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Author(s): R. Sklenář
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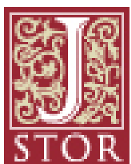

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HOW TO DRESS (FOR) AN EPYLLION: THE FABRICS OF CATULLUS 64

I

The secondary literature on Catullus 64 is replete with discussions that run to monograph length without exhausting the interpretive possibilities of this intricate poem; a comprehensive explication is therefore necessarily beyond the scope of the present study, for which I take as my starting point the central image of the *vestis*, the fabric that covers the marriage bed of Peleus and Thetis. This image, rendered in a sustained ecphrasis, not only dominates the poem by its length, placement, and complexity, it also serves as a metaphor for the poem's compositional technique[1]. The strands of this fabric run out beyond the ecphrasis itself to the very margins of the poem, whose unity is therefore to be found only by following these strands, not in a quest for linear coherence – for linearity and sequential logic are precisely what Catullus defies in order to impart to his epyllion the cohesion of a woven tapestry.

> pulvinar vero divae geniale locatur
> sedibus in mediis, Indo quod dente politum
> tincta tegit roseo conchyli purpura fuco.
> haec vestis priscis hominum variata figuris
> heroum mira virtutes indicat arte. (47–51)

The original meaning of *vestis* is specifically "clothing, garment"; though it extends metaphorically to other types of cloth and covering, it remains, at least in this poem, associated with its semantic origins. At the conclusion of the ecphrasis, the word occurs again:

> talibus amplifice vestis decorata figuris
> pulvinar complexa suo velabat amictu. (265–6)

Catullus here engages in both ring-composition[2] and variation. The language recalls that with which the ecphrasis is introduced[3], but two other textile words are added: *amictus*, also referring in the first instance to garments, and only by transference to other kinds of coverings, and *velabat*, which likewise primarily denotes clothing,

[1] I have been anticipated in part by REES 1994: 86–87, who briefly notes that "textiles provide a theme and structure for the poem" (1996: 86), and by LAIRD 1993 and GAISSER 1995, who develop this theme more extensively. IVERSEN 2001: 257–75 goes so far as to apply the textile metaphor to the entire Catullan corpus.

[2] KLINGNER 1956: 31.

[3] See *inter multos alios* KROLL 1959: 178 (*ad loc.*), SYNDIKUS 1990: 169–70; LAIRD 1993: 24.

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but shares its root with *velum*, "sail." This set of associations is significant, for Catullus has been working on it throughout the ecphrasis; it is very much in play in the description of Ariadne's abandonment:

> quem procul ex alga maestis Minois ocellis
> saxea ut effigies bacchantis prospicit, eheu,
> prospicit et magnis curarum fluctuat undis,
> non flavo retinens subtilem vertice mitram,
> non contecta levi velatum pectus amictu,
> non tereti strophio lactentes vincta papillas,
> omnia quae toto delapsa e corpora passim
> ipsius ante pedes fluctus salis alludebant.
> sed neque tum mitrae neque tum fluitantis amictus
> illa vicem curans toto ex te pectore, Theseu,
> toto animo, tota pendebat perdita mente. (60–70)

Here the *amictus* is Ariadne's dress, which, together with the headband that would normally secure her hair and the *strophium*, the breastband, lies at her feet, a picture of cosmetic neglect that expresses her distraught state[4]. Thus the clothing motif associates itself with the contrasting themes of the ecphrasis and the framing narrative: the coverlet, the *amictus* of the marriage bed, is orderly and arranged, in keeping with the bed's function as symbol of a formal, ceremonious, and orderly union of man and wife and as the locus of that hallowed union's consummation; Ariadne, by contrast, has deserted her family to elope with Theseus[5]. Her dropped and disarranged *amictus* serves a symbolic function analogous (because contrasting) to that of the coverlet, here expressing the dissolution of a union that never was properly sanctified.

Ariadne herself employs the word *vestis* in her address to the absent Theseus:

> si tibi non cordi fuerant conubia nostra,
> saeva quod horrebas prisci praecepta parentis,
> attamen in vestras potuisti ducere sedes,
> quae tibi iucundo famularer serva labore,
> candida permulcens liquidis vestigia lymphis
> purpureave tuum consternens veste cubile. (158–63)

She here alludes directly to the language beginning the ecphrasis. The coverlet which she says she would have been willing to spread over Theseus' bed even as a slave if she could not be his wife has the same color (*purpurea*) as the coverlet on the marriage bed of Peleus and Thetis: thus Ariadne appropriates for this imaginary coverlet the initial description of the coverlet on which she herself is depicted[6], in

[4] As numerous commentators have noted; *see e.g.* KROLL 1959: 153 ad 63.

[5] Catullus refers to Theseus as Ariadne's *coniunx* (123), which ought to mean husband, but it is not at all clear that they were ever married; indeed Ariadne's complaint (139–41) seems to suggest that Theseus promised to marry her but failed to follow through.

[6] GAISSER 1995: 602.

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the process transferring the symbolic significance of the dyed cloth from marriage to slavery – a component of which, one presumes, would be concubinage.

Dyed cloth acquires an entirely different meaning in the other great speech of the ecphrasis, also addressed to Theseus, but face to face by his father Aegeus:

> inde infecta vago suspendam lintea malo,
> nostros ut luctus nostraeque incendia mentis
> carbasus obscurata dicet ferrugine Hibera.
> quod tibi si sancti concesserit incola Itoni,
> quae nostrum genus ac sedes defendere Erechthei
> adnuit, ut tauri respergas sanguine dextram,
> tum vero facito ut memori tibi condita corde
> haec vigeant mandata nec ulla oblitteret aetas,
> ut simul ac nostros invisent lumina colles,
> funestam antennae deponant undique <u>vestem</u>,
> candidaque intorti sustollant <u>vela</u> rudentes,
> quam primum cernens ut laeta gaudia mente
> agnoscam, cum te reducem aetas prospera sistet. (225–37)

Aegeus vows to hang Theseus' ship with sails dyed with *ferrugo*, literally "rust" but, when used of a dye, denoting a color "ranging from reddish-purple to near-black[7]", here probably a blackish purple[8], hence of a color-class at least related to the *purpura* of the two coverlets. This color, however, signifies the death of Theseus; it is the undyed white sails, which he forgets to raise, that signify his safe return from Crete. Those unraised white sails are *vela*, the noun related to *velare*; these sails therefore are verbally linked to Ariadne's dress as well as to the coverlet of the marriage bed and to the garlands with which Chiron decks the forecourt of Peleus' palace when the divine guests arrive (*vestibulum ut molli <u>velatum</u> fronde vireret*, 293). The dyed sail, moreover, is a *funesta vestis*, a garb of mourning, with *vestis* solidifying the connection to both coverlets: and since we are still in the ecphrasis, once again a speaking character on the purple fabric of the marriage-bed's coverlet refers to another purple (or at least purplish) fabric whose *signifié* is utterly different: not only death, but falsehood, since Theseus is not dead, and forgetfulness – the last a characteristic of Theseus that is the temporary undoing of Ariadne and the permanent undoing of Aegeus[9].

Though the white sail is never raised, white cloth makes an important appearance at the marriage banquet:

> qui postquam niveis flexerunt sedibus artus,
> large multiplici constructae sunt dape mensae,
> cum interea <u>infirmo</u> <u>quatientes</u> corpora motu

[7] *OLD* 691, v. sub. *ferrugo* 2.

[8] *vicinus purpurae subnigrae* (Serv. ad *Aen*. 9.582, cited in Kroll 1959: 173 *(ad loc.)*).

[9] Gaisser 1995: 605–06 ("[Aegeus] is trying to read the message inscribed in a woven fabric. Although the message is of his own devising, his misreading of it is inevitable; for through Ariadne's curse and Theseus' forgetfulness the sail no longer has the meaning he assigned to it").

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veridicos Parcae coeperunt edere cantus.
his corpus tremulum complectens undique vestis
candida purpurea talos incinxerat ora
at roseae niveo residebant vertice vittae
aeternumque manus carpebant rite laborem.
laeva colum molli lana retinebat amictum....(303–11)

ante pedes autem candentis mollia lanae
vellera virgati custodibant calathisci. (318–19)

The Parcae are dressed in white, but their robes are bordered with purple at the hem: thus they wear the colors associated with the coverlets, with the unlucky sail raised by Theseus, and with the lucky sail not raised by Theseus; and white (because undyed) is the color of the wool that they spin. For good measure, the presence of both colors on the robes of the Parcae is emphasized by the juxtaposition of *candida* and *purpurea* in 308. Both these colors are now associated with truth-telling, for the Parcae sing a song "which no age afterward will convict of treachery" (*perfidiae quod post nulla arguet aetas,* 322) – treachery being the very charge, *perfide*, with which Ariadne taxes Theseus.

The references to fabric and clothing would seem to describe a process of corruption and rehabilitation, as they become associated first with the hallowed marriage bed, then with abandonment, deceit, and death, then finally with truthful prophecy; and since that truthful prophecy takes the form of an epithalamium, it coincides with a return to the theme of marriage itself. But one must pose the question: can a symbolic association, once established, ever be completely severed? Can the fabric, once stained, ever be washed clean? And what of the sanguinary narrative of the Parcae's song? Inevitably we are confronted with the vexed and oft-revisited issue of the poem's moral stance; indeed, it is precisely the poem's formal devices that effect this confrontation. In order further to explore what the textiles of Catullus 64 may contribute to an understanding of the larger theme of moral decline, I would like to examine some motifs that occur in connection with the poem's *vestes* and *amictus*: they are, to take a word from the Parcae's refrain, *subtegmina*, cross-threads, hence essential to the fabric's integrity.

II

We have seen two contrasting references to actual garments: Ariadne *en déshabillé* and the ceremoniously robed Parcae. This contrast is amplified by references to headgear: Ariadne's hair is unbound, her headband (*mitra:* 63, 68) discarded[10], whereas the Parcae are duly wearing their headbands (*vittae*, 309). Applied to those *vittae* is a color-term, *roseae*, which Catullus also applies to the coverlet,

[10] We never find out what color Ariadne's *mitra* is, or her *amictus* for that matter, but we do know that the *mitra* was a cloth headdress: Tatham 1990: 560.

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itself dyed with *roseo fuco* (49)[11]. The description of Ariadne's unbound hair (63) is preceded by a comparison to a stone statue of a Maenad (61) – that is, to an artistic representation of a Maenad, rather than to a real one[12]. At one level, this further heightens the conceit of the ecphrasis; but there is still an implicit comparison of Ariadne's mental state to Bacchic frenzy: she is *externata*, out of her mind (71, 165). All the more ironic, then, that it is Bacchus himself who comes to rescue her, with a maddened entourage in tow[13]:

> at parte ex alia florens volitabat Iacchus
> cum thiaso Satyrorum et Nysigenis Silenis,
> te quaerens, Ariadna, tuoque incensus amore.
> * * *
> quae tum alacres passim lymphata mente furebant
> euhoe bacchantes, euhoe capita inflectentes.
> harum pars tecta quatiebant cuspide thyrsos.... (251–6)

The identity of these followers of Dionysus is not altogether clear. If the reading of the manuscripts is correct, line 254 begins with *qui*, whose antecedent is the Satyrs and Sileni of line 252; the resulting sense would be "the Satyrs and Sileni who, running hither and thither, then raged with maddened mind, raising the Bacchic cry 'euoe!'". As KROLL pointed out long ago[14], however, *harum* in 256 requires a feminine plural referent, which makes the preceding two lines refer to Maenads. The relative *quae*, BERGK's emendation, would have its antecedent in a missing line. If in fact these are Maenads, then they are live ones as opposed to the stone Maenad to which Ariadne is compared (of course the fact that they are representations of Maenads on the coverlet collapses that distinction[15]), and, though there is no mention of their hair, we can presume that their hair would be unbound and flying, especially in light of a later reference to them[16]. Even if the transmitted text is correct, we still have an apparent rehabilitation of Bacchic frenzy[17], indeed of madness itself, since *furores* describes both Ariadne's emotions as she watches the departure of Theseus (54) and the madness of love which the speaker charges Cupid with arousing in human hearts (94; the context is Ariadne falling in love with Theseus[18]). To complicate matters further, there is an implicit connection be-

[11] KONSTAN (1977: 40) observes that *fucus* "was employed very commonly...to mean 'deceit' or 'dissimulation,' from the fact that the red dye which the plant produced could be used to conceal the quality or purity of wool. Line 49...plainly conveys a sense that the ivory couch is covered by royal drapery tinged with deceit."

[12] LAIRD 1993: 21.

[13] LAIRD 1993: 220–1, GAISSER 1995: 594.

[14] KROLL 1959: 176 (*ad loc.*)

[15] For an excellent treatment of this issue, see BARTELS 2004: 33.

[16] *saepe vagus Liber Parnasi vertice summo / Thyiadas effusis evantis crinibus egit*, 390–1, discussed *infra*.

[17] *Contra* KONSTAN 1977: 61–2.

[18] KONSTAN 1977: 58.

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tween these Bacchic revelers and the Parcae in the verb *quatio*, which refers to the shaking of the thyrsus at 256 and to the physical doddering of the aged Parcae at 305. Unbound hair appears as well in the song of the Parcae itself, with decidedly un-epithalamia associations:

illius egregias virtutes claraque facta
saepe fatebuntur gnatorum in funere matres,
cum incultum cano solvent a vertice crinem
putridaque infirmis variabunt pectora palmis.
currite ducentes subtegmina, currite, fusi. (348–52)

Here, the unbound hair is a sign of mourning on the part of the mothers whose sons Achilles will slay in battle. That such butchery should constitute *egregiae virtutes* and *clara facta* is fully in keeping with a strict construction of the heroic code, but the emphasis in this passage shifts from Achilles (*illius*) to the survivors of his victims, whose funereal dishevelment acknowledges Achilles' greatness by making the price of it only too clear[19]. These distraught mothers are also lexically linked to the Parcae who narrate their plight: the hands with which they beat their breasts are *infirmae*, as is the movement of the Parcae. Moreover, the act of beating their breasts is represented by *variabunt*, *variare* here meaning "to alter the color of" (sc. by bruising); the same verb describes the embroidery on the coverlet. There, it signifies ornament; here, disfigurement, and this reversal of polarities runs counter to the poem's ostensibly positive treatment of the heroic age. Unbound hair, moreover, makes a final appearance in the poem's concluding *laudatio temporis acti*:

saepe vagus Liber Parnasi vertice summo
Thyiadas effusis evantis crinibus egit (390–1).

In this rehabilitated Bacchic context, the flyaway hair of the Maenads is a feature of that glorious heroic age whose passing the speaker laments. Yet this is an image which in the same poem has stood for lovesickness, mourning, and Dionysiac ecstasy; if anything, it is its ambivalence that fits it so aptly to the poem's treatment of the legendary past.

That treatment is further problematized by the association of the central textile image with the sail of Theseus' ship in *funestam vestem*. We have already noted the effect of *funestam*: it links the *vestis* and its color to a grim episode in the career of Theseus, and the view of Theseus in general that emerges from the ecphrasis casts doubt on the *virtutes heroum* which the coverlet purports to depict[20]. On the whole, the poem appears to begin with an idealized view of the heroic age (the

[19] The definitive discussion of the negative characterization of Achilles is now Bartels 2004: 57–60.

[20] Konstan's argument (1977: 39–49) for the "dark" reading of *virtus* in Catullus 64 is definitive: "an ironic and rather bitter judgment on such 'virtues'" (1977: 40, on *virtutes heroum* as exemplified by Theseus); "savage brutality" (1977: 47, on the *virtutes* of Achilles). See also Bartels 2004: 41 ("die heroum... virtutes lassen sich kaum finden").

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makarismos of lines 22–24)[21], darken that view in the ecphrasis with an unflattering portrait of Theseus, brighten it again with a return to the banquet of Peleus and Thetis, darken it again with the bloody description of the career of Achilles, then rehabilitate it once for all in the moralizing final lines, whose inclusion of epic warfare among the glories of the past

saepe in letifero belli certamine Mavors
aut rapidi Tritonis era aut Rhamnusia virgo
armatas hominum est praesens hortata catervas (394–6)

seems to be instructing us how to interpret the Parcae's description of the career of Achilles. But *funestam vestem* also associates the poem's textile imagery with seafaring in general, which in turn associates it with the very beginning of the poem. There, the voyage of the Argo is specifically described as the first sea-voyage ever,

Peliaco quondam prognatae vertice pinus
dicuntur liquidas Neptuni nasse per undas
Phasidos ad fluctus et fines Aeeteos,
cum lecti iuvenes, Argivae robora pubis,
auratam optantes Colchis avertere pellem
ausi sunt vada salsa cita decurrere puppi,
caerula verrentes abiegnis aequora palmis.
diva quibus retinens in summis urbibus arces
ipsa levi fecit volitantem flamine currum,
pinea coniungens inflexae texta carinae.
illa rudem cursu prima imbuit Amphitriten (1–11),

and we must pause to consider what effect this mythological reference has on the view we are being invited to take of the heroic age. Long before Horace wrote of *impiae rates* in *C.* 1.3, the first sailor as a symbol of mankind's moral decline had become a topos. Lucretius, in his description of primitive man, states explicitly: *improba navigii ratio tum caeca iacebat* (*DRN* 5.1006); Hesiod observes that those who act justly do not sail, because the earth nourishes them· οὐδ' ἐπὶ νηῶν / νίσσονται, καρπὸν δὲ φέρει ζείδωρος ἄρουρα (*Op.* 236–37). Does Catullus follow this tradition? That depends in part upon how one interprets the verb *ausi sunt* in line 6. *Audeo* and its derivatives *audax* and *audacia* are notoriously ambivalent, connoting either courage or rashness[22]; Horace, in what may be an interpretation of this passage of Catullus, follows his reference to *impiae rates* with a negative use of *audax* (*C.* 1.3.25–26). Moreover, there is a serious problem of mythic chronology: our first image of Ariadne on the coverlet has her observing the departure of Theseus and his fleet (52–53). Of necessity, the coverlet depicts events anterior

[21] Though Bartels (2004: 41) notes cogently that the ability of *compello* to serve as a term of reproach renders even the *makarismos* ambivalent.

[22] Bramble (1970: 36) remarks of this passage that "this inescapably conjured up shades of impiety."

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to the framing narrative, just as the song of the Parcae depicts subsequent events, though all three chronological levels belong to the heroic age. The Argonauts could hardly have been the first sailors after Ariadne had already endured the stereotypical fate of being abandoned by one[23]. There are only three ways to solve this problem: the first is to assume an instance of uncharacteristic sloppiness in an otherwise meticulously constructed poem[24]; the second is to tinker with the text, which is admittedly corrupt: of the three derivatives of the lost Verona manuscript (V)[25] on which our text of Catullus mainly depends, two (GR) read *primam*, while the third (O) reads *post eam* with a correction in the margin to *proram*, which K. QUINN adopts[26], along with *Amphitrite*, another correction in the margin of O: the meaning would be "she (Minerva) introduced the ship, inexperienced in sailing, to the sea." Most editors, however, adopt the reading *prima* (from a *codex recentior*) while retaining the accusative *Amphitriten*, on which the three main manuscripts agree (though they use the Latin ending, and R has the mistranscription *amphitricem*), which gives the meaning "this ship was the first to imbue inexperienced Amphitrite with voyaging." QUINN himself, however, concedes that this seems to be what Ovid thought the Catullan passage meant[27]:

prima malas docuit mirantibus aequoris undis
  Peliaco pinus vertice caesa vias,
quae concurrentis inter temeraria cautes
  conspicuam fulvo vellere vexit ovem.
o utinam, ne quis remo freta longa moveret,
  Argo funestas pressa bibisset aquas! (*Am.* 2.11.1–6)

The similarities between the Ovidian and the Catullan passage are unmistakable; clearly Ovid is responding to Catullus[28]. If QUINN is right in accepting *proram*, then we need to make two assumptions scarcely less farfetched than that of Catullan sloppiness: the first is that the corruption infected the Catullan textual tradition so

[23] QUINN 1973: 302 ad 11, 310 ad 52–53; GAISSER 1995: 593. For a detailed investigation of the problem, see WEBER 1983, who surveys the conflicting traditions in the sources at Catullus' disposal and rightly concludes that the contradiction is deliberate.

[24] Rightly rejected by QUINN 1973: 310 ad 52–53: "...the sort of careless slip which seems incredible at the very point of juncture of inner and outer story." SYNDIKUS 1990: 138–139 accounts for the discrepancy on the grounds that "[man behandelte] solche chronologischen Fragen im Mythos mit sehr leichter Hand oder spielte sogar damit." QUINN's observation forecloses any possibility of "mit sehr leichter Hand" here. "Spielte damit" is perhaps not inappropriate, so long as we acknowledge that this is *ein sehr ernstes Spiel*.

[25] I employ the standard sigla: G=Parisinus lat. 14137; R=Vaticanus Ottobonianus lat. 1829; O=Oxoniensis Bodleianus Canonicianus classicus lat. 30; V=fons communis.

[26] QUINN 1973: 302 ad 11. QUINN cites the reading to BAEHRENS, but priority belongs rightly to ELLIS: see ELLIS 1876: 231 (ad 11). KONSTAN (1977: 15) also adopts *proram*.

[27] QUINN 1973: 302 ad 11.

[28] THOMAS 1982: 163–163. Despite the intertextual concerns of his inquiry, THOMAS does not address the textual problem in line 11.

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early as to degrade the text used by Ovid barely half a century later; the second is that Ovid followed this supposedly defective text with sovereign disregard for the chronological problem. If anything, however, the Ovidian passage is evidence in favor of the standard reading: Ovid read the Catullan passage to mean that the Argo was the first ship because, in fact, that is what the passage said all along, and accordingly the discrepancy between the outer and inner stories on the question of nautical history must stand. The third and likeliest possibility, admirably formulated by J. GAISSER, is that the poem deliberately splits its narrative persona, thereby rendering it contradictory and unreliable, and inviting us to distrust its *makarismos* of a heroic age as to whose chronology it is in dispute with itself[29].

This fragmentation becomes most evident when the narrator interrupts the ecphrasis just before Ariadne's great speech: *sed quid ego a primo digressus carmine plura / commemorem* (116–17). As virtually every commentator has noted, the *primum carmen* here can only refer to the inner narrative of Ariadne; plainly it cannot be *primum* in relation to the *carmen* into which it is incorporated. The narrator marks the latter *carmen* self-referentially as well in his *makarismos* of the heroic age: *vos ego saepe, meo vos carmine compellabo* (24, addressing the heroes of old). With *primum carmen*, the narrator indulges in an easily refutable pretense that he is composing independently of the framing narrative[30]. At no point does he claim for his own *carmen* the truthfulness that he claims for the Song of the Parcae, which he designates with the same word, *carmen*:

haec tum clarisona vellentes vellera voce
talia divino fuderunt carmine fata,
carmine, perfidiae quod post nulla arguet aetas. (320–2)

As used of his own composition, *carmen* can be translated as either "song" or "poem," and carries both meanings; the Song of the Parcae has the additional meaning "prophecy"[31] – additional because it carries all three meanings: it is a prophecy of the career of Achilles; it is a song (*clarisona voce fuderunt*); and it is a poetic composition in the Hellenistic style[32]. And yet the narrator's claim for the song's

[29] GAISSER 1995: 592–93, 608. GAISSER's analysis of the chronological inconcinnity in Catullus 64 is the subtlest and most perceptive to date. Like THOMAS, however, she is silent on the textual problem in line 11: "if it was really the *Argo* that first sailed the sea, as Catullus assured us (*illa rudem cursu prima imbuit Amphitriten*), where did Theseus get his ship?" (1995: 592). I agree that the *codex recentior* reports the correct reading (*prima*), but the textual problem is a real one and needs to be addressed in view of its implications for the interpretation of the poem.

[30] Cf. 7 2004: 47: "Indem der Erzähler [sein eigenwilliges] Verhalten betont, bringt er es dem Leser vollends zu Bewußtsein und verhält sich geradezu in provozierender Weise anders, als man es von einem (epischen) Erzähler erwartet."

[31] *OLD* 1c, v. sub. *carmen*. *Carmen* can have the meaning "prophecy" all by itself, but here that sense is reinforced by *fata*. RUIZ SÁNCHEZ 1997: 84 rightly comments that the term *carmen* imparts "magical connotations" to the Parcae's song.

[32] See *inter alios* THOMSON 1997: 429 (*ad loc.*)

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inerrancy has to be regarded in light of the fact that we are entirely dependent on his authority for it[33], since it too, like the ecphrasis, is an incorporated *carmen*.

Since Catullus 64 is overtly concerned with poetry itself, there can be no question but that it employs its textile imagery as a self-referential metaphor. Textile manufacture as a metaphor for poetic composition is common enough[34], and the self-referential use of weaving imagery on the part of a "literary" as opposed to improvising "oral" poet goes back at least as far as Pindar: ἀνδράσιν αἰχματαῖσι πλέκων / ποικίλον ὕμνον (*Ol.* 6.86–87)[35]. As A. LAIRD observes, Catullus 64 explicitly foregrounds the textile metaphor in the Song of the Parcae, who not only spin as they sing, but address their spindles in the refrain of their song, thus employing their handiwork as a poetic device[36]. The merging of the textile imagery that has been prevalent throughout the poem with the very act of poetic composition prompts LAIRD to suggest astutely that the entire poem is a πλοκή, an act of weaving or plaiting[37]; I would go even further and maintain that *vestis variata* characterizes the poem as a whole. *Variata*, in fact, virtually duplicates the sense of Pindar's ποικίλον, an adjective regularly used to describe multicolored or embroidered textiles: in Homer, it is a traditional epithet of πέπλος, "piece of cloth[38]"; Pindar applies it to ὕμνος, "song", but with the textile metaphor very much intact in πλέκων. Thus the Song of the Parcae erases the very distinction between *carmen* and *vestis* that the other incorporated poem, the ecphrasis, attempted to establish with *primum carmen*. The discrepancies between the ecphrasis and the outer narrative, therefore, are features of the poem's ποικιλία in the textile sense: in attempting to convert the ecphrasis into an independent *carmen*, the speaker adopts a separate narrative persona who follows a mythic tradition different from that of the framing narrative (in which the Argo is the first ship), affects to ignore the framing narrative altogether with *primum carmen*, then affects to ignore its own conceit of describing a piece of embroidery by including two impossibly long

[33] Cf. GAISSER 1995: 611: "the song of the Parcae has both no authority at all (only Catullus makes them sing) and all the authority in the world (they sing truly)."

[34] GAISSER 1995: 580 n.2. See especially the stimulating discussion of NAGY 1996: 59–86.

[35] SNYDER 1981: 95. NAGY 1996: 64–66 notes that weaving and sewing are contrasting archaic (in the case of weaving, Indo-European) metaphors for the composition of songs, and maintains that sewing is the more complex of the two, as it involves the stitching together of fabrics already woven. It is interesting, however, that later "literary" aesthetic doctrine employs the old weaving metaphor to represent, as in Catullus 64, poetry of self-conscious and deliberate internal complexity – perhaps a polemical adaptation and revaluation of the archaic association between "woven" words and deceit (on negative and deceitful weaving, see NAGY 1996: 64–65 n. 23).

[36] LAIRD 1993: 28. See also GAISSER 1995: 611.

[37] LAIRD 1993: 28.

[38] *LSJ* II v. sub. ποικίλος; NAGY 1996: 65.

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speeches, only to return to that conceit with the brief narrative of the approach of Bacchus[39].

There is an additional metaphor associated with the Song of the Parcae: that of pouring (321), itself a recurrent theme in poem 64, where the verb *fundo* and its compounds bring together inherently disparate contexts. It first occurs in the introduction to Ariadne's speech (124–25), to which the introduction to the Song of the Parcae unmistakably alludes:

saepe illam perhibent ardenti corde furentem
clarisonas imo fudisse e pectore voces (124–5).

The Parcae thus deliver their truth-telling prophecy with the same vocal quality, marked by the unusual compound adjective *clarisonus*, with which Ariadne utters her complaint[40] and, most important for the contrast, her curse. *Fundo*, moreover, is used as a ring-composition device, since Ariadne's speech is immediately followed by *has postquam maesto profudit pectore voces* (202)[41]. The verb is not found again until the introduction to the Song of the Parcae; hence, its function is unquestionably, at least in part, to connect those two portions of the poem. The Parcae themselves then appropriate that verb for a completely different context:

adveniet fausto cum sidere coniunx,
quae tibi flexanimo mentem perfundat amore (329–30).

Once again we have a textual problem: one of our three main manuscripts (O) omits verse 330 entirely; since the other two retain it, we can assume that it was in V. As transmitted, however, it reads unhappily as "to drench your mind's love with the soul having been deflected (*quae tibi flexo animo mentis perfundat amorem*)." If MURET's beautiful emendation, adopted by all major editions, has in fact recovered what Catullus actually wrote, then the Parcae are applying the verb *fundo* to Thetis, the divine wife who will come "to drench Peleus's thoughts with soul-swaying love", in clear contrast to Ariadne's *furores*, which afflict her not only in her abandonment (54, 124) but also in the very act of falling in love with Theseus (94–98). The verb makes its last appearance in the narrator's invective against the corruption of his own day, in close proximity to the *effusis crinibus* of the last reference to Dionysus and his Bacchantes:

sed postquam tellus scelere est imbuta nefando
iustitiamque omnes cupida de mente fugarunt,
perfudere manus fraterno sanguine fratres,
destitit exstinctos gnatus lugere parentes,
optavit genitor primaevi funera nati,

[39] GAISSER 1995: 608. *Contra* BARTELS 2004: 19, who offers the radical proposition that the Ariadne episode is not meant to be read as part of the ecphrasis at all.

[40] REES 1994: 83 (*inter alios*).

[41] The echo is noted as well by KONSTAN 1977: 59 and REES 1994: 84. On the verbal links between Ariadne's lament and the song of the Parcae, see also CURRAN 1969: 82.

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liber ut innuptae poteretur flore novercae,
ignaro mater substernens se impia nato
impia non verita est divos scelerare penates.
omnia fanda nefanda malo permixta furore
iustificam nobis mentem avertere deorum.
quare nec talis dignantur visere coetus,
nec se contingi patiuntur lumine claro (397–408).

Here the same verb used by the Parcae, *perfundo*, now refers to the drenching of hands with fratricidal blood[42] – a semantic twist for which none of the previous occurrences of *fundo* have prepared us. *Furore* in 405, moreover, is transposed from Ariadne and the Bacchantes to the narrator's contemporaries, its erotic associations altered from infatuation and abandonment to perversion (the incest of 403–404). The madness that has been Ariadne's infatuation, the emotional chaos of her abandonment, and the ecstasy of the Bacchantes accompanying Dionysus on his way to rescue her is now the moral and semiotic chaos of the narrator's own day, in which the commingling of all things right and wrong – literally, speakable and unspeakable – has alienated the gods, in contrast to that happier time when divine guests attended a marriage that itself united a human with a divine spouse.

And yet this *nimis optatum tempus* saw its share not only of bloodshed, but also of deceit and treachery, which the incorporated narratives unstintingly depict[43]. Furthermore, the appearance of the same lexical and thematic markers at all levels of narration exemplifies the phenomenon of *omnia fanda nefanda permixta*, the dissolution of rules for what can be said where. The recurrence of motifs in framing and embedded narrative alike, as well as their association with widely disparate contexts, is likewise the most vivid feature of poem 64's ποικιλία[44]: thus the artisan of this most textile-like of poems elevates semantic displacement to a principle of composition. For the legendary past, he wishfully postulates a moral and semantic clarity which his depictions of that past have already undermined[45]; subtract from his own era its promiscuity of signification, and he loses precisely that which has made possible his own glorious and variegated tapestry.

[42] PUTNAM 1961: 195.

[43] Noted as well by CURRAN 1969: 187. For this reason I must cordially disagree with BARTELS' (2004: 50) somewhat dismissive treatment of the epilogue ("fast nebenbei scheint der Erzähler mit dem Topos des moralischen Verfalls zu spielen"). BARTELS is surely right (ibid.) to note that the narrator depicts the immorality of his own day as "eine deutliche Steigerung" by comparison to that of the age of heroes, but the contrast underscores the fact that the seeds of decline had already been planted then.

[44] KLINGNER 1956: 78–81 discusses ποικιλία as a stylistic feature of Catullus 64, but oddly elects not to relate it to the metaphor of poem-as-textile.

[45] It should now be evident that KONSTAN's restriction of this theme to "Catullus' judgment on Rome" (1977: 83) is too confining. CURRAN 1969 is much more nuanced.

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The University of Tennessee, Knoxville R. SKLENÁŘ

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