

OPTIMA CARME:
A REEXAMINATION OF THE NURSE IN THE *CIRIS*

BY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the *Ciris*, a Pseudo-Vergilian epyllion of uncertain date, and analyzes the figure of the nurse Carme, a character who has largely been ignored in previous studies of the poem. The *Ciris* narrates the story of Scylla of Megara and how she betrayed her father, King Nisus, because of her love for Minos, King of Crete. While nurses are typical stock characters in Greek and Roman literature, I will show how the character of Carme becomes more than Scylla's nurse. Although she embodies the qualities of many nurses from various genres before her, the *Ciris* poet also expands her role, briefly transforming an otherwise minor character into a second heroine.

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Chapter One

Introduction

The *Ciris* is a first century B.C. or first century A.D. epyllion about Scylla, who betrays her father Nisus, king of Megara, because of her love for Minos, king of Crete. The author begins with a dedication to a “Messalla” and a lengthy apology for not writing a philosophical poem (lines 1-34). He then discusses at great length the version of the story that he intends to write, including a mention of the story he will not write (lines 54-91). After this lengthy proem (100 lines), he begins his narrative proper. First, he tells the reasons for Scylla’s desire for Minos, who was attacking Megara. By the will of the gods, Scylla is consumed by an uncontrollable love for Minos. In hopes of marriage to Minos, Scylla approaches her father’s bedroom with the intention of cutting off his special lock of hair. A prophecy proclaimed that as long as the purple tuft of hair remained on Nisus’ head, the city of Megara would be safe from harm.

While Scylla deliberates whether she should betray her father, her nurse Carme hears the girl walking around and catches her at Nisus’ door. After much prodding, specifically Carme addressing her concern that Scylla is in love with Nisus, Scylla reveals her love for Minos. Then follows a long lament by Carme, in which it is revealed that Minos caused the death of her own daughter Britomartis, and now Carme believes he is attempting to take away Scylla as well. Carme then agrees to help Scylla achieve her desires, but only after Scylla attempts every method to convince Nisus. When persuasion fails, Scylla cuts off her father’s magical lock and Megara falls. Minos then ties Scylla to his ship before he sails back to Crete, and while she

laments her fate, Amphitrite transforms her into a ciris out of pity. The poem ends with Scylla continually fleeing from her father Nisus, who was transformed into a sea eagle.

Versions

As the author himself mentions, his poem is only one version of the story of Scylla. Many other ancient authors tell her story, but there is confusion between the various Scyllas in myth. The most well-known Scylla is the monster depicted in Homer's *Odyssey*. In Book 12 of the epic, she dwells high above the sea and snatches Odysseus' men as their ship sails between her cliff and Charybdis, the whirlpool.¹ This monster Scylla is mentioned by other authors, such as Book One of Vergil's *Aeneid* when Aeneas attempts to encourage his people.² There is no further extant expansion upon her backstory until her appearance in Hellenistic literature.

In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the poet reveals that Scylla was once a beautiful girl loved by Glaucus, whom the witch Circe desired. Glaucus went to Circe for help because Scylla had spurned his advances and fled from him. Angered by Glaucus' love for Scylla and his rejection of her own love, Circe poisoned the swimming hole Scylla was accustomed to use. As she entered the pool, Scylla's body was transformed into numerous barking dogs from her waist down, and as revenge against Circe, Scylla attacked Odysseus and his crew.³ Ovid mentions that Scylla would have also attacked Aeneas and his men as they sailed from Troy if she had not been turned into stone. A second version of this origin story is preserved by John Tzetzes, a late Byzantine scholar whose 12th-century commentary of Lycophron's *Alexandra* (240BC) mentions Lycophron's Scylla story, which states that Amphitrite, the wife of Neptune, was jealous of Neptune's love for Scylla, and transformed her into the same monstrous form that Circe did.⁴

¹ *Ody.* XII.85-100.

² *Ae.* I.198-207.

³ Ovid *Met.* XIV.1-74.

⁴ Tzetz. *ad Lycoph.* 45.649.

The other major strand of Scylla stories refers to Scylla of Megara, the girl who betrayed her father Nisus and was punished. *Ciris* is a part of this strand, which is alluded to by numerous authors, Greek and Latin alike. The overall themes remain similar among these tellings, such as Scylla's betrayal of Megara, the cutting of Nisus' magical lock, and with two exceptions to be discussed below, a transformation of Scylla into another creature. Other elements of the story are more fluid and change according to the author's purpose of mentioning the story, such as the reason for the betrayal, the creature Scylla becomes, and the role of minor characters such as the nurse Carme.

The 5th century Greek tragedian Aeschylus provides the earliest mention of her story in his *Choephoroi*. In this play, instead of claiming love as the force driving Scylla's actions, Aeschylus asserts that Scylla betrayed her city and her father because she had been persuaded by her desire for gold.⁵ Aeschylus is one of very few authors who claims Scylla's actions were motivated by greed rather than by passion, but her punishment is not mentioned in the tragedy and there is no transformation. A second Greek author from the 2nd century BC, Apollodorus, reasserts that Scylla's actions were driven by love, but instead of a transformation, Minos ties Scylla to his ship by her feet and she drowns.⁶ These two are the only versions in which there is no transformation of Scylla. Comparatively, 1st century BC Latin author Hyginus writes in his *Fabulae* that instead of becoming the bird *ciris*, she becomes the fish *ciris* who must escape her father, the sea bird.⁷

In later Latin poetry, however, her story becomes confused and conflated with that of the Monster Scylla, as seen specifically Vergil's *Eclogue VI* and Propertius 4.4. In the eclogue, Vergil addresses Scylla, the daughter of Nisus, as the monster with the barking dogs surrounding

⁵ *Chor.* 613-620.

⁶ *Bibliotheca* 209-12.

⁷ *Fab.* 198.

her.⁸ In Propertius' elegy, Tarpeia wonders, "why marvel that Scylla cut her father's hair and her white loins changed into savage dogs" (*quid mirum patrios Scyllam secuisse capillos/candidaque in saevos inguina canes*, *Prop.* 4.4.39-40).⁹ It is critical to state that the stories of Scylla become intertwined during the Augustan age, which perhaps has affected the manner in which the *Ciris* author wrote his poem. A final poet who slightly alters Scylla of Megara is Ovid in his *Metamorphoses*. In addition to the Scylla as monster story in Book XIV mentioned above, Ovid includes in Book VIII the story of lovelorn Scylla who betrays her father. While the main themes of the story still remain unchanged (betrayal, hair cutting, etc.), Ovid's Scylla speaks a long lament filled with harsh words for Minos after he rejects her, and then she throws herself into the sea to swim after the disappearing ships before she is changed into the *ciris*.

In the proem of his poem, however, the *Ciris* author attempts to distinguish the two strands, Scylla of Megara and Scylla the monster, and to place his poem within the tradition of the Scylla stories. His reasons are not explicitly stated, but possibilities will be discussed later in this thesis.

Influences

The *Ciris* was not only influenced by a number of various Scylla stories, but also participates in contexts beyond the myth. Two of these contexts, Neoteric poetic style and the genre of epyllion, are quite entangled with one another. Neoteric poetry is the name given to the style that arose in the 1st century BCE as a reaction against traditional epic poetry.¹⁰ This style

⁸ *Ec.* 6.74-77.

⁹ Propertius, Sextus. *Sexti Properti Elegos*. Edited by S. J. Heyworth. Oxford : New York: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 2007; all translations are my own unless noted otherwise.

¹⁰ There is some debate about whether there was a neoteric movement or if Cicero simply presents poets like Cinna and Catullus in this light; for further information, see Lyne, R. O. A. M. "The Neoteric Poets." *The Classical Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (1978): 167-87.

included these features: allusions, learning, literary sophistication, Alexandrian footnotes, self-conscious literariness, appreciation of the small scope, and personal rather than patriotic themes, among others.¹¹ Some scholars suggest that the Hellenistic poet Callimachus gave rise to a new genre embraced by the Neoterics and which also forms a context for the *Ciris*: the epyllion, also called the “little epic.”¹² This type of poem, other than being shorter than grand epics such as the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, also focuses its attention on descriptive elements and characters instead of a broader narrative. Callimachus’ *Hecale*, considered to be one of the first epyllia and of which only a few number of fragments remain, seems to have had a specific influence on the author of the *Ciris*. One fragment in particular suggests that Callimachus used Scylla in some capacity because her name is mentioned alongside the cutting of a purple hair.¹³ Other elements, such as the figure of the tragic nurse,¹⁴ will be explored later in this thesis.

While the epyllion maintained its short and allusive nature, the subject matter of these poems changed in a number of ways after its creation by Callimachus. Rather than simply a short poem with a range of topics such as domestic life or proper love,¹⁵ the element of uncontrollable and often illicit desire became a defining characteristic of the genre. There are regrettably very few extant epyllia. This should not, however, lead one to believe that the genre was insignificant in the development of Latin literature. A number of Neoteric poets from the 1st century BC are known to have written an epyllion, and some fragments of these works have survived. Authors such as Helvius Cinna (d.44BC) and Licinius Calvus (82-47BC), who wrote

¹¹ Zetzel, James E.G. “Catullus, Ennius, and the Poetics of Allusion.” *Illinois Classical Studies* 8, no. 2 (October 1, 1983): 251–2; Hinds, Stephen. *Allusion and Intertext: Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman Poetry*. Cambridge University Press, 1998. 1-2.

¹² Allen, Walter. “The Epyllion: A Chapter in the History of Literary Criticism.” *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 71 (1940): 1.

¹³ Call. *Fr.* 90: Σκύλλα γυνή κατακάσα καὶ οὐ ψύθος οὔνομι ἔχοθσα πορφυρέην ἤμησε κρέκα.

¹⁴ Lehnus, Luigi. “Una Scena Della *Ciris*: Carme E l’*Hecale* Di Callimaco,” *Rendiconti: Classe di Lettere e Scienze Morali e Storiche*, 109 (1975): 353–61.

¹⁵ Allen 1940: 14: “more descriptive than narrative” scope; 18: Allen provides a list of extant epyllia: Theocritus 13-15, Moschus 2, Bion *Achilles*, *Culex*, *Ciris*, Catullus 64.

the *Zmyrna* and *Io* respectively, both had influence upon the poet of the *Ciris*, particularly the *Zmyrna*, whose story is alluded to in Carme's first speech.¹⁶

A larger champion of the Roman neoteric style, who inspired poets like Cinna and the *Ciris* author, was Parthenius of Nicaea. Although his dates are somewhat unclear, it is known that he was brought to Rome by a Helvius Cinna (either the poet of the *Zmyrna* or his father) near the end of the Mithridatic Wars (75-63BC), served as Vergil's "*grammaticus in Graecis*," and dedicated his only surviving work, the *Erotika Pathemata*, to Cornelius Gallus for him to use as a database for future epyllia.¹⁷ The *Erotika Pathemata*, a collection of brief summaries of myths, describes the suffering of heroes and heroines caused by love, which is displayed "only in the disastrous extreme, as a ruinous passion important...for its appalling effects."¹⁸ While many considered Parthenius' focus on illicit love to be horrifying, he was later praised by later Greek scholars and Aulus Gellius, a grammarian from the late 2nd century AD who associated Parthenius with poets such as Apollonius, Callimachus, and Theocritus.¹⁹ Scholars generally agree that Parthenius' fascination with violent and unlawful passion inspired Cinna to write the *Zmyrna*, an epyllion about the love of *Zmyrna* (or *Myrrha*) for her father *Cinyras*.²⁰

While there is no mention of *Scylla* in the *Erotika Pathemata*,²¹ the influence of Parthenius is difficult to deny because the *Ciris* alludes to the *Zmyrna*, and later Augustan poets such as Vergil, Ovid, and Propertius, all of whom refer to the myth of *Scylla*, present some elements of Parthenian style. This neoteric style has caused many scholars to question whether

¹⁶ *Ciris* 238.

¹⁷ Francese, Christopher. *Parthenius of Nicaea and Roman Poetry*. Studien Zur Klassischen Philologie, Bd. 126. Frankfurt am Main ; New York: Peter Lang, 2001. 27.

¹⁸ *Ibid*: 71-2.

¹⁹ Francese 2001: 122.

²⁰ *Ibid* 41: Both Parthenius and Cinna base their version of *Zmyrna* in Cyprus, where others begin in Assyria or Arabia; story also present in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, set in Panachaia (X.309).

²¹ Another known but lost work of Parthenius, the *Metamorphoses*, gives her story, though it seems to have been more etiological in function than his love poems.

the *Ciris* was written around the same time period as Cinna's *Zmyrna* and other lost epyllia, or if the *Ciris* poet was a later author attempting to mimic an older style. While I will not attempt to answer the question of dating in this thesis, I will provide a short summary of the research that has been done regarding this topic.

Overview of scholarship

The authorship and dating of the *Ciris* have been a source of rich debate in modern scholarship. I will not cover every argument made about these two topics; however an overview of this debate will aid in displaying the mysterious nature of the *Ciris*. Most scholars agree that the epyllion was not written by Vergil despite its placement within the *Appendix Vergiliana*. The general consensus, however, ends here as multiple different ancient poets have been suggested as the creator of the *Ciris*, also affecting the opinions concerning the proper dating of the work. Rather than attributing the work to a young Vergil, some scholars have suggested Cornelius Gallus, Ovid, and Statius as possible authors. As early as the late 19th century, scholars such as Ganzenmüller and R.F. Thomason noted the similarities between the text of the *Ciris* and phrases from Catullus, Lucretius, Vergil, and most importantly, Ovid.²² Thomason presents a number of ideas from Ganzenmüller's study, specifically highlighting that he did not assign the poem to a specific author; rather, he suggested the author was a "superlative plagiarist" who was intimately familiar with all the works of Ovid, placing the *Ciris* author some time after Ovid.²³ In his reevaluation of the *Ciris* and Ovid almost thirty years later, Thomason argued against Ganzenmüller's proposed date of A.D. 19, shortly after Ovid's death, and instead suggested between 18-16 B.C., when Ovid journeyed to study literature in Athens.²⁴

²² "Beitrage zur *Ciris*," *Fleckeis. Jahrb. Supplementbd.*, XX (1894), 553-657, via Thomason, R. F. "The *Ciris* and Ovid: A Study of the Language of the Poem." *Classical Philology* 18, no. 3 (1923): 239-62.

²³ *Ibid*: 622, as translated by R.F. Thomason.

²⁴ Thomason, R. F. (1923): 242.

In the early 20th century, however, the opinion about the author of the *Ciris* was placed firmly within the 1st century B.C. and attributed to Cornelius Gallus, commonly considered to have been Vergil's companion and a missing link for the development of Latin poetry.²⁵ In her book, *The Epyllion from Theocritus to Ovid*, Majorie Marie Crump also argued for Gallus' authorship, stating that the poem was an example of the "school of Cornelius Gallus."²⁶ Using Vergil's works as evidence, Crump suggested that there is clear development of Vergil's writing from the *Culex* (assuming it is in fact the work of a young Vergil) to the *Aeneid*; this development, however, leaves no room for the *Ciris*.²⁷ Crump based this idea of development on what she called "the Vergilian spirit," arguing that the *Culex* and *Eclogues* are metrically and conceptually similar, but the *Ciris* does not resemble either.²⁸ Therefore, it cannot be considered as an early work of Vergil. A second argument in favor of Gallus' authorship made by Crump used Vergil's *Eclogue 6*, which she believed was a catalogue of Gallus' epyllia.²⁹ Considering the mention of Scylla and Nisus is contained within one of the two *Eclogues* about Gallus,³⁰ it is tempting to believe that Gallus could be the author because he would serve as a link between neoteric poets, such as Catullus and Cinna, and Golden Age poets, such as Vergil and Ovid. There is not, however, enough evidence (if any) from the corpus of Gallus or from references to him made by other poets to support the notion of Gallus as author.

In more modern studies of the poem, recent scholars have focused their attentions on the date of the *Ciris*, preferring to attribute the poem to a nameless author from a certain time period. In his recent work, *Allusion and Allegory: Studies in the Ciris*, Boris Kayachev highlights that

²⁵ Thomason's study began the shift to reading *Ciris* as a poem of the 1st c. BC.

²⁶ Crump, Mary Marjorie. *The Epyllion from Theocritus to Ovid. Thesis, Etc.* Oxford, 1931: 157.

²⁷ *Ibid*: 157.

²⁸ *Ibid*: 156.

²⁹ *Ibid*: 173; inspired by Skutsch, Franz. *Aus Vergils Fruhzeit.* Leipzig:1901.

³⁰ *Quid loquar aut Scyllam Nisi, Ec. 6.74.*

the main problem of assigning date and authorship to this poem is the “paradox of the poem’s assumed date of composition and the neoteric style.”³¹ The neoteric style in Rome is generally assigned to poets like Catullus, Cinna, and Calvus as the leaders of the “new poets,” those who wrote in the style of Callimachus, the Hellenistic poet, instead of Ennius, the first Roman epic poet. Even if most scholars agree the *Ciris* is not a work of Vergil, the style of the poem suggests that it was written towards the end of the Roman Republic, where many scholars argue for Gallus as the author. Crump states that there is “no trace of the metamorphosis of Scylla until Parthenius and the *Ciris*,” suggesting that the poem must have been written before the composition of Vergil’s *Georgics*, in which the transformation of Scylla into a bird is referenced.³²

There are, however, many aspects of the poem that suggest a much later date, as if it were written by an author attempting to revive the neoteric style. In his article “The Dating of the *Ciris*,” R.O.A.M. Lyne, the author of the most influential commentary on the poem, argued it was post-Ovidian, which would suggest the 1st century A.D. as the earliest possible dating period.³³ This suggested date returns the poem at least to Ganzenmüller’s earlier mentioned placement of A.D. 19. Lyne, however, believed the *Ciris* was written later because its poet had been influenced in some capacity by Statius, a Silver Age poet from the late 1st century AD. Lyne’s main evidence for this late dating is the use of *quinquennia* in reference to the Panathenea festival found in the opening lines of the *Ciris*, a use which he stated had no precedent use before Statius.³⁴ Additionally, in her book *The Rhetoric of the Roman Fake*, Irene Peirano argues for a post-Ovidian date, stating that because the *Ciris* omitted two major episodes from Ovid’s Scylla

³¹ Kayachev, Boris. *Allusion and Allegory: Studies in the Ciris*. Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG, 2016: 6.

³² Crump 1931:160; Vergil *Georg.* 1.404-9.

³³ Lyne, R. O. A. M. “The Dating of the *Ciris*.” *The Classical Quarterly* 21, no. 1 (1971): 233–53.

³⁴ *Tarda que confecto redeunt quinquennia lustro*, *Ciris* 24; Lyne 1971: 242.

in the *Metamorphoses*, the moment Scylla fell in love and the cutting of the lock, the poet was avoiding moments already discussed at length by a predecessor.³⁵

Conclusion

As stated earlier, this thesis will not attempt to provide a date or an author for the *Ciris*, but rather will focus on elements within the text. Specifically, this thesis will examine the development of the nurse character through both Greek and Latin literature in an attempt to understand the nurse Carme, a character who does not exist in the myth of Scylla of Megara outside the *Ciris*. In my first chapter, I will examine various characteristics of nurse and nurse-like figure in clear precedents to the *Ciris*. I will establish a definition of a nurse or nurse-like character and provide examples from a range of sources (Greek and Latin epic, tragedy, and epyllia) to show the expected qualities of a nurse figure. My second chapter will turn to Carme, who possesses many qualities that would be expected of a nurse figure, such as viewing her ward as her own daughter. She also, however, takes on a role otherwise unprecedented for her type of character in classical literature: a second heroine. In addition to showing how the *Ciris* author alludes to a number of other nurse figures, I will show how Carme reflects those traits of former nurse-like figures through her actions and speeches, as well as how she assumes the authority of the heroine and becomes as important a character as Scylla herself.

A brief concluding chapter will place these findings in the larger context of the poem's position, and self-positioning, in ancient literature.

³⁵ Peirano, Irene. *The Rhetoric of the Roman Fake: Latin Pseudepigrapha in Context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012: 175.

Chapter Two

Influential Nurses

The figure of the nurse is a well-known stock character from Greek epic and tragedy. In her book *Eurykleia and Her Successors: Female Figures of Authority in Greek Poetics*, Helen Karydas defines the character of the nurse as “an older woman, implicitly or explicitly a slave or servant of the household.”¹ This definition, however, barely begins to explore the number of roles a nurse is capable of fulfilling nor does it explain the variety of characters that act in a nurse-like function. In this chapter, I will examine various examples of the nurse from different literary genres (epic, tragedy, and epyllion) in Greek and Latin in an attempt to better define the role of the nurse Carme in the *Ciris*. Because of the complexity of the character and the various functions each literary nurse fulfills, I will simply call each woman I examine a “nurse.”

There are very few studies of nurses in Greek and Roman literature; these women are only briefly mentioned despite the essential role they play in the narrative.² In early Greek epic, Eurykleia from the *Odyssey* not only fulfills the role of caregiver for Telemachus and Odysseus, but also aids Penelope by providing advice, giving orders to the other servants in the household, and playing an essential role in the overall plan of Odysseus against the suitors. In Greek tragedy, comparatively, the role of the caregiver seems to be the only purpose of the nurse, with one particular exception from Euripides’ *Hippolytus*, which will be explored later. Other nurses like Medea’s nurse in Euripides’ *Medea* give their own perspective on the current events and provide general background, but there is no mention of their personal background for their audience and often times there is no further action on their part; the nurse and tutor in *Medea*, for example, are powerless to stop Medea from killing her children.

¹ Karydas, Helen Pournara. *Eurykleia and Her Successors: Female Figures of Authority in Greek Poetics*. Greek Studies. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998: 1.

² Ibid: 1.

The flexible nature of this character allows nurses to fulfill a number of different functions beyond simply caregiver. As will be shown throughout this chapter, nurses possess an essential role in the household because of their influence over the development and education of young girls specifically (young boys were typically instructed by a tutor, a male figure similar to the nurse). Through this influence, nurses tend to appear in moments when the protagonist is faced with a difficult decision, one with adult consequences, and needs a wiser figure to provide advice or physical guidance. The nurse is thus often influential at the crux between childhood and adulthood, serving as a boundary line (physical, emotional, and otherwise) for her protégée. This older woman encourages the young girl to pursue the path the nurse believes to be the best, whether her motivation is the health of the girl or she has more personal reasons involved. This is particularly strong in the *Ciris* because, as we will see, Carme is not only Scylla's nurse, but also her confidant, friend, and even parental figure at times. The number of roles Carme plays in Scylla's life shows how a nurse can serve as not only a caregiver, but also as an independent character with subjective motivations.

Eurykleia

Beginning with the earliest literary influence on Carme, Eurykleia displays the numerous capabilities of the nurse character throughout the *Odyssey*. She is not simply the caregiver of Telemachus ("she nursed him when he was little," ἔτρεφε τυτθὸν ἐόντα, *Od.*1.435) and Odysseus ("you yourself nourished me at your breast," σὺ δέ μ' ἔτρεφες ἀντὶ τῷ σῶ ἐπὶ μαζῶ, 19.482-3); she is also a trusted advisor to Penelope ("but having bathed and put clean clothes on your skin...pray to Athena," ἀλλ' ὕδριναμένην, καθαρὰ χροὶ εἴματα ἐλοῦσα...εὐχε' Ἀθηναίη, 4.750, 752), and the commander of the household servants ("But she, noble among women, commanded to the female servants...thus she spoke, and they heard her well and obeyed," ἡ δ' αὖτις δμωῆσιν

ἐκέκλετο δῖα γυναικῶν...ὡς ἔφαθ', αἱ δ' ἄρα τῆς μάλα μὲν κλύον ἠδ' ἐπίθοντο, 20.147, 156). As Karydas illustrates, Homer highlights Eurykleia's importance to the epic in her first scene when she is introduced as "Eurykleia, daughter of Ops, son of Peisenor" (Εὐρύκλει' Ὀπος θυγάτηρ Πεισηνορίδαο, *Od.* 1.429). The mention of her father and grandfather is unusual background information about a servant, as well as the suggestion immediately following that Odysseus' father Laertes viewed Eurykleia as an almost equal to his wife Antikleia (*Od.* 1.430-35).³ This information suggests that Eurykleia holds a high position in the household from the beginning, far more than a simple caregiver. Additionally, when Telemachus begins planning his journey to learn about his father's fate, it is Eurykleia he confides in, rather than his mother, in Book Two of the *Odyssey*.⁴ While this is not meant to suggest that Penelope would be untrustworthy or unconcerned about Telemachus' safety, it does display not only the close bond that Telemachus shares with Eurykleia, but also a second position that Eurykleia holds in the household: a boundary between boyhood and manhood.

This position is subtler than her role as a nurse, but the specific location that she and Telemachus occupy during two instances, both of which mentions Eurykleia's family, should be considered. The first moment appears when Telemachus prepares himself for bed, "debating many things in his mind" (πολλὰ φρεσὶ μερμηρίζων, *Od.* 1.427), specifically Athena's commands to leave home and search for information regarding his father; none other than "Eurykleia, daughter of Ops, son of Peisenor" is present at this critical moment for Telemachus.⁵ While there is no conversation between the two at this moment in the epic, Homer seems to suggest her role as a boundary marker because she is the one who "pulled the door by the silver handle" (θύρην δ' ἐπέρθσε κορώνη ἀργυρῆ, 1.441-2), closing the threshold of Telemachus'

³ Karydas 1998: 11-12.

⁴ Ibid: 15; *Od.* 2.349-60.

⁵ *Od.* 1.428-9.

bedroom, and perhaps also preventing him from crossing the boundary between boyhood and manhood for a little longer. The second instance, however, seems to suggest the opposite result. Homer mentions a room filled with wine, clothing, and various other treasures that await Odysseus' return.⁶ Once again, standing at the threshold, who "guarded everything with the wisdom of her mind" is "Eurykleia, daughter of Ops, son of Peisenor" (ἦ πάντ' ἐφύλασσε νόου πολυιδρείησιν, Εὐρύκλει, Ὀπὸς θυγάτηρ Πεισηνορίδαο, 2.346-7). As mentioned earlier, Telemachus reveals his intentions to Eurykleia in the following conversation, in which he requests that Eurykleia prepare some jars of wine. Since these doors were to remain closed until Odysseus' return, Telemachus' order to open them indicates a "crossing" of the threshold because he is taking control of the household as its master.⁷ Therefore, it is at this threshold that Telemachus takes his first step across the boundary towards becoming a man because he has decided to follow Athena's plan without the advice of his nurse. Although Eurykleia is concerned about his safety and the future plots of the suitors, "the old woman swore a great oath by the gods" (γρηῦς δὲ θεῶν μέγαν ὄρκον ἀπώμνυ, 2.377) that she would not say anything. Where Penelope would perhaps have prevented Telemachus from making the journey at all, Eurykleia yields to his decision to set out on his own and to begin his journey towards becoming a man.⁸

As she is for Telemachus, Eurykleia is present for similar crucial moments in Odysseus' life as well. She is the only person who realizes Odysseus' identity before he reveals it himself, again perhaps emphasizing her importance in the household. Since it is the scar on his leg that she recognizes, the possibility exists that she was present when Odysseus first received the scar, perhaps a sign of Odysseus' passage from boyhood to manhood. While there is no specific

⁶ *Od.* 2.338-343.

⁷ *Ibid.*: 2.349-60

⁸ Karydas 1998: 16.

indication of Eurykleia's presence in the text, it has been suggested that the sudden departure from the main storyline to the birth of Odysseus and the boar hunt are to be understood as Eurykleia's memories.⁹ Irene de Jong argues that because of Eurykleia's presence in the naming of Odysseus by his grandfather Autolykos (*Od.* 19.399-404), she must also be present in the boar hunt to complete the frame of young Odysseus' sufferings (19.457-466). Karydas seems to agree with this possibility, suggesting that the scar is not a superficial marker, but an indication of the bond between Odysseus and Eurykleia.¹⁰ If de Jong and Karydas are right, as I think they are, the transitional moments of Odysseus and Telemachus are connected through the presence of Eurykleia, who seems to have served as a boundary marker for both characters as they began to mature from boys to men. Even her recognition of the scar serves as a type of threshold because Odysseus begins to transition from a wanderer to the king of Ithaca once again.

Eurykleia's relationship with both Odysseus and Telemachus is different after they become men. Odysseus acts as the true master in the bathing scene, another pivotal plot point, but one in which he asserts control. Although he addresses Eurykleia as *μαῖα* twice (19.482, 500), he affirms his control as the master of the house when he threatens "I will not keep away from you, being my nurse, when I kill the other female servants in my halls" (*οὐδε τροφοῦ οὔσης σεῦ ἀφέξομαι, ὅππότε' ἂν ἄλλας δμῶας ἐν μεγάροσιν ἐμοῖς κτείνωμι γυναῖκας*, 19.489-90). While not as forceful as his father, Telemachus displays his authority when he no longer addresses Eurykleia as *μαῖα* ("nurse," *Od.* 2.349), but rather as *γρηῦ* ("old woman," *Od.* 22.395),

⁹ Jong, Irene J. F. de. "Eurykleia and Odysseus' Scar: Odyssey 19.393-466." *The Classical Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (1985): 517-18.

¹⁰ Karydas 1998: 27.

perhaps signaling his newfound maturity.¹¹ This change in address also suggests the changing roles of Eurykleia, as she shifts between an affectionate nurse to a wise and crafty old woman.¹²

Phaedra's Nurse

Not every nurse from classical literature is as active and independent as Eurykleia. One of the best nurses from Greek tragedy is Phaedra's nurse from Euripides' *Hippolytus*. Tragic nurses typically fulfill only the role of caregiver, such as Medea's nurse mentioned earlier, and perform the duties asked of them. This does not mean their role is unimportant; the actions of the nurse Kilissa in Aeschylus' *Choephoroi* lead to the destruction of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra when she, by the command of Clytemnestra, summons Aegisthus to the palace to meet Orestes in disguise without an attendant for protection, by the advice of the Chorus.¹³ Rather, the relationship is not generally displayed as affectionate nurse to inexperienced ward, but as servant to master. The Nurse in *Hippolytus*, however, seems to stand alone because while she fulfills the role of caregiver, she also "displays extensive authority and power of speech that enable her to direct her mistress...and the action."¹⁴ The extent to which Phaedra's Nurse not only participates in, but also controls the plot of the play, is unprecedented in either Greek epic or tragedy. It is this active participation that makes an otherwise nameless character influential for the development of the nurse-like figure and relevant to the current study. Karydas notes that because the Nurse has a practical objective, to save Phaedra's life, she is effectively able to use a type of authority that other tragic nurses do not seem to have to direct Phaedra in the direction she believes to be the most beneficial for Phaedra.¹⁵

¹¹ Ibid: 37.

¹² Ibid: 58.

¹³ Karydas 1998: 65; also the mention of her name, rather than the generic "Nurse," hints at her important role; *Choephoroi* 766-782.

¹⁴ Karydas 1998: 115.

¹⁵ Ibid: 117.

Although nothing is known about Phaedra's nurse regarding her backstory or even her name, she does display the same affection Eurykleia does, consistently addressing her ward as "my child" and attempting every method possible to aid Phaedra before the secret is exposed. Karydas attributes the Nurse's powerful feminine authority in this play to the absence of the head male.¹⁶ While Karydas' assessment may be correct, Phaedra's current position must also be taken into consideration. She heavily relies upon the Nurse and her advice throughout the play because she has no other family to support her; Theseus is not present until after Phaedra's death, and her own family is far away on Crete, as the Chorus and Phaedra both emphasize.¹⁷ Therefore, while the Nurse displays the expected caregiver characteristics, she has also undertaken the more complex role of mother for Phaedra. The Chorus even seems to acknowledge the two-sided role the Nurse holds, and the degree to which Phaedra depends on her, calling her τροφός,¹⁸ a usual term for a nurse, but it is also used as a description of a mother figure.¹⁹ Phaedra also acknowledges the role her nurse plays because the first name she calls the Nurse is μαῖα,²⁰ similar to Telemachus' address to Eurykleia. While μαῖα is used to describe an older woman, typically a nurse, it is also used as an address to a "foster-mother."²¹ Since there is no backstory given about the Nurse, there is no indication that she "adopted" Phaedra for any specific reason (in place of another child, for example). The adoption, however, seems to have been reversed in this relationship because Phaedra does not have another family member around her to rely on; the Nurse is the closest person Phaedra has to a mother. It is because of this

¹⁶ Ibid: 130.

¹⁷ *Hipp.* 156 and 337-43; Phaedra also mentions her "Cretan home" (Κρησίους δόμους) at 719.

¹⁸ *Hipp.* 170, 267.

¹⁹ LSJ, used of Ajax's mother, Greek text from *Sophoclis fabulae*. Oxford: New York: Oxford University Press, 1990: "announce my sad things and my fate to my old father and to my miserable nurse (my mother who nursed me)," ἀγγειλον ἄτας τὰς ἐμὰς μόρον τ' ἐμὸν γέροντι πατρὶ τῇ δυστήνῳ τροφῷ, *S.AJ.* 849.

²⁰ *Hipp.* 311.

²¹ LSJ; also defined as "good mother" or "true mother."

dependence that the Nurse is able to wield effective authority over Phaedra, not only because there is not a strong masculine presence.

Unlike Eurykleia, however, Phaedra's nurse behaves as the director of the story when she tries to persuade Phaedra that it would be better to accept her passion rather than desire to die.²² It is this meddling, however, that causes the destruction not only of Phaedra and her life, but also of the relationship between Phaedra and her "foster-mother." While the Nurse perhaps cannot be blamed for her desire to save Phaedra's life, she does accept the responsibility for not obeying Phaedra's wish to die with her honor intact;²³ this apology, however, cannot restore the relationship, which is too far gone for repair. Indeed, Phaedra uses fewer personal names when addressing the Nurse as the situation worsens, from *μαῖα* (*Hipp.* 311) to *πρόσπολον* ("servant," 582) and finally *παγκακίστη διαφθορεῦ* ("most evil corrupter," 682). This deterioration in the relationship shows that the Nurse overstepped her bounds and did not heed Phaedra's wishes, unlike Eurykleia, who obeyed Telemachus and Odysseus' commands.

In this way, the Nurse serves as a boundary marker for her ward, standing between life and death for Phaedra. In her attempts to remove suicide from Phaedra's possible actions, the Nurse admits, "the deed is better, if indeed it will save you, than the word with which you, being prideful, will die" (*κρεῖσσον δὲ τοῦργον, εἴπερ ἐκσώσει γέ σε, ἢ τοῦνομ', ὃ σὺ καθθανῆ γαυρουμένη*, 501-2), displaying the only outcomes that are possible for Phaedra. Although the Nurse desperately wants Phaedra to live, Karydas suggests that Nurse only hastened the end result of Phaedra's death²⁴ by committing actions that push Phaedra towards her death. Even Artemis states that Phaedra "having tried to conquer Cypris with her will, she, being unwilling,

²² *Hipp.* 439-40.

²³ *Hipp.* 704-5.

²⁴ Karydas 1998: 175.

was utterly destroyed by the plans of her nurse” (γνώμη δὲ νικᾶν τὴν Κύπριν πειρωμένη τροφοῦ διώλετ’ οὐκ ἔχοῦσα μηχαναῖς, 1304-5), placing the blame for Phaedra’s suicide on her Nurse.

While the Nurse’s involvement may not have affected the outcome, nevertheless she adds a necessary dimension to the character of the nurse because she acted independently from her ward and mistress, rather than following orders like other tragic nurses who are powerless to change their ward’s situation. While the Nurse’s failure could suggest her overall inability to affect a certain outcome, specifically her intention of saving Phaedra’s life, she did effectively use her authority to attain what others could not: Phaedra’s confession and Hippolytus’ silence.

Chalciope

The figure of the nurse displays another dimension or variation in Hellenistic epic, as seen by a third nurse-like figure: Chalciope, the sister of Medea, from Apollonius of Rhodes’ *Argonautica*. While she is not a servant like Eurykleia, Chalciope undertakes the role of the wise older woman to give advice to her younger sister, and she displays similar characteristics, specifically her concern over Medea’s behavior. When she tries to discover the source of Medea’s sadness, she wonders, “what horrible suffering has come upon your heart” (τί τοι αἰνὸν ὑπὸ φρένας ἴκετο πένθος, *Arg.* 3.675),²⁵ thinking exclusively about Medea’s personal wellbeing, similar to Phaedra’s Nurse who wonders “why, oh child, are you anxious at these things” (τί ποτ’, ὦ τέκνον, τάδε κηραίνεις, *Hipp.* 223). In his commentary on Book Three of the *Argonautica*, R.L. Hunter connects τί...πένθος in the *Argonautica* to *Iliad* 1.362, where Thetis asks Achilles the same question (τί δέ σε φρένας ἴκετο πένθος), contributing to the idea that Chalciope is a mother-like figure to Medea.²⁶ Medea even states “I say that I am your sister and daughter, since you lifted me, an infant, to your breast equal with the others” (φημι καινήτη τε

²⁵ Text of *Argonautica* from Apollonius, Rhodius. *Argonautica*. Oxford. Oxford University Press, 1961.

²⁶ Hunter, R.L., ed. *Argonautica, Book III*. Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics. Cambridge, England ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989: 171 *ad.*674-5.

σέθεν κούρη τε πέλεσθαι, ἴσον ἐπεὶ κείνοις με τεῶ ἔπαείραο μαζῶ νηπυτίην, 3.733-4), as if Chalciope had adopted Medea as her own daughter. This relationship, however, seems to point more towards the relationship between a nurse-figure and her ward because Medea discloses information to Chalciope rather than to her mother, similar to Telemachus revealing his plans to Eurykleia instead of Penelope.

While Chalciope is the logical choice for Medea's confidant because of the involvement of her sons, she is also the character present during the heroine's hesitation, thus serving as a boundary marker of Medea's decision between helping Jason and remaining loyal to Aetes, that is between wife and daughter. Hunter even compares ἐπιμητιόωσα ("and she sat among her sons, considering how to appease her sister," ἠ δ' ἐὼι παισὶν ἦστ' ἐπιμητιόωσα κασιγνήτην ἀρέσασθαι 3.667-8) with *Odyssey* 6.14, where μητιόωσα is used as Athena plans to bring together Nausicaa and Odysseus to send the latter home ("[Athena] devising a homecoming for greathearted Odysseus," νόστον Ὀδυσσῆ μεγαλήτορι μητιόωσα). Hunter suggests that through this small connection, Chalciope provides the influence over Medea to choose Jason.²⁷ While this parallel between Athena and Chalciope is challenging to argue, mostly because Athena does not serve as a nurse-like figure towards Nausicaa the same way Chalciope does towards Medea, it is interesting to consider the other side of both relationships: Nausicaa and Medea.

Both girls develop feelings for a foreign hero (though Eros specifically may be at fault for Medea's emotions) and require the help of an older woman (or goddess) for the relationship to progress. In the case of Nausicaa, Athena chides her because "your shining clothes lie neglected, but your marriage is near" (εἴματα μὲν τοι κεῖται ἀκηδέα σιγαλόεντα, σοὶ δὲ γάμος σχεδὸν ἐστίν, *Od.* 6.26-7), thus providing the catalyst for her being near the place where

²⁷ Hunter 1989: 171 *ad.* 674-5.

Odysseus washed ashore. When Odysseus decides to beg Nausicaa for help and appears before her, it is because “Athena put courage into her heart and took fear away from her limbs” (τῆ γὰρ Ἀθήνη θάρσος ἐνὶ φρεσὶ θῆκε καὶ ἐκ δέος εἴλετο γυίων, 6.139-140) that Nausicaa does not run away like her handmaids. While Athena does not intend for the end result to be marriage between Nausicaa and Odysseus, the possibility still exists for Nausicaa.

Although Medea could be considered a craftier character than Nausicaa, there is some similarity between their situations. Like Odysseus who needs Nausicaa’s help to return home, Jason needs Medea’s help to succeed in his quest for the Golden Fleece. While Medea displays a struggle between choosing Jason or Aeetes, she nevertheless seems to realize that she cannot make the decision without the advice of an older figure. After her dream about Jason and her father (3.616-635), Medea decides “I will make a trial of my sister if she would entreat me to aid in the struggle” (αὐτοκασιγνήτης πειρήσομαι εἴ κέ μ’ ἀέθλω χραισομεῖν ἀντιάσησιν, 642-3). Even if she does not intend to reveal her true reason for wanting to help Jason, Medea is aware that she needs someone to help her make a decision.

Chalciope perhaps does not intend for Medea and Jason to be married, even if Medea, like Nausicaa, considers marriage a possibility. She does, however, reveal that she, similar to Athena and even her own sister, has an ulterior motive for advising Medea to help Jason; she fears Medea “heard of some accursed attack from our father against me and my sons” (ἦέ τιν’ οὐλομένην ἐδάης ἐκ πατρὸς ἐνιπὴν ἀμφὶ τ’ ἐμοὶ καὶ παισίν, 3.677). Medea responds, “Chalciope, my spirit is tossed concerning your sons, lest our father kill them immediately together with the foreign men” (Χαλκίοπη, περὶ μοι παίδων σέο θυμὸς ἄηται, μή σφε πατὴρ ξείνοισι σὺν ἀνδράσιν αὐτικ’ ὀλέσση, 3.688-9). This reason that Medea uses on her sister is known before the conversation between the two because Chalciope’s own son Argus “advised

her with all sorts of words to beg Medea to help” (Ἄργος παντοίοισι παρηγορέεσκ’ ἐπέεσσιν, Μήδειαν λίσσεσθαι ἀμυνέμεν, 3.610-11). Although she cares about Medea’s personal wellbeing, she also believes that she would benefit from Medea’s actions because the lives of her sons could be spared. Therefore, to some extent, Chalciope’s upcoming encouragement towards her sister is brought on by Medea’s trick; Medea is not solely concerned about her nephews, but also tries to create a logical reason to help Jason other than being driven by love to betray her father. She uses a motivation she believes will persuade Chalciope to convince her that helping Jason is the proper direction to follow. Therefore, while Athena’s advice to Nausicaa is not brought about by the girl’s deceitfulness, both Nausicaa and Medea require a push from another figure for their relationship with the foreign man to progress.

Therefore, Chalciope acts as a nurse figure for Medea like Eurykleia or Phaedra’s Nurse because she appears when her ward must make a difficult choice and offers advice as an experienced older woman. Unlike Eurykleia and Phaedra’s Nurse, however, she displays a secondary motivation, unrelated to her ward’s wellbeing, for advising Medea. Though she seems unaware of Medea’s trickiness, she gave Medea the confirmation she needed to proceed with her plan to help Jason and eventually leave with him. This secondary motivation is a characteristic that is perhaps also present in Carme, which I will discuss at length later.

Hecale

A final Greek nurse-like figure to consider as influence on the character of Carme is Hecale from Callimachus’ *Hecale*, particularly because she is the heroine of the first epyllion, the “little epic,” often considered a separate genre.²⁸ Because of the overall influence of Callimachus on all Latin poetry, the presence of the *Hecale* is difficult to deny, especially in a

²⁸ Text and numbering of *Hecale* fragments comes from Hollis, A.S., ed. *Callimachus: Hecale*. Oxford : New York: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 1990.

later epyllion such as the *Ciris*. One important example of Callimachus' influence is a thematic allusion at the beginning of the main narrative of the *Ciris*, when the cause of the war between Crete and Megara is explained.²⁹ The reason for the war is because "Polydios, fleeing Carpathia and the Caeratan rivers, had covered himself with the hospitality of old Nisus" (*hospitio quod se Nisi Polydios avito/Carpathium fugiens et flumina Caerata/texerat*, 113-15). Kayachev draws a parallel between Nisus' hospitality with that of Hecale, which is considered to be the most important theme of Callimachus' poem.³⁰ Without the display of hospitality, perhaps Minos would not have attacked Megara, meaning that Scylla would not have fallen in love with him and betrayed her city. Assuming Kayachev is correct and the *Ciris* author did emulate an overarching theme of the *Hecale*, then my suggested influence of the character Hecale on the nurse Carme is not unexpected, especially considering that the Marathonian Bull, which Theseus has come to kill, is thought to be the same bull that Pasiphae, the wife of Minos, desired.

The nurse parallel exists, and is more easily seen, in smaller details from the *Hecale*. Although very little is revealed about Hecale herself in the surviving fragments, Hecale's multi-sided character and a fragmentary narration of her life story to Theseus, which scholars such as Luigi Lehnus and A.S. Hollis believe was told as entertainment the night before his fight with the Marathonian Bull,³¹ could have influenced the *Ciris* author in his creation of the character Carme and the conversation between Carme and Scylla. Beginning with Hecale herself, Hollis suggests that she was intended to be a combination of Eumaeus, the loyal swineherd from the *Odyssey*, and Eurykleia.³² The hospitality theme mentioned earlier connects Eumaeus and Hecale because they both accept a stranger into their homes and entertain him as a *xenia*-practicing Greek

²⁹ Kayachev 2016: 60; *Ciris* 110-115.

³⁰ Ibid; Hollis 1990: 138.

³¹ Lehnus 1975: 356; Hollis 1990: 166.

³² Hollis 1990: 6.

should, though it is unclear whether Hecale is aware of Theseus' identity or not, unlike Eumaeus who is unaware of Odysseus' identity.³³

The influence of Eurykleia on Hecale can be seen in her nurse-like treatment of Theseus. While the bond between Eurykleia and Odysseus or Telemachus is long and durable, Hecale seems to establish a similar, nurse to child, relationship with Theseus. Even Theseus himself acknowledges Hecale's nurse-like position because in one fragment, he addresses her as *μᾶτα*, the same word used by both Odysseus and Telemachus in conversation with Eurykleia, as well as Phaedra the first time she addresses her Nurse directly.³⁴ The relationship between Hecale and Theseus is unlike that of Eurykleia and Odysseus or Telemachus because Hecale did not raise Theseus. The hero, however, seems to view her as his "foster-mother" because similar to Phaedra, Theseus has no other family to rely on at a critical moment in his life.

A second fragment further suggests the idea of Hecale as a nurse figure. In his article "una scena della *Ciris*: Carme e l'*Hecale* di Callimaco," Lehnus suggests that Hecale discusses her past with Theseus, giving details such as her lost children and her current unhappiness. Hollis also believes Hecale speaks of a tragic past, specifically referencing a "man the horses carry from Aphidnae" (τὸν δ' ἄπ' Ἀφιδνάων ἵπποι φέρον, *fr.* 42.2)³⁵ and two boys,³⁶ though it is unclear whether she was their mother or nurse because of later confusion over whether Hecale was ever married.³⁷ Either way, both boys perish, the first in an unknown way, and the second

³³ Hollis 1990: 181: "When an older person meets a young prince, the former turns out also to have met the prince's father at a similar age, and is astonished by the likeness between the two," similar to *Od.* 4.138, when Helen recognizes Telemachus because of his similarity to Odysseus.

³⁴ *Hecale* fr. 40.3; *Od.* 2.349; *Hipp.* 311.

³⁵ Hollis 1990: 181-2 presents multiple interpretations for the man, including the suggestion that he was Theseus' father Aegeus, but seems to argue that it is the man who will become Hecale's husband.

³⁶ *Fr.* 48

³⁷ Hollis credits this confusion to Ovid *Rem.* 747-8, which questions, "why there was no one who took Hecale, no one who took Iru" (*cur nemo est, Hecalen, nulla est, quae ceperit Iru*).

specifically at the hands of Cerycon³⁸ (whom Theseus killed on his journey to Athens before he travels to Marathon), against whom Hecale expresses her desire for revenge.³⁹ The mention of two children, regardless of whether they were Hecale’s children or wards, highlights her capability and experience as a caregiver, which perhaps somewhat explains her reasoning for taking Theseus on as a third “child.”

While there are many elements that are unclear about Hecale’s past because of the current incomplete state of the text, the idea of Theseus as her third “child” supports her role as a nurse, perhaps also strengthening the comparison to Eurykleia, who views Telemachus and Odysseus as her children as well (“dear child,” φίλε τέκνον at 2.363 for Telemachus and φίλον τέκος at 19.474).⁴⁰ After Hecale reveals her past, she states, “I will tear my cloak over you as well” (σοὶ ἐπιρρήξαιμι χιτῶνα, fr. 49.3). The referent for σοὶ is uncertain. One suggestion for σοὶ indicates a member of her own family, perhaps either her youngest son or her husband, who has recently died. A second suggestion is that she fears for Theseus’ life and is certain that she will have to mourn him after the Marathonian bull kills him.⁴¹ Hollis does not give much credit to the second idea, and prefers the interpretation that Hecale is mourning one of her sons. If Theseus is σοὶ, however, Hecale’s role as Theseus’ nurse-like figure is further supported because she believes she will mourn for him as a third son, just like she did her other two sons.

Another interesting connection exists between the *Hecale* and the *Ciris*. The first is the mention of Scylla in the former (“Scylla, the prostitute woman and not having a false name, cut the purple hair,” Σκύλλα γυνὴ κατακάσα καὶ οὐ ψύθος οὐνομ’ ἔχουσα πορφυρέην ἤμησε κρέα,

³⁸ Fr. 49.8 ff.

³⁹ Hollis 1990: 176.

⁴⁰ While τέκνον can be used in a general sense of “child” by an older figure towards a younger figure, since both Telemachus and Odysseus view Eurykleia as their μάϊα, or foster-mother, Eurykleia’s use of φίλος with τέκνον heightens the familial relationship.

⁴¹ Ibid: 198; also Kayachev 2016: 122.

fr. 90). Although the fragment mentions very little beyond Scylla's name and her deed of cutting Minos' hair, it is tempting to imagine that Hecale narrated Scylla's story as a lesson for Theseus or that it was a digression from the main storyline like the story of Britomartis in the *Ciris*. A second connection is the possible imitation by the *Ciris* author of the character Hecale in the nurse Carme. Many scholars have tried to connect Hecale to Carme through the roles they fulfill for their wards because they both "adopt" their ward and display a strong connection to the younger character.⁴² Since I have not discussed the *Ciris* at length yet, I will revisit these two ideas later in this chapter.

Anna

Shifting from Greek to Roman literature, it would be difficult to exclude the *Aeneid*, especially since Vergil was credited with the authorship of the *Ciris*, although even the ancient poets and commentators were uncertain of the true author. While the nurse-like figure, Dido's sister Anna, in the *Aeneid* does not have the strongest connections to the other nurses, her mention is still necessary to display the changing and developing role of this character. Her role is similar to that of Medea's sister, Chalciope, because she advises Dido about pursuing a relationship with Aeneas, and thus is present at a turning point in her sister's life. It is only after the conversation with Anna that Dido allows herself to display her love for Aeneas because her sister reminds her that "on one side, the Gaetulean cities, a race unconquerable in war, and the unrestrained Numidians and inhospitable Syrtis surround us; on the other side, the region deserted with thirst and the widely raging Barcaeans" (*hinc Gaetulae urbes, genus insuperabile bello,/et Numidae infreni cingunt et inhospita Syrtis;/hinc deserta siti regio lateque*

⁴² Lehnus 1975, for example.

furentes/Barcaeii, Ae.4.40-4),⁴³ emphasizing that Dido must protect their new city in some way. This reasoning is different from the other nurses' persuasive words because while Anna does care about Dido's happiness, she also explicitly voices the benefits beyond love and marriage. Unlike Chalciope, who did not necessarily have marriage in mind when she asked Medea for help, Anna seems to focus on marriage as the result of a relationship with Aeneas while she attempts to persuade Dido.

The parallel somewhat falls apart after this point because Anna is not the wise older woman who advises her younger ward, but rather the younger sister of a widowed woman who seems beyond the age of needing a nurse. Dido clearly values her sister's opinion because "kindled by these words, she inflamed her spirit with love and gave hope to the doubtful mind and loosened her shame" (*his dictis incensum animum inflammavit amore/spemque dedit dubiae menti solvitque pudorem, 4.54-5*), and Dido pursues Aeneas. When the relationship falls apart and Dido decides to die, however, Anna is not present in the moments before her sister's death. Instead Vergil mentions that the only nurse remaining is "Barce, the nurse of Sychaeus, for black ash was holding her own in her ancient fatherland" (*Barcen nutricem...Sychaei/namque suam patria antiqua cinis ater habebat, 4.632-3*). Even though she has her husband's nurse, this is the only time in Book Four that Barce is mentioned and she is sent to bring Anna back to Dido. Perhaps Dido understands how a nurse would interfere with her plans; therefore, she sends away the only nurse figure remaining that could prevent her suicide. She wants her nurse-like sister by her side only when it is too late for Anna to stop her.

Despite her lack of interference at the end of Dido's life, in some sense, Anna succeeds in acting like a nurse figure because she is present during an important decision in Dido's life. She

⁴³ *Aeneid* text from Mynors, R.A.B., ed. *P. Vergili Maronis Opera*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969.

also acts as a go-between by carrying messages from Dido to Aeneas in an attempt to convince Aeneas to stay in Carthage (“her most unhappy sister carried and carried back such weeping,” *talisque miserrima fletus/fertque refertque soror*, 4.437-8). This image somewhat recalls Phaedra and her nurse because both Phaedra’s nurse and Anna approach the desired hero in an attempt to ease the heroine’s sorrow. Nevertheless, Anna’s lack of wisdom, paired with Dido’s maturity, does not permit her to serve as a full-fledged nurse, but rather just as her sister’s confidant.

Myrrha’s Nurse

There are many fragmentary and lost works that influenced the *Ciris* poet, some of which have a nurse figure, that provide stronger comparisons for nurse-like figures. One important, but missing, work is the *Zmyrna*, an epyllion about Myrrha and her father Cinyras, written by the neoteric poet Helvius Cinna in the first century BC. Many scholars have suggested the impact of this epyllion, specifically the scenes between the Nurse and Myrrha, upon both the character of Carme as well as the relationship between Carme and Scylla.⁴⁴ Because of the current state of the *Zmyrna*, it is difficult to show exact points concerning the Nurse that connect the *Zmyrna* to the *Ciris*. Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* may be helpful inasmuch as it may reflect aspects of Cinna’s poem. By using the *Metamorphoses*, it is not my intention to suggest that the *Ciris* was written afterwards, and thus is using Ovid as a window to look back towards Cinna. There is simply not enough of the *Zmyrna* remaining, and Ovid’s Nurse is the nearest substitute for Cinna’s Nurse.

⁴⁴ Courtney, Edward. *The Fragmentary Latin Poets*. Oxford [England] : New York: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 1993: 219; Hollis, A.S. *Fragments of Roman Poetry, c.60 BC-AD 20*. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007: 33; Lightfoot, J. L., ed. *Parthenius of Nicaea: The Poetical Fragments and the Erōtika Pathēmata*. Oxford : New York: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 1999: 167, 498.

At a basic level, the stories of Myrrha and Phaedra are closely related. Both women experience illicit love for a family member and rely upon their nurse to help them overcome their passion. The nurses of both stories respond to the drastic designs of their wards (Myrrha attempts to hang herself and Phaedra to starve herself) with a single motivation: to save their ward's life. Both nurses serve as a mother figure and wield effective authority over their "foster-child" in their respective myths, guiding the girl in the direction the nurse believes to be the best. Myrrha's Nurse continues the theme of a boundary marker, again as one who stands between the girl's decision of life or death. Ovid seems to highlight this role of the Nurse in Book 10 of the *Metamorphoses* because when Myrrha attempts suicide, "they say the murmurs of her words had come to the faithful ears of the nurse, tending the threshold of her foster-child" (*Murmura verborum fidas nutricis ad aures/pervenisse ferunt limen servantis alumnae, Met.X.382-3*).⁴⁵ Although the plot of the story suggests the Nurse is merely sleeping outside Myrrha's bedroom, the metaphorical meaning is difficult to ignore, especially in light of the liminal function of the other nurses discussed herein. As also noted by Ovid, the Nurse seems to have adopted Myrrha in the same way Eurykleia and Hecale adopted their respective wards because Ovid calls Myrrha an *alumna*, specifically defined as a "foster-child."⁴⁶ This is also the only name the Nurse uses to address Myrrha.⁴⁷

There is, however, one critical difference between these two stories: the reaction of the girl. Initially, Phaedra exclaims, "Nurse, I beg by the gods that you be silent about that man" (μαῖα, καί σε πρὸς θεῶν τοῦδ' ἀνδρὸς αὐτίς λίσσομαι σιγᾶν πέρι, *Hipp.* 311-12), refusing to admit Hippolytus' name. Although she tries to exercise her authority over the Nurse, Phaedra's

⁴⁵ Text of *Metamorphoses* comes from Ovid. *Metamorphoses*. Oxford : New York; Oxford University Press, 2004.

⁴⁶ Lewis and Short.

⁴⁷ "As a suppliant, she sinks before the feet of her foster-daughter" (*ante pedes supplex procumbit alumnae*, 415) and "Rejoice my foster-daughter," she said (*Gaude mea dixit alumna, Met. X.442*).

own hesitation prevents her success. After the revelation to Hippolytus, however, she responds to the Nurse's actions with anger, specifically commanding "go away and consider your own affairs; I will order my own matters well" (ἀλλ' ἐκποδῶν ἄπελθε καὶ σαυτῆς περὶ φρόντιζ'. ἐγὼ δὲ τὰμὰ θήσομαι καλῶς, 708-9), and begins to wield her own authority over both the household and her own fate.

Myrrha, on the other hand, behaves as a more passive figure before her father discovers her identity, even describing her own actions and feelings with passive verbs, along with the narrator who also uses the passive voice.⁴⁸ Myrrha allows her Nurse to persuade her into indirectly confessing her problem when she admits "oh mother lucky in your husband" (*o dixit felicem coniuge matrem, Met X.422*), even though she initially begged her Nurse "depart or cease to ask what pains me" (*discede aut desine dixit/quaerere quid doleam, X.412-13*). Similarly to Phaedra, Myrrha's indecision permits the Nurse to initiate the plan she believes will save her foster-child, even though the girl has begged otherwise. Unlike Phaedra, however, Myrrha does not have the opportunity to retake control of the situation after the secret is exposed because she is forced to flee and escape her father.

In his commentary on Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, William Anderson suggests that Myrrha is innocent until she allows her "honest Euripidean nurse" to pressure her into the plan to seduce Cinyras.⁴⁹ He repeats this opinion again when Ovid notes, "the aged woman leads the hesitating girl with her hand" (*cunctantem longaeva manu deducit, X.462*), emphasizing that the Nurse made the decision for a wavering Myrrha to satisfy her passion.⁵⁰ Without the Nurse's almost forceful guidance, Myrrha would not have made it to her father's doorstep, and perhaps her

⁴⁸ *feror* (320); *laedor, revolvor* (335); *carpitur* (370); *erigitur* (378); *ducitur* (457).

⁴⁹ Anderson, William S, ed. *Ovid's Metamorphoses, books 6-10*. American Philological Association. Series of classical texts. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972: 508 *ad.* 377-9.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*: 513.

suicide would have been successful. Therefore, the Nurse fulfilled her role as the boundary between life and death and daughter and paramour for Myrrha, as well as the driving force behind Myrrha's actions while she was indecisive. After this scene, however, Myrrha's nurse disappears from the rest of the story, thus rendering Myrrha as an entirely passive figure, unable to wield her own authority like Phaedra.

While there are numerous other examples of nurse-like figures, I have highlighted those that I believe display the clearest influence on the character of Carme, the nurse in the *Ciris*. The genres of epic, tragedy, and epyllion have all been represented, and while there are similarities that these nurses share, such as the affection they display for their ward and their role as a threshold, each genre requires that they fulfill certain requirements. Epic nurses such as Eurykleia, Chalcioppe, and Myrrha's Nurse are supporting characters for the main hero or heroine, providing advice, and often times a necessary push when their ward must make a difficult decision. A tragic nurse such as Phaedra's nurse provides background information and exploits the main tensions of the current situation. In many of these circumstances, however, the nurse is unable to change the outcome and can only helplessly watch as their ward's life falls apart. Even Phaedra's nurse with her authority over Phaedra was unable to save her ward from her death. Lastly, for an epyllion nurse such as Hecale, an otherwise minor character is brought into the foreground. She receives the attention that her other counterparts have been denied and is elevated to the status of a major character. In the next chapter, I shall analyze the character of Carme from the *Ciris* and how she not only encompasses each of the characteristics of the nurses in this chapter, but also how she is able to achieve a role greater than her earlier counterparts, even if only for a short time.

Chapter Three

The Heroine Nurse

Now that the various characters and genres necessary for understanding the nurse Carme have been established, in this chapter I will discuss Carme herself, the nurse of Scylla and a major protagonist in the *Ciris*. As will be displayed throughout this section, Carme is a combination of all the nurses discussed earlier, as well as the traditions and requirements of their respective genres (epic, tragedy, and epyllion). On a basic level, she acts as Scylla's caregiver and "foster-mother," similar to Eurykleia and Hecale, and therefore, behaves in the manner that one would expect from a nurse-like figure. She is also an independent personality with a rich backstory like Chalciope, who has a number of her own concerns about Scylla's confession, such as her personal enmity against Minos, as well as her own motivations for helping her "adopted" child achieve her goals. Finally, because of her independence, she controls the action of the story similar to Phaedra's nurse and Myrrha's nurse, and makes decisions based on her personal opinions rather than heeding the decision of her mistress.

In all known versions of Scylla's myth, the *Ciris* is the only one that possesses a nurse figure. Many scholars have attempted to explain Carme's otherwise unattested presence in this myth. In his article "Scylla's Nurse," Peter Knox suggests two possibilities: one, the *Ciris* poet was introducing an originally lacking portion of the story because he was relying so heavily upon the *Zmyrna*, which presumably has a nurse; two, there was another source altogether, now lost, in which there was a nurse figure alongside Scylla.¹ A later scholar, Donato De Gianni, continues to expand the question of Carme's character, suggesting that her character could have

¹ Knox Peter E. "Scylla's Nurse." *Mnemosyne: Bibliotheca Classica Batava* 43 (1990): 158.

been inspired by tragic figures such as Phaedra's Nurse or by other Hellenistic examples.² Since very little of the *Zmyrna* survives, this question is rather difficult to answer. Interestingly enough, although Scylla was not a popular figure in art, one image of Scylla and her nurse partially survives in the House of Castor and Pollux at Pompeii.³ Very little is known about the image beyond the figures present; therefore, the chance exists that either the *Ciris* inspired the painting, or vice versa, or that both were inspired by a lost source, all of which suggest the possibility of Carme's existence beyond the *Ciris*.

Regardless of whether she is an original figure to the myth, Scylla's nurse is more than a nameless character like Phaedra or Myrrha's nurse; while she participates as a driving force for the plot, similar to Phaedra and Myrrha's nurse, she is also given a name and a family like Eurykleia, and narrates her personal story at length, which includes the mention of her own family, like Hecale and Chalciopé. Although the exact date of the composition of the *Ciris* is unknown, all of the earlier mentioned nurses hold some influence over Carme and her overall character, perhaps with the exception of Ovid's Nurse (again, because of the issue of dating), though the nurse of Cinna's *Zmyrna* is a likely alternative. Since specifically nothing concerning the nurse of the *Zmyrna* survives, and, as mentioned earlier, because many scholars believe that the nurse of Cinna's poem inspired Ovid's Nurse, I shall use her as the Roman comparison for Carme.

Carme as nurse

Carme's first appearance in the *Ciris* quickly suggests her important role throughout the poem. Unlike the nameless presentation of Myrrha's nurse, who is introduced merely by *nutricis* and *anus* ("the faithful ears of the nurse...the old woman rises," *fides nutricis ad aures...surgit*

² Gianni, Donato De. "La nutrice di Scilla e la nutrice di Fedra: ispirazioni euripidee nella 'Ciris.'" *Vichiana* Anno XII - N. 1 - IV serie, no. 1 (2010): 38.

³ See appendix A for the image and its reproduction.

anus, *Met.*X.382, 384), Carme has an introduction similar to Eurykleia, receiving not only a specific name, but also a family history as well, being addressed as “Carme the daughter of Ogygian Phoenix (*Ogygii Phoenicis filia Carme*, 220).⁴ While Carme herself is not a well-known mythological character, both “Ogygian” and “Phoenix” allude to famous myths and families. Phoenix was the founder of Phoenicia, brother of Europa (or possibly her father), and brother of Cadmus, grandfather of Dionysus.⁵ Lyne suggests that because the two titles given to Carme are somewhat contradictory (“Ogygian” implies Theban, which points towards Cadmus, not Phoenix), the author is simply fond of proper name epithets.⁶

While I do not disagree with Lyne about this, I would suggest that the poet uses the introduction of Carme to allude to “Eurykleia, daughter of Ops, son of Peisenor” (Εὐρύκλει’ Ὠπος θυγάτηρ Πεισηνορίδαο, *Od.*1.429) to emphasize the importance of Carme to the rest of the story. While Eurykleia was given a family in the *Odyssey*, her father and grandfather do not exist outside of the epic.⁷ In comparison, I would suggest that the mention of Phoenix and Thebes as part of Carme’s identification highlights not only the noble, even royal, family from which she came, but also a possible personal connection to the main antagonist of the story, Minos, who was the son of Europa, Phoenix’s sister.⁸ Although nothing more about this connection is mentioned throughout the poem, it does imply that the *Ciris* poet did not choose his epithets simply to use epic names, but rather to suggest that Carme holds a more important role in plot of the *Ciris* than even Eurykleia did in the *Odyssey*.

⁴ *Ciris* text comes from Lyne, R. O. A. M. *Ciris: A Poem Attributed to Vergil*. Cambridge Classical Texts and Commentaries; 20. Cambridge [Eng.]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1978.

⁵ Tripp, Edward. *The Meridian Handbook of Classical Mythology*. New York: New American Library, 1974: 477.

⁶ Lyne 1978: 191.

⁷ Neither Ops nor Peisenor are listed in Tripp.

⁸ Tripp 1974: 380; see family tree in appendix B.

Although her personal introduction is more complex than the other nurse figures, Carme appears at the expected moment, when the heroine is wavering about her decision and needs the guidance of a wiser figure. The *Ciris* author emphasizes the liminal space in which Scylla finds herself:

*nam qua se ad patrium tendebat semita limen
vestibulo in thalami paulum remoratur
Ciris 216-17*

“for where the path was stretching towards the threshold
of her father, she lingers a little in the entrance of the bedroom”

Although the author only mentions one *limen* at this moment, it seems that Scylla is standing at the boundary line of many different thresholds.

While physically she stands at the border of her own door,⁹ she also wavers emotionally between her love for Minos and her loyalty to her country, as seen when “often she, the ruined one, returns to climb her father’s walls and makes the excuse that she visits the airy towers...from her high seats in the sky, she watches her love” (*saepe redit patrios ascendere perdita muros/ aériasque facit causam se visere turris...sedibus ex altis caeli speculatur amorem*, 173-5). While the boundary line is not explicitly stated like the *limen* at her father’s bedroom, the city walls seem to serve the same purpose; they act as a marker between love and country.¹⁰ Finally, Scylla seems to debate with herself what her next decision should be and she displays conflicting feelings about betraying her father. As she approaches her father’s door, “she catches the thin air with her sobbing suppressed” (*pressis tenuem singultibus aera captat*, 211). While Lyne’s interpretation that tears would be expected in this type of situation is acceptable,¹¹ I would also suggest that this display of emotion exhibits the difficult debate in

⁹ Lyne 1978: 189 argues that it must be the threshold of her door, similar to Medea at *Arg.* 3.648-51.

¹⁰ Welch, Tara. *Tarpeia: Workings of a Roman Myth*. Columbus, Ohio: The Ohio State University Press, 2015: 33-5.

¹¹ Lyne 1978: 188.

Scylla's mind. Her struggle in choosing her father or Minos, being a daughter or a wife, weighs heavily on her mind, which seems to contribute to her open display of turmoil.

This tension over Scylla's decision goes so far that it is the *limen* itself that betrays her attempts at silence. The poet notes, "the old woman perceived that she rose, for the bronze hinge, creaking on her marble threshold, had made a noise (*surgere sensit anus, sonitum nam fecerat illi/marmoreo aeratus stridens in limine cardo*, 221-2). This is the perfect moment for the nurse Carme to appear because her ward has become stuck on one of her many boundaries in the same way Phaedra, Medea, and Myrrha were caught between two choices when their respective nurses appeared. In the same manner as the other nurses, Carme attempts to diagnose her "foster-child's" problem by closely examining her behavior and appearance. Unlike the other nurses, however, Carme seems aware of the typical behavior of a lover because she points out three different symptoms of Scylla's "illness" that the other nurses are not able to recognize as quickly.¹² While the situations vary greatly (perhaps it would be unfair to ask Myrrha's Nurse to assume love is the catalyst for Myrrha's attempted suicide), Carme does not seem to consider any possibility other than love as being the cause for the physical changes in Scylla's behavior.

In the beginning of this speech, Carme immediately points out Scylla's complexion, arguing, "not in vain does the green pallor through your vitals fill your sick veins with thin blood" (*non tibi nequiquam viridis per viscera pallor/aegrotas tenui suffundit sanguine venas*, 224-5). This paleness is also a common symptom of lovesickness, often times paired with blushing to highlight the conflict between love for the love object and shame for the passionate

¹² Phaedra's Nurse only assumes an illness at first: "you will bear your illness more easily with rest and a noble mind" (ῥᾶιον δὲ νόσον μετὰ θ' ἡσυχίας καὶ γενναίου λήματος οἴσεις, *Hipp.* 205-6); Myrrha's Nurse assumes everything except love: "whether it is madness, I have things which would cure it with a charm and herbs; or if someone harms you, you will be purified with a magic ceremony; or if it is the anger of a god, it is an anger easily appeased by sacrifices" (*seu furor est habeo quae carmine sanet et herbis;/sive aliquis nocuit magico lustrabere ritu;/ira deum sive est sacris placabilis ira*, *Met.* X. 397-9).

emotions.¹³ Medea provides the best example of this battle between love and shame because after she has been shot by Eros' arrows, "her tender cheeks change into pale green, sometimes into redness" (ἀπαλάς δὲ μετερωπᾶτο παρειᾶς ἐς χλῶρον, ἄλλοτ' ἔρευθος, *Arg.* 3.297-8).¹⁴

Although the conflict between love and shame is a common theme, some examples focus more on the pallor that comes with being in love, such as Ariadne of Catullus 64, who "how often became more pale than the brightness of gold" (*quanto saepe magis fulgore expalluit auri*, 64.100), or the narrator of Sappho 31, who is "more pale than grass" (χλωροτέρα δὲ ποίας, *fr.* 31.14). Carme seems acutely aware of this poetic theme because she specifically mentions *viridis* when describing Scylla's coloring, which is the same "green" (χλωροτέρα) the narrator of Sappho 31 becomes when he/she sees the other woman. Already, Carme notices and understands more about her ward's problem than the other nurses, which suggests that her character will play far more than a supporting role for Scylla.

Carme then quickly shifts to the second type of erratic behavior, fasting, by questioning, "for what cause should I say that you do not touch the cups of sweet Bacchus nor the full offspring of Ceres" (*nam qua te causa nec dulcis pocula Bacchi/nec gravidos Cereris dicam contingere fetus*, 229-30). This reference to Scylla's refusal to eat and drink recalls Phaedra's response to her love for Hippolytus.¹⁵ Phaedra's Nurse, unlike Carme, believes that she is merely afflicted by some illness, along with the Chorus.¹⁶ Considering the philosophical and elegiac interpretation of love as a disease, perhaps Phaedra's Nurse is more perceptive than she has been credited. In her article, "Love as Illness: Poets and Philosophers on Romantic Love," Ruth Caston explores the parallels between the philosopher's and the elegiac poet's

¹³ Kayachev 2016: 82.

¹⁴ Phaedra's countenance is described as "changed in color" (ἀλλόχροος, 175), which physically highlights her struggle with love and shame, but no other description of her color is given.

¹⁵ "She has kept far away the holy bundles of Demeter's grain," Δάματρος ἀκτᾶς δέμας ἄγνὸν ἴσχειν, *Hipp.* 137.

¹⁶ *Hipp.* 131-2.

understanding of love.¹⁷ While this perception of love is not unique to either philosophy or elegy, both view love as an illness and provide a remedy for the disease.¹⁸ Caston specifically mentions the symptoms as listed by Cicero in his *Tusculan Disputations*, which include a pale complexion and tears, and those listed by Propertius in his poetry, which add insomnia and weight loss to the previous two, among others.¹⁹ It is difficult to assume that Phaedra’s Nurse had lovesickness in mind, but Carme seems to suspect this disease from the start. Already, Carme’s character seems more complex than the other nurses I have discussed because she diagnoses Scylla’s problem as if she were a philosopher or a love poet.

The final type of erratic behavior is Scylla’s restlessness that Carme highlights when she asks “for what reason do you, alone, remain awake at the bedroom of your parent, during which time mortal hearts rest their tired cares, during which even rivers rest their rapid courses” (*qua causa ad patrium solam vigilare cubile/tempore quo fessas mortalia pectora curas/quo rapidos etiam requiescunt flumina cursus*, 231-33). This restlessness during the night is typical behavior of the lover, as seen with Medea:

δὴν δὲ καταυτόθι μίμνεν ἐνὶ προδόμῳ θαλάμοιο
αἰδοῖ ἐεργομένη. μετὰ δ’ ἐτρέπετ’ αὐτίς ὀπίσσω
στρεφθεῖς’. ἐκ δὲ πάλιν κίεν ἔνδοθεν, ἅψ τ’ ἄλεινεν
εἶσω

Arg. 3.648-51

“for a long time, remained at the entrance of her bedroom, being prevented by shame, she turned around and returned again, but once again came from inside, and again went inside shamefully”

This behavior is also seen with Myrrha because “it was the middle of the night and sleep had loosened bodies and cares; but Cinyras’ daughter, wakeful, is seized by a unconquerable flame

¹⁷ Caston, Ruth Rothaus. “Love as Illness: Poets and Philosophers on Romantic Love.” *The Classical Journal* 101, no. 3 (2006): 271–98.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*: 272.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*: 281, 283; *TD* 3.3.5; *Prop.* 2.11-30.

and, mad, takes back her wishes” (*noctis erat medium, curasque et corpora somnus/solverat; at virgo Cinyreia pervigil igni/carpitur indomito furiosaque vota retractat, Met. X.368-70*). Medea and Myrrha are not the only women who suffer from restlessness because of their passions, however it is interesting to compare their actions alongside Scylla because all three women love someone they should not.

The *Ciris* poet even plays on this theme because Carme references Myrrha directly, exclaiming “Ah me, lest that madness has invaded your limbs, that one which once seized the eyes of Arabian Myrrha” (*ei mihi, ne furor ille tuos invaserit artus/ ille Arabae Murrae quondam qui cepit ocellos, 237-8*), when she first discovers Scylla lingering at Nisus’ threshold. While she may be incorrect in assuming Scylla has fallen in love with Nisus, she knows that she has correctly diagnosed Scylla’s passion because she insists “for you are tossed, Amathusia is not so rough to me that I cannot recognize her by some sign” (*nam te iactari, non est Amathusia nostri/tam rudis ut nullo possim cognoscere signo, 242-3*). Carme believes that there cannot be another reason why Scylla would be paling, fasting, and lingering around her father’s door except because she is in love.

While naturally Scylla might be frustrated that her nurse has caught her, she seems aware of the literary tradition involving nurses, similar to Carme knowing the tradition about the symptoms of love. Scylla unashamedly declares:

*nam nisi te nobis malus o malus, optima Carme,
ante in conspectum casusve deusve tulisset,
aut ferro hoc...
purpureum patris dempsissem vertice crinem,
aut mihi praesenti peperissem vulnere letum
Ciris 278-282*

“for, best Carme, if an evil, oh evil, fortune or god
had not brought you into our gaze, with this weapon...
I would have cut off the purple hair from my father’s head,
or I would have brought death to myself with a wound on the spot”

The choice for Scylla was either betraying her father or committing suicide, an option the poet has not introduced until this point. Lyne suggests that while Scylla’s debate was logical because she would avoid slowly wasting away to death, nevertheless this is the first moment the poet has introduced suicide as an option.²⁰

This revelation of Scylla’s intentions may occur because, like Phaedra, Carme is as close to a mother figure as Scylla has. There is no mention of Scylla’s biological mother, and she seems to be Nisus’ only child, so Carme is the only person she has to rely on. If this is the case, however, the fact that Scylla uses *malus* as a description of the chance or god that brought Carme to her is somewhat contradictory. Scylla expresses a wish that “you, if you are able to save me, not prefer to destroy me” (*ut me, si servare potes, nec perdere malis, 275*), begging Carme to help her move beyond the *limen* and save her life. Yet, when the moment arises for Carme to act both as a boundary marker and a wise advisor, Scylla claims a *malus* fortune or god brought Carme to the scene. William Greene suggested that Scylla is simply not differentiating between fate and a god because either way, her plans have been interrupted; he does not comment any further on her direct address of Carme.²¹

This is not to say that Scylla thinks Carme is *mala*, but rather she knows that when a nurse gets involved, the situation tends to worsen and fall apart entirely. There is, however, an interesting juxtaposition between *malus* and *optima Carme* (*malus o malus, optima Carme, 278*), as if Scylla is aware that Carme has only the best intentions in mind. Carme has already sworn to

²⁰ Lyne 1978: 218.

²¹ Greene, William Chase. “Young Virgil and ‘The Doubtful Doom of Human Kind.’” *The American Journal of Philology* 43, no. 4 (1922): 348-9.

Scylla that she would “rather see all thousands of labors, worthy and unworthy, than endure that you waste away from these sad mournings and such gloom” (*omnia me potius digna atque indigna laborum/milia visuram, quam te tristibus istis/sordibus et senio patiar tabescere tali*, 247-9). Similar to Phaedra’s and Myrrha’s Nurse, Carme believes that she intends to save Scylla from a bad decision, which seems to be the exact reason for Scylla’s concern. It seems more likely that Scylla does not want to be saved, particularly if it means her nurse must be involved in the matter.

Carme as heroine

In the evidence above, Carme behaves in the manner expected of a typical nurse. She appears in the moment when her ward is facing a number of difficult choices and needs the guidance of an older, wiser figure. While she may be far more perceptive than the others (expect perhaps Eurykleia), thus far, she has acted as a boundary marker between Nisus and Minos for Scylla, preventing her from cutting off her father’s lock and trying to keep Scylla as a faithful daughter. Once Scylla confesses her love for Minos, however, Carme begins to absorb another type of character into her own. She stands out among the other nurses discussed in the previous chapter not only because of her multi-sided character and the combination of various literary genres, but also because of her prominent, and unusual, new role: a second heroine.

Two scenes in particular portray Carme in this new role because not only does she take over the lament usually spoken by a scorned, often abandoned, heroine, she also seems to take control of the action to the extent that Scylla does not, or more likely cannot, persuade Carme otherwise. The epyllion allows for this flexibility in character because part of the genre’s emphasis is the elevation of a minor character. The lament, otherwise reserved for the main heroine of the poem, is Carme’s response to Scylla’s confession of love for Minos. Considering

the fact that the *Ciris* is one of the few extant epyllia, it is difficult to say whether every epyllion, specifically those after Callimachus, followed the pattern of the abandoned girl lamenting over her situation and cursing the man responsible for it. Both Carl Jackson and Walter Allen, based on extant poems and titles of missing poems, suggest that many later epyllia focused on the romantic theme, particularly unrequited love of a woman for a man.²²

Allen admits that this is a generalization and there is simply not enough evidence, and while I do agree with this sentiment, I would venture that very few poets, if any, gave a character other than the main heroine an angry lament against the male antagonist. Given the fact that Carme has been established as the nurse figure who appears when the main heroine must make a difficult choice, her sudden monologue comes as an almost surprise. While Phaedra's Nurse received speeches as expansive as Carme, particularly when attempting to persuade Phaedra to accept her passion,²³ not even she receives a speech with such detailed personal information.

Carme's anger against Minos is made known in the first few lines of her lament.

Although she was concerned that Scylla was in love with Nisus, she reacts to Scylla's confession as if it is worse than her earlier fear because of the past she shares with Minos:

“o mihi nunc iterum crudelis reddite Minos
o iterum nostrae Minos inimice senectae,
sicine ut ante olim natae te propter eundem
nunc amor insanae luctum portavit alumnae?
tene ego tam longe capta atque avecta nequivi,
tam grave servitium, tam duros passa labores,
effugere, o bis iam exitium crudele meorum?”

Ciris 286-292

²² Jackson, Carl Newell. “The Latin Epyllion.” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 24 (1913): 40; Allen, Walter. “The Epyllion: A Chapter in the History of Literary Criticism.” *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 71 (1940): 14.

²³ *Hipp.* 433-481.

“Oh Minos, rendered cruel to me again
Oh Minos, again hostile to our old age,
just as once before for my daughter because of the same you
now Love brought grief for my frenzied foster-daughter?
Was I, captured and carried off so far,
having suffered such painful servitude and such hard labors,
unable to escape you, oh now twice the cruel destruction of my people?”

Although Carme has not personally been rejected by Minos like other scorned heroines were by their heroes, there are a number of similarities in the general structure of her angry lament. In his book, *Amatory Persuasion in Antiquity*, Nicolas Gross specifically examines “The Rhetoric of Abandonment,” language that he suggests is intended to prevent the hero from his committed goal.²⁴ While Carme’s speech does not completely fit the mold put forth by Gross, there are elements of her speech that are similar to more traditional laments by other heroines, one example being her specific and harsh vocabulary to describe Minos. Considering the overall tone of her speech, Carme does not have pleasant memories of her previous encounter with Minos, who is *crudelis*, *inimice*, and an *exitium*.

Three other heroines, Medea, Ariadne, and Dido, address their hero with similarly sharp adjectives:

ὦ παγκάκιστε, τοῦτο γάρ σ' εἶπεῖν ἔχω,
γλώσση μέγιστον εἰς ἀνανδρίαν κακόν, *Med.* 465-6

“Oh worst of men, for I have this to say to you,
the best thing with my tongue against your awful unmanliness.”

Sicine me patriis avectam, perfide, ab aris/
Perfide, deserto liquisti in litore, Theseu? C.64.132-3

“Thus you, treacherous one, abandon me, taken from my paternal home,
on a deserted shore, treacherous Theseus?”

²⁴ Gross, Nicolas P. *Amatory Persuasion in Antiquity: Studies in Theory and Practice*. Newark : London: University of Delaware Press ; Associated University Presses, 1985: 69; this language is also seen in Ovid’s *Heroides*

Dissimulare etiam sperasti, perfide, tantum/
Posse nefas tacitusque mea decedere terra? *Ae.* 4.305-6.

“Did you also hope, treacherous one, to be able to conceal
so great wickedness and depart my land silently?”

In all four speeches (Carme included), the heroine directly addresses the male protagonist with a harsh adjective within the first two lines of each respective lament;²⁵ Ariadne even uses repeats *perfide* to express her anger and grief towards Theseus when she realizes he has abandoned her. Carme responds to Scylla’s confession with similar language because of the sorrow Minos has already caused her. Even when Scylla has been tied to Minos’ ship after the downfall of Megara, a situation that seems appropriate for such a lament, she does not address Minos in her opening lines, instead begging “oh disturbed winds, suppress your gusts for a little bit, while I complain and, nevertheless dying, address the gods, although I did nothing with their witness, in my final hour” (*supprimite, o paulum turbati flamina venti/dum queror et divos,/quamquam nil testibus illis/profeci, extrema moriens tamen alloquor hora, Ciris* 404-406). While Scylla does address Minos directly later in her speech from the prow of his ship, she arguably does not use any harsh adjectives towards him. One possibility of a harsh adjective is used when Scylla briefly recounts the fall of Megara, admitting, “oh cruel I sought the shrines with a flame” (*o ego crudelis flamma delubra petivi, 424*). *Crudelis* could be a reference to Minos, instead rendering the line “I, oh cruel one, sought the shrines with a flame,” which would fit the pattern established just above. Lyne, however, notes that Ovid’s Scylla uses a similar phrase to address herself in the

²⁵ While not in the first two lines of their laments in Ovid’s *Heroides*, Dido and Medea both address their respective hero as *perfide*; Dido: “But neither do you bear those things which you boasted to me, treacherous one, nor do the sacred objects and your father press your shoulders” (*Sed neque fers tecum, nec, quae mihi, perfide, iactas Presserunt umeros sacra paterque tuos, Her.*7.79-80) and “that shore which I gave to you, treacherous one, I purchased” (*quod tibi donavi, perfide, litus emo, Her.*7.118); Medea: “Treacherous one, you felt it! For who hides love well?The flame stands out, betrayed by its own evidence” (*Perfide, sensisti! Quis enim bene celat amorem? Eminent indicio prodita flamma suo. Her.*12.37-38).

Metamorphoses (“Oh I thrice happy,” *o ego ter felix*, *Met.* 8.51).²⁶ Therefore, I would suggest that *crudelis* should be applied to Scylla instead of Minos because she has not displayed the typical anger towards her male counterpart in her speech, so it would be almost out of character for her to address him as *crudelis*.

Two smaller details in Carme’s speech are also reminiscent of monologues by scorned heroines. The first is Carme’s use of *te propter eundem* (“because of the same you”) when explaining the reasons why she would call him *crudelis* and *inimice*. In Dido’s first speech against Aeneas, she also uses the same phrase in the same position in the line when admitting that “because of you, the Libyan races and Numidian kings hate me, the Tyrians are hostile; because of the same you, my honor is destroyed” (*te propter Libycae gentes Nomadumque tyranni/odere, infensi Tyrii; te propter eundem/exstinctus pudor*, *Ae.* 4.320-22). Both Carme and Dido blame their grief and subsequent torments specifically on the male hero. Scylla seems like she would have every reason to accuse Minos for causing her suffering because she betrayed her family and city, similar to Ariadne, and as a reward, Minos dragged her through the sea.²⁷ Scylla, however, pleads, “either let my curse be owed to fate or an uncertain chance, or finally deserved blame; I will think all these things rather than that you did this” (*vel fato fuerit nobis haec debita pestis/vel casu incerto, merita vel denique culpa/omnia nam potius quam te fecisse putabo*, 456-8). She refuses to give him all the credit, instead preferring to blame it on fate, as seen in the line above, or declaring, “now, now wickedness conquers all” (*iam iam scelus omnia*

²⁶ Lyne 1978: 276 *ad.*424: *o ego* also appears at *Hor. Epod.* 12.25 (*o ego non felix*), as well as other Ovidian lines.

²⁷ “Then suspended in a new method from the high sterns, the maiden of Nisus is dragged through the blue sea” (*tum suspensa novo ritu de navibus altis/per mare caeruleum trahitur Niseia virgo*, 389-90).

vicit, 427).²⁸ While she could be placing the blame upon herself and Minos equally, she does not display the same anger that either Dido or Carme show in their laments.

A second detail in Carme's speech that is reminiscent of scorned heroines is her use of *luctus*, grief that is specifically shown for another person, usually over their death.²⁹ Looking back at Carme's speech, she declares "thus as once before for my daughter, because of the same you now Love carried grief for my frenzied foster-daughter" (*sicine ut ante olim natae te propter eundem nunc amor insanae luctum portavit alumnae*, 288-9). I believe Lyne is correct when he suggests that Carme is commenting upon the "ironically parallel fates of Britomartis and Scylla," thus rendering his translation as "Love carried grief to my daughter and now to my foster-daughter because of you."³⁰ I, however, would suggest that because of the nature of *luctus*, grief expressed for another person, Love has brought grief to Carme, not the two girls, a grief that she in turn expressed "for" her daughter in the past and now expresses "for" Scylla.³¹ While this is a thin distinction, it is important nevertheless because it is the same type of grief Ariadne expresses after Theseus has abandoned her in Catullus 64. After Aegeus has committed suicide, the poet notes, "thus having entered the roofs of the home sad from the paternal death, fierce Theseus received such grief, such as the grief he bestowed to the daughter of Minos with his forgetful mind" (*sic funesta domus ingressus tecta paterna/morte ferox Theseus, qualem Minoidi luctum/obtulerat mente immemori, talem ipse recepit*, 64.246-8). Theseus's grief is caused by the fact that his father has perished, and if he is experiencing the same sorrow as Ariadne, then

²⁸ Her line recalls Vergil's famous line, "Love conquers all" (*omnia vincit Amor*, *Ec.*X.69), which seems to equate love and crime, further removing Minos from any blame.

²⁹ *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*: 1737, Kemper; Oxford Latin Dictionary: *luctus*.

³⁰ Lyne 1978: 221 *ad.*288-9.

³¹ Also suggested by Kayachev, Boris. "Ciris 288: An Emendation." *The Classical Quarterly*, March 2017; Luppe, Wolfgang. "Textvorschläge Zur Pseudo-Vergilianischen, Ciris:" *Philologus*. June 1, 2008.

she must have been grieving over the loss of family as well.³² Therefore, the connotation seems to be the same for Carme, who is expressing her own grief over her two “daughters.” This detail is not to suggest that only scorned heroines experience and display *luctus*; the comparison, however, of the grief felt by both Ariadne and Carme does support the notion of Carme as a second heroine.

One final idea that suggests Carme’s additional role is her involvement in the fall of Megara. Originally, Scylla is set up as the cause of Megara’s destruction:

Nec vero haec urbis custodia vana fuisset
(nec fuerat), ni Scylla novo correpta furore,
Scylla, patris miseri patriaeque inventa sepulcrum,
O nimium cupidis Minoa inhiasset ocellis.
Ciris 129-132

Truly this defense of the city [Nisus’ lock] would not have been in vain (nor had it been), if Scylla, corrupted by a strange madness, Scylla, discovered as the tomb of her wretched father and fatherland, had not drank in Minos with, alas, too desiring eyes.

Scylla cannot escape the blame for betraying her father and city because it was her desire for Minos that persuaded her of the idea. Scylla, however, displays multiple times throughout the poem that she does not behave as the instigator of her deeds, but rather is pushed towards certain actions by outside forces. Even her passion for Minos was caused “because the same little boy was sharpening the sad angers of great Juno” (*idem tum tristis acuebat parvulus iras/Iunonis magnae*, 138-9), not by Scylla’s own free will. Similar to Phaedra and Myrrha, she is unable to argue against Carme because she is uncertain about her desires and is inexperienced because of her age, so she obediently follows the commands of her nurse (*praeceptis paret virgo nutricis*, 353), allowing Carme to push her in the direction of betraying her father.

³² Thomson, Douglas F. S. “Aspects of Unity in Catullus 64.” *The Classical Journal* 57, no. 2 (November 1, 1961): 55.

Carme could also have a personal motivation, like Chalciope, that influences her decision to help Scylla achieve marriage with Minos. Twice in her speech, Carme states that she has been an exile from her home for a long while (*tene ego tam longe capta atque avecta*, 290; *hoc unum exilio docta atque experta monebo*, 332). At first glance, these mentions seem to be reasons why Scylla should trust her advice; she has had many experiences throughout her life, mostly because she has been in exile, and thus is the wise advisor that Scylla needs at this point. The poet, however, offers another possibility: even though Carme deeply cares about Scylla's desires, "she rejoices no less that the Cretan walls are brought back: the fatherland is pleasant even to buried ashes" (*non minus illa tamen revehi quod moenia Cretes/gaudeat: et cineri patria est iucunda sepulto*, 384-5). These lines suggest that Carme had a personal motive for wanting Scylla to marry Minos because it would mean her return home to Crete. Therefore, her mention of her exile might suggest far more than that she has gained wisdom from her experiences; she has plans of being a heroine who is able to return home through Scylla's relationship with Minos, like Chalciope planned to protect her sons through Medea's relationship with Jason.

Because of Carme's strong presence and possible motivations for helping Scylla, when Nisus' hair is actually cut, the poet is deliberately vague about which of his characters performed the act. He leaves the climax of the story with "again she joins herself as a comrade to her foster daughter to the undertaking and prepares again to cut the purple hair" (*rursus ad inceptum sociam se adiungit alumnae/purpureumque parat rursus tondere capillum*, 381-2). Looking closely at the grammar of the passage, although neither heroine is mentioned by name, Carme must be the main subject for *adiungit* because of the mention of *alumnae*, and thus is the last subject mentioned.

There is, however, some awkwardness with Carme being the subject of *parat rursus* because this is the first reference of her actively participating in the plot to cut off the hair; the last time the plan was mentioned, Carme did not aid Scylla's attempt, but rather she foiled it.³³ While it would be more natural to assume that Scylla is preparing her plan again, Carme seems to give herself the job of cutting the hair. The next moment the lock is mentioned, although the poet explicitly states that "Scylla is hostile to her father's head" again (*capiti Scylla est inimica paterno*, 386), he finishes the climax of the epyllion with "the hair flowering with Sidonian purple is cut" (*tum coma Sidonio florens deceditur ostro*, 387) not placing blame or giving credit to anyone. Carme, however, was the final character that behaved in an active manner, lending some possibility to the idea that she cut Nisus' lock instead of Scylla.

This idea is further supported by the fact that starting with the passively cut lock, many of the verbs switch to the passive voice (such as *capitur*, *probantur*, and *trahitur*, even Scylla is *suspensa*).³⁴ This could simply be because her city has been captured and she is tied to Minos' ship, and therefore powerless to do anything. Scylla, however, has not been an active figure throughout the poem, but instead has been driven along by other powers, as stated earlier. In his book *Parthenius of Nicaea and Roman Poetry*, Christopher Francese presents an interesting suggestion as for the reason behind Scylla's passive nature.³⁵ He argues that the *Ciris* poet attempts to treat Scylla as an innocent victim rather than a traitorous woman, specifically highlighting the poet's suggestion that "maybe she is ignorant – for what good person does not prefer to believe everything other than to condemn the girl of so great a crime" (*sive illa*

³³ Lyne 1978: 263 *ad.* 381-2.

³⁴ *Ciris* 387-390.

³⁵ Francese, Christopher. *Parthenius of Nicaea and Roman Poetry*. Studien Zur Klassischen Philologie, Bd. 126. Frankfurt am Main ; New York: Peter Lang, 2001: 179-80.

ignorans – quis non bonus omnia malit/credere quam tanti sceleris damnare puellam, 188-9).³⁶

In the same way that Scylla will later proclaim that she will think anything other than Minos planned to betray her, the *Ciris* poet wants to believe anything before he thinks that Scylla willingly and knowingly betrayed her city.

Since the *Ciris* poet has rendered his heroine as an innocent victim, he instead displays his craft through a particular emphasis on Scylla herself. He focuses special attention on Scylla's beauty, an aspect which Francese notes is not a usual detail in her myth, turning her into a "spectacle rather than a moral actor."³⁷ Various details about her beauty are emphasized throughout the poem, such as her "graceful body" (*gracili...corpore*, 151), "fragrant hair" (*fragrantis...capillos*, 168), and "white neck" (*niveo...collo*, 171). The poet also mentions how "Juno feared to show you [Scylla] to her brother" (*timuit fratri te ostendere Iuno*, 157) when Scylla violated Juno's sacred altar because of young girl's beauty. He later emphasizes how "many nymphs in the waves marvel at her, and father Ocean and bright Tethys marvel [at her]" (*complures illam nymphae mirantur in undis/miratur pater Oceanus et candida Tethys*, 391-2) while she is tied to Minos' ship. It is possible that the nymphs, Ocean, and Tethys are marveling at the manner in which she is tied to the ship, since the author specifies she hands "in a new method" (*novo ritu*, 389), however her beauty seems to be the focus since they marvel "at her" (*illam*, 391). Even Scylla herself brings her beauty to attention, lamenting, "my marble-like limbs become black and blue because of the tightened knots" (*marmorea adductis livescunt bracchia nodis*, 449).

Lastly, before she is transformed into the *ciris*, all the sea creatures marvel at her "until Neptune's wife, having power over the blue kingdom, did not bear that such beauty of form be

³⁶ Francese 2001:179; also *fertur* and *impellitur*, *Ciris* 184.

³⁷ *Ibid*: 180-81.

vexed by the waves and changed the wretched limbs of the virgin” (*donec tale decus formae vexarier undis/non tulit ac miseros mutavit virginis artus/caeruleo pollens coniunx Neptunia regno*, 481-83); Scylla’s beauty is the reason why Amphitrite takes pity on her, rather than punishing her for her crime against Nisus.³⁸ I would take this argument about Scylla as a spectacle one step further and suggest that the poet has focused so much on Scylla’s physical beauty, almost eroding her agency in the downfall of the city. This focus on her beauty then has caused the poet to relocate the heroine’s strength and independence into Carme, perhaps as an even further attempt to render Scylla as a passive victim.

Carme, however, does not control the role of the heroine for an extended period of time. In the second half of her speech, she seems to revert back to the established nurse character after she has processed the initial shock of Scylla’s confession. Phaedra’s Nurse had a similar, though not as complex, outburst when her ward first admitted her illicit love before agreeing to help.³⁹ Myrrha’s Nurse, though she did not vocalize her shock in the same way, also responded to her ward’s confession with utter horror.⁴⁰ The question arises, then, of why Carme would participate, possibly even execute, the plan against Nisus. She could, like many of the other nurses, simply have Scylla’s happiness (and life) in mind and will do whatever is necessary to succeed. She even admits that “I am not trying to bend you from your begun love” (*non ego te incepto...conor/flectere amore*, 328-9), a strange statement considering the anger and sorrow she expressed earlier in her speech, but her love for Scylla far outweighs her hatred of Minos. In this case, Carme is behaving as is expected of a nurse because she is willing to take a risk for the sake of her ward.

³⁸ Francese 2001:181; at least according to the *Ciris* author.

³⁹ *Hipp.* 353-361.

⁴⁰ *Met.* X.423-28.

Despite the large role that she has undertaken until this point, Carme disappears after the lines concerning the walls of Crete, which were mentioned above. There is no mention of whether she dies, is forced into further exile, or perhaps is on Minos' ship returning to Crete. This sudden disappearance completes the ring composition of Carme's role in the *Ciris*. She appeared as a nurse-like figure whose life was otherwise unknown, briefly steals the role of heroine from Scylla because of her angry lament and her agency in the downfall of Megara. After returning to a typical nurse who acts as an aid for her ward (though perhaps she retains some of the heroine's power by possibly cutting Nisus' hair herself), she vanishes once her role is fulfilled.

Conclusion

While the issue of the dating and authorship of the *Ciris* is important in understanding how this poem does, or does not, display the continual development of Latin poetry, particularly the popularity of the epyllion outside the Neoteric circle, there are many other directions that scholars can take regarding this poem. This thesis has only focused on one aspect of the *Ciris*, but I believe that Carme displays a unique example of character and story development through the nurse-like figure. It is difficult to say whether poems written after the *Ciris* followed its example of a character that serves as both a nurse and a heroine, since it is unclear which, if any, poems might have been influenced by it.¹ Nevertheless, there is still the question concerning why the author chose to render his main heroine as an almost powerless figure and to grant the power and agency of the stereotypical lovesick maiden to an otherwise unknown mythological figure.

If an epyllion like the *Zmyrna*, which probably possessed a strong nurse character similar to Carme, had survived intact, perhaps we could argue that epyllia were trending towards nurses as being another heroine and the main heroine becoming a more passive figure, a characteristic of the genre of epyllion. In disastrous love stories like these, however, mythology tends to place all the responsibility and blame upon the shoulders of the maiden, and often does not even mention the presence of a nurse, let alone the actions they perform.² Even in the few other epyllia whose titles are known or fragments survive, only the *Zmyrna* would suggest the presence of a strong nurse based on the most popular version of the myth, though others such as

¹ Antoninus Liberalis, a Greek grammarian from the 2nd c. AD may have been influenced by the *Ciris* because in his *Metamorphoses*, he mentions Carme as the daughter of Cassiopeia and Phoenix.

² For other examples, see Welch, Tara. *Tarpeia: Workings of a Roman Myth*. Columbus, Ohio: The Ohio State University Press, 2015: 289 provides a list of other treasonous girls who fell in love with foreigners; no nurses are listed as having a major influence.

Calvus' *Io* or Cato's *Dictynna* might have taken liberties similar to the *Ciris* poet and added a nurse figure. Though this distinct shift in power provides a unique insight into the development of an otherwise stock character, the *Ciris* alone cannot prove that other epyllia possessed figures such as Carme who seem to dominate the action over the expected heroine because the evidence simply does not exist.

There are, however, a number of other directions that work on this text should take such as the conflation of Monster Scylla with *Ciris* Scylla. The poet makes every effort to emphasize that his poem is not about the former girl, but the latter. He discusses how “many great poets, Messalla, say that she, her limbs changed into another form by far, harassed the Scyllean rock with her insatiable monster” (*complures illam magni, Messalla, poetae...longe alia perhibent mutatam membra figura/Scyllaeum monstro saxum infestasse voraci*, 54, 56-7) and that “some generally adapted other girls who may be assigned to Scylla by Colophian Homer” (*alias alii vulgo finxere puellas/quaе Colophoniaco Scyllae addicantur Homero*, 64-5). If the *Ciris* author was influenced by Vergil or Propertius, neither of whom had a problem with combining the two girls, the question arises of why this poet was concerned with separating the traditions.

Despite the poet's request of “rather let it be permitted that *Ciris* become known and Scylla not be one girl from many” (*potius liceat notescere cirin/atque unam ex multis Scyllam non esse puellam*, 91-1), the poet himself seems to conflate the two, particularly when describing Scylla's transformation. Kayachev suggests that the mention of Amphitrite is intended to evoke the monster because another Scylla had an affair with Neptune and Amphitrite transformed her into the sea monster.³ A second way in which the two maidens are connected is through their name: Scylla. In her article, “*Mutati artus: Scylla, Philomela and the End of Silenus' Song in*

³ Tzetz. *ad Lycoph.* 45.649; Kayachev, Boris. “Scylla the Beauty and Scylla the Beast: A Homeric Allusion in the *Ciris*,” *Homeric receptions across generic and cultural contexts*, 2016: 282.

Virgil Eclogue 6,” Irene Peirano explores the meaning of the name Scylla from Homer to Vergil.⁴ When discussing the conflation of the girls, Peirano mentions a scholium to Euripides’ *Hippolytus* that suggests that Scylla, the daughter of Nisus, became a beast instead of a ciris after being dragged.⁵ She continues this thought by highlighting that Scylla is dragged by Minos’ ship in the *Ciris* (“Nisus’ daughter is dragged through the blue sea,” *per mare caeruleum trahitur Niseia virgo*, 390), while in Book 3 of the *Aeneid*, Vergil attributes the action of “dragging” to the monster Scylla (“But with blind shadows the cave holds Scylla, stretching out her mouths and dragging ships onto the rocks,” *At Scyllam caecis cohibet spelunca latebris/ora exsertantem et navis in saxa trahentem*, *Ae.*3.424-5).⁶ Peirano offers no further opinion on this connection between the Scyllas, but does suggest that the *Ciris* poet, with Parthenius as his guide, is attempting to correct the version in which Scylla, daughter of Nisus, became the monster Scylla. Nevertheless, even though the *Ciris* poet has attempted to distinguish between Scyllas, even he cannot help but mention the monster Scylla.

Another direction that work on this text could take is to further expand upon the idea of the nurse as a threshold. Since nurses were tasked with the care and education of young girls, they would be present at the most critical transitions in their ward’s life. This role in ancient history must have been vitally important because not only are they included in many different texts, but also the position has survived into the modern day. Parents still sometimes place their children into the hands of nannies or babysitters, most with the intention that this liminal figure will aid the child into the next stage of life. Modern movies like “Mary Poppins” and “Nanny McPhee” have displayed this liminal space that nurse-like characters occupy. In both movies,

⁴ Peirano, Irene. “Mutati Artus: Scylla, Philomela and the End of Silenus’ Song in Virgil ‘Eclogue’ 6.” *The Classical Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (2009): 187–95.

⁵ *Ibid.*: 191.

⁶ *Ibid.*: 191.

the nurses appear in critical moments in the lives of the children and only stay until the children have grown out of their childish behavior and become more responsible individuals.⁷

Although ancient nurses are presumably with their wards far longer than either Mary Poppins or Nanny McPhee were, I believe the idea of the nurse as a threshold still applies. To return to ancient sources, there are many more individuals from classical literature who are nurse-like figures. Even those who are only mentioned once, such as Caieta in Book 7 of Vergil's *Aeneid* ("you, dying, also gave eternal fame to our shores, Caieta, nurse of Aeneas," *tu quoque litoribus nostris, Aeneia nutrix/aeternam moriens famam, Caieta, dedisti, Ae.7.1-2*), should be reconsidered. In his article "Cicero at Caieta in Vergil's *Aeneid*," R.R. Dyer argues that Caieta's death marks the end of Aeneas' childhood, as he has now officially separated from his father and his mortal "mother."⁸ Dyer also offers a second opinion by Thompson, who suggests that Aeneas is instead losing his humanity because he has lost his links through his father and "mother" to the mortal world.⁹ In both arguments, Caieta has served as a threshold for Aeneas, whether she stood between his childhood and adulthood, mortality and immortality, Troy and Rome, perhaps even peace and war considering the upcoming battles Aeneas will face.

The *Ciris* is a poem that should be considered in a much greater capacity because it has far more to offer than previously thought. Establishing an author, a date, or even a general time period would aid in understanding how this poem fits into the realm of Roman poetry. The *Ciris* does, however, possess its own unique merits that ought to be reconsidered because it is one of the few complete examples that remain of an epyllion.

⁷ In the movie "Nanny McPhee," Nanny McPhee states, "When you need me, but do not want me, then I must stay. When you want me, but no longer need me, then I must go."

⁸ Dyer, R. R. "Cicero at Caieta in Vergil's 'Aeneid.'" *Latomus* 54, no. 2 (1995): 291.

⁹ Ibid.

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Appendix A¹⁰
Image of Scylla and Carme
House of Castor and Pollux



¹⁰ Both images come from:
<http://pompeiipictures.com/pompeiipictures/R6/6%2009%2006%20atrium%20part%207.htm>

Appendix B
Carne's Family Tree

