

SOUNDING OUT ECPHRASIS: ART AND TEXT IN CATULLUS 64

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The term *ecphrasis* in ancient doctrine denoted any poetic or rhetorical description, including descriptions of landscape (*topothesia*), buildings, battles, and storms.¹ In recent critical idiom it has been narrowed to refer specifically to literary descriptions of visual works of art.² This critical focus indicates the interest of the problem of comparing the two media of literature and the visual arts. The great benefit of considering 'ecphrasis' in the modern sense is that it forces us to confront both the nature of the visual artistic medium and that of the verbal medium describing it.

A variety of critical strategies have emerged to approach ecphrasis as it is now understood.³

(i) There is the exploration of the relationship between a literary text and any *actual* artefact it describes.⁴ This approach seems to me to be flawed by its 'essentialization' and prioritization of the artwork over the literary text, even though that artwork is as much of a literary construct as anything else mentioned or described in the text. (ii) The 'typological' approach examines relationships between ecphrases in different genres and ecphrasis *as a genre*.⁵ (iii) The symbolic reading of ecphrasis considers connections between themes of the ecphrases with those of the narrative enclosing them. The Shield of Aeneas in particular has attracted this kind of interpretation. Another range of concerns, pertaining to the relation between ecphrasis and narrative, has been surveyed by D. P. Fowler.⁶

In contrast to the emphases of these approaches, I wish to concentrate specifically on the comparison between visual art and literature raised by ecphrasis. I will consider how one text, Catullus 64, itself exposes and explores the different natures of the two media. The first section (I) seeks to offer some means of classifying ecphrases. I will then consider the question of speech in ecphrasis and show how radically Catullus 64 departs from its literary precedents. The central part of this discussion (II) will show in detail how some specific devices in the poem draw attention to a comparison of visual and verbal representation. A brief conclusion (III) will consider the implications this study of Catullus 64 has for an understanding of ecphrasis in general.

I

With the relatively constricted notion of ecphrasis adopted here — ecphrasis as description of a work of art — a major problem arises. What does it mean to 'describe a picture'? There is a difference between my 'describing' Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne* (a known painting to which my words can be seen to refer) and my 'describing' a fictional picture, which is a complete product of my imagination. In the imaginary ecphrasis, the so-called 'picture' is utterly dependent on my words for its existence. This distinction between 'factual' and 'fictional'

¹ I would like to thank Sandrine Dubel, Denis Feeney, Don P. Fowler, Tony Woodman and the Editor, who carefully read earlier versions of this piece, for a number of very helpful comments, criticisms and suggestions. I have also benefited from conversations with Mark Edwards, Edith Hall, and David West.

² Here *ecphrasis* will be italicized when the term is used in the ancient sense. On conceptions of *ecphrasis* in Greek and Latin rhetoric and poetry, see C. S. Baldwin, *Ancient Rhetoric and Poetics* (1924), 203; Glanville Downey, 'Ecphrasis', in *Reallexicon* (iv) (1959), 922–43; R. Heinze, *Virgils epische Technik* (3rd edn, 1915), 396; G. Kennedy, *Greek Rhetoric under the Christian Emperors* (1983); Lucian, *Quomodo historia scribenda est* 57; Horace, *Ars Poetica* 1–19; Quintilian iv.3.12–13. The Servian corpus on *Aeneid* x.653–5 offers ancient views of *ecphrasis* / *descriptio* and its relation to narrative or poetic discourse in general.

³ These principal concerns are listed by G. Ravenna, 'L'ecphrasis poetica di opere d'arte in Latino: Temi e

problemi', in *Quaderni dell'Istituto Filologica Latina Padova* 3 (1974), 1–52.

⁴ See e.g. H. Jucker, *Vom Verhältnis der Römer zur bildenden Kunst der Griechen* (1950); F. Klingner, 'Catullus Peleus-Epos', *Studien zur griechischen und römischen Literatur* (1956), 156–224.

⁵ See P. Friedländer's introduction to *Joannes von Gaza und Paulus Silentiarius* (1912); Ravenna, op. cit. (n. 3), and S. Goldhill, 'Reading, seeing, meaning: the poetics of Hellenistic ecphrasis', in the forthcoming C.U.P. volume on Greek art and texts edited by Osborne and Goldhill.

⁶ D. P. Fowler, 'Narrate or describe: the problem of ecphrasis', *JRS* 81 (1991), 25–35. (I will provide some account of Roman views of that relation in J. Elsner (ed.), *Art and Text in Roman Culture*.) Fowler and Ravenna provide ample bibliography on *ecphrasis*/ecphrasis respectively. Additional bibliography on ecphrasis in later literature can be found in *Comparative Criticism — A Yearbook* 4 (1982) and M. Krieger, *Ekphrasis* (1992).

ecphrasis is important for understanding literary ecphrasis.⁷ Literary ecphrasis is a feature of language, which constitutes rather than describes. Although this view may be in line with current theoretical fashion, it is by no means a result of contemporary influences alone. In 1874, Sir Robert Phillimore, annotating his translation of Lessing's *Laocoon*, argued along very similar lines:⁸

What we call 'poetical pictures' the Ancients called 'phantasies', as we may remember in Longinus. And what we call the Illusion, the deceit of a picture, they called the 'energy'. . . I much wish that modern treatises on the art of poetry had made use of the term energy, and had altogether avoided the word picture. We should have been spared a number of half-true rules, whose principal foundation is the analogy of a term arbitrarily employed. No man would confine poetical phantasies within the limits of a material picture; but as soon as people began to call phantasies 'poetical pictures' the foundation of the error was laid.

Phillimore is alerting us to the confusion that can be caused by applying to images in poetry terms which belong to discussion of the visual arts. 'Modern treatises' of our own day have fared little better than those in Phillimore's time. Misuse of the word 'picture' and vague use of the word 'image' have led to confusion between factual and fictional ecphrasis.¹⁰ Critics of Catullus 64 alone provide many good instances of this error when they claim that Catullus poorly describes a picture, forgets he is describing a picture, or that Catullus is not describing a picture at all.¹¹ Attempts made by other critics to carve up the ecphrasis into those bits which do describe the picture and those which do not, derive from the same kind of misconception.¹² All these views seem to suggest that Catullus' fictional ecphrasis has far more to do with visual artworks than it does with language and literature. Ariadne's frequent appearances in surviving Roman wall painting have probably led to the misconception: it is often a fault of classicists to insist on pinning literature down to known facts and artefacts, giving little credit to poetic imagination.¹³

Failure to recognize a second distinction between what I shall call 'obedient' and 'disobedient' ecphrasis has perhaps had a more important role in accounting for this confusion. *Obedient* ecphrasis limits itself to the description of what can be consistently visualized. An ideal example might be the description of the triangle in Plato's *Meno*: from the words of the dialogue we can visualize precisely, even actually construct, the image that Socrates wants us to recognize. Factual ecphrases like journalistic descriptions of visual artworks aspire towards 'obedience', though only in cases of simple designs can this really be achieved. *Disobedient* ecphrasis, on the other hand, breaks free from the discipline of the imagined object and offers less opportunity for it to be consistently visualized or translated adequately into an actual work of visual art. This distinction is especially useful for considering ecphrases in literature, since most of our examples will be 'fictional' anyway.

Most fictional ecphrases, like Homer's Shield for example, stand at some point in between the two poles of obedience and disobedience, but they are usually nearer to one or the

⁷ Words like 'factual' and 'fictional' can be hazardously anachronistic in discussion of ancient texts and categories: see C. Gill and T. P. Wiseman (eds), *Lies and Fiction in the Ancient World* (1993). The terms here serve only to distinguish between ecphrases which present works of art otherwise known and attested, and those (the majority of literary ecphrases) which do not.

⁸ Sir Robert Phillimore, *Laocoon — with Preface and Notes* (1874), 144. The third Earl of Shaftesbury remarked in 1711: 'Comparison and parallel run between painting and poetry because of the *pictoribus atque poetis* etc. and the *ut pictura poesis* almost ever absurd and at best constrained, lame, or defective.' B. Rand (ed.), *Second Characters* (1914), 141.

⁹ It seems that Phillimore here means *enargeia* — 'vividness'. *Enargeia* and *energeia* were confused textually or associated conceptually in ancient as well as later times: Longinus does not use the term ἐνέργεια, but ἐνάργεια is discussed in *De Sublimitate* 21.8. For ἐνέργεια, see Aristotle, *Rhetoric* III.11 (1411 b 31).

¹⁰ P. N. Furbank, *Reflections on the Word 'Image'* (1970), *passim* argues this case.

¹¹ Examples of these misapprehensions: 'Catullus may have been thinking of a particular representation of the Ariadne story in art', C. J. Fordyce (ed.), *Catullus* (1961), 273n.; 'Bacchus comes in with his rowdy throng, seeking the love of Ariadne. Once more all is young, vigorous, full of joy. Perhaps this is the scene Catullus meant originally to have described on the coverlet', M. C. J. Putnam, 'The art of Catullus 64', *H.S.C.P.* 65 (1961), 165–206; cf. R. Jenkyns, 'Catullus and the idea of a masterpiece', *Three Classical Poets* (1982), 122 and 137.

¹² See e.g. G. Pasquali, 'Il carmen 64 di Catullo', *S.I.F.C.* (1920), 1–23, at 19; C. Muller's commentary (1836) suggests only the contents of 50–75 and 251–64 are represented on the *vestis*, the rest being digression.

¹³ For discussions of Ariadne's appearance in ancient art, see T. B. L. Webster, 'The myth of Ariadne from Homer to Catullus', *G&R* 13 (1966), 21–31. A. Maiuri, *Roman Painting* (1953) notes Ariadne was the most popular subject to be depicted in Pompeian art. Perseus was the next most frequent, and then, significantly, figures of Maenads (cf. 64.60, 64.251).

other pole.¹⁴ The Shield of Achilles in the end inclines towards obedience — we could just about visualize how it would be.¹⁵ And the notion that it is a magic shield might help us imagine it, even if there is some temporal sequence and movement in the scenes it contains — perhaps we might conceive of it as a kind of mosaic of little video scenes.

Catullus' ecphrasis of Ariadne, on the other hand, is as good an example as one could get of *disobedient* ecphrasis. It has often been noted how difficult, or rather, impossible it would be to render on an actual tapestry many of its features.¹⁶ Problems are posed by digressions and flashbacks, by descriptions of thought and movement; and on other levels by audible features of the text: apostrophe, onomatopoeia and alliteration.¹⁷ In any attempt to visualize the described artwork, the very notion of a narrative that begins at one point of time (Ariadne's discovery of Theseus' desertion) in the story and ends at another (her rescue by Bacchus) is problematic. Furthermore this passage of ecphrasis is exceptional in Classical literature, in that it contains and quotes directly the speeches of some characters mentioned in it. The two speeches are lengthy (Ariadne is given some seventy verses at 132–201; the words of Aegeus who only appears in an explanatory flashback take up 215–37) and together they make up almost half of this section of the poem. Direct speech is not to be found in the narration of any other ancient ecphrasis.

The incongruity which arises from this feature, at least, hardly needs to be stated: we do not expect to hear a direct rendition of a speech given by a character who features in what we are told is a purely pictorial work of art. Indeed this is the only case in Classical literature in which this occurs.¹⁸ Static visual media, whether painting, embroidery or sculpture cannot have precise equivalents for all these facilities — contemporary comic strips with captions and balloons are one exception.¹⁹

We can go beyond providing a rather common-sense theoretical excursus on ecphrasis and then mechanically applying it to the one in Catullus 64, labelling it fictional and disobedient. A consideration of the questions outlined above may clarify our appreciation of ecphrases of artworks in general, but I think that applied to Catullus' description of the tapestry in particular, the speculations are especially rewarding. The ecphrasis in 64 invites and highlights comparison between verbal and pictorial communication, even more than ecphrases usually do. Sound, movement and temporality are characteristically open to verbal narrative, but closed to visual media.²⁰ These elements, often suppressed in ecphrasis, are brought to prominence in Catullus 64.

Other devices which alert us to the differences between visual and verbal media are metaliterary: the poem draws attention to its own medium of expression. For example, there is the simile at 61–2 which likens Ariadne to a statue of a Maenad, a few verses after she has been introduced:

saxea ut effigies bacchantis, prospicit, eheu,
prospicit . . .

Like a rocky effigy of a raving bacchant, she looks out, alas, she looks out . . .

It has been noted how this comparison well conveys Ariadne's mental state (and state of undress).²¹ The foreshadowing by this likeness of the assumption of Ariadne by Bacchus

¹⁴ The comparison is only to the other ecphrases extant in Greek and Latin literature.

¹⁵ This is partly because Homer provides specific details of the shield's physical design, e.g. 481–2, 519, 549, 574, 607. For similar effects in the ecphrasis of Aeneas' shield, see K. W. Gransden, *Virgil. Aeneid Book 8* (1976), 162–3 and D. West, 'Cernere erat . . . The Shield of Aeneas', in S. J. Harrison (ed.), *Oxford Readings in Virgil's Aeneid* (1990), 295–304.

¹⁶ See remarks quoted in n. 11 above.

¹⁷ For a consideration of how far visual narratives can accommodate conventions of linguistic narrative, particularly 'flash-forwards' and 'flashbacks' see N. Goodman, 'Twisted tales', in W. G. T. Mitchell (ed.), *On Narrative* (1981), 99–115. S. Chatman, 'What novels can do that films can't', *idem*, 117–36 is also helpful.

¹⁸ I am not counting discursive expositions indirectly prompted by imagined works of art like the narrative of

Daphnis and Chloe or Eumolpus' verses on the painting of the capture of Troy in Petronius, *Satyricon* 89.

¹⁹ Gransden, *op. cit.* (n. 15), 162 notes, 'Only on a frieze, like the Bayeux tapestry, can the viewer's experience be controlled as the poet's controls the reader's.' More to the point, the Bayeux tapestry combines a written text with the pictorial one.

²⁰ Lessing, *Laocoon* (Section 18) emphasizes the distinction prescriptively: succession of time is the domain of the poet, as space is the domain of the painter. On the relation this question has to the distinction between narrative time and story time, see Fowler, *op. cit.* (n. 6), 29 and G. Genette, *Narrative Discourse* (trans. Lewin, 1980), 33f. and 93f.

²¹ W. Kroll, *Catull* (1922), *ad loc.* cites *Ciris* 165f. as a parallel; A. Pease on *Aeneid* iv.301 finds other such Bacchante comparisons.

(intimated at 25ff.) has often prompted comment as well. But there is more to this simile: the image of Ariadne is already embroidered on the *vestis*. Now this image is compared to a statue — an impression of one form of visual representation is conveyed by actually describing another. It is not just that the embroidered figure has the posture of a statue — *saxea* actually brings out the texture of the sculptural medium.²² A comparison of this kind in ecphrasis is unique and deserves some consideration. It compels us to notice the versatility of poetic as opposed to plastic media.

A close examination of the language in this simile reveals two more things. First, the anaphoric repetition of *prospicit* helps convey the immobility of the figure. Secondly, *bacchantis* is the genitive not of a noun (as it is usually translated), but of the present participle *bacchans*. The verb *bacchari* means to rave, rant, or as Lewis and Short put it, ‘to cry Euhoe in the orgies’ — to make a lot of noise. There is then something interesting about the juxtaposition with *effigies*. We are made to contemplate a plastic image of someone making a sound. This conceit casts light on *eheu* at the end of the verse. *Eheu* could be a live rendition of the frozen Maenad crying ‘Euhoe’, as much as an exclamation of sympathy on the part of the poet.

Something similar is going on if we consider the juxtaposition between 260–4 and 265:

orgia quae frustra cupiunt audire profani;
plangebant aliae proceris tympana palmis,
aut tereti tenuis tinnitus aere ciebant;
multis raucisonos efflabant cornua bombos
barbaraque horribili stridebat tibia cantu.
talibus amplifice vestis decorata figuris . . .

... rites which the profane desire in vain to hear; / others were striking tympanums with outstretched palms, / or rousing a shrill din with the bronze cymbals; / the horns many had were blowing out hoarse-sounding booms, / and the barbarian pipe was shrieking with its fearful music. / The cloth abundantly decorated with such figures . . .

The sonic effects of 260–4 with the musical instruments played by the Bacchic troop and the noise they made precede 265, which reminds us of the pictorial quality of the scene. This kind of juxtaposition, which has been seen as a ‘striking disharmony’ is not confined to the Bacchante simile or to these verses which form the climax of this ecphrasis. At its very opening, just after *haec vestis . . . indicat arte*, we find in 52:

namque fluentisono . . . litore Diae . . .
So on the wave-sounding shore of Dia . . .

The first word *namque* is the explanatory connective followed by *fluentisono*, a word describing a noise if ever there was. Commentators seem to have found the noise of the sea less striking and disharmonious than the noise of the Maenads. From the very beginning of the Ariadne episode, Catullus’ language rolls sound and vision together, as does the very word *fluentisono*. It is not just that we have an ecphrasis which contains sound effects: the diction and word order is actually serving to enhance the anomalous presence of noise in a picture at every point. We are thus prompted to reflect on the medium of language that produces such a description.

Earlier it was noted that Catullus’ ecphrasis is unique in ascribing *direct speech* to characters who appear in what is supposed to be a visual representation. This is perhaps the most important way in which this poem highlights the difference between visual and verbal media. However, the problem of speech in ecphrasis is raised before Catullus. I will consider the way it is approached in four earlier texts.

(i) The very first ecphrasis we have contains speech in some sense. Homer’s account of the forging of Achilles’ shield reports speech, or else mentions speech acts of some kind, along with various sounds and movements — of combat, farming, dancing and so on. We are told of a bridal song (xviii.493)²³ and the Linos-song (570). There is an argument about the blood price

²² Tony Woodman has pointed out to me that the phrase *saxea effigies* is used of a *speaking* statue in Tacitus, *Annals* 11.61.

²³ This, along with the mention of Ariadne at 592 (in the context of material artistry) suggests a possible link with Catullus 64.

of a murdered man (497–508) — the case of each opponent is rendered briefly in indirect discourse — followed by the cheers of a crowd and the elders' judgement given in turn (ἀμοιβηδὶς δὲ δικάζον, 506). More discourse with an agonistic tone is recounted indirectly, as two armies consider the alternatives for the city they are besieging (509f.) — it must share its wealth or be devastated.

Although *oratio recta* is by far the most prevalent mode of reporting speech in the *Iliad*, it is not employed at all in this ecphrasis. This need not be because we only *see* carved figures speak in a pictorial representation: Homer's shield is divinely made — so the figures it contains could well move and make noises. Rather, the indirect discourse serves to maintain a different level of reality: events and stories involving unnamed personages on the shield are of a different order from those of the world in which the shield appears.

(ii) In Theocritus, *Idyll* 1.29–56, the goatherd describes the cup he will offer to Thyrsis as a reward for his singing. This ecphrasis in 32–8 also conveys a depiction of an agonistic kind of exchange:

ἐντοσθεν δὲ γυνά, τι θεῶν δαίδαλμα, τέτυκται,
 ἀσκητὰ πέπλω τε καὶ ἄμπυκι. πᾶρ δέ οἱ ἄνδρες
 καλὸν ἐθειράζοντες ἀμοιβηδὶς ἄλλοθεν ἄλλος
 νεικειούσ' ἐπέεσσι· τὰ δ' οὐ φρενὸς ἄπτεται αὐτᾶς·
 ἀλλ' ὁκὰ μὲν τήνον ποτιδέρεται ἄνδρα γέλαισα,
 ἄλλοκα δ' αὖ ποτὶ τὸν ῥίπτει νόον. οἳ δ' ὕπ' ἔρωτος
 θηθὰ κυλοιδιόωντες ἐτώσια μοχθίζοντι.

And within a woman is fashioned, an artifice of the gods, / wearing a robe and a headband. Beside her, men / with fine flowing hair are contending in an exchange of words, / one to another. But this does not touch her heart: / for at this moment she looks to one man, laughing, / and at that moment she flings her attention to the other. / The eyes of each man are swollen with desire, as he labours in vain.

The rivals' amoebaeon exchange recalls the alternation of verses between Thyrsis and the goatherd in the outer narrative.²⁴ The speech in this ecphrasis is again reported very indirectly: but the indication that speaking is occurring here is certainly tantalizing. Gow's comments suggest he thinks this ecphrasis is disobedient:²⁵

ἀμοιβηδὶς: for the next three lines, more than anywhere else in his account of the bowl, T. is interpreting rather than describing, since a work of art can only suggest, not depict, successive action on the part of the figures. The circumstances of the quarrel-scene on the shield of Achilles (*Il.* 18.497–508) are very different, but as that also slips into interpretation with the word ἀμοιβηδὶς (506) it is probably in T.'s mind.

The general distinction between the media (following Lessing) is acceptable, but Gow begs the question of what the difference is between description and interpretation. Fowler rightly notes, 'there is no neutral, zero-focalized way of linearizing a visual scene'.²⁶ 'Interpretation' is not, in my view, the best word to use for ecphrases like these in Homer or Theocritus, even if we concede that they are disobedient. These ecphrases are certainly not like the explicitly interpretative expositions in Longus and Petronius (n. 18). Moreover, Gow's use of 'interpreting' in this context carries, far more than the word 'description', the misleading implication that there is an essential image logically prior to the one Theocritus' language presents.

The idea of two men speaking in competition for a woman's attention could find an equivalent in illustration: the males could be depicted with open mouths as they make emphatic gestures. The woman could be depicted as she is described — glancing at one man but evidently giving her attention to the other. Overall, Theocritus' ecphrasis seems to me to be obedient: we can go on reading it and continue to have the impression that everything put before us could be translated into a visual medium. Whatever the case, it should be obvious by now that the presentation of *direct* speech, given by depicted characters, cannot be a property of obedient ecphrasis — the content of an utterance could not feasibly be rendered in a visual art form.

²⁴ On the programmatic nature of the *mise-en-abyme* here, see F. Cairns, *WS NF* 18 (1984), 89–113, at 102–5.

²⁵ A. S. F. Gow (1968), ad loc. on 34.

²⁶ *op. cit.* (n. 6), 29.

(iii) A way round this stricture is offered by three of the shield ecphrases given by the messenger in Aeschylus' *Septem*.²⁷ These ecphrases, whilst still remaining obedient, do manage to present the speech of the figure they depict, not only indirectly (as with Eteocles' shield 465–9), but also in *oratio recta* in presenting the shields of Capaneus (432–4) and Polyneices (642–8). This is achieved because we are told in every case that the words of the depicted warrior are written in captions embossed on each shield. The messenger also tells us what the captions say.²⁸ So these illustrated figures come to life because they do speak after a fashion; yet the convention inherited from Homer — that there is only indirect speech in ecphrasis if any speech at all — has not actually been broken. The effect in Aeschylus is not only interesting as a singular technique; it is important because it exhibits a preoccupation with the way speech should be presented in these contexts.

(iv) Apollonius' description of the cloak given to Jason by Pallas in the *Argonautica* (1.720–67) offers an important advance. Like the *vestis* in Catullus 64.48–50, it is shiny, red and purple in colour (725–8) and intricately woven (δαίδαλα πολλά διακριδὸν εὖ ἐπέπαστο, 729). The various episodes embroidered in the cloak are presented by obedient ecphrasis; the last of these is especially notable (763–7):

Ἐν καὶ Φριξὸς ἔην Μινυήϊος ὡς ἑτεόν περ
εἰσαίων κριοῦ, ὃ δ' ἄρ' ἔξενέποντι ἐοικώς.
κείνους κ' εἰσόροων ἀκείους, ψεύδοιό τε θυμόν,
ἐλπόμενος πυκινήν τιν' ἀπὸ σφείων ἔσακοῦσαι
βάξιν, ὃ καὶ δηρόν περ ἐπ' ἐλπίδι θηήσαιο.

And Phrixus the Minyan was also on it, as if he was actually / listening to the ram, and it indeed was like one speaking. / Looking at them you would be silent, and deceive your soul, / hoping to hear some solid speech from them, / and you would gaze for a long time in hope.²⁹

This taunts us: the images of Phrixus and the ram are so lifelike that we are tempted to wait until we hear them speak. But because they are embroidered on a cloak they never will.³⁰ Our attention is simultaneously drawn to the way the convention of treating speech in ecphrasis has worked hitherto. The narrator's playful apostrophe to his addressee could be regarded as an invitation to another poet to break free from the convention and employ direct speech.³¹

As we have seen, it is an invitation which is taken up in Catullus 64. Beyond the points of resemblance noted above, there are many other echoes of the *Argonautica* in 64: the whole Peleus and Thetis story is part of the Argonaut myth. Wendell Clausen notes many allusions to the *Argonautica* in 64³² — he suggests that the idea of the tapestry as a vehicle of the Ariadne story was suggested by *Arg.* IV.421f. There, the robe given to Jason is still fragrant after Dionysus and Ariadne embraced on it. Jason also recalls the story of Ariadne to Medea at III.1000–4. This is how the cloak ecphrasis is closed at 1.768:

τοῦτ' ἄρα δῶρα θεᾶς Τριτωνίδος ἦεν Ἀθήνης.

Such were the gifts of the Tritonian goddess Athene.

²⁷ On these see F. I. Zeitlin, *Under the Sign of the Shield: Semiotics and Aeschylus's Seven against Thebes* (Filol. e critica 44) (1982).

²⁸ G. O. Hutchinson (1985) on the *Septem* (369–652 ad loc.) remarks: 'The speeches inscribed for the figures are unique . . . Letters are used on shields only to identify city or owner. It is true that painters representing shields might use the space for statements of their own (Chase 110f., Paus. 5.19.4); and that people on vases are sometimes given little speeches of this kind (Kretschmer, *Die griechischen Vasenschriften*, 86ff.) A. wishes the figures to embody as vividly as possible the aspirations of each hero.'

²⁹ The ram here might be compared to Myron's representation of a cow (*A.P.* 9) and generally the topos in epigram of statues that might speak. See O. Fua, 'L'idea dell'opera d'arte 'vivente' e la buccula di Mirone nell'epigramma greco e latino', *Rivista di cultura classica e medievale* 15 (1973/1), 49–55 and G. Zanker, *Realism in Alexandrian Poetry* (1987), 44–5.

³⁰ Compare Socrates' comparison of writing with painting in *Phaedrus* 275, and this excerpt from an

ecphrasis by Guarino, in a letter written in 1430 to thank a friend for the gift of a carved inkstand: 'Subinde delectatione non possum cum imagunculas inspecto et vivas in argilla facies . . . ungues, digiti, molles e terra capilli visentem fallunt. Cum oris hiatum inspicio, emanaturum vocem stultus expecto . . .', R. Sabbadini (ed.), *Epistolario di Guarino Veronese* 2 (1916), III. M. Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators* (1988), 92 notes a related conceit in Byzantine ecphrases: poets warn readers to be silent in case their utterances break in upon the world of the pictures they describe.

³¹ Compare the image of Apollo in Philostratus, *Imagines* 1.26.34 and the ambiguous ἐτώσια μοχθίζοντι in Theocritus, quoted above. Keats, 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' is laden with such irony throughout. The praise of Herodotus' use of second person address in *De Sublimitate* 26.2 shows how the device can enhance the vividness of a topographical description.

³² 'The Marriage of Peleus and Thetis', in *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature Volume II* (1982), 187f.

This verse follows directly after 763–7 quoted above. The description closes at a point when it is brought to our notice that we cannot *hear* what is in this picture. If we compare the closing of Catullus' ecphrasis at 260–5 (quoted above), there is a striking resemblance between *frustra cupiunt audire* (260) and Apollonius' ψεύδοιό τε θυμόν, ἐλπόμενος . . . ἔσακοῦσαι (1.765–6). Catullus' narrator is bringing out the sonic aspects of his ecphrasis just before it ends — something which Apollonius' narrator, at a corresponding point, emphasized he could not do.³³ Where the use of sound and speech in Catullus' ecphrasis is concerned, it is hard not to entertain the notion that a cue to be more 'disobedient' has been taken from the fanfares of the poet of the *Argonautica*.

II

It should now be clear how far Catullus extends the capacity of ecphrasis and exploits possibilities which have been approached, but not fully applied, by his extant predecessors. I would like to dispel any notion that these innovations we have seen are random or of no consequence for understanding the poem. There is some meta-literary comment in 64 to accompany its exploration of what can be done with speech in ecphrasis. This comment should show that the poem can be legitimately read as a text which questions the nature and role of ecphrasis. The passages which introduce and conclude the Ariadne inset form part of that comment. It is worth quoting them together before discussing them further:

Haec vestis priscis hominum variata figuris heroum mira virtutes indicat arte.	50–1
talibus amplifice vestis decorata figuris pulvinar complexa suo velabat amictu.	265–6

This cloth varied with the olden figures of people / reveals with marvellous art the qualities of heroes.

The cloth abundantly decorated with such figures / was veiling the couch with its covering.

The close resemblance in diction between these two sets of verses has often been pointed out.³⁴ It offers a kind of structural punctuation in the poem, marking the beginning and end of the ecphrastic inset.³⁵ The similarity between *vestis . . . variata figuris* and *vestis decorata figuris* might also cause us to look for a significance to these words beyond the primary visual one. When we see *variare*, or its cognates, and *figurae* juxtaposed, it is hard not to think of the frequent joint appearance of the two in rhetorical texts.³⁶ *Variare* is used very commonly in Cicero to mean 'to diversify' in speech or writing; but the sense of marking or adorning with colours is the primary meaning.³⁷ *Figura* came to have a plethora of meanings in the Roman rhetorical tradition.³⁸ It is not found in Cicero as an equivalent of σχῆμα, but it is used by Varro to denote the inflection or form of a word,³⁹ and by the author of the *Ad Herennium* to mean 'voice quality' (as in *vocis figuram* III. 11. 19) or to serve as a synonym for *genus dicendi*

³³ Again cf. Keats: 'What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?/Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard/Are sweeter'. See F. I. Zeitlin, 'On ravishing urns: Keats in his tradition', in L. Higgins and B. Silver (eds), *Rape and Representation* (1991), 278–302. The ecphrasis in *Aen.* v. 520f., discussed by D. West, 'On serial narration and on the Julian star', in *Proceedings of the Virgil Society* (1992), involves a cloak and ends on a sonic note: 'saevitque canum latratu in auras'. Serial narration can be an important feature of 'disobedient' ecphrasis, but identification of it does not ease or make redundant the problem of the 'mingling' of description and interpretation in ecphrasis, even when (as here in *Aen.* v. 520f.) there is no apparent deviant focalization.

³⁴ e.g. Kroll, *op. cit.* (n. 21), ad loc. See also Jenkyns, *op. cit.* (n. 11), 123 for other references.

³⁵ For structural punctuation of ecphrases, see M.

Barchiesi, *Il tempo e il testo* (1987), 80–91. Moschus and Apollonius have resemblances of sense rather than diction between the beginning and ends of their ecphrases (*Europa* 37, 62; *Arg.* 1.721–3, 768). 'Plastic' frames more similar to Catullus' can be found in Theocritus' description of the ivy-garland (1.29, 1.55) and *Iliad* xviii where Ocean forms the rim of the shield (478–89, 607–9) although the introductions and conclusions are not as verbally similar as they are in Catullus.

³⁶ This conjunction appears in Quintilian, *Inst. Or.*, e.g. iv. 2.22: 'plurimis figuris erit varianda expositio'.

³⁷ See *OLD* (1982), s.v. *uatio*, 1 and 2, for examples of both senses.

³⁸ See H. Lausberg, *Manuel de retórica literaria* (Sp. trans. Riesco, 1975).

³⁹ Varro, *De Lingua Latina* viii. 71, ix. 55.

(iv.8.11f., 'quae genera nos figuras appellamus'). The Elder Seneca employs *figura* in the *Controversiae* to mean a 'figured declamation'.⁴⁰ Orators contemporary with Catullus *may* have employed *figura* as either Quintilian or Seneca used the term; we do not have enough evidence to go on. However, the precise meaning or meanings of *figura* in the rhetorical schools of Catullus' time does not need to be ascertained for us to conceive of some kind of play here on the visual and verbal connotations of the word. Such puns were to be enjoyed by *docti poetae* in later ages.⁴¹ *Decorare* also has two senses which fit nicely with the two given for *variare*: to embellish things or to give honour and glorify.

The use of *amplificae* has caught the attention of commentators. Fronto provides an instance of the adjective form (*Aur.* 2. p. 74 150 N), but the occurrence of this adverb is unique. Kroll sees it as an extension of *ample* for metrical ends,⁴² but the addition of a *-ficus/-ficare* suffix surely ought to make us think of enlarging or amplification in rhetoric and other kinds of discourse. Instances of *amplificare* or *amplificatio* employed in a rhetorical sense are legion.

The *double entendre* does not stop here. The word *vestis*, repeated in 265 from 50, may not be so innocent in this context. Brink remarks that 'comparisons of style with sewing and weaving are familiar from rhetorical and literary theory alike'.⁴³ He cites Petronius and Quintilian who compare speeches with clothing in their remarks on *sententiae*:

praeterea curandum est ne sententiae emineant extra corpus orationis expressae, sed intexto vestibus (intexto versibus *var.*) colore niteant. (*Sat.* 118.5)

Care should also be taken not to let epigrams shine garishly from the body of the speech — they should rather gleam with a colour that is woven into the cloth.

ut adfert lumen clavus et purpurae loco insertae ita certe neminem deceat intertexta pluribus vestis. (*Inst. Or.* VIII.5.28)

A purple stripe appropriately applied lends brilliance to a cloth, but a cloth interwoven with too many patches is certainly not becoming to anyone.

The comparison made by Quintilian between speech and clothing is the third of three analogies. The first was from agriculture; the second from visual art.⁴⁴ It may not be irrelevant that Horace's weaving metaphor comes after a painting/poetry analogy sustained in *Ars Poetica* 1–13. In reviewing further senses of *vestis*, we may bring to bear another passage of Quintilian, from IX.3.41:

Hanc frequentiorem repetitionem *πλοκήν* vocant, quae fit ex permixtis figuris . . .

This rather frequent repetition, which is made from a mixture of figures, is called a 'weaving' in Greek . . .⁴⁵

We must be wary of laying too strong a claim for any precise rhetorical sense for any of the terms in 64.50 and 265. These observations only serve to point out that the diction employed to open and close the Ariadne inset generally evokes vocabulary of speech and rhetoric. These words only have technical connotations: they do not need to signify anything particularly coherent on this secondary level.

⁴⁰ e.g. at I.1.15, I.2.16, II.1.23; II.3.18. For Seneca's technical terms, see H. Bardon, *Le Vocabulaire de la critique littéraire chez Sénèque le rhéteur* (1940).

⁴¹ One example (suggested to me by David Norbrook) comes from a letter to Milton written by Andrew Marvell in 1614 in which he praises Milton's *Defensio Secunda* published that year: 'When I consider how equally it turns and rises with so many figures, it seems to me a Trajans columnne in whose winding ascent we see imboss'd the several Monuments of your learned victories.'

⁴² *op. cit.* (n. 21), ad loc.

⁴³ C. O. Brink, *Horace on Poetry* (1971), 96. v. 14–16 ad loc. The verses run: 'inceptis gravibus plerumque et magna professis/purpureus, late qui splendeat, unus et alter/adsuitur pannus . . .' We might tentatively compare 'tincta tegit roseo conchyli purpura fuco' in *Cat.* 64.49.

Compare verbs like *splendeat*, *emineant*, *niteant*, *eminet*, *deceat* in the passages of literary and rhetorical criticism quoted here with the words conveying the brilliance of Peleus' palace in 44–8, noted by K. Quinn, *Catullus: The Poems* (1970) ad loc.: *fulgenti*, *splendent*, *candet*, *collucent*, *splendida* and *politum*. Two senses of *ἐνάργεια* / *ἐναργής* could explain this: these words are used to convey clarity and brilliance of views and objects as well as of words (Liddell and Scott (1968), s.v. *ἐνάργεια*, 2 and 3, 556).

⁴⁴ *Inst. Or.* VIII.5.26: 'nec pictura, in qua nihil circumlitum est, eminet; ideoque artifices etiam, cum plura in unam tabulam opera contulerunt, spatiis distinguunt, ne umbrae in corpore cadant.'

⁴⁵ Aristotle gives *πλοκή* a different sense (n. 59).

There are further arguments to support the postulation of a *double entendre* in these verses. The first lies in the analogies, frequently drawn in ancient authors, between poetry or rhetoric and painting or sculpture.⁴⁶ Such comparisons were obviously made well before Catullus, e.g. the anecdote of Sophocles joking about how epithets involving colour — such as ‘gold-haired Apollo’ — would look ridiculous if they were faithfully rendered in painting.⁴⁷ We have more positive comparisons in Plato, *Ion* and *Republic* 603–5 and in Aristotle, *Poetics* 1448a, 1454b and 1460b. The saying that ‘a poem should be a speaking painting and a painting a silent poem’ is quoted as an example of *commutatio* (though not attributed to Simonides, as in Plutarch, *De Glor. Ath.* III. 346f.) in *Ad Herennium* IV.28.39.⁴⁸

Given that comparisons of this nature were commonplace, it might be no surprise that an awareness of them was heightened by ecphrasis. By its very appearance, the *topos* prompts a consideration of how visual and verbal media operate. Poets and commentators were more likely to sense and express the difference between these media than ancient rhetorical or literary theorists, who would be more prone, in examining their effects on the mind and society, to regard painting and poetry as parallel forms of *mimesis*.⁴⁹

Catullus was living in a cultural climate dominated by the influence of rhetoric and its teachers.⁵⁰ He would have been educated by grammarians. He was friends with Cinna and Calvus. There are numerous obvious references to orators of his day, as well as displays of rhetorical technique, even in his shorter poems. In this regard, it is interesting to see how Catullus’ ecphrasis (in the modern sense) conforms to later rhetorical prescriptions in the *Progymnasmata* about *ecphrasis* (in the ancient sense). Aphthonius recommends that descriptions of scenes should put the subject in the context of his or her surroundings.⁵¹ This is what Catullus does in Poem 64. First in 52–3 are the surroundings — the seashore of Naxos and Theseus’ fleet receding into the distance. Ariadne is suspended as the object of the narrator’s scrutiny until 54, the verse which identifies her. Whilst adopting the syncopated manner of Hellenistic narrative, Catullus in two verses achieves this integration of the human subject with her physical surroundings. Aphthonius also says that descriptions of people should go from head to foot (37.9–11) and Hermogenes says that descriptions of events should be ordered temporally — first past, then present, then future.⁵² This ecphrasis conforms to these strictures too. The first features of Ariadne mentioned are her eyes ‘maestis Minois ocellis’ (60). The narrator then works down from her *mitram* (63) via *pectus* and *papillas* to her *pedes* (67). Again, the digressions from the vignette of the beach are ordered so that we have a flashback first (70–115), then an elaboration of Ariadne’s present state which includes her long lament (116–206). As this closes we are told of the effect of her curse on Theseus (207f.): a kind of flash-forward which continues until 248, although this section itself includes an explanatory flashback from 212 (‘namque ferunt olim . . .’) outlining those instructions Aegeus gave which Theseus forgets. When the narrator does bring us back to the ‘present’ vignette (‘quae tum prospectans cedentem maesta carinam’, 249–50), it is only to change it — by describing the arrival of Bacchus. There may have been guidelines similar to those which are found in the *Progymnasmata* we have, in the rhetorical manuals of Catullus’ time. The general sophistication of the *Ad Herennium* and *De Oratore* suggests that equivalently detailed instructions about description might have been available.

⁴⁶ See Brink, ad loc. on Horace, *Ars Poetica* 7, 9, 21, 361 for further examples.

⁴⁷ *Ion* of Chios (fr. 8 von Blumenthal).

⁴⁸ On this saying, quoted by Plutarch, *De audiendis poetis* 17f–18 and *Quaest. conv.* 9.15, see T. J. B. Spencer, ‘The imperfect parallel betwixt painting and poetry’, *Greece and Rome* 7.2 (1960), 173–86, at 175. F. A. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (1966), 28 thinks Simonides’ appearance in Cicero, *De Oratore* 11.86, as a mnemotechnician must be related to his *commutatio* comparing poetry and painting. This is obviously speculative, but of interest insofar as the *imagines* prescribed for orators to aid memory are not unlike *ecphrases* (cf. *Ad Her.* III.28–40).

⁴⁹ See Servian corpus on *Aen.* VIII.625. Propertius brings out the difference between art forms by demonstration as well as comment (as in III.2. 17f.). II.12 praises the aptness of visual representations of *Amor*, but the last couplet challenges the painter: ‘qui caput et digitos et lumina nigra puellae, / et canat ut soleant molliter ire pedes?’

⁵⁰ J. Granarolo, ‘Catulle — rhéteur’, in R. Chevallier (ed.), *Colloque sur la Rhétorique — Calliope 1* (1979), considers Catullus’ education and the relation between lyric and rhetoric. See also H. Bardon, *L’art de la composition chez Catulle* (1943); J. Bayet, *Catulle, la Grèce et Rome, Entretiens Hardt* (1953), 33–6; M. L. Clarke, *Rhetoric at Rome* (1953), 10–35; G. Kennedy, *The Art of Persuasion in the Roman World* (1972), and E. Rawson, *Intellectual Life in the Late Roman Republic* (1985), 143f. Granarolo suggests an Asiatic influence in Ariadne’s lament and in Poems 65–6 to Hortensius. See the discussion of Asianism in R. G. M. Nisbet, ‘Cicero’s speeches’, in T. A. Dorey (ed.), *Cicero* (1965). The loud volume at which Ariadne speaks (125, 202) might have been a feature of this trend in oratory: cf. H. Caplan in a note to his trans. of *Ad Herennium* (1981), 193.

⁵¹ *Prog.* 37.13–14, ed. Rabe (1926).

⁵² 22.19–23.6, ed. Rabe (1913).

Lucretius, a contemporary of Catullus, appears to have endowed some of his diction with rhetorical terms.⁵³ But perhaps the best parallel for Catullus' *double entendre* in verses 50–1 and 265–8 is to be found in the introduction to an ecphrasis in another text which might be seen to refer to, or in some way resemble them. This phrase heralds the description of Aeneas's shield in *Aeneid* VIII.625 (although there are other parallels):⁵⁴

clipei non enarrabile textum . . .

the composition of the shield impossible to narrate . . .

Textum usually means a woven fabric or style of weaving; this sense is often transferred to rhetorical style.⁵⁵ This verse clearly has something in common with Catullus 64.50–1 and 265, demonstrating that they do contain an ambiguity. Virgil's ecphrasis is more obedient than that of Catullus.⁵⁶ But with the words *non enarrabile*, the narrator affects to admit that he cannot aspire to the effects of a medium, skill and range beyond his own.⁵⁷ (Catullus by contrast does not employ any such *adynaton*.) The two suggestions I am making here, then, are first that 50–1 and 265–6 have some technical (rhetorical) significance and secondly that this further significance supports the idea that attention is being drawn to the innovations in treating ecphrasis in this poem. We are led to a view of this *vestis* as a spoken text as well as a woven one.

The more general observation made at the beginning of this section about these phrases offering a structural punctuation of the ecphrasis can be used to underline this. Such punctuation also encloses all the proper speeches in the poem. Consider the recurrence of diction between the opening and closing of (i) Ariadne's soliloquy (130–1, 202):

atque haec extremis *maestam* dixisse querellis,
frigidulos udo singultus ore cientem.

has postquam *maesto* profudit pectore voces . . .

And [they report that] in her extreme laments she sadly uttered these things, / rousing cold little sobs from her wet mouth.

After she poured out these utterances from her sad breast . . .

(ii) Aegeus' instructions (213–14, 238–40):

linquentem gnatum *ventis* concrederet Aegeus
talia complexum iuveni *mandata* dedisse . . .

haec *mandata* prius constanti mente tenentem
Thesea ceu pulsae *ventorum* flamine nubes
aereum nivei montis *liquere* cacumen.

And [they report that when] Aegeus entrusted his departing son to the winds, / embracing him, he gave these instructions to the young man . . .

These instructions departed from Theseus, who had hitherto held them with constant attention, / like clouds driven by a blast of wind / leave the airy peak of a snowy mountain.

⁵³ See I. Dionigi, *Lucrezio: le parole e le cose*, 24 and D. Feeney, 'The taciturnity of Aeneas', in S. Harrison (ed.), *Oxford Readings in Vergil's Aeneid* (1990), 171 on rhetorical terms in *Aen.* IV.

⁵⁴ *Ciris* 9 ('coeptum detexere munus'), especially the lengthy play on weaving at 21f. ('sed magno intexens, si fas est indicere peplo' etc.) and 339 are especially striking. Cf. E. J. Kenney, *Cupid and Psyche* (1990) on Apuleius *Met.* v.16.5 ad loc. R. O. A. M. Lyne (ed.), *Ciris* (1978), ad loc. offers material on literary comparisons between poetry and weaving. See J. McIntosh Snyder, 'The web of song: weaving imagery in Homer and the lyric poets', *CJ* 76 (1980–1), 193–6.

⁵⁵ Again see Lyne, op. cit. (n. 54) and the *OLD* s.v. *textum* ib.

⁵⁶ I am taking into account the serial narration noted by West. Generally this ecphrasis functions differently from the one in Cat. 64. Note, for instance, the operation of the simile at VIII.691–2 — 'pelago credas innare revulsas/ Cycladas aut montis concurrere montibus altos . . .' This explicitly impressionistic observation imputed to us by *credas* is quite unlike the Maenad simile at 64.61 discussed earlier.

⁵⁷ cf. Servian corpus ad loc.: 'NON ENNARABILE TEXTUM bene "non enarrabile"' etc. C. Lazzarini, 'Elementi di una poetica serviana', *Studi Italiani di Filologia Classica* 7 (1989), 56–109, cites this to show that the relation between narrative time and story time was of interest to Servius. Fowler, op. cit. (n. 6), 26f., notes the problem of time in describing artworks.

(iii) the prophecy of the Parcae (320–2, 382–3):

haec tum clarisona pellentes vellera voce
talia divino fuderunt *carmine* fata,
 carmine, perfidiae quod post nulla arguet aetas.

talia praefantes quondam felicia Pelei
carmina divino cecinerunt pectore Parcae.

Then striking these threads, in a clear-sounding voice, / they uttered these fates in a divine song, / in a song, which no age may prove false subsequently.

Foretelling these happy things once for Peleus / the Parcae sang songs from a divine breast.

The connection between speaking and weaving is made obvious by that song of the Parcae. They are engaged in both activities simultaneously: this is emphasized by their repeated refrain ('currite ducentes subtegmina, currite, fusi'). The interest in weaving and textiles is sustained powerfully throughout the poem.⁵⁸ Arguably, the discourse of the whole 'epyllion' poem is a kind of *πλοκή*.⁵⁹ Within the *vestis*, the weaving reaches its most intricate: the linear story of (1) Theseus' departure from Athens and Aegeus' farewell, (2) his encounter with Ariadne and killing of the Minotaur, (3) the desertion of Ariadne, (4) Ariadne's lament, (5) Bacchus' intervention, (6) the return of Theseus and Aegeus' death, is woven into the narrative as 3, 2, 4, 1, 6, 5.

There is one more basis on which the difference between verbal and visual means of communication is brought out in this poem. At 162–70, Ariadne lists the things she could have done for Theseus if he had married her, and then turns to consider the hopelessness of her position:

quae tibi iucundo famularer serva labore
 candida permulcens liquidis vestigia lymphis,
 purpureave tuum consternens veste cubile.
 sed quid ego ignaris nequiquam conquerar auris,
 externata malo, quae nullis sensibus auctae
 nec missas audire queunt nec reddere voces?
 ille autem prope iam mediis versatur in undis,
 nec quisquam apparet vacua mortalis in alga.
 sic nimis insultans extremo tempore saeva
 fors etiam nostris invidit questibus auris.

I could have worked for you as a servant at pleasant chores, / softening your fair feet with clear water, / or covering your bed with a purple drape. / But why do I maddened by misfortune, lament in vain / to the unconscious breezes, which have no faculty to hear / or to answer my words? / Yet *he* is borne on almost half way across the waves, / and not a mortal soul appears on this empty strand. / So cruel fate excessively taunts me in this extreme situation, / even begrudging a listening ear to my laments.

The resemblance of this passage to Palaestra's soliloquy in Plautus, *Rudens* 185f. has often been remarked upon.⁶⁰ When a character in drama complains that no one can see or find her, there is an element of meta-theatrical irony: Palaestra is on stage, under the gaze of an audience.⁶¹ A similar effect is achieved in this passage for Ariadne, who is under the envious gaze of the Thessalian youths, who are admiring the tapestry ('cupide spectando Thessala pubes', 267). Ariadne's particular way of expressing her complaint is that she cannot be *heard*.

⁵⁸ Ariadne's garments fall off (63–6); the thread she gives Theseus (113–15); Ariadne's *tegmina* (129); the imagined purple bedspread (163); the ship's cable (174); the *redimita frons* of the Eumenides (193–4); the *funestam vestem* of T.'s sails (234); the twined serpent belts of the Bacchantes (258); Chiron's garlands (283); Penios's lattice-work (292); the garb (*vestis* and *vittae*) of the Parcae (306f.); weaving of the Parcae (311f.); the knot

of love between Peleus and Thetis (334–5); the thread around Thetis's neck (377); as well as 50–1 and 265–6.

⁵⁹ *πλοκή* in Aristotle, *Poetics* 1456a is equivalent to *δέσις* ('complication') in plot.

⁶⁰ e.g. Ellis ad loc.

⁶¹ cf. *Rudens* 205f.: 'Ita hic sola solis locis conpotita . . . Nec mi obviam homo quisquam'.

Of course she is heard, in a sense, by the poem's audience. But there is another level of irony — and perhaps this is why the point is made twice at 166 and 170 — Ariadne may be dwelling on the fact that she cannot be heard or addressed because she is in a picture.

Two echoes of language used earlier in the poem occur in the passage quoted above, and these serve to support the case for meta-literary significance here. First, 'sed quid ego . . . conquerar' (164) recalls 'sed quid ego a primo digressus carmine / plura commemorem' above at 115–16. Those words recalled break the illusion of the story as the presence of a narrator is reaffirmed. Secondly, it has been noted often enough that 163 reminds us of the *vestis* on which Ariadne herself appears. The purpose of this reminder then must be to draw attention to the point that it is a *depicted* Ariadne who is speaking and complaining that she cannot be heard.

III

The main aim of this discussion has been to show how the innovative use of ecphrasis in Catullus 64 invites us to compare visual and verbal media. The qualities that make such an ecphrasis disobedient (succession of time, movement, sound, and especially speech) have had a major part to play. We have seen that reflexive features in the poem also contribute to inducing this comparison: the use of quasi-rhetorical terminology and meta-literary conceit.

There are other ways in which Catullus' ecphrasis departs from those in all the other ancient texts we have considered. Compared to them, it is disproportionately large in relation to the remaining body of the poem. It takes up 216 of 408 verses — more than half the text. The ecphrasis is the thematic as much as the structural centrepiece of the poem.⁶² On formal grounds, Catullus' ecphrasis is less easily distinguished from the narrative enclosing it than are ecphrases in other works of ancient literature. Unlike other ecphrases, that of Catullus has no stylistic features peculiar to it. We might have expected, for example, a predominance of the narrative present tense in the ecphrasis relative to the discourse outside it, or apostrophes to the reader (e.g. *ut credas*) emphasizing the verisimilitude of the artwork. Unlike other ecphrases, Catullus' ecphrasis is not deprived of stylistic features found in the outer narrative. Indeed some of those features that this ecphrasis shares with the narrative embedding it are what make it unique: as well as quoted speech, we find similes, anonymous traditions, and apostrophes to characters, both without and within this ecphrasis. This standardization of texture throughout the poem has been noticed.⁶³

Virgil's technique is much more sophisticated than that of Catullus in his description of the bedspread of Peleus and Thetis which depicted the story of Ariadne. Catullus makes no pretence of describing a visual artefact, but writes undisguised literary narrative. V., by exploiting the visual as well as the exemplary possibilities of his chosen scenes . . . maintains the illusion of a visual artefact.

Gransden's observation here is nice, but his value judgements should be qualified (or reversed). Catullus' technique need not be attributed to lack of sophistication. Theocritus and Apollonius 'maintained the illusion of a visual artefact' by changing the *registers* of their narratives (the notions of 'disguised' or 'undisguised' literary narrative are not helpful here). Catullus' departure from these literary models in *not* changing the register of his narrative can be regarded positively: it offers a different way of 'describing a visual artefact'. This singular departure invites us to reconsider the very nature of ecphrasis. The majority of ancient ecphrases, with their conventional registers, are really no more or no less illusory than Catullus'. What Catullus' retention of the same narrative style inside and outside his 'ecpfrasis' achieves is to expose the way that verbal narrative can efface the ontological difference between Ariadne in a picture and Ariadne directly described.

⁶² J. C. Bramble, 'Structure and ambiguity in Catullus LXIV', *PCPS* 16 (1970), 22–41, considers aspects of the question for this poem; Fowler, *op. cit.* (n. 6), looks at the relation between *ecpfrasis* and narrative as a whole.

⁶³ Gransden, *op. cit.* (n. 15), 162–3.

Of course language can discriminate between visual representations and real objects: the difference can be explicitly announced. We do not have to rely on narrative registers alone to know whether we have descriptions of depicted objects or descriptions of the objects themselves. But Catullus, in eschewing the typical registers of literary ecphrasis, reveals the arbitrariness of those registers. And that raises an important question: How can we be sure that the outer sections of the poem (1–49, 266–408) which recount the marriage of Peleus and Thetis are not describing an artwork as well? No other ancient poem containing an ecphrasis presents this problem quite so acutely.

This discussion began with a distinction between the two meanings of the word ‘ecphrasis’: ‘verbalizing art’ for modern critics and ‘verbalizing the visual’ for ancient ones. The last stage in our examination of Catullus 64 suggests that this dual signification may after all have been quite felicitous. The consideration of how an artwork is presented in poetry may soon become the consideration of how the visual itself is inscribed in discourse.

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