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### "εις έπη και ελεγείας ανάγειν": the Erotika Pathemata of Parthenius of Nicaea

Klooster, J.J.H.

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PART 4

THE LATE ROMAN REPUBLIC AND THE AUGUSTINEAN PERIOD





“ΕΙΣ ΕΠΗ ΚΑΙ ΕΛΕΓΕΙΑΣ ΑΝΑΓΕΙΝ”:  
THE *EROTIKA PATHEMATA* OF PARTHENIUS OF NICAEA

Jacqueline J.H. Klooster

1. *Introduction*

The first-century BC Greek author Parthenius of Nicaea tends to turn up in discussions of Latin “epyllion.” In the past, it has for instance been claimed with some insistence that he was *personally* responsible—through his influence on Gaius Helvius Cinna, author of the allegedly seminal “epyllion” *Zmyrna*—for introducing this type of poetry in Rome. Thus, it was asserted, he became nothing less than the driving force behind the so-called “neoteric school.”<sup>1</sup> Even if one does not subscribe to this particular idea—as few nowadays do—, enough interesting issues regarding Parthenius and epyllion remain. In this paper I will investigate what, if anything, Parthenius’ *Erotika Pathemata* (*EP*)<sup>2</sup>—a collection of prose accounts of unhappy, often fatal passions—may tell us about “epyllion” and its generic affiliations. I use the term “epyllion” here as shorthand for “short narrative hexameter poems of Hellenistic stamp”; this does not imply that I subscribe to its perception as a clearly circumscribed recognized generic category in antiquity. In fact, the illustration of the continuity between, and blurry boundaries of, all sorts of hexametric and elegiac poetic sub-forms will be one of the aims of this paper.

Taking stock of the corpus that is usually subsumed under the term “epyllion,”<sup>3</sup> we might posit that there appear to be two categories or

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<sup>1</sup> Clausen (1964) 187–188; Otis (1966) 27; Lyne (1978a) 173–174; Lyne (1978b) 54–55. Others, more skeptical on the issues of both epyllion’s existence as a genre and Parthenius’ influence on Roman poetry, resist the notion that the efflorescence of short hexameter epics in first century BC Rome should be laid at the door of this poet. Notoriously, this debate also involves the discussion of whether there was a “neoteric school” (based on the passages in Cic. *Ad Att.* 7.2.1; *Tusc.* 3.45; *Orator* 161) and what its connection with Parthenius—and epyllion—was. For a skeptical approach to this question see Crowther (1976) 65–71, Rose (1994), Lightfoot (1999) 54–76, Francese (2001) 9–15.

<sup>2</sup> On the translation of the phrase *Erotika Pathemata*, see Lightfoot (1999) 367–368; Francese (2001) 69–73; “sufferings in love” probably best covers the meaning.

<sup>3</sup> A great deal of evidence from the Hellenistic and Roman periods is either lost or hard to comprehend. See Fantuzzi (1998a) 31–32 for a list of (possible) Hellenistic epyllia and their titles. Roman epyllia would have included Cinna’s *Zmyrna*, Calvus’ *Io*, Catullus’ *Carmen* 64.

perhaps “families” of epyllia, one focusing on erotic subject matter (e.g. Theocritus’ *Idyll* 13 *Hylas*, Moschus’ *Europa*, Catullus *Carmen* 64, [Vergil’s] *Ciris*), the other on the unheroic and “domestic” side of heroic tales, e.g. Callimachus’ *Hecale*, Theocritus’ *Idyll* 24 (*Heracliscus*) and Vergil’s *Moretum*. It is especially in the second category that an *Auseinandersetzung* with heroic epic in the manner of “scherzhafte Leichtigkeit” (to quote Fantuzzi [1998a] 32) may be sought, if we are willing to admit these defining characteristics as valid. The first, erotic epyllion, often treats its melodramatic or pathetic erotic subject matter in a less obviously parodist way. It is this first erotic category that became predominant in Latin literature as e.g. Cinna’s *Zmyrna*, Calvus’ *Io*, Catullus’ *Carmen* 64, and the “epylliac” episodes in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* show; whether it proliferated on quite the same scale in the Hellenistic period is hard to say. In the following I will concentrate in particular on this category of erotic epyllion and the question of its generic affiliations.

Why might the *EP* seem interesting for a discussion of this kind of epyllion? Let us look at the following illustrative passage from them.

(1) Ἀλέξανδρος <δὲ> ὁ Πριάμου βουκολῶν κατὰ τὴν Ἰδὴν ἠράσθη τῆς Κεβρήνης θυγατρὸς Οἰνῶνης. λέγεται δὲ ταύτην ἔκ του θεῶν κατεχομένην θεσπίζειν περὶ τῶν μελλόντων καὶ ἄλλως δὲ ἐπὶ συνέσει φρενῶν ἐπὶ μέγα διαβεβοῆσθαι. (2) ὁ οὖν Ἀλέξανδρος αὐτὴν ἀγαγόμενος παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς εἰς τὴν Ἰδὴν, ὅπου αὐτῷ οἱ σταθμοὶ ἦσαν, εἶχε γυναῖκα καὶ αὐτῇ φιλοφρονούμενος < > μηδαμὰ προλείψειν ἐν περισσοτέρᾳ τε τιμῇ ἄξειν. (3) ἢ δὲ συνιέναι μὲν ἔφασκεν εἰς τὸ παρὸν ὡς δὴ πᾶν αὐτῆς ἐρώη· χρόνον μὲντοι τινὰ γενήσεσθαι, ἐν ᾧ ἀπαλλάξας αὐτὴν εἰς τὴν Εὐρώπην περαιωθήσεται κάκει πτοηθεὶς ἐπὶ γυναικὶ ξένη πόλεμον ἐπάξεται τοῖς οἰκείοις. (4) ἐξηγείτο δὲ ὡς δεῖ αὐτὸν ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ τρωθῆναι καὶ ὅτι οὐδεὶς αὐτὸν οἶός τε ἔσται ὑγίη ποιῆσαι ἢ αὐτῇ. ἐκάστοτε δὲ ἐπιλεγομένης αὐτῆς <ταῦτα> ἐκεῖνος οὐκ εἶα μεμνήσθαι. χρόνου δὲ προϊόντος ἐπειδὴ Ἑλένην ἔγχευεν, ἢ μὲν Οἰνῶνῃ μεμφομένη τῶν πραχθέντων τὸν Ἀλέξανδρον εἰς Κεβρήνα, ὅθεν περ ἦν γένος, ἀπεχώρησεν, ὁ δὲ παρήκοντος ἤδη τοῦ πολέμου διατοξευόμενος Φιλοκτῆτη τιτρώσκειται. (5) ἐν νῶ δὲ λαβῶν τὸ τῆς Οἰνῶνης ἔπος, ὅτε ἔφατο αὐτὸν πρὸς αὐτῆς μόνης οἶόν τε εἶναι ἰαθῆναι, κήρυκα πέμπει δεησόμενον ὅπως ἐπειχθεῖσα ἀκέσσηται τε αὐτὸν καὶ τῶν παροικομένων λήθην ποιήσεται, ἅτε δὴ κατὰ θεῶν βούλησιν [τε] ἀφικομένων. (6) ἢ δὲ αὐθαδέστερον ἀπεκρίνατο, ὡς χρὴ παρ’ Ἑλένην αὐτὸν ἰέναι ἀκακίης δείσθαι· αὐτῇ δὲ μάλιστα ἠπείγετο, ἔνθα διεπέπυστο κείσθαι αὐτόν. τοῦ δὲ κήρυκος τὰ λεχθέντα παρὰ τῆς Οἰνῶνης θάπτον ἀπαγγείλαντος ἀθυμῆσας ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος ἐξέπνευσεν. (7) Οἰνῶνῃ δὲ ἐπεὶ νέκυν ἤδη κατὰ γῆς κείμενον ἔλθοῦσα εἶδεν, ἀνώμωξέ τε καὶ πολλὰ κατολοφυραμένη διεχρήσατο ἑαυτήν.

(1) When Priam’s son Alexander was a shepherd on Mount Ida, he fell in love with Oenone, the daughter of Cebren. It is told that she was able to prophesy about the future when inspired by one of the gods and that she was very celebrated, besides, for her keen intelligence. (2) And so Alexander took her from her father’s house to Ida, where his steadings were, and

made her his wife; he <promised> her lovingly that he would never leave her and that he would hold her in ever-increasing honour. (3) She would reply that she understood very well that he was totally devoted to her for the time being, but that there would come a time when he would abandon her and cross over to Europe and there, infatuated with a foreign woman, would bring war upon his own people. (4) She went on to explain that it was fated for him to be wounded in the war and that nobody would be able to heal him save her, herself. But whenever she mentioned this, he would not allow her to continue. Time went by, and Paris married Helen; Oenone reproached him for what had happened and went back to Cebren and her family home. But then, once the war began, Paris was wounded in a duel of arrows with Philoctetes. (5) He remembered Oenone's words, when she had said that he could be healed only by her, and he sent a herald to beg her to come quickly and cure him, to forget about the past since it had all happened through the will of the gods. (6) She responded, haughtily, that he would have to go to Helen and make the request of her. Nevertheless, she made all haste to the place where she had found out he was lying. But the herald reported back Oenone's words too soon, and Alexander lost all heart and died. (7) When Oenone arrived and saw him now dead and lying on the ground, she shrieked, and amidst great lamentation ended her own life. (*EP* 4, transl. Lightfoot, adapted.)

Reading this account, one might be tempted to think it was the synopsis of an "epyllion": it fits almost to perfection the (predominantly content-related) criteria frequently invoked to define this problematic category of poem.<sup>4</sup> In a narrative fashion, centering on a limited number of characters, it treats a little-known erotic episode from the life of one of the protagonists of heroic Epic, Alexander (Paris), concentrating rather on the psychological implications of his first love-affair than on the war he caused. In focusing on an un-heroic, even "bucolic" episode from the young Alexander's life, it presents us with a picture of him before he became the famous Paris of the *Iliad*.<sup>5</sup> The story's real protagonist moreover is a woman, the nymph Oenone, and the outline provides various cues for her to indulge in prophecies (3, 4), speeches (4, 6) and laments (7) thus creating interesting possibilities for a-chronological narrative and digression. The subject matter is sentimental and full of pathos, but does not necessitate an endless or complicated narrative; it would allow handling on a relatively brief scale.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. on these criteria Baumbach in this volume; see also Fantuzzi's (1998a) description of epyllion. For the opinion that this could be epyllion-material, cf. Lightfoot (1999) 68.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. pseudo-Moschus' *Epithalamium of Achilles and Deidamia* 10–11; the story eventually told in that poem likewise focuses on the erotic "pre-quel" of Achilles' heroic life. Another famous example is Theocritus' *Idyll* 1: Polyphemus as shepherd in love with Galatea.

In thinking this the stuff of epyllion, would we be anywhere near the truth? Perhaps; since Parthenius himself writes in his remarkable dedicatory preface to the *EP* that he has collected this and other stories for Cornelius Gallus (he of Vergil's 6th and 10th *Eclogues*) with the express purpose that the latter might “render the most appropriate ones in hexameters and elegiac verses” (2: αὐτῷ τέ σοι παρέσται εἰς ἔπη καὶ ἐλεγείας ἀνάγειν τὰ μάλιστα ἐξ αὐτῶν ἀρμόδια.) If fully narrative poems were envisaged, this could well have included epyllia. But this is certainly not the only possibility. The material also seems eminently fit for treatment in the segmented narratives of hexametric catalogue poetry, or in the *exempla* of Latin love elegies, to name only some examples.<sup>6</sup> In the following I will investigate the question of what kind of poetry Parthenius may have expected Gallus (and perhaps others) to write.<sup>7</sup> The issue of whether this might have included epyllion will be addressed and the apparent lack of differentiation between elegy and hexameter for practical purposes will receive special attention.<sup>8</sup>

## 2. Parthenius and the Erotika Pathemata

Since the life of Parthenius is often taken to impinge on the importance of his works, I will offer a brief biography. The *Suda* states that he was a Hellenized Greek from Bithynia, either Nicaea or Myrlea (Apamea) who was brought to Rome as a young(ish) man in 73 BC, during the Mithridatic Wars.<sup>9</sup> The Cinna among whose loot Parthenius ended up is commonly

<sup>6</sup> The version of Ovid's *Heroides* V shows that other elegiac treatments in other hard to define genres such as the fictive elegiac epistle (cf. *Ars am.* 3.346) were equally possible.

<sup>7</sup> Cairns (1979) 226 reasonably assumes that the dedication to Gallus is also a rhetorical ploy by which Parthenius is “commending his own handbook to the general public, by declaring it to have been written ‘by appointment to Cornelius Gallus.’”

<sup>8</sup> *Prima facie*, this lack of differentiation contrasts with statements like: *Callimachi numeris non est dicendus Achilles / Cydippe non est oris Homere, tibi* (*Ov. Rem. am.* 381–382) and *Plus valet in amore Mimnermi versus Homero* (*Prop.* 1.9.11). But it is of course possible that such rigid separations of epic and elegy were tendentious or disingenuous. Ovid's “epic” *Metamorphoses* treat a great amount of erotic material, while his elegiac *Fasti* do not, or at least not prominently. In *Ars Am.* 11–18 Eros is explicitly compared to Achilles, which seems a provocative statement. For further thoughts on what Ovid claimed to be fitting in heroic versus elegiac narrative, cf. Fantuzzi in this volume.

<sup>9</sup> *Suda* s.v. Παρθένιος. See Lightfoot (1999) 11 and Francese (2001) 17–24 on the justification of the date of his arrival in Rome. It is usually assumed that Parthenius was already an accomplished poet when he was brought to Rome, on the grounds that the fragments of the *Arete* refer only to geographical landmarks in the region of Bithynia. Of course this need not be conclusive.

identified with Gaius Helvius Cinna, the poet of the (lost) “epyllion” *Zmyrna* (hailed by Catullus in *Carmen* 95; the same Cinna is probably named in *Ecl.* 9.35), or else with his father.<sup>10</sup> The information that Parthenius lived until Emperor Tiberius (ἐβίω μέχρι Τιβερίου τοῦ Καίσαρος) can be correct only if it is taken to mean that Tiberius (born in 42 BC) was a (very) young man while Parthenius was still alive, since he only became emperor in 14 AD.<sup>11</sup>

According to the *Suda*, Parthenius was a poet in various meters (μέτρων διαφόρων ποιητής), whose major works included the elegiac *Aphrodite*, and one or more poems on his dead wife Arete.<sup>12</sup> Today this poetical output is virtually lost, the longest comprehensible poetical fragment being six lines long.<sup>13</sup> Yet we hear that once Parthenius was among the favorite poets of Emperor Tiberius and that Hadrian thought highly of him.<sup>14</sup> Apart from finding favor with princes, Parthenius’ poetry seems to have been admired by what may be considered able judges, namely Vergil and Cornelius Gallus. Macrobius (*Sat.* 5.17.18) quotes a line (*Georg.* 1.437) which Vergil purportedly translated from Parthenius and states that he was Vergil’s *grammaticus in Graecis*.<sup>15</sup> The phrase probably signifies that Parthenius acted as Vergil’s consultant in matters of Greek mythology, poetry, (geographical) nomenclature and the like.<sup>16</sup> What supports this notion is the

<sup>10</sup> For troubles surrounding the identification of this Cinna, see Lightfoot (1999) 12–13. Clausen (1964) argued that the *Zmyrna* was influenced by Parthenius on the grounds of the occurrence of the obscure Cyprian river Satrachus in this epyllion and in Parthenius fr. 29, in the context of an Adonis-narrative. (Adonis was the son of Zmyrna and Cinyras.) Otis (<sup>2</sup>1966) 27 concurred.

<sup>11</sup> Assuming that Parthenius came to Rome as an adult, this would lead to impossibly high old age. It has been suggested, however, that this information was influenced by the fact that Tiberius greatly admired Parthenius’ poetry (cf. Suet. *Vit. Tib.* 70).

<sup>12</sup> ἔγραψε δὲ ἐλεγείας, Ἀφροδίτην, Ἀρήτης ἐπικήδειον τῆς γαμετῆς, Ἀρήτης ἐγκώμιον ἐν τρισὶ βιβλίοις. See Lightfoot (1999) 30–33 on the question whether this implies one or more elegies on Arete.

<sup>13</sup> In referring to Parthenius’ works I adopt the numbering of Lightfoot’s (2009) edition.

<sup>14</sup> Tiberius: Suetonius *Vit. Tib.* 70.2; Hadrian: *IG* xiv 1089 (Kaibel *Ep. Gr.* 1089; *GVI* 2050; Page *FGE* p.568–571), an epigram to commemorate the restoration of Parthenius’ grave in Tivoli.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. similar claims in Aul. Gell. *NA* 13.27.1; *NA* 9.9.3. The fact that Donatus says that Vergil bore the sobriquet *Parthenias* (“Parthenius’ little friend” perhaps rather than “the maidenlike”) might confirm this.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. e.g. the way in which the word *grammaticus* is used in Suet. *Vit. Tib.* 70: *Maxime tamen curavit [sc. Tiberius] notitiam historiae fabularis usque ad ineptias atque derisum; nam et grammaticos, quod genus hominum praecipue, ut diximus, appetebat, eius modi fere quaestionibus experiebatur: “Quae mater Hecubae, quod Achilli nomen inter uirgines fuisset, quid Sirenes cantare sint solitae.”*



dedicatory preface of the *EP*, as noted addressed to the elegist Cornelius Gallus, in which Parthenius says he has compiled a collection of love stories as a *hypomnema* for Gallus.<sup>17</sup>

ΠΑΡΘΕΝΙΟΣ ΚΟΡΝΗΛΙΩΙ ΓΑΛΛΩΙ ΧΑΙΡΕΙΝ.

(1) Μάλιστα σοὶ δοκῶν ἀρμόττειν, Κορνήλιε Γάλλε, τὴν ἄθροισιν τῶν ἐρωτικῶν παθημάτων ἀναλεξάμενος ὡς ὅτι πλείστα ἐν βραχυτάτοις ἀπέσταλκα. τὰ γὰρ παρά τισι τῶν ποιητῶν κείμενα τούτων, μὴ αὐτοτελῶς λελεγμένα, κατανοήσεις ἐκ τῶνδε τὰ πλείστα· (2) αὐτῷ τέ σοι παρέσται εἰς ἔπη καὶ ἐλεγείας ἀνάγειν τὰ μάλιστα ἐξ αὐτῶν ἀρμόδια. <μηδὲ> διὰ τὸ μὴ παρεῖναι τὸ περιττὸν αὐτοῖς, ὃ δὴ σὺ μετέρχη, χεῖρον περὶ αὐτῶν ἐννοηθῆς· οἶονεὶ γὰρ ὑπομνηματίων τρόπον αὐτὰ συνελεξάμεθα, καὶ σοὶ νυνὶ τὴν χρῆσιν ὁμοίαν, ὡς ἔοικε, παρέξεται.

Thinking, Cornelius Gallus, that the collection of sufferings in love was very appropriate to you, I have selected them and sent them to you in as brief a form as possible. For those among the present collection that occur in certain poets where they are not narrated in their own right, you will find out for the most part from what follows. You too, will be able to render the most suitable of them in hexameters and elegiacs. Think none the worse of them because they lack that quality of refined elaboration which you pursue. For I have collected them after the fashion of a little notebook and they will, I trust, serve you in the same way. (translation Lightfoot)

What did this “little notebook” look like? The entire collection consists of 36 short stories, which might qualify as “myths” in that they tell—more or less—traditional tales that address questions of some relevance to society; in particular how (not) to handle erotic desire.<sup>18</sup> However, many are strictly bound to local traditions (e.g. the Southern-Italian aetiological tale of Hipparinus and Antileon *EP* 7) and some concern individuals from the relatively near past (e.g. Cleonymus and Chilonis, *EP* 23, contemporaries of Pyrrhus of Epirus). In general, the supernatural and the gods play a minor role.<sup>19</sup> According to a recognizably Hellenistic aesthetic, the stories

<sup>17</sup> The writing of prose *hypomnemata*, anything from thematically ordered compilations to synopses and epitomes of works of prose and poetry, for the use of other authors, be they poets or writers of prose, was broadly practiced in the Hellenistic and Roman era. Books were expensive and often hard to come by, and browsing the libraries was a time-consuming activity which many authors who also fulfilled public roles (like Cornelius Gallus, who held various high military functions) simply lacked the time for. On the history and characteristics of *hypomnemata* see Lightfoot (1999) 217–222; Francese (2001) 37–46 with further bibliography there. See further Lightfoot (1999) 368–371 on translation and interpretation of the preface of the *EP*.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Burkert's (1979) definition of myth: “a traditional tale with secondary, partial reference to something of collective importance” (23).

<sup>19</sup> E.g. in *EP* 15 Daphne is said to be the daughter of Amyclas rather than of the river Ladon, and in 20, Orion is a boorish lout rather than a giant; the gods play significant roles

either concern obscure characters (e.g. Herippe and the Gaul, *EP* 8), or else relate little-known events from the lives of well-known characters (e.g. Odysseus and Aeolus' daughter Polymele *EP* 2; Paris and Oenone *EP* 4, Achilles and Peisidice *EP* 21). The single topic is intractable erotic passion, mostly resulting in gruesome bloodshed: murder, mutilation and suicide are rife (the exceptions are *EP* 1, 2, 12, 16, 30, where no one gets killed). In this respect they not only differ from the topics of Hellenistic poets like Callimachus or Theocritus,<sup>20</sup> but also from the Romance novel, with which they have sometimes (mistakenly) been connected.<sup>21</sup>

The collection concentrates on heterosexual couples and especially on women and their feelings, although it contains two stories of male homosexual lovers (*EP* 7, 24). Among its erotic themes, two taboo motifs unfamiliar from Hellenistic poetry, but frequent in Latin *epyllia* (inspired by the *EP*?), keep returning. There is a striking concentration of incestuous passions (father and daughter *EP* 13, 33; mother and son *EP* 17, 34; brother and sister *EP* 2, 5, 11, 31) and we also find a large number of tales involving a girl's irresistible passion for the enemy's commander (mostly) leading to high treason (the so-called *Tarpeia*-motif, *EP* 5, 9, 21, 22, 23).<sup>22</sup> Of course the incest-theme has a long history in Greek literature (the story of Oedipus may already be found in *Od.* 11.271–280, apart from its famous treatment in Sophocles' tragedies), but the great concentration here suggests that the theme was for some reason very much *en vogue*.<sup>23</sup> Approaching this issue from a poetical angle, Francese plausibly suggests that it was used by poets of the age

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only in 15 (Apollo, in love with Daphne), 27 (Athena avenging a poor weaving woman) and 33 (Niobe arousing Leto's anger).

<sup>20</sup> The exception that comes to mind is [Theocritus] 23, the so-called *Suicide paraclausithyron*.

<sup>21</sup> So most prominently Rohde (<sup>3</sup>1914) 121–127.

<sup>22</sup> A good third is the breach of moral codes of hospitality (*EP* 2, 14, 18); other plots centre on the effects of erotic jealousy or suspicion, mourning for deceased beloveds, illicit affairs, or greed. The majority of these incest and treason stories may be reduced to a simple pattern: the protagonist becomes aware of his/her abject passion; he/she tries to resist; he/she succumbs; the passion is consummated and/or revealed; disaster ensues. Cf. Francese (2000) 151–155, building on the structural analysis of incest narratives in Latin poetry by Verducci (1985) 181–234.

<sup>23</sup> Two fragments of Parthenius' own poetry (frs. 28 and 33) also treat this theme, and there is further evidence that he wrote on Smyrna and her father (fr. 29). Cinna and Ovid treated the Smyrna-story as well; Ovid further also treated the Byblis-story and the story of the siblings Macareus and Canace (which is not found in extant fragments of Parthenius).



to extend the boundaries of the love story genre, rather than to evoke the primal shiver of tragedy. The shock of the act remains, but it is derived not from the violation of the taboo, but from the juxtaposition of the incest with normal romantic codes, which it ironizes and denaturalizes.<sup>24</sup>

As Francese recognizes, this may be applied more broadly to encompass the theme of high treason for erotic motives, or other perverse and unhappy passions as well (cf. the Pseudo-Vergilian *Ciris*, Prop. 4.4, Tarpeia).

Where did Parthenius find this material? The Byzantine scholiast has in many cases noted which other, earlier, authors also told the story<sup>25</sup> and, as far as it may be checked, these indications appear to be essentially correct, although it is unclear whether they refer to *sources* or rather *parallels* of Parthenius' accounts.<sup>26</sup> Despite the fact that in the preface Parthenius specifically emphasizes the part of the stories that derives from poetical sources (τὰ . . . παρά τισι τῶν ποιητῶν κείμενα), a great number of them are actually referred by the scholiast to historiographical<sup>27</sup> or even peripatetic-philosophical<sup>28</sup> prose accounts, suggesting that Parthenius must have browsed more than just the scrolls of poetic predecessors.<sup>29</sup> Yet, for some reason these prose authors apparently were not thought interesting enough to be named on their own account. This implies that Parthenius'

<sup>24</sup> Francese (2001) 152.

<sup>25</sup> The *EP* are preserved in the *Codex Palatinus graecus* 398 dating from the ninth century, together with works by Antoninus Liberalis and Hanno the Carthaginian. In some cases the scholiast clearly did not find parallels and noted a ligature of the O and Y, presumably meaning οὐ ("I could not find anything"); sometimes even this indication is absent. It is generally accepted that these indications (Lightfoot calls them *manchettes*) were not provided by Parthenius himself. Parthenius does occasionally name and quote authors, cf. discussion below.

<sup>26</sup> Whenever the version named by the scholiast survives, Parthenius' own treatment does not have the appearance of a mere synopsis, cf. Francese (2001) 84–89, an analysis the parallels or sources of *EP* 9.

<sup>27</sup> *EP* 4: Cephalon of Gergithia, *Trojan Histories*; *EP* 4: Nicander, *On Poets* (?); *EP* 6: Theagenes; Hegesippus, *Pallenian History*; *EP* 7: Phanius of Eresus; *EP* 8: Aristodemus of Nysa, *Histories*; *EP* 9: Andriscus, *Naxian History*; *EP* 11: Aristocritus, *Milesian Histories*; *EP* 14: "the writers of Milesian History"; *EP* 15: Phylarchus, Book 15 of his *Histories*; *EP* 16: Hegesippus, *Pallenian History*; *EP* 19: Andriscus, *Naxian History*; *EP* 25: Phylarchus; *EP* 29: Timaeus, *Sicilian History*; *EP* 33: Xanthus, *Lydian History*; Neanthes; *EP* 34: Hellanicus, *Trojan Histories*; Cephalon of Gergithia; *EP* 36: Asclepiades of Myrlea, *Bithynian History*.

<sup>28</sup> *EP* 9 and *EP* 18: Theophrastus, *Political Crises*; *EP* 14: Aristotle (an unnamed work).

<sup>29</sup> *EP* 1: Nicaenetus of Samos, *Lycus*; Apollonius of Rhodes, *Caunus*; *EP* 2: Philetas, *Hermes*; *EP* 3: Sophocles, *Euryalus*; *EP* 5: Hermesianax, *Leontion*; *EP* 11: Apollonius of Rhodes, (*The Foundation of*) *Caunus*; *EP* 13: Euphorion, *Thrax*; Dectadas (? unattested name); *EP* 14: the otherwise unknown Diodorus of Elea, *Elegies*; *EP* 22: Licymnius of Chios (lyric poet); Hermesianax; *EP* 25: Euphorion, *Thrax*; *EP* 27: Moero, *Curses*; *EP* 28: Euphorion, *Apollodorus*; Apollonius, *Argonautica*; *EP* 33: Simmias of Rhodes.

concern is not so much with **truth or** the correct rendering of his sources as with anecdote and plot; where his material derives from is much less interesting than to what use it may now be put.<sup>30</sup>

In some cases more than one version of a particular story is given. Thus in *EP* 11, where the variant of the story stems from the question whether it was Byblis who fell in love with Caunus or vice versa, Parthenius quotes verse elaborations of both stories, noting that the story that it was Byblis, the version he has versified himself, is the majority view (*EP* 11.3 οί δὲ πλείους . . . φασὶν . . .). This seems not so much to imply that he holds this to be more likely as that he perhaps thinks it offers a fine opportunity for painting a maiden desperately in love (cf. the general tendency to concentrate on women's feelings).<sup>31</sup> But we may equally think that he is offering Gallus the possibility of inserting both variants in his final elaboration, a mannerism not rare in Hellenistic poetry.<sup>32</sup>

Parthenius claims that the material he has taken from other poets has not been treated independently or completely (μὴ αὐτοτελῶς λελεγμένα); the stories are only *alluded to* in earlier authors, not told in their own right.<sup>33</sup> In many cases this is arguably the reason for **as** much as the result of—the fact that they are abstruse and out of the way. Of course this answers perfectly to a taste that prefers the piquancy of untrodden paths combined with the learning of the library. It allows the envisaged versifier the paradoxical erudite originality of a “new” and yet traditional story, which he may treat as he likes, unhampered by overwhelming examples set by famous predecessors. *A fortiori* this would apply for—obscure—prose authors.

<sup>30</sup> This may be contrasted with the way in which Callimachus names his prose source, Xenomedes of Ceos in fr. 75.76 (Acontius and Cydippe), where he explicitly calls him πρέσβυς ἐτητυμίη μεμελημένος “the old man concerned with truth.” In general, the extensive mining of prose treatises for material (without explicit source-indications) is a well-established characteristic of learned Hellenistic poetry.

<sup>31</sup> Other instances: 14: Cleoboea is alternatively named Philaechme; 26: Apriate was killed by Trambelus or killed herself; 28: Cyzicus died because he wanted to save Cleite from her incestuous father, or because the Argonauts accidentally killed him; 32 gives an additional note on the origins of the name of the thicket where Anthippe is accidentally slain; 33 provides an obscure variant of the Niobe-story.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Lightfoot (1999) 272, quoting Lyne (1978b) 125 on *Ciris* 54–91. We may also think of Callimachus' *Hymn to Zeus*, where variations of the myth are made into a major theme, or Apollonius Rhodius *Arg.* 4.982–990.

<sup>33</sup> See Lightfoot (1999) 369.

3. “ἐλεγειοποιός και μέτρων διαφόρων ποιητής”: *The Poetry of Parthenius*

We set out to answer the question what kind of poetry Parthenius expected the *EP* to inspire, and in particular whether epyllia might be among them, and if so, how they might differ from elegies. Since the *EP*'s preface does not appear to address in any detail theoretical issues of contemporary generic classification, I have likewise chosen to approach the question from a practical angle, and compare the material in the *EP* with the kind of poetry that was *de facto* composed by Parthenius and his addressee.<sup>34</sup> To begin with, we may look at the fragments of Parthenius' own poetry.

Elegies clearly take pride of place among his works,<sup>35</sup> but he apparently wrote in (many?) other meters besides. Some surviving fragments attest to his writing hexameters (frs. 33–34), but there are no recognizable lyric or iambic fragments. The *Aphrodite* and *Epicedium of Arete* and the *Encomium of Arete in Three Books* are repeatedly singled out in the *testimonia* and may therefore be major works.<sup>36</sup> They appear to have been elegiac; the two last titles may however refer to the same work.<sup>37</sup> Despite the unrevealing formulation in the *Suda* (περὶ μεταμορφώσεως ἔγραψε), it is likely that Parthenius' *Metamorphoses* too were a work of poetry.<sup>38</sup> Other sources attest to the existence of more elegiac and hexametric poems with titles suggesting either mythological subject matter (consisting perhaps of hymns and narrative poetry, just possibly “epyllia”) or more personal topics (possibly epicedia, epithalamia and *propemptika*).<sup>39</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Also, a complete discussion of the difficult material of ancient theories about epic and elegy would go beyond the scope of a single paper. For some useful remarks on what ancient theorists say about form and content of small epic, see Koster (1970) 124–130 and Gutzwiller in this volume.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. *Suda* s.v. ἐλεγειοποιός; the epigram by Hadrian (*SH* 605d), Erycius *AP* 7.377, Pollian *AP* 11.130.

<sup>36</sup> *Suda*; *SH* 605d (Hadrian?) also singles out *Arete* among his achievements.

<sup>37</sup> Parth. frs. 2–5, a heavily-mutilated vellum codex with marginal *scholia*, were convincingly argued by Pfeiffer to derive from the lament on *Arete* (1943) 23–32. I follow Lightfoot (1999) 134, who tentatively assumes that the epicedium should be identified with the three book encomium. The only problem with this identification is that epicedia were usually briefer.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Lightfoot (1999) 113, on the basis of *Suda* N 261, on a poet Nestor, who wrote *Μεταμορφώσεις, ὡσπερ και Παρθένιος ὁ Νικαεύς*, and fr. 24, a *scholium* on Dionysius Periegetes reproducing the account of the name of the Saronic sea which Parthenius would have given in his *Metamorphoses*.

<sup>39</sup> The titles *Aphrodite* (fr. 7), *Delos* (frs. 10–12), *Leucadiae* (fr. 14) (elegiac), *Anthippe* (frs. 15–16), *Heracles* (frs. 19–22), *Iphiclus* (fr. 23) and *Metamorphoses* (fr. 24ab) (either hexametric or elegiac) suggest narrative treatment of myth, while *Arete* (frs. 1–5), *Epicedium for Archelais* (fr. 6), *(To) Bias* (frs. 8–9) (elegiac), *Crinagoras* (fr. 13) and *Epicedium*

Ancient testimonies mostly align the style and subject matter of Parthenius' poetry with that of Callimachus and Euphorion.<sup>40</sup> He is also named in combination with Lycophron and Rhianus.<sup>41</sup> Critics take him to task for his long-windedness, perhaps in digressions, and his difficult, recherché vocabulary is remarked upon, as is his choice of obscure myths.<sup>42</sup> The epigrammatist Erycius (*AP* 7.377), finally, harshly abuses the (dead) Parthenius, calling him a slave and condemning his elegies on what appear to be moral grounds (μιαρογλώσσου 2; μυσαρῶν ἀπλυσίην ἐλέγων, l. 4), and because he would have spoken in offensive terms of Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad* (l. 5–6). A more or less consistent picture emerges: Parthenius was a learned, "Hellenistic" poet, writing in a recherché vocabulary and digressive style on abstruse, insalubrious subjects of the kind Euphorion liked (we shall see that he too favors perverse affairs with violent endings), in a style influenced by Callimachus. On these grounds he has been seen as the last of the Alexandrians, the man who "brought Callimachus to Rome."<sup>43</sup>

Parthenius' two longest surviving poetical fragments seem to bear the characterizations of the *testimonia* out. Although it is unknown from which poems they derive and what their precise function in the context was, they may serve to illustrate his erudition, his sophisticated language and metre,<sup>44</sup> and the "elegant, even mannered construction of [his] lines, their careful syntactic balance, imagery and euphony."<sup>45</sup> Of the two fragments, one is elegiac (fr. 28) and one hexametric (fr. 33), but they are remarkably alike in subject matter, in that both treat stories of maidens suffering from pernicious incestuous passions, in one case for the girl's

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for *Auxithemis* (fr. 17), *Propemptikon* (fr. 26) (hexametric or elegiac) suggest more personal poetry. It is hard to know what to make of the title *Eidolophanes* (fr. 18, either hexametric or elegiac) or of the claim in a *scholium* on Vergil that Parthenius wrote a Greek *Moretum* (cod. Ambrosianus T 21 *sup* = fr. 25).

<sup>40</sup> Respectively Luc. *De hist. conscr.* 56–57, *AP* 11.130 and Luc. *De hist. conscr.* 56–57, Suet. *Tib.* 70.2.

<sup>41</sup> Respectively Artemidorus *Oneirocr.* 4.63; Suet. *Tib.* 70.2.

<sup>42</sup> Respectively Luc. *De hist. conscr.* 56–57, *AP* 7.377 and *AP* 11.130, Galen *De sent. med.* ap. Kalbfleisch (1942) 377 and Artemidorus *Oneirocr.* 4.63.

<sup>43</sup> Clausen (1964) 187–188; Seth-Smith (1981) 63.

<sup>44</sup> Fr. 33 includes two four-syllabic *spondeiazontes* at verse end; cf. Cicero (*Ad Att.* 7.2.1) who appears to name this as a mannerism favored by the *poetae novi*.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Francese (2001) 47–58; Lightfoot (2001) 177–181; 187–191; van Groningen (1953) emphasizes the importance of euphony for Parthenius; Clausen (1964) 190 has pointed to the elaborate structural symmetries in fr. 33.

own father (fr. 28: Comaetho and Cydnus), in the other for her brother (fr. 33: Byblis and Caunus, quoted by Parthenius himself in *EP* 11).<sup>46</sup>

παρθένος ἢ Κιλίκων εἶχεν ἀνακτορίην,  
ἀγχίγαμος δ' ἔπελεν, καθαρῶ δ' ἐπεμαίνετο Κύδνω,  
Κύπριδος ἐξ ἀδύτων πυρσὸν ἀναψαμένη,  
Εἰσόκε μιν Κύπρις πηγὴν θέτο, μίξε δ' ἔρωτι  
Κύδνου καὶ νύμφης ὑδατόεντα γάμον.

A maiden ruling over the Cilicians,  
to wedlock near, she raved with love for Cydnus,  
Lighting a torch for him from Cypris' shrine;  
till, rendering her a spring, Cypris conjoined  
of river and nymph an aqueous match. (fr. 28, Comaetho, transl. Lightfoot)

ἢ δ' ὅτε δὴ <ρ'> ὀλοοῖο κασιγνήτου νόον ἔγνω,  
κλαίεν ἀηδονίδων θαμινώτερον, αἴ τ' ἐνὶ βήσσης  
Σιθονίῳ κούρῳ πέρι μυρίον αἰάζουσιν.  
καὶ ῥα κατὰ στυφελοῖο σαρωνίδος αὐτίκα μίτρην  
ἀψαμένη δειρὴν ἐνεθήκατο· ταί δ' ἐπ' ἐκείνη  
βεύδεα παρθενικαὶ Μιλησίδες ἐρρήξαντο.

And once she knew her cruel brother's intent,  
her shrieks came thicker than the  
nightingales' in woods who ever mourn the Thracian lad.  
Her girdle to a rugged oak she  
tied, and laid her neck within.  
And over her Milesian maidens rent their lovely robes. (fr. 33 Byblis, transl.  
Lightfoot)

If we wanted to tease out possible generic differences from these fragments, it may be noted that whereas the elegiac Comaetho-fragment suggests very brief and contained treatment (Lightfoot speaks of an “Alexandrian footnote”), the hexametrical Byblis-fragment seems to have been part of a slightly longer narrative. Judging by the context of its citation in Eustathius (quoting Stephanus Byzantius), the Comaetho-fragment moreover derives from a description of a fountain at the Cilician village of Glaphyrae.<sup>47</sup> This suggests a geographical, aetiological narrative, perhaps focusing on metamorphoses, since Comaetho turns into a spring; the story may therefore derive from Parthenius' *Metamorphoses*. All the

<sup>46</sup> It may or may not be relevant that an author named *Parthenius* apparently made it his specialty to write of παρθένοι, (fr. 28.1; fr. 33.6). In relation to fr. 28, the editors of *SH* moreover point out that Cydnus had a son named Parthenius who became the eponym of the Cilician city Parthenia.

<sup>47</sup> Steph. Byz. ap. Eustath. *Il.* 2.712 = 327.37; cf. Lightfoot (1999) 177–178.

same, it may have been part of an elegy enumerating the fates of unhappy maidens, or more broadly exemplifying unhappy loves, in the manner of a thematically inspired catalogue like Hermesianax' *Leontion*.

The hexametric Byblis-fragment has tentatively been interpreted as part of an "epylliac" digression embedded in a longer narrative, e.g. incorporated in an *ekphrasis* shedding light on the fate of the protagonists of the main story through contrast or analogy (cf. Moschus' *Europa*).<sup>48</sup> All the same, it may have been the ending of a longer narrative in a poem on a small scale (cf. Theocritus' *Idyll* 13). Alternatively, it may have been one tale of unhappy love in a series, again in the popular manner of Hellenistic catalogue poetry, only in hexameters (e.g. Moero's *Curses*, Euphorion's *Thrax*).<sup>49</sup> Although it does not contain, in its present state, a metamorphosis, the context suggests that there may well have been one;<sup>50</sup> so this fragment too could possibly derive from the *Metamorphoses*, if they were hexametric rather than elegiac.

So what can we say about Parthenius' output? Lightfoot states that the question of whether it included epyllia is "misguided, if it presupposes anything too precise," since, in the manner of Allen,<sup>51</sup> she sees the existence of epyllia as a definable category as "a self-generated problem caused by the modern imposition of the word on innocent ancient sources." However, even if we take the term loosely, we "simply do not know whether any of Parthenius poems were straight narratives on mythological themes. . . . [T]he *Anthippe* for example, could have been, but could also have been, for example, a monologue by the distressed heroine, like the *Megara*."<sup>52</sup> The elegiac side is somewhat more revealing: since we hardly hear of any substantial Greek elegy (narrative or otherwise) in the centuries following Callimachus, this automatically makes Parthenius' elegies more or less unique in his own time.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, if the *Arete* was indeed a multi-book elegy, which had as its theme or motif the death of the poet's wife, it may have owed something to one of the only three other known (long) elegies

<sup>48</sup> Cazzaniga (1961) 51, n. 20 suspects that it was part of an *ekphrasis*.

<sup>49</sup> The fact that the *Thrax* of Euphorion is actually named as the source of the story of Apriate and Trambelus (*EP* 26) illustrates that the *EP* would have been perfectly adaptable to curse poetry.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Lightfoot (1999) 438.

<sup>51</sup> Allen (1940) 1–26; 515–518; (1958) 515–518.

<sup>52</sup> Lightfoot (1999) 49.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. the discussion of scanty testimonies for Hellenistic (post-Callimachean) elegy in Lightfoot (1999) 24–28. It may be noted that epigram (by then a genre in its own right) was flourishing.



named after women, the *Nanno* of Mimnermus, the *Lyde* of Antimachus and the *Leontion* of Hermesianax.<sup>54</sup> This suggests a literary sensibility that looked back to the heyday of Hellenism and beyond.<sup>55</sup> Fragments from the *Arete* are too scanty, however, to confirm whether it was predominantly personal in the manner of Latin elegy, or predominantly mythical like its Hellenistic predecessors.

#### 4. Chalcidico quae sunt mihi condita versu: *The Poetry of Gallus*

The next avenue to go down would naturally be a discussion of the poetry of Gallus, the elusive elegist to whom the *EP* were offered according to the preface. Practically nothing of his poetry survives apart from the scanty remains from Qaṣr Ibrīm, and we are therefore relegated to the *testimonia*, which point to love-elegy.<sup>56</sup> Servius, for instance, notes about his poetical production: *amorum suorum de Cytheride* (= Lycoris) *scripsit libros quattuor*; which may well indicate a volume under the title *Amores*. We do not know either at what point in his career the *EP* were offered to him. Was he already an established poet of love elegy by then? And if so, then why might Parthenius expect him to write hexametric poetry, and what kind?

Such questions inevitably lead to the tantalizing Vergilian *Eclogues* 6 and 10, where echoes of Gallan poetic themes have been suspected. On the basis of these *Eclogues*, it has been surmised that Gallus at some point was inspired by Euphorion in themes or style, although it remains debated whether he incorporated these themes or style into his *elegies*, or was (considering) writing *hexameters* on them.<sup>57</sup> At *Ecl.* 10.50 Gallus is

<sup>54</sup> The single other known example of a multi-book elegy is Callimachus' *Aetia*, which does not concentrate only on erotic motifs; it may have been a response to Antimachus' *Lyde*. About the contents of the *Nanno* little is known (cf. West [1974]; Bowie [1997a]). The *Lyde* appears to have contained a collection of (tragic) myths which the poet told himself to reconcile himself to the death of *Lyde* (cf. Matthews [1996], Wyss [1936]). The *Leontion* is a catalogue elegy modeled after the Hesiodic *Ehoëae*, recounting the purported love-affairs of famous poets and thinkers. From the fragments of the *Arete* it is hard to see to which (if any) of these elegies the poem owed anything.

<sup>55</sup> It has been suspected that the *Arete* inspired the elegiacs by Calvus on his dead wife or mistress Quintilia; see Courtney (1993) 208 on frs. 15–16.

<sup>56</sup> Prominently among them Quint. 10.1.93, Ovid. *Am.* 1.15.29–30, *Tr.* 4.10.53, Prop. 2.34.91–92, Mart. 8.73.6 etc. See in general Courtney (1993) 259–270, with bibliography.

<sup>57</sup> Pace Courtney (1993) 262. He thinks *Chalcidico* at 10.50 refers to the obscure alleged inventor of elegy Theocles of Chalcis, because he cannot believe that Vergil meant to say that Gallus had written hexameters, the meter in which Euphorion predominantly wrote.

made to refer to *Chalcidico quae sunt mihi condita versu*, which is generally taken as a reference to Euphorion of *Chalcis* (cf. Quint. 10.1.56), and hence to poetry in his style and/or meter. It seems that the remark of Servius on *Ecl.* 6.72 *His tibi Grynei nemoris dicatur origo* may shed some more light on what kind of topics this could have included. He states *hoc autem Euphorionis continent carmina, quae Gallus transtulit in sermonem Latinum* (this is treated in the poems of Euphorion, which Gallus translated into Latin). *Hoc* must mean *Grynei nemoris origo* “(the origin of) the Grynean wood.” The exact reference of *carmina, quae* is unclear, however (perhaps rather the Euphorionic corpus as a whole rather than a particular poem), as is the exact meaning of *transtulit* (which might denote anything from exact translation to creative emulation). Yet, the connection with Euphorion is more than likely.<sup>58</sup> There is moreover a probable connection with Parthenius too, since he wrote about the Grynean wood himself (fr. 10, the elegiac *Delos*). Such poems on (the foundation of) the Grynean wood might have incorporated the contest between Calchas and Teiresias as recounted by [Hesiod] in the *Melampodia*, or, more likely, the (aetiological) tale of the Amazon Gryne, raped by Apollo.<sup>59</sup>

So this brings us to the next practically blank space in literary history, the fragmentary poet Euphorion, who, from what fragments we have, appears to have favored abstruse mythological tales in obscure language. The *testimonia* and fragments suggest that he wrote mainly in hexameters.<sup>60</sup> There is however another important link back from Euphorion to Parthenius, since the scholiast names Euphorion as a parallel or source for three of the *EP* (13, 26, 28), which means he outnumbers all the other authors indicated in the “manchettes.” We might tentatively suggest, then, that at least these three tales would have seemed likely to appeal to Gallus, if he was, as Vergil implies, an emulator of Euphorion. What kind of stories are they? Two involve incest between father and daughter (13: Harpalyce and Clymenus, 28: Cleite and Piasus),<sup>61</sup> the former ending in fratricide and anthropophagism; the third (26: Apriate and Trambelus) is

Fantuzzi (1998b) 268 proposes that Euphorion is thought of as an elegist because Gallus was inspired by him.

<sup>58</sup> Of course this has been related with Cicero’s sneer at the *cantores Euphorionis* (Cic. *Tusc.* 3.19.45), who may or may not have included Gallus.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Lyne (1978a) 186; Lightfoot (1999) 149–151.

<sup>60</sup> On Euphorion see most recently Magnelli (2001); older studies include Meineke (1843), van Groningen (1953) and (1977).

<sup>61</sup> The first of the two variants related is attributed to Euphorion; the second to Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* 1.

a story of attempted rape resulting in murder or suicide. They stand out, especially *EP* 13, for their perverse and ghastly character. It is not exactly what we would picture in Roman love elegy, even by a poet who is characterized as *durior* than Propertius and Tibullus (Quint. 10.1.93). However, as noted, the incest theme did enjoy a remarkable efflorescence in *hexametric* Latin poetry of this period,<sup>62</sup> and these themes derive from a Greek *hexameter* poet (Euphorion) as well. This makes it marginally more likely that if Gallus was indeed going to versify this particular material, he would do it in hexameters rather than in elegiacs. Of course then the next—unanswerable—question would be whether such hexameter poems would be “epyllia,” like the Latin examples, or rather belong to the genre which Euphorion appears also to have favored, the catalogue poem.<sup>63</sup>

##### 5. *Poetical Quotations in the Erotika Pathemata*

Our final resource in attempting to answer what kind of poetry Parthenius may have expected Gallus to write will be to look at the poetry Parthenius himself quotes in the *EP*. These quotations are presumably meant to exemplify poetic style<sup>64</sup> and it is suggestive that they include both elegy (Alexander Aetolus *EP* 14), and hexameter poetry (Nicaenetus of Samos *EP* 11; Parthenius *EP* 11; Apollonius of Rhodes *EP* 21;<sup>65</sup> Nicander) as if to provide examples of treatments in both generic types proposed in the preface. But why were these authors and these passages selected? Do they hold any clues for the kind of poetry Parthenius expected Gallus to write? To begin with, all quotes save Parthenius' own Byblis-fragment derive from (early) Hellenistic poets, viz. Nicaenetus, Apollonius, Alexander Aetolus, Nicander; this is unsurprising considering Parthenius' own stylistic preferences as characterized by the *testimonia* and borne out by

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Cinna's *Zmyrna*, later Ovid's *Myrrha* (*Met.* 10.298–502) and Byblis (*Met.* 9.450) and Macareus and Canace (*Her.* 11).

<sup>63</sup> Euphorion's *Thrax*, *Chiliades* and *Arae* or *Poteriokleptes* all appear to have been curse poems. A number of Euphorion's titles suggest mythological epyllia (e.g. *Dionysus*, *Dionysus Kechènos*, *Hyacinthus*), while some titles simply withstand interpretation (e.g. *Apolodorus*, *Artemidorus*, *Xenius*, *Polycharès*); see Fantuzzi (1998b).

<sup>64</sup> The one exception appears to be the three-line hexameter quote in *EP* 34, from Nicander, which appears to be inserted “only to illustrate the variant version of Corythos' parentage” (a son of Helen and Paris, rather than of Oenone and Paris), Lightfoot (1999) 547. For this reason I exclude this fragment from discussion.

<sup>65</sup> The author whom Parthenius names “the writer of the *Lesbou Ktisis*” is, since Müller, usually identified with Apollonius of Rhodes.

his own fragments. Hexametric fragments dominate in quantity (4 to 1), but the elegiac fragment by Alexander Aetolus stands out for its length (34 lines).<sup>66</sup> The passages from Nicaenetus, Apollonius and Alexander all appear to relate complete stories.<sup>67</sup> Parthenius' and Nicander's fragments are only quoted to illustrate an episode (Byblis' death) and a genealogical point (Corythos' mother) respectively.

Returning to our point of departure, we may wonder whether these fragments exemplify in any way the handling of narrative Parthenius advises Gallus to adopt in his own poetry. Considering the statement in the preface that the stories Parthenius collected from poetry were retold because they were not narrated in their own right, this does not appear *prima facie* likely, although we might argue that he has chosen these examples precisely because now, in the context of his own clear prose summary, Gallus may enjoy them and see the charm of their allusive narrative style, which he may wish to emulate. One of the reasons why the fragments are interesting is that they show there were apparently many ways of treating "epylliac" subject matter besides in an epyllion. They evoke the style of catalogue poetry (Parthenius, and Alexander Aetolus, perhaps Nicaenetus), or look like digressions in longer narratives (in particular Parthenius). Alternatively they may look like independent episodes in longer colonization or foundation-epics (Apollonius, Nicaenetus). This does not necessarily mean that Parthenius did not wish Gallus to write epyllia at all: to cite a whole epyllion would simply have exceeded the scope of Parthenius' project. All the same, if he had wanted to, he might perhaps have mentioned examples of epyllia by name. On balance, it seems *epyllia* may have been among the possibilities, but only as one type among various other types of poetry for which the material might be used.

The fragments show clear similarities in style and approach: all of them use a learned vocabulary, characterized by glosses and rare geographical epithets and patronymics; most of them include comparisons, if not full-blown similes, and they are full of colorful adjectives, but they all have their distinctive qualities as well, a selection of which may be highlighted. Nicaenetus (*EP* 11) appears to tell the story of Byblis and Caunus in a highly allusive, even elliptic fashion—although this may also be the effect

<sup>66</sup> The longest of the other fragments is from the *Lesbou Ktisis* (22 lines); Nicaenetus' fragment is 10 lines; Parthenius' 6, and Nicander's 3.

<sup>67</sup> Although in the fragment from Apollonius, Parthenius leaves out the lines in which Peisidice's dealing with Achilles must have been described. Cf. Lightfoot (1999) 502.

of lacunas in the text<sup>68</sup>—passing straightway from the mention of Caunus' love for Byblis to his wanderings (Byβλίδα, τῆς ἤτοι ἀέκων ἠράσσατο Καῦνος / βῆ δε †φερενδιος† φεύγων ὀφιδέα †Κύπρον†, *Byblis, whom Caunus loved against his will. He left all in the midday heat, the snaky Cyprus fled* . . ., l. 6/7). Byblis' sad fate after her brother's departure is said to be like that of the ὀλολύγων (perhaps a nightingale, or a night owl).<sup>69</sup> The implication—not explicitated elsewhere—is that Byblis loved Caunus back. In its brevity and allusiveness, the fragment has a markedly enigmatic character; prior knowledge of the myth would definitely be helpful, or even necessary, for its understanding. It focuses on genealogy and the foundation myth of Caunus' city rather than on the psychological detail of the incestuous passion between the siblings.

Parthenius' own account of Byblis' death (also found in *EP* 11) by contrast indicates a fuller and more (sym)pathetic treatment of the story focusing on the emotions of the female protagonist. Caunus' reaction to Byblis' love is qualified (and therefore presumably focalized by Byblis) as "her cruel brother's intent" (ὀλοοῖο κασιγνήτου νόον). With a traditional comparison referring to the story of Tereus, Procne and Itys, the girl is said to have lamented "more thickly than nightingales, who in the brushwood lament ceaselessly over the Sithonian lad" (ἀηδονίδων θαμινώτερον, αἶ τ' ἐνὶ βήσσης / Σιθονίῳ κούρῳ πέρι μυρίον αἰάζουσιν).<sup>70</sup> The unusual comparative θαμινώτερον and the rare epithet Σιθονίος (Thracian) stand out.<sup>71</sup> The subsequent mention of Byblis' hanging herself from a "rough oak" (στυφελοῖο σαρωνίδος [note the ambiguity of the adjective, with its connotations of cruelty]), mourned by maidens who rend their finely woven robes (indicated with the "exquisite gloss" βεῦδεα [cf. Lightfoot *ad loc.*]) invites compassion and emphasises Byblis' fragility: like the maidens who now mourn her, she was a delicate, anguished creature. Perhaps by juxtaposing these two accounts Parthenius wished to illustrate how a story that had been told allusively and in passing only (Nicaenetus) might be elaborated into a independent, highly pathetic narrative, focusing on its psychological implications.

<sup>68</sup> White (1982), cf. Francese (2001) 141; *contra* Meineke (1843) 11–13, Martini (1902) 61, Lightfoot (1999) 439.

<sup>69</sup> Lightfoot (1999) 442: the line is modeled on *Il.* 9:563.

<sup>70</sup> The mournful cries of the nightingale for Itys are a topical from *Od.* 19:518–523 onwards.

<sup>71</sup> The rare epithet appears in Latin first in *Ecl.* 10.66, another suggestion of a connection between Gallus and Parthenius.

The fragment from the *Lesbou Ktisis* (EP 21) deals with the maiden Peisidice, who falls in love with Achilles as he is attacking her city and promises to let him enter if he will marry her. He agrees, but, after all is said and done, he is so disgusted with her treason that he has her stoned to death by his men. The poetical fragment is characterized by a Homericizing vocabulary and a very overt narrator who directs the narratees' attention through prolepsis ("Fair Kypris, though, had injury in store": θαλερὴ δέ μιν ἄασε Κύπρις, 6), (morally) evaluative language and the selection of highly pathetic scenes ("With her own eyes she could endure to see her parents riven with bronze": ἔτλη δ' οἴσιν ἰδέσθαι ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖσι τοκῆας / χαλκῶ ἔληλαμένους, 13–14), and dramatic irony, opposing the protagonist's deluded hopes with her eventual fate ("So that she might live in Phthia in the home of a hero, as his prudent wife—but he would not fulfil these promises": ὄφρα . . . Φθίῃ δ' ἐνὶ δώματα ναίοι ἀνδρὸς ἀριστήρος πινυτὴ δάμαρ<sup>72</sup>. οὐδ' ὄγ' ἔμελλεν / τὰ ῥέξειν, 17–19). The effect is one of pathos. Overall the narrator acts as if he is (and invites his narratees to be) perplexed and shocked by the behavior of the love-crazed Peisidice, although he also seems to pity her (αἰνότατον γάμον εἶσιδε, "she witnessed the bitterest marriage," 20; δυσάμμορος, "poor wretch," 21).

From a formal point of view, the most experimental fragment doubtless is the longest, the 34 lines of the elegiac *Apollo* by Alexander Aetolus (EP 14) which appear to take the form of a prophecy by the god, narrated in the future tense. It has been suspected that, somewhat like Lycophron's *Alexandra*,<sup>73</sup> the poem as a whole consisted of a series of such prophecies, perhaps connected in theme.<sup>74</sup> The fragment is quoted to illustrate the story of Antheus, a beautiful young man who stays at the court of Phobius the Neleid as a hostage. There the wife of Phobius, Cleoboea or Philaechme (she is unnamed in the fragment), falls in love with him, and tries to seduce him. Angered by his refusal, she makes him enter a well-pit to retrieve an allegedly lost golden pitcher (or, as Parthenius records, a partridge). When he is inside she sends a crushing millstone after him, but afterwards, repenting of her deed, she kills herself.

<sup>72</sup> The phrase, no doubt ironically underlining Peisidice's misjudgment of her own acts, evokes the prudent wife *par excellence*, Penelope, cf. *Od.* 11.445; 20.131; 21.103.

<sup>73</sup> It is perhaps significant that both poets are said to have belonged to the Alexandrian Pleiad, the guild of tragedians active under Ptolemy Philadelphus.

<sup>74</sup> As we know from other Hellenistic poetry, prophecies were popular in encomiastic contexts, cf. e.g. Callimachus *Delos-Hymn* 162–195. This may or may not apply to this text.

The device of telling the story (after the event) as if it was an inevitable disaster waiting to befall Antheus sometime in the future arguably heightens its pathos. This also has repercussions for the trustworthiness of the narrator. So, the direct speech (lines 20–25, the woman’s request to retrieve the golden pail) implies that omniscient Apollo actually predicts what the woman will say, as well as how she will phrase it. Another striking feature is the allusive narrative embedded in the comparison in lines 7–10, where it is stated that Antheus will be as fresh and attractive as the son of a certain Melissus (10–15).

ἐλεύσεται ἔκγονος Ἄνθεός  
 ὄρκι’ ὀμηρείης πίστ’ ἐπιβωσάμενος,  
 πρωθήβης, ἔαρος θαλερώτερος· οὐδὲ Μελίσσῳ  
 Πειρήνης τοιόνδ’ ἀλφεισίβοιον ὕδωρ  
 θηλήσει ἡμέγαν υἷόν· ἀφ’ οὗ μέγα χάρμα Κορίνθῳ  
 ἔσται καὶ βριαροῖς ἄλγεα Βακχιάδαις

Antheus shall come, son of Assessus’ king,  
 his plea based on a hostage’s sure oaths,  
 in bloom of youth, fresher than spring—  
 no son so tender shall Peirene’s fruitful flood  
 rear for Melissus, whence shall come great joy to Corinth,  
 to cruel Bacchiads a woe. (translation Lightfoot)

This Melissus’ son, Actaeon, was desired by the aristocratic Bacchiad Archias of Corinth and killed in a struggle when the latter tried to abduct him. To avenge him, Melissus killed himself at the Isthmia, thus calling down Poseidon’s anger on those responsible. As a result Archias went into exile and founded Syracuse. The rather obscure story was presumably taken from a writer of Sicilian history (e.g. Timaeus) and forms a miniature *Erotikon Pathema* in its own right. Parthenius may have thought the passage a particularly attractive case of extremely allusive embedded narrative, worthy of emulation, or at least consideration. Of course its enigmatic nature fits in perfectly with the oracular language one would expect from Apollo (think, *mutatis mutandis* of the constant stream of enigmas in the *Alexandra* of Lycophron). But more important is its function, which is not spelled out by the reference: the fate of Actaeon and its results effectively foreshadow the fate of Antheus. Both beautiful young men die as the result of being the object of a passion they do not return, and both their deaths result in the exile of the ruler (Phobius leaves Miletus as a result of his wife’s misdeeds like Archias left Corinth). Clearly we are meant to see that, as narrator, Apollo cannot help but be prophetic,

even in an apparently innocuous comparison.<sup>75</sup> Its form and function are exquisitely intertwined and provide a puzzle: how alike are Antheus and Actaeon and why?

As so many of the *EP* turn on parallel themes, it is not hard to see how a similar effect could be achieved by embedding one story (e.g. *EP* 22 the story of Nanis, daughter of Croesus, who betrays her city to Cyrus) into the narrative of an analogous (e.g. *EP* 21 Peisidice) or contrasting one (e.g. *EP* 9 Polycrite, who saves her city through the love of the enemy commander).

In these necessarily brief discussions I hope to have hit upon some stylistic features that may have seemed particularly instructive or worthy of emulation to Parthenius. Looking at cumulative evidence, I would say that rare vocabulary, subtle comparisons, morally loaded adjectives, literary allusions, and an overt narrator using unexpected narrative techniques were definitely among the devices recommended to Gallus. This will presumably not come as a surprise; these are the hallmarks of Hellenistic and “neoteric” poetic style, and they may be found in all its high genres, including “epyllion.” What does, however, merit consideration is the fact that most of the cited fragments do not appear to exemplify “epylliac” narrative per se, but rather catalogue poetry or longer, episodic narrative.

#### 6. Conclusion: “εἰς ἔπη καὶ ἐλεγείας ἀνάγειν” revisited

Having considered the material from various angles, we may now once more return to our original point of departure and ask: what kind of poetry did Parthenius expect Gallus and others inspired by his collection to write? Is it likely that epyllia were among them? If we define epyllia as narrative poems centering on a single action or event, embellished with various digressions, the evidence becomes rather meager. Apart from the *subject matter* of most narratives in the *EP* (erotic, pathetic, by-ways of the heroic world, a preoccupation with female protagonists and psychology), there do not appear to be many pointers in that direction. But,

<sup>75</sup> Prophetic foreshadowing similarly appears to be present in the ambiguous phrases λιθόλευστον ἔρον (meaning Cleoboea’s reprehensible love “that deserves punishment by stoning” but also suggesting the manner of Antheus’ death); καθαψαμένη (18, where Cleoboea clasps Antheus’ knees) foreshadows ὑπὸ δειρήν / ἀψαμένη (38–39, of Cleoboea hanging herself). And there are more examples.



paradoxically, precisely this subject matter is the criterion epyllia are usually defined with.

To begin with, Parthenius himself may or may not have written epyllia: this is simply impossible to prove. Much less is it possible to deduct from this that his writing in this field was the initial inspiration for Roman poets to write epyllia.<sup>76</sup> So how about Gallus? Although Gallus may have written hexametric poetry if he wished to emulate Euphorion, it does not follow that this would automatically have included epyllia, since, as the fragments suggest, Euphorion also, or perhaps predominantly, wrote catalogue poems. Interestingly, the poems quoted in the *EP* do not illustrate epylliac treatment either, but rather show how Parthenius' material had originally been used in elegiac and hexametric catalogues or historical episodic narratives. This means that, even if the possibility that the *EP* inspired epyllia does not need to be excluded, the direct connection between Parthenius and epyllion, once so fervently propounded, does not appear to have much grounding in the surviving evidence. It is better to say that the epylliac treatment some of the themes from the *EP* and Parthenius' own poetry eventually received shows that epyllia were *one* way, and a highly successful one, in which the peculiar erotic themes popular in various genres in this era might be handled. Rather than defining a genre, these themes appear to define an era in literary history.

The *EP* allow us tantalizing glimpses of what appears to have been the amazingly rich poetic landscape of the Hellenistic and Roman era. Besides narrative poetry, we get the impression that there must have been a wealth of erotic mythological poetry in various forms. The sources the poets drew on were diverse, probably including a wide variety of historiography and peripatetic treatises as well as earlier poetry. This material came to the poets in ways we might not have expected: embedded narratives were collected, taken out of their contexts, and retold in prose to be subsequently elaborated and embellished in verse.

Surprisingly enough, in this era, people like Parthenius who were practiced and knowledgeable in the fields of elegiac and hexametric poetry thought that both meters might treat similar themes—in all sorts of manners. Apart from subject matter, the poetic examples Parthenius quotes reveal that a refined style was a characteristic uniting these genres at this time. What this suggests is that the *division* between elegy (of any kind)

<sup>76</sup> As Lyne had claimed. Lightfoot (1999) 68 shows that "epyllia" had been written before Parthenius' arrival in Rome, e.g. by the young Cicero.

and hexameter poetry (of any kind) was not as essential in this period as the *unifying* characteristics they now shared above all else: recherché topics, prominently among them erotic myths, and an utterly refined, novel style.

This may make us wonder whether it is still valid to see this kind of erotic hexameter poetry as standing in a direct or indirect *Auseinandersetzung* with heroic epic. In the first place this depends on how one defines heroic epic (the *Iliad* is patently different from the *Odyssey* or from the *Argonautica*). Still, before the Hellenistic era a pathetic treatment of erotic stories is infrequent in epic. It is therefore perhaps more important to note that erotic concerns were more emphatically at home in *elegy* from an early point on (Mimnermus' *Nanno*, Antimachus' *Lyde*).<sup>77</sup> We might therefore consider whether it is not more likely that erotic epyllia (especially the later Latin examples) branched off from heroic poetry under the influence of erotic elegies and formed, so to speak, elegiac little epics, which had as much in common with elegy as with epic, or more.

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<sup>77</sup> For the great number of topics and modes that elegy could contain, cf. West (1974) 1–18; Bowie (1997a).

