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Catullus and the tragedy of Ariadne

Notice biographique

Gail Trimble is currently completing her time as a graduate student at Corpus Christi College, Oxford. Her doctoral thesis is the first part of a planned full-scale commentary on Catullus 64 ; she also works on other Late Republican and Augustan Latin poetry and is particularly interested in issues of voice and genre. From October 2010 she will be a Junior Research Fellow at Trinity College, Cambridge.

Résumés

Les allusions bien connues aux prologues tragiques dans le proème du *Carmen* 64 de Catulle soulèvent des questions sur les relations génériques entre tragédie, épopée et épyllion, relations qui encouragent le lecteur du poème à voir l'ekphrasis d'Ariane tout entière comme une tragédie. Telle que Catulle la présente, l'histoire d'Ariane possède un prologue qui situe la scène, une rhesis centrale, un climax tragique et un *deus ex machina ;* elle a aussi sa propre audience sous la forme des Thessaliens invités au mariage. Le *didaskalos* de cette tragédie est le narrateur du *Carmen* 64, apparemment une version du poète Catulle lui-même. Plusieurs des poèmes personnels de Catulle se lisent déjà comme des fragments de tirades tragiques, sans présenter toutefois une figure équivalente qui les organise en un tout cohérent. L'article va plus loin que les travaux précédents dans l'analyse de la raison pour laquelle l'Ariane présentée dans l'ekphrasis tragique est un parallèle si proche du Catulle dont nous entendons la voix dans sa poésie personnelle.

The well-known allusions to tragic prologues in the proem to Catullus 64 raise questions about the generic relationships between tragedy, epic and epyllion which encourage the reader of the poem to see the entire ecphrasis of Ariadne as a tragedy. As Catullus presents it, Ariadne's story has a scene-setting prologue, central *rhesis*, tragic climax and *deus ex machina ;* it also has its own audience in

the shape of the Thessalian wedding-guests. The *didaskalos* of this tragedy of Ariadne is the narrator of 64, apparently a version of the poet Catullus himself. Yet some of Catullus' personal poems read like fragments of tragic speech with no equivalent figure to organise them into a coherent whole. The article goes further than previous work in exploring why the Ariadne presented in this ecphrastic tragedy is such a close parallel to the Catullus whose voice we hear in the personal poetry.

Mots-clés : Catulle, *Carmen* 64, Ariane, ekphrasis tragique, voix du poète.
Keywords : Catullus, *Carmen* 64, Ariadne, ecphrastic tragedy, poet's voice.

Catullus 64 contains allusions to both Greek and Roman tragedy which are well known and widely studied. Particularly clear is the presence of Euripides' *Medea* and its adaptation by Ennius, both in the proem and in the Medea-like figure of Ariadne. But these allusions are not just isolated borrowings, nor is it simply that the story of Medea has an important, exemplary role to play in both the main stories in the poem, though that is of course important[1]. Rather, the points where intertextuality with tragic texts is particularly obvious should alert the reader to the wider generic fusion that is going on in this famously rich and complex poem. It is possible to see the entire ecphrasis of Ariadne as a tragedy embedded into Catullus' short epic – and such an approach may help us to appreciate better the structure and unity of this inner story, which often seems unpredictable or disjointed, and, as an ecphrasis, highly problematic. And I would also like to suggest a way in which this understanding of poem 64 as containing a complete tragedy, with Ariadne as its heroine, may give us insight into the relationship between this Ariadne and the « Catullus » whose voice we seem to hear in his shorter, personal poems.

I would like to begin by looking carefully at the questions of genre raised in Catullus 64's opening lines.

> *Peliaco quondam prognatae uertice pinus*
> *dicuntur liquidas Neptuni nasse per undas*

[1] See *e. g.* PERROTTA 1931, AVALLONE 1953, KONSTAN 1977 p. 67-74, CLARE 1996, DEBROHUN 2007.

Phasidos ad fluctus et fines Aeetaeos,
cum lecti iuuenes, Argiuae robora pubis,
auratam optantes Colchis auertere pellem
ausi sunt uada salsa cita decurrere puppi,
caerula uerrentes abiegnis aequora palmis.
diua quibus retinens in summis urbibus arces
ipsa leui fecit uolitantem flamine currum,
pinea coniungens inflexae texta carinae.
illa rudem cursu prima imbuit Amphitriten ;
quae simul ac rostro uentosum proscidit aequor
tortaque remigio spumis incanuit unda…
(Cat. 64.1-13)

It is widely known that the openings of both Euripides' and Ennius' *Medea*s are allusively present here, as well as the opening of Apollonius' *Argonautica*[2]. These allusions mean that the proem is misleading in subject matter : Catullus suggests that this will be a poem about Jason and Medea at *some* stage in their relationship before revealing at line 19 that the main subject is actually the love of Peleus and Thetis – and then of course dramatically changing direction again with the ecphrasis. But this opening is equally confusing in its *generic* signals, since it exploits the conventions of both epic and tragic beginnings more generally as well as alluding to specific examples of both. The initial description of the Argo could potentially be *either* a tragic prologue, which would tend to set the scene by narrating past events up to the present, dramatic moment, *or* the proem to an epic, which would summarise what will be narrated in the text that follows. In his article on Catullus 64 and the Argonautica, Clare explains how the allusions to the Ennian and Euripidean *Medea* prologues in lines 1-7 of Catullus' poem initially suggest the tragic type, but 8-11 then return to the beginning of the Argonautic story – the building of the ship – and therefore invite a reinterpretation of 1-7 as a foreshadowing epic summary[3]. Moreover, tragic and epic openings typically presuppose very different roles for the speaker : in tragedy, emotionally involved with a current situation, and, at least if human, with limits to his or her knowledge about it ; in epic, narrating a past story from a distanced, generally more

[2] On this intertextual network see esp. TRAINA 1972, THOMAS 1982, ZETZEL 1983, VOGT-SPIRA 2000, DEBROHUN 2007.
[3] CLARE 1996, p. 62-65.

objective and probably omniscient viewpoint[4]. This difference is very clearly marked in the different opening speech-acts of Euripides' and Ennius' texts on the one hand, Catullus' on the other. The tragic Nurse wishes that the story of Medea had never started :

utinam ne in nemore Pelio securibus
caesa accidisset abiegna ad terram trabes
(Enn. *Med*. CIII J 208-9)

Catullus 64 begins by evoking the content of this wish, the trees being felled to build the Argo, but then *dicuntur*, the « Alexandrian footnote[5] », indicates that this is, after all, the distanced indirect statement of a learned, self-conscious epic narrator. However, it is in the prologue, particularly when it is a monologue, that « tragedy comes closest to having a « narrator[6] » and in Ennius' version the Nurse suddenly seems to gain her own epic narratorial distance as she etymologises the name of the ship :

nauis […]
[…] *quae nunc nominantur nomine*
Argo, quia Argiui in ea delecti uiri […]
(Enn. *Med*. CIII J 210-212)

Through its mixture of allusions, then, Catullus' opening invites its readers to reflect in some depth on the historical interrelationships between the genres of epic and tragedy. We might see an acknowledgement of Ennius as a writer of both tragedy and epic, especially since within a few lines Catullus will also allude to his *Annals*[7]. Or, thinking of Medea, we might be led to consider the influence of Euripides on Hellenistic poetry – notably Apollonius – and of both on republican Roman tragedy, especially in the portrayal of women undergoing pathological love[8]. Accius in his Medea play used both Apollonius and Sophocles' *Scythians*[9]. But we might also start to ponder the relationship to tragedy of the epyllion form itself, in its length and focus on a single episode, for instance, and to wonder if

[4] RACE 1992, p. 13-15.
[5] Terminology introduced by ROSS 1975, p. 78 ; on this feature see in particular HINDS 1998, p. 1-3.
[6] SEGAL 1992, p. 85.
[7] THOMAS 1982, p. 157 and 160-161 traces six reminiscences of Enn. *Ann*. 376, 377-8 Sk in lines 6-13 here.
[8] *Cf.* ZETZEL 1983, p. 262-264.
[9] DELAGE 1935.

64, like 63, ought to be understood as belonging to the Hellenistic tradition of short narrative poems incorporating tragic situations, emotions, and plot-structures[10].

It is with all these issues in mind that I would like to turn to the inner story of Catullus 64, which extends from line 50 to line 266 – more than half the poem. The following basic summary may help to articulate its structure :

50-1	The *uestis* is introduced
52-75	Ariadne on the beach (1)
76-115	Events on Crete (flashback) : Theseus goes to Crete ; Ariadne falls in love with him ; Theseus defeats the Minotaur
116-23	Ariadne's journey to Dia
124-31	Ariadne on the beach (2)
132-201	Ariadne's speech
202-48	Aegeus scene (including flashback) : Jupiter confirms Ariadne's curse ; Aegeus' instructions to Theseus about the white and black sails ; Theseus' return to Athens
249-50	Ariadne on the beach (3)
251-64	Arrival of Bacchus

We conventionally refer to this whole section as « the ecphrasis », and it is formally introduced as one – as a description of the picture of Ariadne embroidered on the coverlet of Peleus' and Thetis' marriage bed[11]. But it does not seem to follow the familiar conventions of poetic descriptions of works of art in the tradition of Homer's description of Achilles' shield[12].

[10] Such Hellenistic poems include [Theoc.] 26 (death of Pentheus) and Call. *Hymn.* 5 (blinding of Tiresias) and 6 (*hubris* and punishment of Erysichthon). Callimachus' *Hecale* resembles an Attic tragedy in its length (over 1000 lines), Atticism of setting, local details and dialectal elements, role of Theseus, and eventual aetiology of an Athenian deme ; perhaps also in its plot-structure (see AMBÜHL 2004, p. 26-28). On Catullus 63 in relation to this tradition see esp. HARRISON 2005 and HARDER 2005.

[11] Cat. 64.47-51.

[12] Hom. *Il*. 18.478-607. The bibliography on ecphrasis in ancient literature is vast ; for particularly useful background see esp. FRIEDLÄNDER 1912, p. 1-103, FOWLER 1991, BECKER 1995. For the unconventionality of the ecphrasis in Catullus 64 see esp. LAIRD 1993, LANDOLFI 1998, ELSNER 2007, p. 68-73.

There are no repeated references to the artistic medium or the skill of the artist, no remarks to the reader about the lifelikeness of the work[13]. This is an ecphrasis full of movement and sound, from *fluentisono … litore Diae* at the beginning (line 52) to the pandemonium of Bacchus' entourage at the end (lines 251-264). The complexity of emotion mentioned, too, goes beyond what could be inferred simply from looking at a picture, and is described with self-consciously verbal devices such as simile, metaphor and apostrophe[14]. The main figure in the picture utters a lengthy speech (lines 132-201). And large parts of the story depend on references to spoken or literary tradition such as *perhibent* and *ferunt*, so that we wonder whether we are supposed to imagine the scenes narrated in these sections as appearing on the coverlet at all[15]. I am not suggesting that an account of the ecphrasis as a tragedy can or should explain all this away – Catullus is undoubtedly engaged in a subtle exploration of the differences between visual and verbal representation, and the main cause of all these difficulties in reading the ecphrasis *as* an ecphrasis is the powerful, capricious narrator that he has created. But I do think that a literary model, rather than one from visual art, is likely to help us understand how this « disobedient[16] », impossible ecphrasis is successful as a unified piece of text : and I think that the model of tragedy offers a great deal to readers who have been encouraged by the proem to think in tragic terms.

In these terms, then, there is a sort of prologue to the tragedy of Ariadne before the protagonist speaks. I have already mentioned how tragedy comes closest to having a « narrator » in its prologue ; here, it is the narrator who explains where the scene is set, naming the place immediately as the prologue-speakers of, for instance, Euripides' *Bacchae* and *Helen* do, and pointing out features of the landscape – here, the waves, the wind and the seaweed – like the *paedagogus* in Sophocles' *Electra*, or Odysseus in *Philoctetes*[17]. The main

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[13] Contrast *e. g.* Homer's repeated ἐν δ᾽ ἐτίθει or ἐν δὲ ... ποίησε « he made » (*Il.* 18.490, 541 etc.), imitated by the Virgilian *fecerat … fecerat et …* (*Aen*. 8.628, 630 etc.) ; *Il.* 18.548-9 where the narrator remarks how similar to ploughed earth that part of the shield looks χρυσείη περ ἐοῦσα ; Theoc. 1.42 φαίης κεν, Virg. *Aen*. 8.691 *credas*.

[14] *e. g.* 61 *saxea ut effigies bacchantis*, 62 *magnis curarum fluctuat undis*, 71 *a misera*.

[15] 76 *perhibent*, introducing the flashback to events on Crete ; 117 *commemorem*, covering Ariadne's desparture from home ; 124 *perhibent*, on which the narration of Ariadne's speech depends ; 212 *ferunt*, followed by the Aegeus scene. Only at 251 *at parte ex alia* is direct description apparently resumed.

[16] Laird's term for an ecphrasis that does not « [limit] itself to the description of what can be consistently visualized » (LAIRD 1993, p. 19).

[17] 52 *namque fluentisono prospectans litore Diae*, 57 *harena*, 59 *uentosae … procellae*, 60 *alga* etc. ; Eur. *Bacch*. 1 ἥκω Διὸς παῖς τήνδε Θηβαίαν χθόνα, *Hel*. 1 Νείλου μὲν αἵδε καλλιπάρθενοι ῥοαί, Soph. *El*. 1-14 ἀγορὰ Λύκειος ... Ἥρας ὁ κλεινὸς ναός etc., Soph. *Phil*. 1-2 ἀκτὴ μὲν ἥδε τῆς περιῤῥύτου χθονὸς | Λήμνου, βροτοῖς ἄστιπτος οὐδ᾽ οἰκουμένη.

effect of the first two panels of the ecphrasis, the initial description of Ariadne on the beach and the flashback to her falling in love with Theseus on Crete, is to build up expectations about how the central character will react to the situation in which she finds herself : the explanation of how she reached this point is reminiscent of Medea's Nurse narrating Medea's adventures from Colchis to Corinth, or Deianira in *Trachiniae* explaining how she came to be the wife of Heracles[18], while the descriptions of her physical dishevelment and emotional turmoil resemble the vignettes with which tragic characters are often described as they enter[19]. On a larger scale, the deferral of Ariadne's speech to the third « scene » of the inner story evokes those tragedies in which, although the attention of the characters on stage is focused on the current state of the protagonist, whose reaction to the disaster he or she has recently suffered is eagerly anticipated, his or her actual entrance is considerably delayed, and makes a greater impact because of this. Euripides' Medea fits this pattern, speaking confidently on stage after she has been heard crying out wildly from inside the house just as Ariadne begins her speech after uttering wordless cries[20] ; but Ariadne as presented here is perhaps even more like Sophocles' Ajax, her initial unspeaking appearance in a state of shocked disbelief contrasting with her later angry and articulate account of her situation as his appearance in the prologue, still deluded in his madness, does with his eventual emergence from his tent in the full awareness that he has slaughtered animals instead of the Greek leaders[21].

Catullus' ecphrasis is unique in including extended direct speech, and as might be expected, it is within Ariadne's speech that allusions to particular tragedies are most strongly marked. Her situation – betrayed, abandoned, lamenting the reversal of her fortunes and vituperating the person who has caused it – is of course in general terms a tragic one, and

[18] Eur. *Med*. 1-48, Soph. *Trach*. 1-48.

[19] Cat. 64.63-72. Compare the physical descriptions of a character who has just entered the stage at *e. g.* Aesch. *Choeph*. 10-12 τί χρῆμα λεύσσω ; τίς ποθ᾽ ἥδ᾽ ὁμήγυρις | στείχει γυναικῶν φάρεσιν μελαγχίμοις | πρέπουσα ;, Enn. *Alex*. fr. XXV J *o lux Troiae, germane Hector,* | *quid ita cum tuo lacerate corpore miser ?* | *aut qui te sic respectantibus tractauere nobis ?*, and the emotional speculation of *e. g.* Soph. *Ant*. 626-31 ὅδε μὴν Αἵμων, παίδων τῶν σῶν | νέατον γέννημ᾽· ἆρ᾽ ἀχνύμενος | τῆς μελλογάμου τάλιδον ἥκει | μόρον Ἀντιγόνης, | ἁπάτης λεχέως ὑπεραλγῶν ;, Eur. *Hipp.* 170-5 ἀλλ᾽ ἥδε τροφὸς γεραιὰ πρὸ θυρῶν | τήνδε κομίζους᾽ ἔξω μελάθρων. | στυγνὸν δ᾽οφρύων νέφος αὐξάνεται. | τί ποτ᾽ ἐστὶ μαθεῖν ἔραται ψυχή, | τί δεδήληται | δέμας ἀλλόχροον βασιλείας.

[20] Eur. *Med*. 214 *sqq*. contrasting with 96-97, 111-114 etc. ; Ariadne utters *clarisonas … uoces* at Cat. 64.125 and then speaks coherently, 132-201.

[21] Contrast Cat. 64.52-75, esp. 55 *necdum etiam sese quae uisit uisere credit* with the scene in which Ariadne speaks, 124-201 ; compare Ajax at Soph. *Aj.* 91-117 (prologue, still mad), 333 *sqq*. (lyric cries), 430 *sqq*. (spoken trimeters, sane).

more specifically puts her into a long line of exploited tragic heroines. Of these, the most important is Medea, to whose story readers of Catullus 64 have already been alerted by the proem. She and Ariadne are very obviously examples of the same mythic type, the king's daughter who falls in love with a foreign stranger and helps him in his quest, betraying her father and leaving home with the hero, who then ungratefully deserts her. A heroine in this sort of situation utters accusations of betrayal and in particular of perfidy, with reference to the hero's former deceptive words ; a description of how she saved him ; and references to the pitiable situation in which he has now left her. All this can be traced in Euripides[22]. We can also see Ariadne's close relation to Ennius' Medea in the indignant series of rhetorical questions with which she asks whether she is now meant to return to the places she has betrayed :

Cat. 64.177-183

nam quo me referam ? quali spe perdita nitor ?
Idaeosne petam montes ? at gurgite lato
discernens ponti truculentum diuidit aequor.
an patris auxilium sperem ? quemne ipsa reliqui 180
respersum iuuenem fraterna caede secuta ?
coniugis an fido consoler memet amore ?
quine fugit lentos incuruans gurgite remos ?

Compare Ennius' heroine, as well as her Euripidean original :

Enn. *Med*. fr. CIV J

quo nunc me uortam ? quod iter incipiam ingredi ?
domum paternamne ? anne ad Peliae filias ?

Eur. *Med*. 502-505

νῦν ποῖ τράπωμαι; πότερα πρὸς πατρὸς δόμους,
οὕς σοὶ προδοῦσα καὶ πάτραν ἀφικόμην ;
ἢ πρὸς ταλαίνας Πελιάδας; καλῶς γ᾽ ἂν οὖν
δέξαιντό μ᾽ οἴκοις ὧν πατέρα κατέκτανον.

This rhetoric also evokes Ennius' Andromache, who uses it to lament her state as an exile : it leads into a vivid description of her wrecked home in stabbing phrases following each other in asyndeton :

[22] *e. g.* Cat. 64.132-142 esp. *blanda promissa … uoce* with Eur. *Med*. 492-498 ὅρκων δὲ φρούδη πίστις … ; Cat. 64.149-151 *certe ego te … eripui* with Eur. *Med*. 476-487 ἔσωσά σ᾽ … ; Cat. 64.152-153 and 177-186 with Eur. *Med*. 509-515.

Enn. *Andr*. XXVII J
quid petam praesidi aut exequar ? quoue nunc
auxilio exili aut fugae freta sim ?
arce et urbe orba sum. quo accedam ? quo applicem ?
cui nec arae patriae domi stant, fractae et disiectae iacent,
fana flamma deflagrata, tosti †alii† stant parietes,
deformati atque abiete crispa.

Similarly, Ariadne follows up her desperate questions with an account of her surroundings whose syntax and alliteration give it a strong tragic flavour :

Cat. 64.184-7
praeterea nullo colitur sola insula tecto,
nec patet egressus pelagi cingentibus undis.
nulla fugae ratio, nulla spes : omnia muta,
omnia sunt deserta, ostentant omnia letum.

The other tragic aspects of Ariadne's speech are well known[23], so I will not spend time on them here except briefly to note that it is not only tragic heroines that she evokes : she also addresses her natural surroundings as Medea's Nurse does in both Euripides and Ennius[24], and in her accusation of Theseus as born of Scylla or a *leaena* – the word is borrowed from Greek – she in fact echoes Jason's reproaches to Medea the child-murderer, not hers to him[25].

At the end of Ariadne's speech, however, tragedy is again present not on the level of style or rhetoric but as a crucial influence on the structure of this inner story. Curses are frequently important in tragedy because they are one way of effecting retribution, which is often a key element of tragic plot-structure. A tragic curse may be sent by the gods on to a whole dynasty, with the effects felt over generations. But for a human curse uttered at moment of emotional climax at the end of a scene, by a figure who is outwardly weak but enabled by means of this curse to become unexpectedly powerful, we might compare

[23] In addition to the works mentioned under n. 1 above and the standard commentaries, see in particular SYNDIKUS 1990, p. 154-156, AUHAGEN 2000, GOLDBERG 2005, p. 134-138.
[24] Cat. 64.164-5, Eur. *Med*. 56-8, Enn. *Med*. CVI J.
[25] Cat. 64.154-7 *quaenam te genuit sola sub rupe leaena … quae Scylla rapax …* ; Eur. *Med*. 1342-3 λέαιναν, οὐ γυναῖκα, τῆς Τυρσηνίδος | Σκύλλης ἔχουσαν ἀγριωτέραν φύσιν. For the background to this accusation of inhuman parentage see esp. KLINGNER 1956, p. 84-86, and on further implications of Catullus' allusion DEBROHUN 1999, p. 427-429.

Oedipus' curse on Polynices in the *Oedipus at Colonus*[26]. Ariadne's curse is even more closely comparable, however, to Theseus' curse on Hippolytus in Euripides' play ; there, as in Catullus, the fulfilment of the curse occurs within the time-frame of the text, and forms the final tragic climax[27]. Theseus in fact hears how his curse caused his son's death in a messenger speech ; here, similarly, Ariadne's utterance of her curse is immediately followed by the narration of its effects, as the narrator tells us how Jupiter answered Ariadne's prayer and caused Theseus to forget to change his sails from black to white, thereby leading his father Aegeus to kill himself[28]. A messenger-speech, like a tragic prologue, seems an appropriate model for narrator-text when a tragedy is incorporated into in a narrative genre[29] ; and the links with messenger-speeches are particularly close here, since the scene involving Aegeus is a narrative passage set somewhere other than our main tragic location, the island of Dia, and, of course, ends with a horrible death. Moreover, at the end of the Aegeus scene there is a brief recurrence of the image of Ariadne, still standing on the island gazing out to sea :

Cat. 64.246-250 *sic funesta domus ingressus tecta paterna*
morte ferox Theseus, qualem Minoidi luctum
obtulerat mente immemori, talem ipse recepit.
quae tum prospectans cedentem maesta carinam
multiplices animo uoluebat saucia curas. 250

This brings us back to the « staged » time and place like the comment offered at the end of a messenger-speech by one of the characters who has listened to it ; this gives the strange impression that Ariadne has somehow heard the account of how her revenge was effected, like Theseus in the Hippolytus, or Medea hearing how her poisoned gifts have killed Jason's new bride[30].

This, however, is not quite the end of Catullus' tragedy of Ariadne : it has a sudden and appropriately tragic resolution as Bacchus arrives in precisely the manner of a *deus ex*

[26] Soph. *O.C.* 1383-1396.
[27] Eur. *Hipp.* 887-890 (Theseus utters the curse), 1154 *sqq.* (messenger scene narrating Hippolytus' death).
[28] Cat. 64.202-248.
[29] Or, alternatively, messenger-speeches in tragedy can be understood as a way of incorporating into drama possibly « epic » narrative : see BARRETT 2002.
[30] Both Theseus and Medea ask for details (Eur. *Hipp.* 1169-1172, *Med*. 1132-1135), then remain on stage to listen to the respective messenger-speeches and utter responses (*Hipp.* 1257-1260, *Med*. 1236-1250).

machina[31]. He is, in fact, flying – *uolitabat*, line 251 – and Braga therefore compares his arrival to the appearance of Medea in her chariot at the end of Euripides' play[32] ; but more generally, his role as rescuer of the protagonist is typical of a *deus ex machina* (we might think of Heracles in *Philoctetes*), and he will also make Ariadne into a goddess, as the Dioscuri promise immortality for Euripides' Helen or Dionysus in the *Bacchae* for Cadmus and Harmonia[33]. Most important, however, is that although it seems that on the *uestis* this scene is visible next to that of the distraught and abandoned Ariadne[34], in the poem it does not « appear » until the end, and only as a brief coda, or *exodos*, staged by the poet. A linear structure has been created out of the flat field of a picture – as must necessarily happen in any ecphrasis – and here, as I have tried to show, it is the structure of a tragedy. The tragic model helps us to understand the movement from initial description of the protagonist through explanatory flashback to central *rhesis*, climactic curse, messenger-speech and *deus ex machina* as a coherent narrative, not an unpredictable series of « digressions » from the description of a picture ; but it is a narrative that also gains coherence and unity by repeatedly returning to the figure of Ariadne on Dia. The way that Ariadne is framed at one moment of her life by her appearance on the coverlet allows Catullus to give the impression that, like a tragedy, her story has unity of time and place ; and I have been arguing that as he presents it it has unity of action too. It certainly has a strongly marked beginning, middle and end, as Aristotle would demand[35] ; it is worth remarking that in a poem whose narrative movement is famously so surprising, there are no real digressions to break up the inner story of Ariadne, no shift of focus out to the wedding of Peleus and Thetis and then in to the ecphrasis again.

The tragedy of Ariadne, then, is complete and satisfying, and we hear how it satisfies its internal audience :

Cat. 64.265-8	*talibus amplifice uestis decorata figuris*	265
	puluinar complexa suo uelabat amictu.	

[31] Cat. 64.251-64.
[32] BRAGA 1950, p. 178.
[33] Soph. *Phil*. 1409 *sqq*., Eur. *Hel*. 1666-1669, *Bacch*. 1330-1339.
[34] This is presumably what is implied by *ex parte alia* (see commentators *ad loc*.) ; *cf*. n. 15 above.
[35] Ar. *Poet*. 1450b 26-7. The idea of the three kinds of tragic unity owes more to later codification and to observation of tragic practice than to Aristotle, but see also *Poet*. 1449b 12-13 (unity of time), 1451a 16-35 (unity of action).

quae postquam cupide spectando Thessala pubes
expleta est, sanctis coepit decedere diuis.

This audience is a large, public group identified by a national name (*Thessala*), like the people of a Greek city, or of Rome, assembling to watch a tragedy ; it is a model very unlike that of a single reader reading a written poem, or even a small group of friends hearing a private recitation. There is also something of a theatrical image in the suggestion that the Thessalians gather around the bed, where a single figure is presented to them, standing in fact *in … harena*, line 57 ; the arena, perhaps, another Roman theatre of distress ? Barchiesi has highlighted references to *scaenae* in *Aeneid* 1 as similar markers for the tragedy of Dido[36]. Moreover, while I am not going to claim that there is any reference to the Aristotelian tragic emotions in lines 267-268[37], these spectators clearly had some sort of aesthetic desire which this work of art has fulfilled, and while we could think of this in terms of viewing a static piece of visual art, *postquam* and *expleta est* give a strong sense that rather than wandering individually around Peleus' palace inspecting its various splendours, these wedding-guests have all stopped and *spent time* watching Ariadne together, just as for us, the readers, the description of the palace has been interrupted while the tragedy of Ariadne is played out in the text. The experience of these Thessalian spectators, who cannot literally have heard Ariadne's lament, seems to have taken on characteristics of our experience as readers who could not literally see her. The *audience* in a *theatre*, of course, both listens and sees (*audio*, θεάομαι). The viewer of a picture only sees ; a reader may be constructed by the text as more of a listener or more of a viewer, and here, by being presented with an ecphrasis of a picture which impossibly contains speech, the reader is brought into something approaching the dual position of the theatrical audience of tragedy. And in fact, this partly happens through the appearance in Ariadne's speech of the standard theatrical irony – more typical of tragedy than comedy – that a character is unheard when she is really addressing a large number of

[36] BARCHIESI 1993, p. 352-353 « Aeneas arrives at an unknown harbour, described by the narrator (the epic voice) as a *scaena* (*Aen.* 1.164). Later, he visits Carthage, and notices among the buildings going up a very unusual sight in heroic times : foundations for theatres, theatrical scenery in construction (1.427 *sqq. lata theatris | fundamenta … scaenis decorate alta futuris*). It almost seems as if the Carthaginians are setting the stage for Punic tragedies to be performed. » *Cf.* also HARRISON 1989, who sees Venus' appearance to Aeneas in *Aeneid* 1 (wearing *cothurni*) as the prologue to the Dido-tragedy.

[37] « pity and fear » (Ar. *Poet*. 1449b 27, 1453b).

people in the audience, and alone when she is really sharing the theatrical space with them[38]. When Ariadne complains that she cannot be heard, we may wonder whether this is because she is a picture, or because she is subject to theatrical convention.

One question that might be raised at this point is whether there could have been an actual Greek or Roman tragedy involving Ariadne that could have inspired Catullus. Here it is difficult to go beyond speculation, since Catullus' is the first extended literary treatment of Ariadne to survive, although there are references to her in Homer and Hesiod as well as Apollonius[39], and her abandonment by Theseus and rescue by Dionysus are a frequent subject of vase-painting and wall-painting in the ancient world[40]. But although there is no evidence beyond the ascription of the title *Theseus* to Sophocles or Euripides for Ariadne's appearance in a tragedy, it is certainly possible, particularly with this analysis of Catullus 64 in mind, to imagine one with the scene set on Dia – it might be rather like the *Prometheus Bound*, with the trapped protagonist interacting with local divinities, as in fact happens in Strauss-Hofmannsthal's *Ariadne auf Naxos*[41]. And while I have argued that in Catullus' story of Ariadne there is a strong sense of the structure of a classical tragedy, there is also the possibility that this monody-dominated narrative might be imitating Hellenistic solo tragic performances as well[42] : these certainly seem relevant to the way Catullus presents Attis in 63[43]. It is even easier to imagine a solo virtuoso performance of Ariadne, perhaps with a part for Dionysus too, as a private entertainment – rather like the Ariadne and Dionysus at the end of Xenophon's *Symposium*, though that performance is clearly a wordless dance[44].

However, I would like to close my discussion by considering a different sort of issue raised by my account of the tragedy of Ariadne, and that is the effect it may have on our reading of Catullus' personal poetry. Scholars are familiar with the fact that certain themes and images appear both in the shorter poems and in Ariadne's speech. Biographical criticism

[38] Cat. 64.164 *sqq*. *sed quid ego ignaris nequiquam conquerar auris …* (see n. 24 above), 184 *nullo colitur sola insula tecto*, 187 *omnia sunt deserta*.
[39] Hom. *Il*. 18.590-592, *Od*. 11.321-325 ; Hes. *Theog*. 947-949, frr. 147, 298 M—W.
[40] See *e. g.* WEBSTER 1966, EISNER 1977, DEROUX 1986, GALLO 1986.
[41] In the opera (1916) Ariadne is joined on the island by three nymphs, « Naiad », « Dryad », and « Echo ».
[42] On these see EASTERLING 1997, p. 220.
[43] See n. 10 above.
[44] Xen. *Symp.* 9.2-7.

talks in terms of Catullus writing his own experiences of betrayal into the figure of Ariadne[45], with *ferox Theseus* as the heartless Lesbia ; so his focus on *fides*, for instance, is reflected in her *perfide*[46] ; his assertion that a woman's words to her lover should be written on the wind and water in her declaration that because Theseus' promises are being torn apart by the winds no woman should believe any man[47] ; his bitter contrasts between present and past in her *at non haec quondam blanda promissa dedisti | uoce mihi*[48]. And against this background it is easy to read the fragmentary poem 60, with its references to the lioness and Scylla as possible mothers of the addressee and its accusation of inhuman hardheartedness, as Catullus addressing Lesbia[49]. However, one can also think more formally about the similarities between the utterances of Catullus' Ariadne and the « Catullus » of the personal poetry. Firstly, Ariadne is soliloquising : she is not involved in an *agon* as tragic characters in this sort of accusatory vein usually are. Catullus too is not involved in a real debate, because there is no answer from Lesbia, just as in 64 Theseus' voice is never heard – Catullus makes various tendentious claims about what Lesbia says or has said, even claims that she is « always talking » but he never quotes her words[50]. He too seems to be talking into a void, heard or « overheard » by an audience, his readers, but not, it seems, by Lesbia herself. A poem like 8 gives the impression that when he attempts to address the *puella* he eventually realises this, and, just as Ariadne comes to her senses – *sed quid ego ignaris nequiquam conquerar auris* – has to turn back to addressing himself – *at tu, Catulle, destinatus obdura*[51]. Ariadne is also, as I have mentioned, a relatively weak character, particularly in contrast with the Medea she evokes : alone on her island, she cannot get at Theseus to take revenge on him by poison or child-murder. When she does then achieve revenge, she does it not through her own witchcraft or violence but, by means of her curse, through her speech itself. And it is words

[45] *e. g.* PUTNAM 1961, p. 167, 170, 171 « In a word, poem 64 shows Catullus writing of himself … With the present disguised under symbolic forms, it is true autobiography … Catullus is very much a part of Ariadne … Ariadne is the Catullus to whom all is clear. »

[46] Compare Cat. 64.132-133 *sicine me patriis auectam, perfide, ab aris | perfide, deserto liquisti in litore, Theseu ?* and 182 *coniugis an fido consoler memet amore ?* with *fides* at Cat. 76.3, 87.3.

[47] Cat. 64.143-148 with Cat. 70.

[48] Cat. 64.139-140 ; *cf.* also 143 *nunc iam nulla uiro iuranti femina credat* and compare Cat. 8.3 *fulsere quondam candidi tibi soles*, 9 *nunc iam illa non uult* and Cat. 72.1 *dicebas quondam solum te nosse Catullum*, 5 *nunc te cognoui*.

[49] *e. g.* WEINREICH 1959. This is complicated, of course, by the fact that this evokes Jason (rather than Medea) in Eur. *Med*. (see above, p. 8 and n. 25) when the voice of the personal « Catullus » is also linked to Medea via Ariadne. On the fragmentary nature of poem 60 and its lack of addressee see esp. SKINNER 1981, p. 72-74.

[50] Cat. 7.1 *quaeris*, 72.1 *dicebas quondam*, 83.1 *Lesbia mi praesente uiro mala plurima dicit*, 6 *uritur et loquitur*, 92.1-2 *Lesbia mi dicit semper male nec tacet umquam | de me*.

[51] Cat. 64.164, 8.19.

too which Catullus uses against Lesbia. The appeal to the gods in poem 76 does indeed sound rather like Ariadne's[52], but more interesting is how Catullus uses his poems themselves. We know from *adeste, hendecasyllabi*, for instance[53], or the *truces … iambos* of poem 36, that they can be powerful attacking weapons as invective ought to be, and we find the use of words against Lesbia explicitly articulated in poem 11. Furius and Aurelius are not told to go and attack her physically : instead Catullus' instruction is *pauca nuntiate meae puellae | non bona dicta*[54]. The *non bona dicta* seem to consist in the last two stanzas of the poem, which as an indictment of Lesbia have had their effect on Catullus' readers at least : a divorce *per nuntium*, possibly (according to Mayer's identification)[55], but also a curse. The optative subjunctive, the alliterative pair linked by *–que*, and the use of *suus* link Catullus' *cum suis uiuat ualeatque moechis* to Ariadne's final words, *funestet seque suosque*[56], and in fact, perhaps this is part of the reason why poem 11 feels so closural : it is the closest Catullus gets to a final act of retribution.

And that, of course, is also the problem. As I have argued, one of the things that makes the Ariadne section in 64 seem so much like a tragedy is its sense of structured wholeness, of emotional seriousness displayed and then resolved : hence, perhaps, the spectators' satisfaction. But there is no narrator who can link together Catullus' personal poems and tell us that poem 11 had its desired effect, as the narrator of 64 does as soon as Ariadne's speech is over. Instead, in Catullus' personal poetry we just seem to have isolated excerpts from a narrative, messy, jumbled, and unresolved, without a tragic climax. Reading Catullus' short poems feels, in fact, rather like reading fragments of tragedy, like the ones of Ennius that we can see alluded to in poem 64. Just like the items in a collection of the fragmentary remains of an ancient tragedian, Catullus' « fragments » are scraps of speech implying a context and a speaker : they challenge us to interpret them and fit them together, but, as modern scholarship on the shorter poems is now more comfortable with admitting, their repetitions and inconsistencies mean that we can never arrive at a final, complete

[52] For an interpretation of this see HENRY 1950-1951, p. 52-56.
[53] Cat. 42.1.
[54] Cat. 11.15-16.
[55] MAYER 1983.
[56] Cat. 11.17, 64.201.

reconstruction[57]. Does this mean, then, that as readers of the shorter poems we miss out on the sort of satisfaction experienced by the Thessalian audience of the tragedy of Ariadne ? Perhaps it does, and perhaps the contrast between, on the one hand, this stable appreciation of tragic unity and resolution, and, on the other, the constantly shifting reactions elicited by a reading of the personal poetry, helps us to see how different and daring a project the Catullus of the short poems is engaged in. Rather than the closed understanding of a completed aesthetic artefact, Catullus' fragments may offer an unresolvable uncertainty that is poignantly realistic.

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[57] See for instance JANAN 1994 and, with an excellent survey of the history of scholarly controversy on this question, SKINNER 2007.

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