetis' wedding. Simply gazing at Apollonius' cloak, "the purple robe of Hypsipyle" (ἱερὸν Ὑψιπυλείης/ πορφύρεον, *Arg.* 4.423-24), cannot satisfy the viewer's desire for it (οὐ μιν ἀφάσσω/ οὔτε κεν εἰσορόων γλυκὸν ἴμερον ἐμπλήσειας, 4.428-29). In C. 64, the coverlet of Thetis' marriage bed, besides displaying a much darker color than the gold and silver of the palace (45-49), holds the eager gaze of the wedding guests until they having seen every inch (*quae postquam cupide spectando Thessala pubes/expleta est*, 267-68). Both garments demand and capture the attention of their respective audiences.

A second parallel is the mention of Dionysus/Bacchus and his relationship to the garment.¹⁸ After the story with Theseus ends in C. 64, Catullus moves on to Ariadne's future:

At parte ex alia florens volitabat Iacchus
cum thiaso Satyrorum et Nysigenis Silenis,
te quaerens, Ariadna, tuoque incensus amore.

C. 64.251-253

¹⁷ Bulloch 2006: 46; Clare 1997: 67.

¹⁸ Clare 1997: 77.

But from another part, flourishing Bacchus was flying
with the band of Satyrs and Nysian Silenis,
seeking you, Ariadne, and inflamed by love for you.

With these lines, Catullus could be reminding the reader of the coverlet and uses them as a transition back to the happy wedding story of Peleus and Thetis. The outcome of this scene, however, is not physically on the coverlet nor is it mentioned by Catullus before returning to Peleus' palace. Also present in these lines is the allusion to Apollonius' explanation of Ariadne's future, not mentioned before:

ἐξ οὗ ἄναξ αὐτὸς Νυσηῖος ἐγκατέλεκτο
ἀκροχάλιξ οἴνω καὶ νέκταρι, καλὰ μεμαρπῶς
στήθεα παρθεωικῆς Μινωίδος, ἣν ποτε Θησεὺς
Κνωσσόθεν ἐσπομένην Δίῃ ἐνὶ κάλλιπε νήσῳ

Arg. 4. 431-34

From when the king of Nysa himself,
slightly drunk by wine and nectar, held
the beautiful breast of the virgin daughter of Minos,
whom once Theseus, having followed him from Knossos,
left behind on the island of Dia.

The eventual happiness of Ariadne is revealed by Apollonius, yet it is presented in a situation that anything but happy. Instead, it occurs just before Jason and Medea, using the cloak belonging to the descendant of Ariadne and Bacchus, Hypsipyle, as a trap, kill Apsyrtus, thus linking the ideas of marriage and death together.¹⁹ Catullus proceeds to make this same connection with the song of the Parcae, who sing about the deaths Achilles will cause, at the wedding (C. 64.345-51). The relationship between marriage and death also permeates the story of Theseus and Ariadne, because the princess followed her brother's murderer because of the promise of marriage. There is, however, no mention of marriage in the flashback story until Ariadne berates Theseus for breaking their pledge of marriage (C. 64.139). Perhaps Catullus avoids mentioning the persuasion of Ariadne because he wants his readers to supply the conversation between Medea and Jason and his promises of marriage and a home (*Arg.* 4. 96-98), continuing the trend of having their story float in the background.

This theme of marriage and death stretches across the final book of the *Argonautica* of Apollonius, most likely influenced by Euripides' *Medea*. Apollonius never showed how Jason and Medea's relationship ended, but there is a small allusion to the rage that is present in the *Medea* of Euripides (*Arg.* 4.391-94). The tragedy tells of the events that occurred after the Argonauts. Jason, already married to Medea, is offered marriage to the princess of Corinth, and his acceptance of the proposal angers Medea to the point that she kills both her sons by Jason and the young maiden before escaping to Athens, leaving Jason without a family. Both versions of *Medea* are important for understanding Ariadne's lament and the emotional changes she undergoes. The allegations against Jason in the *Argonautica* provide the model for the first half of the

¹⁹ Clare 1997: 77.

lament of Ariadne in C. 64. In Book Four, Medea accuses Jason of forgetting his promise of marriage to her after his victory over Aetes and his acquisition of the fleece:

Αἰσονίδη, τίνα τήνδε συναρτύνασθε μενοιγὴν
ἀμφ' ἐμοί; ἤέ σε πάγχυ λαθιφροσύναις ἐνέηκαν
ἀγλαΐαι, τῶν δ' οὔτι μετατρέπη, ὅσσ' ἀγόρευες
χρειοῖ ἐνισχύμενος; ποῦ τοι Διὸς Ἴκεσίοιο
ἔρκια, ποῦ δὲ μελιχρὰ ὑποσχεσίαι βεβάασιν;

Arg. 4.355-59

Son of Aeson, what is this purpose you have furnished about me? Or have your triumphs entirely inspired you with forgetfulness, and do you consider nothing of those things, as many as you spoke when held by necessity? Where are the vows of Zeus the suppliant, and where have the honey-sweet promises gone?

Jason's "forgetful" nature has already been highlighted by his silence about Ariadne. Medea seems to have noticed this characteristic because she perhaps knows about Theseus' abandonment of Ariadne. Shortly after Jason succeeds in taking the fleece, she fears that she also will be abandoned because the circumstances are extremely similar to

those of Ariadne.²⁰ Catullus echoes these lines in the first half of Ariadne's lament, accusing Theseus of committing the same crime:

At non haec quondam blanda promissa dedisti
voce mihi, non haec miserae sperare iubebas,
sed conubia laeta, sed optatos hymenaeos,
quae cuncta aerii discerpunt irrita venti

C. 64. 139-142

But these are not the promises you gave me once
with your flattering voice, you were not ordering me,
to hope for this misery, but happy marriages, but happy
weddings, which all the winds mangle with angry air.

After his victory over the Minotaur, Theseus fulfilled the action Jason was afraid to commit. This success could occur because Medea was a greater aid, and also a threat, to the safety of the Argonauts returning home, almost forcing Jason to maintain his promises of marriage. Ariadne was not integral to Theseus' success in the battle against the Minotaur,²¹ thus making it perhaps easier for Theseus to break his promises. She, however, believed that her role was as necessary for Theseus' heroics as Medea's had been for Jason's. This belief led her to follow Theseus in the same manner as her cousin, cutting off all ties with her family and her home to accompany a foreign prince.

²⁰ Clare 1997: 75.

²¹ Clare 1997: 72.

In the second half of the lament, Catullus conflates the genres of epic and tragedy in the character of Ariadne, which Quinn argued to have been a typical combination in Roman poetry.²² Thomas described this process as a way by which the poet can refer to his predecessors and “subsume their versions, and the tradition along with them, into his own.”²³ Her decision to follow Theseus causes her to become like the vengeful Medea of Euripides’ *Medea*. At first, she seems to maintain control over her anger, instead appearing as a stone statue (*saxea ut effigies bacchantis*, C. 64.61), unlike Medea whom Apollonius describes as “burning with a fiery wrath” (ἀναζείουσα βαρὺν χόλον, *Arg.*4.331). As Ariadne becomes more aware of her situation, she begins to become more like Medea. She questions, “to where should I return? On what kind of hope do I, lost, lean upon?” (*Nam quo me referam? Quali spe perdita nitor?*, C. 64.177). In Euripides’ tragedy, Medea asks the same question when she learns of Jason’s new marriage and contemplates the murders she will later commit (τίς με δέξεται πόλις, *Med.* 386; νῦν ποῖ τράπωμαι, 502).²⁴ At this point in the lament, Catullus hints at the Medea-like thought processes beginning in Ariadne’s mind. She has accepted the consequences of her actions, her abandonment after betraying her family, but she does not want to suffer alone; Theseus must also pay for his deeds, specifically abandoning her.

Catullus makes Medea’s spirit more present through the questioning of Theseus’ maternal lineage. While Ariadne berates Theseus for his betrayal, she considers many possible monstrous beings that could have been Theseus’ mother, because only a terrible mother could have born such an offspring:

²² Quinn 1959: 7,10.

²³ Thomas 1986: 193.

²⁴ Euripides text comes from Loeb 1912 and any translations are my own.

Quaenam te genuit sola sub rupe leaena,
quod mare conceptum spumantibus expuit undis,
quae Syrtis, quae Scylla rapax, quae vasta Carybdis,
talìa qui reddis pro dulci praemia vita?

C.64.154-157

Which lioness bore you beneath the lonely cliff,
which sea spit conceived you out from its foaming waves,
which Syrtis, which rapacious Scylla, which vast Charybdis (bore you),
you who returned such rewards for your sweet life?

This attack on Theseus' lineage alludes to a passage in the *Medea* concerning the characterization of Medea. As Debrohun points out, Medea causes herself to become a monstrous mother similar to those mentioned above:²⁵

πρὸς ταῦτα καὶ λέαιναν, εἰ βούλει, κάλει
καὶ Σκύλλαν ἢ Τυρσηγὸν ᾗκησεν πέδον.

Med. 1358-59

Thus, call me by the name of a lioness, if you wish,
and Scylla, who dwells on the Tyrrhenian earth.

This allusion is expertly placed because it heightens the presence of Medea through traditional mythology, because Theseus' stepmother was none other than Medea herself,

²⁵ Deborhun 1999: 428.

who tried to kill Theseus before he left for Crete.²⁶ While Ariadne more closely resembles her cousin than any other character, that resemblance does raise the question about Theseus' own nature and whether Medea's influence has reached him as well.

The second half of the lament displays the Medea-like madness that overtakes Ariadne as her sadness turns into anger. She begs the Eumenides to make Theseus feel the same pain and sorrow he has caused her to experience, the loss of family (*sed quali solam Theseus me mente relinquit/tali mente, deae, funestet seque suosque*, C. 64.200-01). This is the same choice Medea made when she was deciding how she would get revenge on Jason, to bring his family to ruin (δόμον τε πάντα συγγέασ'Ίάσονος/ἔξειμι γαίᾳς, *Med.* 795-96). The parallel Catullus makes with Euripides is clear because both women want the hero to feel the pain that they have caused. The major difference is the identity of the recipients of the murderous intent of Ariadne and Medea. In the *Medea*, the sons of Jason and Medea and his new wife are killed, destroying any hope of a future bloodline for Jason. In C. 64, however, the reverse occurs; Aegeus, the father of Theseus, perishes as the fulfillment of Ariadne's curse. While this could be only because she and Theseus have no children, it could also display the way by which Catullus inserted himself into the epic tradition. His replacement of the death of the future with the death of the past perhaps indicates the rise of his epyllion over his predecessors Apollonius and Euripides.²⁷

This conflation of epic and tragedy in the lament of Ariadne seems to be far more than what Thomas described as "window-reference," which he defined as a close adaptation of one model that is interrupted to refer to the source of that model, causing

²⁶ Tripp 1970: 362; DeBrohun 1999: 429.

²⁷ DeBrohun 2007: "the replacement of Medea's murder of her children with Ariadne's successful prayer for Aegeus' death may be seen as a figure for the tradition at war with itself."

the intermediate work to serve as a “window onto the ultimate source” which is not notable otherwise.²⁸ In terms of these works, C. 64 would be the adaptation of Apollonius’ *Argonautica*, the model, and Euripides’ *Medea*, the source for Apollonius. While Thomas argued his definition persuasively in his article, it does not seem that his idea occurs here because Catullus has mentioned his two predecessors separately, almost dividing his Ariadne into two unique individuals, rather than placing them in conjunction with one another. Though Apollonius’ epic is about the story of Jason and Medea, there is very little, if any, reference to the anger of Medea as seen in Euripides’ play. Therefore, it is more likely that Catullus has melded Roman style and neoteric style poetry into one cohesive poem, thus making a place for himself within the realm of his tradition.

²⁸ Thomas 1986: 188.

CONCLUSION

The paradoxes, parallels, and allusions in C. 64 create a new place for Catullus among the other epic poets and famous storytellers within a new subgenre, the epyllion.¹ C. 64 stands apart from the rest of the Catullan corpus not only because of its length, longer than the rest of his work yet still far shorter than the genre of epos normally presents,² but also because of the Hellenistic nature of the work, which is seen through both the clear and veiled allusions to works of Apollonius and Euripides, the *Argonautica* and the *Medea*.

C. 64 is a poem that both acknowledges Catullus' debt to his predecessors and also revitalizes the old stories through his creative, yet confusing paradoxes, especially those related to the flow of time and the chronology of the stories. Examples of this include the ambiguity of the first ship to sail on the seas, the unclear purpose of the coverlet at the happy wedding, and the true monster of the myth of the Minotaur. It is through paradoxes such as these that Catullus begins to establish his place among both contemporary and earlier poets. By focusing on smaller episodes of epic stories like the *Argonautica* and creating another version of the events, like the meeting of Peleus and Thetis during the adventure of the Argonauts, Catullus composed a story that was entirely his own, causing it to stand apart from the works of other poets.

In addition to the paradoxes, Catullus used many parallels to show how his work is as timeless as those of his predecessors, poems that were already quite old by Catullus'

¹ To the extent it has been identified as such, see Crump 1931.

² Ibid.

time. Through the parallels, which work to unite the stories of Peleus and Ariadne, he has displayed how feelings of love and sorrow, emotions that he very deftly presents in his poems for and about Lesbia, are not contained within one type of story or confined to one specific time period. The burning love that both Peleus and Ariadne experience when they first gaze upon Thetis and Theseus, the sorrow expressed by Aegeus and Ariadne at the sight of Theseus' ship, and the various colors, which connect the palace, the coverlet, and the wedding song of the Fates, all show how these emotions stretch across all times and affect many different kinds of people.

The character of Ariadne presents an extreme, but perhaps an understandable reaction to the situation in which she found herself. Her circumstances, however, are not restricted to her time period or her royal position. Love, betrayal, and sorrow can occur to any social class of any age. Aegeus also displays a powerful reaction to the onslaught of these emotions, which perhaps was the reason Catullus aligned these two characters in his poem. The object of their desire, Theseus, causes both to feel overwhelming sorrow, which is also reflected in the cries of the mothers of the Trojans Achilles is fated to kill. These emotions, love and sorrow, even extend into Catullus' present day, as seen by the crimes and vices which follow the song of the Fates at the end of the poem, showing the perversion of family and marriage. While the poem ends with this feeling of hopelessness, because the gods and mortals no longer interact, perhaps Ariadne's story provides a small window of hope; even after being abandoned, happiness came to her again with her marriage to Bacchus.

Finally, one characteristic of C. 64 is vital to my reading, namely the way that the allusions to Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica* and Euripides' *Medea* come together to

form a subtextual antecedent for the Catullan poem. At first blush, Catullus seems to refer to Apollonius so as to connect C. 64 to that epic work as a source of inspiration. He refers clearly to the Argonauts and the quest for the Golden Fleece; yet, it does not take long to realize that he does so chiefly to highlight the inception of the small episode that will be the focus of the Catullan poem, namely the love of Peleus and Thetis. He inserts the ghostly characters of Jason and Medea into the poem, both of whom are important models for Catullus' Theseus and Ariadne. Beyond this use, the adventure of the Argonauts is passed over to expand upon the wedding story.

The character of Jason in Apollonius' epic is used as the inspiration for Theseus in C. 64. Theseus, however, commits the deed Jason was afraid to do, that is, abandoning the princess who had helped him through the trials presented by her cruel father. Both men are berated by their princess for their fake promises of marriage, used only to persuade Medea and Ariadne to betray their family to help the hero. The other vital character who provides inspiration for C. 64 is Medea, who offers an interesting prototype for Ariadne. They share several interesting characteristics, ranging from burning eyes to the extent to which they go in order to protect their hero to the anger they display towards that hero show. All of these features show how Catullus responded to Apollonius' epic, and also how he intended to make his work more prominent.

Throughout C. 64, Ariadne slowly transforms from an innocent princess, like Medea was in the *Argonautica*, into a frightening and vengeful woman, like Medea of Euripides' *Medea*. Rather than simply referencing the two earlier works in an attempt to acknowledge their influence over his work, Catullus divides the character of Ariadne,

thus weaving together the genres of epic and tragedy, like his contemporary poets might have done.

It is the *Kreuzung der Gattungen*, to use Kroll's now famous *dictum*,¹ i.e. the combination of the genres with an universal message about emotions such as love and sorrow, that has given C. 64 a life outside of the Catullan *libellus*, as it has itself in turn come to influence many other authors, beginning in antiquity with Vergil and Ovid. The emotions displayed by Ariadne in C. 64 are recreated in the character of Dido in Book Four of Virgil's *Aeneid*, as well as in the female characters in Ovid's *Heroides*. Through this expression of understandable emotions and common experiences, Catullus forged a place for his name and style among other poets, with C. 64 serving as the masterpiece of his achievement.

¹ Kroll 1924.

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