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I.—The Epyllion: A Chapter in the History of Literary Criticism

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The term "epyllion" has grown to be part of our critical vocabulary, and there it has no proper place. The modern scholarly writing on this form is misleading in several respects, for attention is not sufficiently directed to the fact that our use of the name has no foundation in antiquity; nor can any connection be demonstrated between this type of literature and the hypothetical quarrel between Callimachus and Apollonius Rhodius. Most significant of all is the point that there has been no success in ascribing common literary characteristics to the poems usually classed as epyllia. It is consequently more satisfactory to regard these poems as results of the Alexandrian fondness for mixed poetical *genera* and to say simply that they were written under strong influence from the Hesiodic, as opposed so the Homeric, tradition of epic poetry.

It is frequently wise to reëxamine the standard ideas about literature for they sometimes emerge as half-truths—occasionally as fables. The stages of their creation are very easy: one set of scholars proposes a suggestion, another set repeats it as fact, and thereafter it is accepted. Perhaps the worst example of this state of affairs exists in the case of the epyllion.¹ Since the beginning of the present century it has been popularly regarded as a literary type established and recognized by the ancients, although both the name and the classification are modern. A few more recent scholars have not only believed in its existence as a literary form,² but have

¹ The extant poems most generally listed in this group are: Theocritus XIII, XXIV, and xxv; the *Hecale* of Callimachus; Moschus II (*Europa*); Bion, *Achilles*; the Vergilian or pseudo-Vergilian *Culex* and *Ciris*; and Catullus LXIV (*Peleus and Thetis*). I shall disregard the poems of which we have only the names or small fragments. It is also useless to consider in this connection statements about Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (which are sometimes said to be a collection of epyllia),—if one disregards the criterion that the epyllion is an *independent* short epic, the battle is lost before it is begun. The same attitude must be taken toward the Aristaeus episode in Vergil.

² It might be appropriate to include here a definition of the modern idea of the epyllion; a fair sample is the one given by Johannes Heumann, *De epyllio Alexandrino*

gone so far as to speak of the influence of "epyllion technique" upon other types of poetry. My intention here is to re-state all the pertinent evidence in juxtaposition, with the purpose of rendering it easily comparable with the statements in the handbooks and monographs. In its present stage the problem, for lack of material, is quite impossible of perfect solution, but the papyrus gains in the Alexandrian field during the past few decades have been so great that we may hope for better fortune in the future. The aim of this paper is to clarify the nature of the problem.

The bibliography of the Greek and Latin Alexandrian periods, especially on points of style, is enormous, and no one can claim omniscience. The handling of it is rendered more troublesome by the fact that so much of the older scholarship is more useful than the recent. Some of the work is not worth mentioning, even to refute it, and I have not done so.³

The question of the epyllion has suffered a curious history. Several conspicuous authorities have written severe strictures upon the type, have pointed out the modern provenance of the name, and have decried its acceptance as a literary form; but they have done so only in footnotes or obiter dicta. They did not state the reasons for their stand on the question, and their remarks have been generally ignored. It is worth while to reproduce them, however, to show that a doubtful attitude is not singular or unwarranted.

For example we have the significant remarks of Wilamowitz-Moellendorff:⁴ "Weil *εἰδύλλιον* so lange mit dem modernen Idyll (oder der Idylle, wie man barbarisch sagte) verwechselt ward, haben sich die Philologen ein *ἐπύλλιον* erfunden, von dem im Altertum niemand etwas weiss; das Wort bedeutet auch niemals ein kleines

(Leipzig diss., Koenigsee, Selmar de Ende, 1904), 7f.:—that epyllia are short narrative poems in hexameters, on mythological subjects, in a serious vein, complete in themselves, and about one book long.

³ Sometimes one meets with oddities when a scholar will feel the need of modifying the general viewpoint, e.g., M. Lenchantin de Gubernatis, *P. Vergili Maronis Civis* (Turin, Chiantore, 1930), xviii: "L'epillio, nell' accezione della parola tra i moderni, è un componimento narrativo d'ambito ristretto, un breve *ἔπος*, un *ποιήματιον* in esametri. Esso, anche secondo i suoi autori, non costituiva un 'genere' nuovo in contrasto al macchinoso carne epico tradizionale, ma un correttivo alle degenerazioni di questo non consone ai tempi, un perfezionamento secondo la nuova coscienza estetica elaboratasi nel periodo ellenistico. In che modo, è ciò che mi propongo di chiarire."

⁴ Ulrich v. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Hellenistische Dichtung in der Zeit des Kallimachos* (Berlin, Weidmann, 1924), i.117, note 2.

Epos. Mit dem hätte auch ein Grieche nie etwas anfangen können, sintemal das was die Modernen Einzellied nennen zu allen Zeiten vorgeherrscht hatte. Vor allem kommt es auf die Behandlung an; mit der Elle misst man Gedichte nicht. Ist die Hekale ein Epyllion? Vergessen ist auch dabei, dass die neuen Gedichte oft elegische Form haben, ohne dass ein Unterschied fassbar wäre. Wie gewöhnlich ist auf die Griechen übertragen, was man sich nach Ciris und Zmyrna als Epyllion zurechtmachte."⁵ While it is valuable to have Wilamowitz's opinion on the subject so clearly expressed, it is nevertheless regrettable that he did not see fit to go into the subject more fully and to document his statement. Similarly Wilhelm Kroll in his edition of Catullus⁶ said that the *Peleus and Thetis* is a "kleines Epos" and that the term "'Epyllion' ist modern."

On the other hand there are conspicuous monographs and articles which I believe to be largely in error and which have maintained the name and the existence of the literary form practically without opposition.⁷ Since several of these works are in English and of greater accessibility, it will suffice to submit only them to exact refutation. The main authorities, which everyone meets as soon as he begins to study the question, are the dissertations by Heumann and May, the article by Jackson, and the book by Miss Crump. Professor Jackson's article is excellent and displays admirable restraint—he and I would be in essential agreement if he had concluded his article with a statement that the epyllion does not exist as a form, as his evidence and interpretation really demonstrate. Miss Crump's book is extensive, but I feel it is completely mistaken. The two German dissertations were received coolly by their reviewers,⁸ but have been accepted ever since. May's work will

⁵ Wilamowitz, *op. cit.* (see note 4), i.184, calls the *Hekale* an eidyllion. That this term also is really unsuitable because it does not seem to have been in existence in the time of Theocritus and Callimachus is indicated by the scholia to Theocritus: Carolus Wendel, *Scholia in Theocritum Vetera* (Leipzig, Teubner, 1914), 5, 12f. The references to Lucian in these scholia betray their date.

⁶ Wilhelm Kroll, *C. Valerius Catullus* (Leipzig, Teubner, 1923), 140.

⁷ Johannes Heumann, *De epyllio Alexandrino* (Leipzig diss., Koenigsee, Selmar de Ende, 1904); Gerhardus May, *De stilo epylliorum Romanorum* (Kiel diss., Fiencke, 1910); C. N. Jackson, "The Latin Epyllion," *H.S.C.P.* xxiv (1913), 37–50; Gennaro Perrotta, "Arte e tecnica nell' epillio alessandrino," *Atene e Roma* N.S. iv (1923), 213–229; M. M. Crump, *The Epyllion from Theocritus to Ovid* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1931). These works will hereafter be referred to only by the authors' names.

⁸ Heumann was reviewed by Max Rannow in *B. ph. W.* xxvi (1906), 705–714, and by C. Fries in *W. kl. Ph.* xxi (1904), 1139–1142; May was reviewed by P. Jahn in *B. ph. W.* xxxi (1911), 1159f.

enter into our discussion but very little, since he almost entirely confined himself to treating the characteristics of Alexandrian verse and style⁹ rather than the peculiarities of the epyllion which might distinguish it from other genres. There is one work in addition by an Italian scholar, but it is generally inconsiderable and contains nothing which is not found in the other authorities.

Most of the modern writers and handbooks quote or refer to Heumann on the epyllion with absolute faith, as if his words were all that need be said on the subject. After citing him they proceed on the assumption that the epyllion is an established literary form, which he had not definitely asserted. The use of the term was not so explicit in the nineteenth century; but after Heumann's dissertation was published, the damage was done and the type has not since been seriously doubted, so far as I know, except by Wilamowitz and Kroll. His dissertation, however, never enjoyed such wide circulation as Miss Crump's book, and some opposition must be raised to her work. Her book received generally good reviews, and apparently has been regarded as sound.

The basic error running through the scholarship on this point is that the authorities have neglected the duty of proving that any genre existed in antiquity to which this name can be applied. It is necessary to demonstrate the existence of a type and that certain poems belong to that type before anyone can satisfactorily describe its characteristics. It is also folly to talk of authors writing in a definite literary form before it is known that there was such a form and that they believed themselves to be writing in that form. The truth of the matter is that these poems do possess some qualities in common, but that they also possess these same qualities in common with other poems and other distinctive types of literature, so that it is not right to classify them as an individual and well-defined genre.

The subject under discussion is unwieldy, but it proves amenable to treatment if we employ various headings, such as the origin and

⁹ Although May's work is useful, I think the reader will find that more satisfactory results were obtained by Erich Reitzenstein, "Zur Stiltheorie des Kallimachos," in *Festschrift Richard Reitzenstein* (Leipzig, Teubner, 1931), 23-69. While this article is interesting for general stylistic considerations in regard to Alexandrian poetry, it has nothing in particular on the epyllion. May has some remarks on the vocabulary of these Alexandrians, which should be compared with René Pichon, *De Sermone Amatorio apud Latinos Elegiarum Scriptores* (Paris, Librairie Hachette et Cie, 1902). Cf. also Jackson, 46-50.

meaning of the name, the supposed origin of the type itself, and the characteristics ascribed to this kind of poetry.

I. THE TERM

The new Liddell and Scott dictionary recognizes the word as a diminutive of *ἔπος*, and as meaning a “versicle”, or “scrap of poetry.” In this meaning it was used three times by Aristophanes, to make fun of Euripides.¹⁰ Its next important occurrence is in Athenaeus,¹¹ who employed it once to describe a pseudo-Homeric poem, the *Ἐπικικχλίδες*:¹² “Ὅτι τὸ εἰς Ὀμηρον ἀναφερόμενον ἐπύλλιον, ἐπιγραφόμενον δὲ Ἐπικικχλίδες, ἔτυχε ταύτης τῆς προσηγορίας διὰ τὸ τὸν Ὀμηρον ἄδοντα αὐτὸ τοῖς παισὶ κίχλας δῶρον λαμβάνειν, ἱστορεῖ Μέναιχος ἐν τῷ περὶ τεχνιτῶν.

It is readily observed that the passage from Athenaeus is of no importance in establishing the epyllion as a literary type, for it does not appear that he wished us to believe he was using a regular literary term. In the first place, Athenaeus is much later than any of the poems ascribed to the genre; secondly, he may have taken the word from comedy or, with his knowledge of comedy, he may have invented it on the same humorous principles as Aristophanes did originally; thirdly, the poem is ascribed to Homer and hence would probably be at least earlier than the Callimachean type of poem; fourthly, he obviously means only that this is a poem in epic verse which is not so long as the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*; fifthly, as he could readily find analogous confusion in the double meaning of *ἔπος* and *ἔπη* as “verses” and “epics”, so he might think that *ἐπύλλιον* should also be able to mean either a verse or a poem. Athenaeus, then, gives us no reason to think that the term was current either in his day or earlier.

These passages form the sum of the ancient evidence. The use of the term epyllion has spread far and wide in modern times and we even find it stated that Musaeus (*fl.* A.D. 550) wrote an epyllion

¹⁰ Aristophanes *Acharn.* 398–400, *Pax* 531f., *Ranae* 941f. A curious parallel to the Aristophanic usage, which shows how that sense of the word endured, is to be found in Clement of Alexandria *Strom.* III.3.24: οὐδὲ μὴν ὅτι ἀνθρώπου κεφαλῇ ἀπέικασται κύμας κατὰ τὸ ἐπύλλιον ἐκείνο,

ἴσόν τοι κύμαους τρώγειν κεφαλὰς τε τοκῆων·

μᾶλλον δὲ ὅτι κύμαοι ἐσθιόμενοι ἀπόκους ἐργάζονται τὰς γυναῖκας.

¹¹ Athenaeus II.65a–b; cf. *idem* XIV.639a.

¹² This poem is mentioned only casually in antiquity (cf. vol. V of T. W. Allen's Oxford [1912] ed. of Homer, pp. 160f.; p. 207, line 334; p. 259, line 45; p. 262, line 103).

or epic idyll on the subject of Hero and Leander.¹³ Statements of this sort can have no importance until we know whether there was such a form in the earlier periods.

Some writers on the subject, as Heumann and Jackson,¹⁴ fully recognize that the name epyllion did not anciently exist as a designation of a literary type, but all the authorities and handbooks very carefully refrain from stating just what is the modern source of the term; and I have not been able to discover it. The name seems first to have come into wide use about 1890–1900, and to have received a tremendous impetus from Heumann's dissertation. The situation is therefore quite different from that of such problems as the *satura*, where we have an actual ancient name. It is true that the ancients were not so insistently precise as we in the use of names to differentiate literary types, but they regularly did apply some sort of term to the various genres. Here we apparently have no ancient name as of a type at all. If the epyllion was a real type, I am at a loss to imagine what they called the poems. It may of course be that the lack of an exact name is not important; it may be an accident that the name does not happen to be preserved. But in that case we ought to be able to recognize the type from its characteristics, as will be discussed presently, and only in that case would it be fair to use the modern term simply for the sake of convenience.

II. THE QUARREL BETWEEN CALLIMACHUS AND APOLLONIUS RHODIUS

One of the landmarks of the literary history of the ancient world has been the quarrel between Callimachus and Apollonius. Actually the proof for their quarrelling at all is so scanty that it has been doubted that the dispute ever occurred. But more recent evidence, in the form of the discovery of the opening lines of the *Aetia*, has shown that there was a quarrel or perhaps a series of quarrels on literary questions, although it has not established Apollonius as Callimachus's opponent and we are still completely in the dark as to the cause of their famous disagreement. The story, as it is retailed in the handbooks of Greek literature, is largely

¹³ Christ-Schmid-Stählin, *Griechische Literaturgeschichte* (Munich, Beck, 1924), II.2, 972; F. A. Wright, *A History of Later Greek Literature* (London, George Routledge & Sons, 1932), 404f.

¹⁴ Heumann, 7; Jackson, 38f.

hypothetical. I shall therefore set down the pertinent material which is worthy of record, omitting the evidence which calls for such allegorical interpretation that it is valueless.¹⁵ The importance of the quarrel for us, of course, is that it is supposed to have been about the proper length and style of epic poems, and the *Hecale* is supposed to have been written by Callimachus as a manifesto on the subject.

Perfectly familiar is the story of Apollonius and his poem, of its first reading and his retirement to Rhodes in shame, and of his revised version (or versions) and consequent brilliant success.¹⁶ In the first place, it will be remembered that there is no indication that Apollonius wrote his poem deliberately as an example of what he thought a long epic should be, that is, there is no clear indication that the *Argonautica* was polemical. The cause of the failure apparently lay in the quality of the poem, which he improved later. So far as I know, it has never been remarked that the great success of the poem produced no imitators. If the *Argonautica* and the *Hecale* were in such direct opposition, the former was the ultimate victor and should have set a style quite different from that of the *Hecale*. There is also, in the *Vitae Apollonii*, no enmity between the two poets; their proximity in the grave would appear to indicate friendship.

The evidence upon which to base the theory of the quarrel between the two poets can be briefly reproduced. First there is the epigram by Apollonius the grammarian (Ἀπολλωνίου γραμματικοῦ):¹⁷

¹⁵ Extreme examples of such interpretation are A. Gercke, "Alexandrinische Studien (Der Streit mit Apollonius)," *Rhein. Mus.* XLIV (1889), 127-150, 240-258; M. T. Smiley, "The Quarrel between Callimachus and Apollonius," *Hermathena* XVII (1912-13), 280-294; A. Couat, "La querelle de Callimaque et d' Apollonius de Rhodes," *Annuaire de l'Association pour l'Encouragement des Études Grecques en France* XI (1877), 71-103, where Couat, in spite of strenuous efforts, is still unsuccessful in connecting the *Hecale* directly with Apollonius. A good specimen of the older type of Alexandrian criticism is A. Couat, "L'Hécalé de Callimaque," *Annales de la Faculté des Lettres de Bordeaux* III (1881), 5-36. On p. 5 Couat says that the *Hecale* was meant to be an example of the new epic style, although he does not call it an epyllion. We might thus hazard the guess that first this idea of a new epic style came into classical scholarship and then someone found it convenient to apply the name to it. It is also noteworthy that in his book on Alexandrian literature he applies the term to some of Theocritus's poems but not to the *Hecale*: A. Couat, *Alexandrian Poetry* (New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1931), 411.

¹⁶ A. Westermann, ΒΙΟΓΡΑΦΟΙ, *Vitarum Scriptores Graeci Minores* (Brunswick, 1845). The *Vitae Apollonii* are on pp. 50f.

¹⁷ *Anth. Pal.* xi.275.

Καλλίμαχος τὸ κάθαρμα, τὸ παίγνιον, ὁ ξύλινος νοῦς,
αἴτιος, ὁ γράψας Λίτια Καλλιμάχου.

The verses are silly, and the author was more interested in making a point than in what the epigram said. I hardly think we need doubt that our two poets are the men in question, but the lines can stand beside Catullus XLIX as a puzzle for interpretation, for the epigram might be no more than a friendly joke. We cannot be sure of its real significance unless other material indicates the trend our thinking should follow. Certainly we need not be influenced by Wilamowitz who says that we are here dealing with another Apollonius.¹⁸ If the epigram is malevolent, it means only that Apollonius thought poorly of the *Aetia*, and it does not specify the reasons for his disapproval.

Lines 105–113 of Callimachus's *Hymn to Apollo* are regularly cited:

ὁ Φθόνος Ἄπόλλωνος ἐπ' οὔατα λάθριος εἶπεν
“οὐκ ἄγαμαι τὸν αἰοιδὸν ὃς οὐδ' ὅσα πόντος αἰεῖδει.”
τὸν Φθόνον ὠπόλλων ποδί τ' ἤλασεν ὠδὲ τ' εἶπεν·
“Ἀσσυρίου ποταμοῖο μέγας ῥόος, ἀλλὰ τὰ πολλὰ
λύματα γῆς καὶ πολλὸν ἐφ' ὕδατι συρφετὸν ἔλκει.
Δηοῖ δ' οὐκ ἀπὸ παντὸς ὕδωρ φορέουσι Μέλισσαι,
ἀλλ' ἦτις καθαρὴ τε καὶ ἀχράαντος ἀνέρπει
πίδακος ἐξ ἱερῆς ὀλίγη λιβὰς ἄκρον ἄωτον.”
χαίρε ἄναξ· ὁ δὲ Μῶμος, ἔνθ' ὁ Φθόνος, ἐνθα νέειτο.

These lines would never have been considered of true value, however, except for the scholium to 106 of this *Hymn*: Οὐκ ἄγαμαι τὸν αἰοιδὸν ὃς] Ἐγκαλεῖ διὰ τούτων τοὺς σκώπτοντας αὐτὸν μὴ δύνασθαι ποιῆσαι μέγα ποίημα, ὅθεν ἠναγκάσθη πιῆσαι τὴν Ἐκάλην. Conjecture is naturally unlimited as to the real meaning of μέγα ποίημα!

In *Argonautica* III.927–947 there is a passage where the crow speaks, advising Mopsus. This is supposed to reflect the passage in the hymn just quoted, although there is no sure connection. Emphasis is laid on III.932–937:

“Ἀκλειῆς ὄδε μάντις, ὃς οὐδ' ὅσα παῖδες ἴσασιν
οἶδε νόψ φράσσασθαι, ὀθούνεκεν οὔτε τι λαρὸν
οὔτ' ἔρατὸν κούρη κεν ἔπος προτιμυθῆσαιτο

¹⁸ U. v. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, “Ueber die Hekale des Kallimachos,” *Nachr. v. d. K. Ges. d. Wissensch. zu Göttingen* No. 19 (1893), 746f.

ἡιθέω, εὐτ' ἂν σφιν ἐπήλυδες ἄλλοι ἔπωνται.
 ἔρροις, ὦ κακόμαντι, κακοφραδῆς· οὔτε σε Κύπρις,
 οὔτ' ἄγαυοὶ φιλέοντες ἐπιπνείουσιν Ἔρωτες."

Most interesting, but most open to question, is Suidas's comment on the *Ibis* in his list of Callimachus's works: Ἴβις· ἔστι δὲ ποίημα ἐπιτετηδευμένον εἰς ἀσάφειαν καὶ λουιδορίαν, εἰς τινα Ἴβιν, γενόμενον ἐχθρὸν Καλλιμάχου· ἦν δὲ οὗτος Ἀπολλώνιος ὁ γράψας τὰ Ἀργοναυτικά. (One wonders—if the *Ibis* was the answer to Apollonius, would there be any need of the *Hecale*?) For the sake of completeness, it is necessary to quote verse 8 of the little Byzantine poem which may have formed a sort of table of contents for a manuscript of Callimachus; I give the verse as it was originally published by Richard Reitzenstein:¹⁹

σκόπτω δ' ἐπ' ἀραῖς Ἴβιν Ἀπολλώνιον.

With this passage we conclude the quotation of all the actual evidence upon which the hypothesis of the famous quarrel rests. And one of the most important parts of this evidence, the *Ibis*, is open to question.

Not only has the authenticity of the *Ibis* been quite fairly doubted, but even the entire proof for the existence of the quarrel. One of the works most frequently cited in connection with the latter problem is by Hugo Jurenka.²⁰ Some of his arguments will stand, but some are clearly impossible. For instance, he thinks²¹ that the Ἀπολλωνίου γραμματικοῦ of *A.P.* xi.275 is quite definitely not Apollonius Rhodius, for he does not believe he could be called a grammarian. He thinks Apollonius Dyscolus is meant. In refutation I need only cite the passage from Athenaeus iii.72a to show that these poets could be referred to in that manner: "Οτι Καλλιμαχος ὁ γραμματικὸς τὸ μέγα βιβλίον ἴσον ἔλεγεν εἶναι τῷ μεγάλῳ κακῷ. I would be prepared to agree with his statement²² that Callimachus's *Hymn* ii.105ff. is not aimed directly at Apollonius but, as the scholiast says, at Callimachus's detractors. He believes, as the new papyrus would now seem to confirm, that there is a possibility that the whole

¹⁹ "Die Inhaltsangabe im Archetypus der Kallimachos-Handschriften," *Hermes* xxvi (1891), 308.

²⁰ Hugo Jurenka, *Quaestiones Criticae* (I. *De Callimacho Apollonii Rhodii inimico*) (Wissenschaftliche Abhandlungen Nr. 41, A. Pichler's Witwe & Sohn, Wien und Leipzig, 1885), 3–15.

²¹ Jurenka, 4–6.

²² *Ibid.*, 6–8.

Ibis citation, which is so important to the history of the quarrel, is a later insertion in Suidas. Consequently he maintains²³ that Callimachus did not write the *Ibis* against Apollonius Rhodius but against some unknown enemy. Spiro's doubts in regard to the quarrel are also frequently mentioned, but they are of no great importance.²⁴

The authenticity of the *Ibis* has been doubted by Rostagni,²⁵ who was, however, quite justly attacked for his method by his reviewer, A. E. Housman.²⁶ The recent discovery of the *diegeseis* of Callimachus's poems²⁷ has perhaps lent color to the doubts as to the authenticity of the *Ibis*, for that poem is omitted from the list of his works. Vogliano,²⁸ however, in spite of the fact that the poem is omitted from this list, does not share Rostagni's opinion that the *Ibis* is pseudo-Callimachean. For our purpose it is not necessary to decide at the moment whether the *Ibis* is authentic or not; it is sufficient to observe how inconclusive statements must be when they look to the *Ibis* for confirmatory evidence.

The weakness of the hypothesis about the quarrel is shown by the remarks of Robinson Ellis in which he discusses the passage in Suidas about the *Ibis*:²⁹ "Huius inimiticiae causa quae fuerit nescitur; a plerisque creditur orta ex invidia quae inter riuales ex carminibus prouenerit." Émile Delage is in much the same situation—he maintains the existence of the quarrel but feels distressed by the vagueness of the evidence.³⁰ Émile Cahen remarks in passing in one of his articles that, although it is not his opinion, the absence of the *Ibis* from the newly discovered *Διηγῆσεις* of

²³ *Ibid.*, 14f.

²⁴ F. Spiro, "Ricerche alessandrine.—II. *Callimaco ed Apollonio*," *Rendic. d. R. Accad. d. Lincei, cl. d. sc. mor., stor. e filol.*, ser. v, vol. II (1893), 337–348.

²⁵ A. Rostagni, *Ibis, Storia di un poemetto greco, Contributi alla scienza dell' antichità pubblicati da G. de Sanctis e L. Pareti*, vol. III (Florence, Felice le Monnier, 1920), 48–52.

²⁶ *C. R.* xxxv (1921), 67f. It is barely worthy of notice, however, that Salvagnius was apparently in error when he said that the *Ibis* was ascribed to Callimachus by Clem. Al. *Strom.* v.8, 50.

²⁷ M. Norsa e G. Vitelli, *Διηγῆσεις δι Ποιητῶν δι Καλλιμαχοῦ ἐν ἑνὶ Πapiroῦ δι Τεβlynis* (Florence, Ariani, 1934); a more recent and elaborate publication of the same document is in *Papiri della R. Università di Milano*, vol. I (Milan, Hoepli, 1937), ed. by Achille Vogliano (pp. 108–111 give the diegesis of the *Hecale*, with a commentary on pp. 144f.). This papyrus also shows us how many of our ideas were false about the contents and structure of the *Hecale*.

²⁸ *Op. cit.* (see note 27), 74.

²⁹ Robinson Ellis, *P. Ovidii Nasonis Ibis* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1881), xxxi.

³⁰ Émile Delage, *Biographie d'Apollonios de Rhodes* (Bordeaux, Feret & Fils, 1930), Ch. iv "La querelle de Callimaque et d' Apollonios."

Callimachus may support the thesis that the poem is spurious.³¹ Even Heumann says³² that the whole idea of the quarrel is shaky, and he is quite willing to admit³³ that he sees no clear relationship between the quarrel and epyllia and that efforts to prove such a relationship have failed, with the result that we cannot say that the quarrel was the cause of the conception of the epyllion although he would believe that the *Argonautica* was the cause of the quarrel.

On the other hand, the discovery of the prologue to the *Aetia* furnishes a document³⁴ which does show that Callimachus was involved in at least one violent literary quarrel, thus confirming the scholium to the *Hymn to Apollo* on the point of the plurality of enemies. It arouses a suspicion, moreover, that the statement in Suidas about the *Ibis*, if not an insertion, is only another example of the tendency of later students to prefer to make statements about well-known writers and to fill in blanks in their facts with the names of famous authors; the name of Apollonius may be in that passage simply because of his fame.

³¹ Émile Cahen, "L'œuvre poétique de Callimaque: documents nouveaux," *Revue des Études Grecques* XLVIII (1935), 319.

³² Heumann, p. 12, note 2.

³³ Heumann, 12–21, especially 21.

³⁴ A. S. Hunt, *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* xvii (London, Egyptian Exploration Society, 1927), no. 2079, Callimachus, *Aetia*, Prologue:

vss. 1–6

[νῦν δὲ τ]ό μοι τελχίνες ἐπιτρέζουσιν ἀ[εικὲς (?)
 [νήιδε]ς οἷ Μούσης οὐκ ἐγένοντο φίλοι,
 [εἶνεκε]ν οὐχ ἔν ἄεισμα διηγεκὲς, ἡ βασιλ[ή]ας
 [κλήσ]ας, ἐν πολλαῖς ἤνυσσας χιλιάσιν,
 [ἦ ἀρχα]ίους ἤρωας, ἔπος δ' ἐπὶ τυτθὸν ἐλ[ίσσω
 [παῖς ἄτ]ε τῶν δ' ἐτέων ἡ δεκά[ς] οὐκ ὀλιγη.

vss. 17–28

[ἔλλατε, βασκανίης ὀλοὸν γένος,] αὐθι δὲ τέχνη
 [κρίνετε, μὴ σχοίνω Περσίδι τήν] σοφίην,
 [μῆδ' ἀπ' ἐμῷ διφᾶτε μέγα ψοφέο]σαν αἰοιδήν
 [τίκτεσθαι βροντᾶν δ' οὐκ ἐμόν, ἀλλ]ὰ Διός.
 [καὶ γὰρ ὅτ]ε πρ[ώ]τισ[το]ν ἐμοῖς ἐπὶ δέλτον ἔθηκα
 [γούνασιν,] Ἄπ[ό]λλων εἶπεν ὁ μοι Λύκιος·
 [ἦ δέον ἄμ]μιν, αἰοῖδε, τὸ μὲν θύος ὅττι πάχιστον
 [δοῦναι, τή]ν μουσαν δ', ὦ ἴγαθε, λεπταλέην.
 [πρὸς δέ σε] καὶ τόδ' ἄνωγα, τὰ μὴ πατέουσιν ἄμαξαι
 [τὰ στείβει]ν, ἐτέρων ἴχνην μὴ καθ' ὀμά
 [δίφρον ἐλ]ᾶν μῆδ' οἶμον ἀνὰ πλατύν· ἀλλὰ κελεύθους
 [καινοτέρ]ας εἰ καὶ στε[ι]νοτέρην ἐλάσεις.

Cf. the scholia to the *Aetia* published as no. 1219 in *Papyri greci e latini* xi (Florence, Ariani, 1935).

Even if someone should manage to demonstrate a quarrel between Apollonius and Callimachus, it would still remain to be proved that its cause was literary. It is known that Callimachus quarreled with other people about literature, but the only literary point in their quarrel we can be reasonably sure of is the question of length; and there we must have faith in a scholiast who is not very clear, viz., the gentleman who called the *Hecale* a μέγα ποίημα. The remarks about literature in the prologue to the *Aetia* would certainly not justify our regarding the *Hecale* as a polemical manifesto. Likewise, even if we should grant that there was a dispute of some sort between Callimachus and Apollonius, we would immediately run into difficulties because we have little idea of the relative chronology of the poems in question. For instance, Émile Cahen in his Budé edition of Callimachus³⁵ says that the *Hecale* is earlier than the quarrel about the *Argonautica*.

We have now found that both the origin of the name and the direct cause of this literary type are entirely unknown, with the result that we can regard the type as defined only if it has clear-cut characteristics.

III. CHARACTERISTICS ASCRIBED TO EPYLLIA

It could be justly objected to the preceding arguments that it might be fair to use the term "epyllion", of modern invention though it be, to group together a number of poems which resemble each other and for which we can discover no ancient classification. In such an approach we must recognize that we should be guilty of falsification since the persistent use of a term gives it a halo of authenticity. But I think we hardly need be distressed by this potential falsification since I believe it to be demonstrable that scholarship has not yet proved these poems to possess sufficient or real characteristics in common. Since the whole existence of the epyllion stands or falls by the proof of mutual characteristics, I feel we should be most critical and exacting in this respect. Heumann, *op. cit.* (see note 7), 44, is willing to admit defeat in advance: "Deinde maxime dolendum est propter parvum exemplorum numerum fieri non posse, ut aut epyllia accuratius ab aliis poesis generibus segregemus aut gradus processusque epylliorum ipsius generis subtilius definiamus."

³⁵ (Paris, Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres," 1922), 147; cf. Heumann, 17f., 22, on the relative chronology of the poems and the quarrel and on the fact that there may have been epyllia before the quarrel.

Of the five authorities listed in footnote 7 none mentions any of the others, but they are all in fair agreement about the characteristics of the epyllion except as each is carried away by his enthusiasm for one phase or another. For our purpose, then, it will be sufficient to give references only to the studies of Miss Crump and Professor Jackson,³⁶ since their work is the more accessible, and to refer to the others when they present a singularity worthy of notice. As was remarked above, the only valuable article on the subject is "The Latin Epyllion", by Professor C. N. Jackson. Professor Jackson really agrees with me that the type does not exist, and he might well have taken the final step which his evidence urges, a statement that the form is spurious. Although I believe that it is almost impossible to analyze literary characteristics with enough exactness to define a genre, we must nevertheless make the effort, since in this instance the very existence of the type depends upon its characteristics.

The origin of the name, in several writers on the subject, is discussed and recognized as modern;³⁷ it should be noted, however, that it is suggested that the Greeks called such a poem an *ἔπος* or *ποιημάτων*.³⁸ This suggestion is made because, if there was such a type of poetry recognized by the ancients, they must have had some way of referring to it. This name apparently rests only upon the authority of the scholium on Callimachus's hymn which speaks

³⁶ C. N. Jackson, "The Latin Epyllion," *H.S.C.P.* xxiv (1913), 37-50; M. Marjorie Crump, *The Epyllion from Theocritus to Ovid* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1931). These works will hereafter be cited only by the authors' names.

As a curious example of the more recent type of scholarship on this subject we may examine Émile Cahen, *Callimaque et son oeuvre poétique* (Bibliothèque des écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome, fasc. 134, Paris, E. de Boccard, 1929). He says (pp. 39f.) that one should be most guarded in treating the quarrels of Callimachus, and he agrees (pp. 57-59, esp. p. 57, note 2) that there is almost no evidence for the Callimachus-Apollonius quarrel. He likewise agrees that Theocritus's poems are not really of the type (p. 308), and he is not clear as to whether there really were any predecessors to the *Hecale* (pp. 307-309). He also says that the *Hecale* antedates the quarrel with Apollonius (pp. 41, 61) and that chronology is against the poem's being an answer to Apollonius. It is further interesting to note that he speaks of the poem as an heroic idyll (p. 183), another term which is of dubious provenance, and he also says (pp. 183, 309) that it is an *aition* in epic verse. How then is anything left of the epyllion classification?

³⁷ Jackson, 38f.; Heumann, 7.

³⁸ Jackson, 39; Heumann, 7. In the *περὶ ὕψους* xxxiii.5 the term *ποιημάτων* is used of a poem we believe was an elegy, Eratosthenes's *Erigone*; Plutarch *Cicero* II.3 relates that Cicero in his youth wrote a *ποιημάτων*, called *Pontius Glaucus*, in tetrameter verse.

of a *ποίημα*.³⁹ It is further suggested that the ancient reading public, as well as the authors, recognized and understood the conventions which were followed in writing epyllia.³⁸ Consequently we should have no difficulty in doing the same.

In the first place the epyllion is said to be a mutation of the grand Homeric epic, which contains within itself almost all forms of objective narrative poetry.⁴⁰ Its style is to be distinguished from the Homeric by being more descriptive than narrative.⁴⁰ In many ways this would be true even of the Homeric epic, and it is certainly difficult to perceive the exact moment when a poem could be called more descriptive than narrative. It is, however, recognized that some poems listed in this group are more narrative than descriptive, and that in them the descriptive passages are merely ornament.⁴¹ It is also pointed out that the dramatic element is often introduced, and that long speeches are frequently used.⁴² The conclusion, I suppose, is that the style of an epyllion can be, in the main, either descriptive, narrative, or dramatic.

As is to be expected, the epyllion naturally preserved some of the appearance of epic poetry and epic style. It drew its subject-matter from the same general field and treated it in much the same way. But its brevity, since the length of a book of Homer would constitute the extreme in length,⁴³ prevented the epic sweep of conception and expression. For the most part, it is declared, the epyllic poets favored romantic stories, so that we may believe that there are two types of epyllia, the heroic and the romantic.⁴⁴ This sort of analysis appears satisfactory until we remember that none of the Greek poems can properly be said to deal with unrequited love and that Catullus LXIV is the only Latin epyllion which does, since the *Ciris* is quite definitely a metamorphosis. Regarding the *Culex* as a parody, we then find that each of these Latin poems has

³⁹ The *Hecale* is called an *ἔπος* in the epigram by Crinagoras (*A.P.* ix.545) and a *ποίημα* by the *Etym. Mag. s.v.* ἘΚΆΛΗ.

⁴⁰ Jackson, 38.

⁴¹ Crump, 22.

⁴² Crump, 22. Cf. S. E. Bassett, *The Poetry of Homer* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1938), Chapter III, where Professor Bassett has demonstrated that these dramatic qualities are peculiarly characteristic of the Homeric epic.

⁴³ Jackson, 40; Crump, 22.

⁴⁴ Jackson, 40; Crump, 22. We must regard as absurd the discovery that the Greek epyllion has three stages (Crump, 40): epic idyll, *Hecale*, work of Euphorion; that the Latin epyllion also has three periods: Catullus, Vergil and Gallus, and the Augustans (*Metamorphoses* of Ovid); and that both Latin and Greek epyllia have two types (Crump, 48): idyllic and narrative.

its own classification. We must also disregard the evidence which is usually drawn from the titles of lost poems or from poems preserved only in fragments, since we cannot be sure of their genre when we lack their text.

It is generally said that the authors of epyllia preferred to write about epic heroes or heroines, sometimes using a whole story, sometimes merely an incident, with a marked preference for the obscure.⁴⁵ This tendency is clear, however, only in the introduction to the *Ciris*, where the author indicates that he is going to tell the correct version of the story. Such an attitude is just as characteristic of the Pindaric ode as it is of epyllia, and is also seen in the spirit which led Callimachus to his aetiological studies. The story of the *Ciris*, moreover, was told in practically the same way in the *Metamorphoses* of Parthenius, as we are informed by a scholium on verse 420 of Dionysius Periegetes, which is a good indication of the genre to which the *Ciris* belongs.

It is also set up as a characteristic that the poets not only frequently used love stories but also emphasized the heroines and gave a romantic and sentimental note to their poems.⁴⁶ That may be true of the *Europa* alone in Greek, and the *Ciris* and Catullus LXIV in Latin, but of none of the other poems; and we are shown by May's work⁴⁷ that Alexandrian tones in the descriptions of the maidens in love are not peculiar to epyllia. Many of the statements about the love element in Latin epyllia doubtless arise from the work of Parthenius, who is modernly regarded as furnishing themes for Gallus's "epyllia." It is worth a moment to lay this ghost. In antiquity Parthenius was primarily known as a writer of elegies. Suidas describes Parthenius as ἐλεγειοποιὸς καὶ μέτρων διαφόρων ποιητής; also he says ἔγραψε δὲ ἐλεγείας, Ἀφροδίτην, Ἀρήτης ἐπικήδειον τῆς γαμετῆς, Ἀρήτης ἐγκώμιον ἐν τρισὶ βιβλίοις καὶ ἄλλα πολλὰ.

It is likewise valuable to cite from the preface to his Περὶ Ἐρωτικῶν Παθημάτων: Μάλιστα σοι δοκῶν ἀρμόττειν, Κορνήλιε Γάλλε, τὴν ἄθροισιν τῶν ἐρωτικῶν παθημάτων, ἀναλεξάμενος ὡς ὅτι μάλιστα ἐν βραχυτάτοις ἀπέσταλκα. τὰ γὰρ παρά τισι τῶν ποιητῶν κείμενα τούτων, μὴ αὐτοτελῶς λελεγμένα, κατανοήσεις ἐκ τῶνδε τὰ πλεῖστα: αὐτῷ τέ σοι παρέσται εἰς ἔπη καὶ ἐλεγείας ἀνάγειν τὰ μάλιστα ἐξ αὐτῶν ἀρμόδια. Here there is no mention of epyllia, nor are the poems termed ποιήματα. When

⁴⁵ Crump, 22.

⁴⁶ Jackson, 41, 46-50; Crump, 22, cf. 49, 102.

⁴⁷ See discussion and references in note 9.

Parthenius talks of elegy and epic in the same breath, he gives us a real clue: the Romans could write about the same subjects in either meter. Thus epyllia may be elegies in epic verse, for the erotic certainly belongs in elegy; and they are clear examples of the Alexandrian fondness for mixed *genera*.

It is well recognized by our modern authorities that the epyllia are results of the Alexandrian liking for mixed literary types, so that each epyllion is likely to be a composite of at least two genres. Consequently, in addition to the epic qualities, there are elements of the idyll, pastoral, elegy, epithalamium, lyric, drama, and metamorphosis.⁴⁸ While this is admirable literary criticism of the poems under consideration, it seems hardly just to say that poems should be grouped together under a specific name since they have the point in common that they are each a mixture of different types of poetry in different proportions.⁴⁹ When we remember the number of poems we have to deal with, there seems to be greater success in pointing out differences than resemblances and we find that each, according to this analysis, belongs in a group by itself.

The resemblances between elegy and the epyllion are so striking that scholars have felt compelled to try to differentiate them. The only differences which could be discovered are the meter and the style.⁵⁰ Thus the analysis of the common conventions by which the ancients would be able to distinguish the epyllion from other types of poetry comes down simply to the epic meter and the epic manner. The epic manner in Latin epyllia is characterized by the invocation at the beginning (which is present in two of the Latin poems and none of the Greek), catalogues, similes, supernatural machinery, descriptions of Hades, etc.⁵¹ There is also the description of a character in a given situation, *ἡθοποιία*;⁵² but Aristotle⁵³ allotted about the same quality to tragedy. The style of epyllia is said to be "formal, allusive, learned. The language and atmosphere are more homely than those of grand epic, and a graceful use of realism gives great charm to the work of some poets."⁵⁴ And the general conclusions are that, "in the later epyllion, the

⁴⁸ Jackson, 41f.

⁴⁹ Jackson, 42, "The Latin epyllion, therefore, is a composite poem."

⁵⁰ Jackson, 43; Heumann, 6f.

⁵¹ Jackson, 44.

⁵² Jackson, 45.

⁵³ Aristotle *Poetics* vi.1450b, 8-13; xv.

⁵⁴ Crump, 24.

picturesque elements tend to become still more subordinate to the narrative or to disappear completely; that the combination of main subject and digression is regularly introduced; that the subject is usually a love romance; and that there is a tendency to prefer the morbidly sensational type of story.”⁵⁵ So we see that the emphasis upon epic meter and epic manner as conspicuous qualities is undoubtedly sound, but that they are not enough to demonstrate a separate genre which must be termed the epyllion.

Efforts to distinguish the epyllion from the narrative hymn on the theory that a hymn deals with the gods and the epyllion with human beings,⁵⁶ are naturally complete failures.⁵⁷ Certainly no such distinction prevailed in the ancient world, and I doubt if the average educated reader could ever recognize such an artificial difference.

The digression is also set up as a sure means by which one can recognize an epyllion,⁵⁸ although the digressions are not generally apparent in the Greek poems and such a vital characteristic ought to be present in the poems which set the type. Unfortunately we know little of the history of the literary digression, which seems also to be characteristic of Homeric epics, Homeric Hymns, Pindaric odes, etc. It is naturally to be granted that there are striking digressions in two of the Latin poems and one of the Greek (Theocritus xxv), but we need more widespread and clearer characteristics which all the poems have in common.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 22f.

⁵⁷ Arthur Ludwich, *Homerischer Hymnenbau nebst seinen Nachahmungen bei Kallimachos, Theokrit, Vergil, Nonnos und Anderen* (Leipzig, S. Hirzel, 1908). On p. 149, note 1, he refers to *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* 160 to prove that hymns were composed to heroes and heroines as well as to gods and goddesses. (Cf. also *H.H.* xv εἰς Ἡρακλέα λεοντόθυμον.) He also, in an extreme fashion, stresses (pp. 149–151) the closeness of Theocritus xxiv and xxv to the *Homeric Hymns*. The same trend of thought is to be found in the article on *Hymnos* in Pauly-Wissowa-Kroll, *R.-E.* (Wünsch), ix¹.156ff.; for melic hymns cf. 158–162; col. 166 declares that Theocritus xxiv would be a hymn if it had the formulaic beginning and ending. T. W. Allen, W. R. Halliday, E. E. Sikes, *The Homeric Hymns*² (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1936), lxxxiii–xcv “The Nature of the Homeric Hymns,” are excellent on the question of the variety of hymns. I would thus say that the only way to tell a hymn is by its formal beginning and ending, and I should think that a purely literary hymn could lack even these. On p. 224 they also refer to the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* 160, which they say refers to those strange creatures, the “melic hymns.” What the Alexandrians could do in mixing forms is shown by Callimachus *Hymn* v, which is in elegiac meter.

⁵⁸ Crump, 23.

I think the only significant fact about the use of the digression is to show how clearly poetry was influenced by rhetoric. The importance of the digression is well appreciated by Theodore C. Burgess,⁵⁹ who says: "The *ἔκφρασις* is a description of persons, things, places, seasons, events, strange living objects, etc. It is conceded by all that *ἔκφρασις* is involved to some extent in all of the other forms of *προγυμνάσματα*, especially in the *σύγκρισις* and *ἐγκώμιον*, yet its claim to a separate place is maintained; compare Hermogenes, Georgius, Nicolaus. That the *ἔκφρασις* is useful in all forms of oratory, but is especially adapted to history (Theon, II, 60, 20) and poetry, is distinctly stated by the rhetoricians. Their citations of examples are largely from these two divisions of literature, e.g., Homer's description of Thersites, of the shield of Achilles; Thucydides' *νυκτιμαχία*, or his description of the harbor of the Thesproians." One is quite willing to grant that the *Ciris*, and especially Catullus LXIV,⁶⁰ are of unusual construction, but this characteristic does not seem to be a peculiarity of a literary type.

As matters stand, one can almost say that no two of these poems have any one characteristic in common unless it be some characteristic which is so general that it is shared by a large portion of ancient poetry.

Although I trust I have adequately demonstrated the perils of believing in the epyllion as a type, it is necessary to treat in detail one point more, the question of the length of the poems. It is often set up as a criterion that the epyllion is about one book long, presumably a book of Homer. The relative lengths of the extant poems are: Theocritus XIII, 75; Theocritus XXIV, 140;⁶¹ Theocritus XXV, 281; Moschus II, 166 (incomplete); Bion, *Achilles*, 32 (incomplete); *Culex*, 414; *Ciris*, 541; Catullus LXIV, 408. It would seem that an average book of Homer would be 500 to 650 verses long. Only one of the poems, and that a later one, approximates this ideal. If the length were a true criterion, it should especially be

⁵⁹ Theodore C. Burgess, *Epidictic Literature* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1902), 200; cf. H. V. Canter, "Digressio in the Orations of Cicero," *A.J.P.* LII (1931), 351-361.

⁶⁰ Cf. Wilhelm Kroll, *C. Valerius Catullus* (Leipzig, Teubner, 1923), 140-143; Clyde Murley, "The Structure and Proportion of Catullus LXIV," *T.A.P.A.* LXVIII (1937), 305-317.

⁶¹ That this number should be increased by some thirty verses is shown by A. S. Hunt and I. Johnson, *Two Theocritus Papyri* (London, Egyptian Exploration Society, 1930), 23f.

present in the early poems which are claimed to have established the literary type. It is worth our while to digress a little here, for we can shed some definite light upon the question of the proper length of different kinds of poems—"proper" in the eyes of the ancients—which is a question much more easily raised than answered.

It is quite right to say that in ancient times there was dispute about the proper length of epic poems. There is great error, however, in thinking that this dispute began with Callimachus and Apollonius, or even in implying that it began with them. At the risk of retracing familiar ground I wish to quote some passages from Aristotle's *Poetics* which demonstrate that the dispute was in full force in his day, and which suggest that it may have begun earlier than his time.⁶² Back of the question of the proper length of a poem lurks the idea of progress, the concept that there is a true form or Platonic idea to which a literary type may aspire and which it may hope to approximate. This sentiment is implied by a passage in Aristotle on tragedy—tragedy has reached its peak and has no future except to try to repeat its successes: Τὸ μὲν οὖν ἐπισκοπεῖν ἄρ' ἔχει ἥδη ἢ τραγωδία τοῖς εἶδεσιν ἰκανῶς ἢ οὐ, αὐτὸ τε καθ' αὐτὸ κρίναι καὶ πρὸς τὰ θέατρα, ἄλλος λόγος. . . . κατὰ μικρὸν ἠϋξήθη προαγόντων ὅσον ἐγίγνετο φανερόν αὐτῆς· καὶ πολλὰς μεταβολὰς μεταβαλοῦσα ἢ τραγωδία ἐπαύσατο, ἐπεὶ ἔσχε τὴν αὐτῆς φύσιν.⁶³

In epic poetry, on the other hand, Aristotle seems to think there is still some possibility for improvement, and he gives clear indication of polemical theorizing on the subject: Διαφέρει δὲ κατὰ τε τῆς συστάσεως τὸ μῆκος ἢ ἐποποιία καὶ τὸ μέτρον. τοῦ μὲν οὖν μήκους ὅρος ἰκανὸς ὁ εἰρημένος· δύνασθαι γὰρ δεῖ συνορᾶσθαι τὴν ἀρχὴν καὶ τὸ τέλος. εἷη δ'

⁶² That the question of the length of the poems was earlier than Aristotle is shown by Vitruvius *De Architectura* v. *Praef.* 3-4: "Etiamque Pythagorae quique eius haeresim fuerunt secuti, placuit cybicus rationibus praecepta in voluminibus scribere, constitueruntque cybus ccxvi versus eosque non plus tres in una conscriptione oportere esse putaverunt. Cybus autem est corpus ex lateribus aequali latitudine planitiarum perquadratum. Is cum est iactus, quam in partem incubuit, dum est intactus, inmotam habet stabilitatem, uti sunt etiam tesserae quas in alveo ludentes iaciunt. Hanc autem similitudinem ex eo sumpsisse videntur, quod is numerus versus, uti cybus, in quemcumque sensum insederit, inmotam efficiat ibi memoriae stabilitatem. Graeci quoque poetae comici interponentes e choro canticum dividerunt spatia fabularum. Ita partes cybica ratione facientes intercapedinibus levant actorum pronuntiationes." The number given in this text is, of course, the cube of six, one of the "perfect" numbers, but it is an emendation. Three times the amount comes to 648.

⁶³ *Poetics* iv.1449a, 7-15.

ἀν τοῦτο, εἰ τῶν μὲν ἀρχαίων ἐλάττους αἱ συστάσεις εἶεν, πρὸς δὲ τὸ πλήθος τραγωδιῶν τῶν εἰς μίαν ἀκρόασιον τιθεμένων παρήκοιεν.⁶⁴ It is unfortunately impossible to tell from this passage whether he meant that the length of an epic should equal that of three tragedies or of three tragedies plus a satyr play. Whichever he meant, the direction his thinking was taking is perfectly apparent—he favored brevity. In the Loeb Library edition of Aristotle's *Poetics*, W. Hamilton Fyfe has the following note to this passage: "'Entertainment' must mean a festival. At the City Dionysia three poets competed, each with three tragedies. By the end of the fifth century only one Satyr play was performed at each festival. But the tragedies were longer than those we possess. It is therefore likely that the nine tragedies together with one Satyr play amounted to about 15,000 lines. The *Iliad* contains between 16,000 and 17,000 lines."⁶⁵ I would say the point is more truly seen by Lane Cooper: "Say, 3500–4000 lines in all; the Oresteian Trilogy of Aeschylus runs to 3795."⁶⁶ Chapter xxvi of the *Poetics* supports Cooper, for there Aristotle clearly says that tragedy has a point over epic in that it is shorter.⁶⁷

It is then of the utmost importance to notice that there are 5,835 lines in the *Argonautica*. Thus we are led to consider that, although the Alexandrians speak of Homer in their literary discussions, they were really more influenced by the Aristotelian view of epic than by Homer himself. It would be rewarding to pursue this subject, for which a beginning has been made by Ludwig Adam.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ *Poetics* xxiv.1459b, 17–22.

⁶⁵ W. Hamilton Fyfe (New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1932), 118.

⁶⁶ Lane Cooper, *Aristotle on the Art of Poetry* (New York, Ginn and Co., 1913), 80.

⁶⁷ We have here some signs that in Aristotle's day there was already argumentative literary theorizing on the question of the length of a literary work (*Poetics* xxvi.1462a 14–1462b 11): "Ἐπειτα διότι πάντ' ἔχει ὄσαπερ ἡ ἐποποιία (καὶ γὰρ τῷ μέτρῳ ἔξεστι χρῆσθαι), καὶ ἔτι οὐ μικρὸν μέρος τὴν μουσικὴν καὶ τὰς ὕψεις, δι' ἧς αἱ ἡδοναὶ συνίστανται ἐναργέστατα· εἶτα καὶ τὸ ἐναργὲς ἔχει καὶ ἐν τῇ ἀναγνώσει καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἔργων· ἔτι τὸ ἐν ἐλάττοντι μήκει τὸ τέλος τῆς μμήσεως εἶναι· (τὸ γὰρ ἀθροώτερον ἦδιον ἢ πολλὰ κεκραμένον τῷ χρόνῳ, λέγω δ' οἶον εἰ τις τὸν Οἰδίπουν θείη τὸν Σοφοκλέους ἐν ἔπεισον ὄσοις ἢ Ἰλιάς)· ἔτι ἦττον μία ἡ μμήσις ἢ τῶν ἐποποιῶν· (σημεῖον δέ, ἐκ γὰρ ὀποιασοῦν μμήσεως πλείους τραγωδίαι γίγνονται)· ὥστε εἰ μὲν ἓνα μῦθον ποιῶσιν, ἢ βραχέως δεικνύμενον μῦθρον φαίνεσθαι, ἢ ἀκολουθοῦντα τῷ τοῦ μέτρον μήκει ὕδαρῃ. λέγω δὲ οἶον εἰ μὲν πλείονων πράξεων ἢ συγκειμένων, ὥσπερ ἡ Ἰλιάς ἔχει πολλὰ τοιαῦτα μέρη καὶ ἡ Ὀδύσεια, καὶ καθ' ἑαυτὰ ἔχει μέγεθος· καίτοι ταῦτα τὰ ποιήματα συνέστηκεν ὡς ἐνδέχεται ἀριστα καὶ ὅτι μάλιστα μίᾳς πράξεως μμήσις.

⁶⁸ Ludwig Adam, *Die Aristotelische Theorie vom Epos nach ihrer Entwicklung bei Griechen u. Römern* (Wiesbaden, Limbarth, 1889).

On this point of length it may be now necessary for us to revise our thinking. The question is raised as to whether by "long epic" the Homeric or the Aristotelian epic would be meant. What also did the scholiast mean when he called the *Hecale* a long poem? Wherein do modern scholars find the difference in length between the individual works of Apollonius and of Callimachus? For our present purpose I have perhaps done enough if I have shown how much work remains to be done in investigating the lengths of ancient books of verse before we can say anything at all positive about ancient opinions on the subject.

One further remark remains to be made on the authorities' point that the epyllia would each be about the length of a book of Homer. In the first place the length of the books of Homer differs considerably in our modern texts. There is also the factor that the length of the epics varied before the vulgate text was established,⁶⁹ so that it would seem that the length of the books must have varied in antiquity from our now generally accepted lengths.

It has also always been supposed that there is some relationship between the length of books of poetry and the length of ancient rolls. In the case of Catullus LXIV, that poem was probably published as a *monobiblos*, in a separate roll. At least, so A. L. Wheeler thought,⁷⁰ citing as evidence the fact that Crinagoras sent a copy of the *Hecale* to Marcellus (*A.P.* ix.545), and that in Catullus xcv there is an allusion to the independent publication of Cinna's *Zmyrna*. He also points out⁷¹ that Catullus LXI–LXIV form a clearly marked unit of 797 lines. It is worth mentioning that if Catullus LXIV was published in a codex, which is not completely impossible, it would really have been of only the size of a very small pamphlet. Surely ancient writers must have taken into consideration, as we do, the form in which their works were to be published.

The classic passage on the subject is, of course, by Birt: "Im Durchschnitt genommen war das Gedichtbuch halb so gross als das Prosabuch. Es hält sich meistens zwischen 700 und 1100 Zeilen; nur ausnahmsweise geht es bis 500 herab. Sein Maximum von 1100 Zeilen ist unverletzlich. Der Zahl Tausend wurde darum typische Geltung zu Theil, und Martial meint nichts als ein *δλον βιβλίον*, wenn

⁶⁹ T. W. Allen, *Homer, the Origins and the Transmission* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1924), Ch. XIII on the origin of the vulgate.

⁷⁰ A. L. Wheeler, *Catullus and the Traditions of Ancient Poetry* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1934), 23.

⁷¹ *Op. cit.* (see note 70), 18f.

er sagt *ut mille versibus Baias laudem* (XI.80); ebendaher wählte noch Tzetzes den Titel *Χιλιάδες*; aber schon Euphorion dichtete fünf Bücher desselben Titels *Χιλιάδες*, und dieser ist von Meineke mit Wahrscheinlichkeit eben auf die Verszahl gedeutet worden. Rechnen wir nach dem Vorbild des Bankesianischen Homer 43 Zeilen auf die Columnne, so hielt also das Poesiebuch 26 Seiten im Maximum. Sehr beliebt waren aber die Bücher zu nur 700 Versen; sie hielten sogar nur 16 Seiten. Daher heisst das Poesiebuch im Gegensatz zum Prosabuch vorzugsweise *libellus*." ⁷² "Bei allen übrigen Dichtern herrscht aber die Zahl Tausend als Maximum (ausser Lucan IX); die beliebteste Grösse liegt zwischen 700 und 799 Versen (44 Rollen); ihr steht die zwischen 800 und 899 am nächsten (33 Rollen)." ⁷³ Anything less than 700 verses was considered very small indeed. ⁷⁴ Birt agrees that epyllia were published as separate books, ⁷⁵ and he also then proceeds to suggest a relationship between the division of the Homeric epics into rolls and the length of the epyllion. ⁷⁶

The variation in the length of the extant epyllia is so great that, under the circumstances, I do not see how it has any value whatsoever as an exact criterion. The only Greek one which might have been published separately is the *Hecale*, and it is all but impossible to demonstrate anything about that poem. None of the other epyllia, moreover, comes anywhere near being long enough.

Kenyon's investigations of the papyrus roll, more recent than Birt's, are very useful, and his work will help us to picture more exactly what this sort of poem would look like in its published form: "It may be taken, therefore, as established by experience that a papyrus sheet intended for a roll on which a work of Greek literature might be inscribed rarely, if ever, exceeded 13×9 inches, while something like $10 \times 7\frac{1}{2}$ would be more common for a book of moderate pretensions. On the other hand, pocket volumes of poetry might be of much less height." ⁷⁷ "The British Museum *Odyssey* papyrus, already referred to as the handsomest specimen of Greek book-production, would have required 7 feet if it con-

⁷² Th. Birt, *Das Antike Buchwesen* (Berlin, Wilhelm Hertz, 1882), 291.

⁷³ *Op. cit.* (see note 72), 293.

⁷⁴ *Op. cit.*, 295.

⁷⁵ *Op. cit.*, 409-412.

⁷⁶ *Op. cit.*, 468, note 1.

⁷⁷ Frederic G. Kenyon, *Books and Readers in Ancient Greece and Rome* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1932), 49.

tained only Book III, or 21 feet if it originally included Books I–III. The Bacchylides Papyrus now measures about 15 feet, but we do not know how much is missing; and the same is the case with the papyrus of Herodas, of which the surviving portion measures 14½ feet, with a height of only 5 inches.”⁷⁸ “Two or three books of the *Iliad* were as much as an ordinary roll could contain; a papyrus of 20 feet in the British Museum, of good average quality, contains the last two books.”⁷⁹

In speaking of the Homeric epics, which he believes were in written form, possibly, even at the time of composition, Kenyon says: “. . . the natural presumption is that the twenty-four books of the *Iliad* represent a stage in its history when it occupied twenty-four rolls. When this division was made is unknown; but it may be worth observing that this theory of its origin would appear to point to a date earlier than the Alexandrian age. From that age we possess a number of specimens of Homeric manuscripts, and it is clear that a normal roll could easily accommodate two books of the *Iliad*. It would seem, therefore, that the division into twenty-four books may go back to a period when rolls were shorter or handwritings larger.”⁸⁰

These statements show how foolish it is to think that the Alexandrians modeled their poems on a single book of Homer, for they would most likely be accustomed to seeing him in units of two books. Thus one might suppose that the epyllion ought to be as long as two books of Homer, but we have no evidence that such was ever the case.

And so we find that there is no group of characteristics which would have induced ancient, or should induce modern, readers to place these poems in a single and separate category.

IV. CONCLUSION

In this paper I am unable to determine the issue of just what the ancients thought these poems were; but since I have been at

⁷⁸ *Op. cit.* (see note 77), 52.

⁷⁹ *Op. cit.*, 62. Hence we see how Birt got his idea that the *Hecale* had 1000 lines: Birt, *op. cit.* (see note 72), 297, and 291, note 2.

⁸⁰ *Op. cit.*, 16f.; cf. 15. Very similar remarks are made in Sir Frederic Kenyon, “The Papyrus Book,” *The Library (Transactions of the Bibliographical Society)* Ser. IV, vol. VII (1926–27), 121–135; and in Frederic G. Kenyon, *Ancient Books and Modern Discoveries* (Chicago, The Caxton Club, 1927), Chapter IV. Although there is no more information in this last book than in the others previously cited, it should be mentioned because it gives the reader such a fine idea of what ancient books were like and it has especially good plates.

such pains to destroy what other people say about them, it is natural to suppose I have some suggestions of my own, which it is only right that I should briefly propound. I feel that we have no means at present of discovering the precise nature of these poems, but there are certain facts upon which theories might justly be established.

It is clear that most scholars have at great length described characteristics for these poems which fit, usually, only the *Ciris* and Catullus LXIV and not much of anything else. There is nothing to show that the ancients regarded any two of these poems as belonging to the same literary classification, nor has the whole lot of them any striking peculiarities in common. This dissimilarity among the actual characteristics of the poems is very suggestive, as is the feeling, which any reader experiences, that the poems are somehow similar. If we remember that the Alexandrians and the Romans who followed them were fond of mixed literary *genera*, might not these poems be, as was mentioned above, regarded as a mixture of types, and a mixture not always compounded in the same proportions?

For instance, it is admitted that epyllion and elegy are indistinguishable except for epic meter and epic manner. The elegy under consideration in this connection is the narrative elegy which was strongly influenced by "Lehrgedicht" and Hesiodic poetry,⁸¹ which itself was a sort of revolt against the long Homeric epic. This type of elegy, transferred into epic verse, might be what has been called the epyllion. The idea of a composite genre, as Jackson suggested, would help to explain the fact that Catullus LXIV is an epithalamium and the *Ciris* a metamorphosis, since they are both subjects which could appropriately be treated in elegiac verse. Doubtless this vagueness as to meters caused difficulty in classification in antiquity, e.g., Aristotle's precept in *Poetics* 1.1447b, 13-16, the passage in which he advised against classifying poets by their meters rather than by their types of imitation.

The *Metamorphoses* of Ovid, since they resemble the poems in question, have also come in to complicate the situation because it

⁸¹ Émile Cahen, *op. cit.* (see note 36), 299-306; Pauly-Wissowa-Kroll, *R.-E.* xxiv s.v. "Lehrgedicht" (W. Kroll); Erich Reitzenstein, "Zur Stiltheorie des Kallimachos," *Festschrift Richard Reitzenstein* (Leipzig, Teubner, 1931), 23-69, especially "II. Hesiod als Vorbild des Epikers," 41-52.

has been suggested by Georges Lafaye⁸² that they can be called a series of epyllia. This is obviously impossible because it has always been insisted that an epyllion should be a completely separate poem, not part of a longer one. Lafaye comes nearer to the truth when he suggests that in many respects the *Metamorphoses* were probably inspired by the *Aetia* of Callimachus.⁸³ Richard Heinze comes closest to my point of view in his work "Ovids elegische Erzählung,"⁸⁴ where he recognizes that the tone of elegy and the tone of epyllion are the same—sympathetic, sentimental; and also that they are similar in the use of monologues, and in their use of erotic elements and the *ἐκφρασις*.⁸⁵

It is most desirable, then, that we should banish from our critical vocabulary the term epyllion and from our critical thinking the grouping of poems under that name. There is also the possible alternative of using "epyllion" in a wider sense, to mean "all poems in the new narrative style as opposed to the Homeric epics." In this sense the term would not be limited to just the few poems listed in footnote 1. These poems, then, cannot smugly be placed in a distinct category and dismissed as finite; they demand consideration as part of the larger question of the nature of the verse and style of the Alexandrians and their Roman imitators.

ADDENDUM. It may be of minor significance to observe that, comparatively late in the history of Latin literature, Ausonius used the word "epyllion" twice and in senses which differ from each other and from the ordinary modern meaning which I have tried to discredit; these are the only occurrences of the word reported by the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*. Ausonius used the word, toward the end of his letter to Symmachus on the poem, to describe his *Griphus Ternarii Numeri*: [335, 56–58] "Quod si alicui et obscurus videbor, aput eum me sic tuebere: primum eiusmodi epyllia, nisi vel obscura sint, nihil futura. . . ." The *Riddle* is a poem of ninety hexameter verses which the author claimed to have composed almost extemporaneously and which deals with the aspects of the numbers three

⁸² Georges Lafaye, *Les métamorphoses d'Ovide et leurs modèles grecs* (Paris, Bibliothèque de la Faculté des Lettres de l'Université de Paris xix, 1904), 94f.

⁸³ *Op. cit.* (see note 82), 105f.

⁸⁴ Richard Heinze, "Ovids elegische Erzählung," *Berichte über die Verhandlungen der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig*, Phil.-hist. Kl., Band 71, Heft 7 (1919), 99.

⁸⁵ *Op. cit.* (see note 84), 100f.

and nine. In the latter part of his *Cento Nuptialis*, in justifying the writing of lewd verses by a poet whose life is pure, Ausonius remarked: [360, 14–15] “. . . Platonis Symposion composita in ephebos epyllia continere.” Here the term would actually refer to prose, or possibly to amatory epigrams [cf. Apuleius *Apol.* 10]. Yet it would seem that Ausonius would have known the technical meaning of the word, if there was one. These two passages have been generally overlooked in scholarly discussions of the so-called epyllia.