

## The Elizabethan Epyllion:

### From Constructed Classical Genre to Twentieth-Century Genre Proper

Silvio Bär (University of Oslo)

Even as the sun with purple-colour'd face  
Had ta'en his last leave of the weeping morn,  
Rose-cheeked Adonis hied him to the chase.  
Hunting he lov'd, but love he laugh'd to scorn.  
Sick-thoughted Venus makes amain unto him  
And like a bold-fac'd suitor 'gins to woo him.

This is the beginning of Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* (1593), a poem about Venus' unrequited love for the beautiful youth Adonis who, unfortunately, prefers hunting over sex.<sup>1</sup> The poem's model is, recognizably, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, where the same story is told, in much shorter form, at 10.519–739. Along with similar poems such as Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594) and Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* (1598), *Venus and Adonis* is among the best-known examples of a genre of mythological (and mostly erotic) narrative poems that were exceedingly popular in England during the 1590s, but whose life span encompassed a much longer period. It began with the first printed English translation of Book 3 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* from 1560, published under the title *The Fable of Ovid treting of Narcissus* (anonymous), and three poems in the 1560s.<sup>2</sup> After its climax in the late Elizabethan period (Queen Elizabeth I, reigned 1558–1603), the composition of this type of narrative poetry continued well into the Jacobean era (King James I, reigned 1603–1625), and during the Caroline era (King Charles I, reigned 1625–1649) another two such poems were written and

published (Cowley's *Constantia and Philetus* [1630] and Shirley's *Narcissus or The Self-Lover* [1646]). It can therefore be safely maintained that this genre was not only "one of the most characteristic forms of the 1590s," as Brown (2004: 102) aptly puts it, but that its popularity and productivity lasted for a period of approximately eighty years altogether.<sup>3</sup>

Today, this genre is commonly referred to by literary critics and literary historians as the "Elizabethan epyllion" or the "Elizabethan minor epic" (in this chapter, I will use the abbreviation EE for the sake of convenience).<sup>4</sup> The goal of this chapter is to trace the history of scholarship on the EE in line with the history of the term "epyllion" as it was consolidated and narrowed in classical scholarship of the nineteenth century. Whereas the history of scholarship on the ancient "epyllion" has been well examined, there is no equivalent study on the question as to when, how and why the term was adapted in English literary history. In what follows, I will therefore, in essence, argue that whereas the invention of the ancient "epyllion" is a matter of the early nineteenth century, the designation of the EE as "epyllion" occurred considerably later. It is only when, in an influential publication from 1931, the concept of the ancient "epyllion" was extended to the idea of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as a series of "epyllia" that the same term became attractive and viable for English philology because of the overall Ovidian nature of the EE. Furthermore, it will be demonstrated that the year 1958 marks a turning point for the dissemination of the term: following a seminal publication in 1958, there was a sharp upswing in the usage of the term, which since then has become standard in English literary history and criticism. However, contemporary scholarship tends to lack reflection and awareness regarding its history. This deficit, in turn, is also in parts due to the fact that classical philology still tends to adhere to the idea of the ancient "epyllion" as a genuine and stable genre.

\* \* \* \* \*

It has long been noted in classical scholarship that the term “epyllion” is not an ancient literary term, but a much more recent coinage. Although there is, to this day, a tendency to claim that the term as such should be kept because of its supposed usefulness to “describe a genuine type of poem” (Hollis 2006: 141), there are numerous arguments that speak against this stance and instead clearly indicate that the ancient “epyllion” is, fundamentally, an anachronistic genre that coincided with the invention of the term by classicists around 1800. The arguments against the assumption of such an ancient genre are complex but can, essentially, be divided into two areas. For one thing, the fact that ancient literary criticism did not think of “small(er) epic” as generically different from “long(er) epic” does not support the assumption from a historical point of view—indeed, authors of epic poems were uniformly referred to as ἐποιοῖ (“producers of epic”) in antiquity.<sup>5</sup> For another, it does not make sense to differentiate between ancient “epic” and “epyllion” because the demarcation between the two genres is considerably more blurry than most of the common definitions imply.<sup>6</sup> In fact, those texts that classical scholars tend to regard as “epyllia” vary greatly in length—that is, from a few dozen to over a thousand lines—and they are also far from constituting a homogeneous group of texts either in terms of periodization or subject matter.<sup>7</sup>

The word “epyllion” as a scholarly *terminus technicus* is attested for the first time in Ilgen’s (1796: 355, 671) edition of the *Homeric Hymns* with reference to the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* and the *Batrachomyomachia*.<sup>8</sup> From then on, it spread in classical philology and became fashionable as a convenient designation for any “small(er)” epic poem.<sup>9</sup> As Tilg (2012: 45) points out, “the original idea of ‘epyllion’ in classical studies from the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries was more inclusive than our narrow definition today,” and indeed it is only in the second half of the nineteenth century that the term’s use became gradually constricted. First, an increasingly centripetal idea of *the* “epyllion” focused on the characteristics of *Carmen* 64 (“The Marriage of Peleus and Thetis”) by the Roman poet Catullus.<sup>10</sup> Subsequently, the concept was, centrifugally, re-applied to Hellenistic poetry

(based on the stereotype of Catullus as the direct literary heir to the Hellenistic poets). Heumann (1904) cemented this idea for the first time; however, it was Crump's (1931) thesis on *The Epyllion from Theocritus to Ovid* which became most influential both in Classics and also, as we shall see, in English philology. The reason for Crump's success in the history of scholarship is complex. First, the fact that her monograph was written in English facilitated its reception beyond the field of Classics. Secondly, she was the first scholar to unequivocally draw a direct line from the Greek (Hellenistic) "epyllion" to the Roman (neoteric) "epyllion," and thus the first to imply an uninterrupted (almost teleological) development to this supposed genre. Thirdly, she provided a neat and tidy catalog of criteria for what she considered to be typical of *the* ancient "epyllion" (Crump 1931: 22–3)—which, as Trimble (2012: 75) shrewdly observes, "possesses a seductive combination of abstraction and authority," as "sitting where it does, at the beginning of a book that covers such a wide sweep of literary history, it commands trust." Crump's criteria have been copied and repeated ever since, for example in the entry on "Epyllion" in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Courtney 1996) and in Merriam's (2001) study of the "epyllion" in antiquity. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Crump puts considerable weight on Ovid and emphasizes the idea of the *Metamorphoses* as a series of "epyllia" (Crump 1931: 195–242), which helped to prepare the ground for later English scholars to link the EE generically with the ancient "epyllion." This is not the right moment here to discuss, let alone to decide, whether Crump's view and her definitions are correct or not (as indicated, I think that they are, for the most part, not). What is important, though, is the fact that the combination of these factors led to a proliferation, and even a certain popularization, of her ideas both within and outside the realms of Classical scholarship.<sup>11</sup> We shall come back to Crump's influence again later in this chapter.

In contrast to the ancient "epyllion," the idea of the EE as a coherent genre of generically related poems that interact with each other and share the same cultural and literary circle, seems undisputed, and undisputable. Although there may, of course, be disagreement

about the inclusion of one or the other text,<sup>12</sup> it cannot be doubted that both the periodization (with its peak in the 1590s) as well as the shared subject matter (with a focus on mythological and erotic stories that were mostly, though not solely, taken from Ovid's poetry) is reason enough to think of the EE as a relatively stable poetic genre with sufficient common characteristics.<sup>13</sup> Although it is, as Ellis (2003: 4) puts it, "[unknown w]hether the Elizabethans viewed these poems as a group," it is, in my view, possible, if not very likely, that they did. However, it can be said with irrefutable certainty that they did not call them "epyllia." Although the term "epyllion" is attested a few times in the sixteenth century by some authors of Latin hexameter poems,<sup>14</sup> there is no evidence whatsoever that suggests that it may have spread to designate other types of poetry that were written in vernacular languages. However, contrary to what might perhaps be expected, the proliferation of the term in classical scholarship in the course of the nineteenth century did not trigger its application to the EE—in spite of the leading position that Classics had as a discipline at the time. As a matter of fact, there is only little—albeit illuminating—evidence for the use of the term outside classical philology in the nineteenth century. One such exception was Karl Elze (1864: 177–268), who applied the term "Epyllien" to Sir Walter Scott's narrative poems that were written between 1805 and 1817 (such as, for example, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* [1805], *The Lady of the Lake* [1810] and *Harold the Dauntless* [1817]). This usage—unique as it is—clearly testifies to the broad applicability of the term at that time. A few decades later, Körting (1910), in his history of English literature, broadened the term's usage by applying it again to Scott's narrative poems (365), but also to those of Lord Byron (such as, for example, *The Corsair* [1814] and *The Prisoner of Chillon* [1816]) (387). Most strikingly, however, he was, by all accounts, the first to call two representatives of the EE "Epyllien," namely, Cowley's *Tragicall History of Píramus and Thisbe* and *Constantia and Philetus* (292). Several aspects of this are of interest in this context: first, the seemingly casual use of the term without any introduction or explanation; secondly, the fact that Körting used the term

to designate two late EE (published in 1628 and 1630, respectively) which contemporary scholarship does not regard as central to the genre;<sup>15</sup> and, thirdly, the lack of an according usage for those EE which are today viewed as typical of the genre: Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* is simply called a "Gedicht" (poem) (260), while Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* are "epische Dichtungen" (epic poems) (256).<sup>16</sup> Interestingly, it was also Körting—who had called the narrative poems by Cowley, Scott and Lord Byron "Epyllien"—who wrote an encyclopedia on the methodology of Roman philology, in which he defines the "epyllion" as a subgenre of epic poetry ("Epische Dichtungen") and translates it as "Verserzählungen" (verse narrations) (Körting 1884: 449). Thus, all aspects considered, it appears that the term "epyllion" was used very broadly by both Elze and Körting, irrespective of the period to which the authors belonged; in essence, "epyllion" seems to have been regarded as an appropriate term for almost any narrative poem.

In his *Handbook of Greek Literature* (widely read at the time), Rose (1934: 321) discusses Callimachus' fragmentarily preserved narrative poem *Hecale* as a prototypical "epyllion" and then adds, at the end of the paragraph, a sentence saying that "[w]e shall find such poems in Theokritos also, and the genre survives, little changed, into modern work." This remark is supplemented by a footnote that mentions Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece*, along with Alfred Tennyson's "Oenone" (1829), as two examples (Rose 1934: 321, n. 20). First and foremost, these two examples show that Rose obviously had a very broad (and, one may perhaps add, indistinct) conception of the "epyllion," similar to that of Elze and Körting. What is more important, though, is his idea that a direct, almost teleological line could be pursued from the ancient "epyllion" to the EE (and beyond). As demonstrated above, this notion is already implied in Crump's (1931) monograph, and although Rose does not reference this study, it does not seem far-fetched to assume that he will probably have known (and used) it. It is, however, not until 1958 that the term "epyllion" finally begins to make proper headway in English philology. In an article entitled "The Elizabethan Minor Epic,"

Miller (1958: 31) openly claims a direct line from the ancient “epyllia,” especially those from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, to the EE:

Literary scholars have commonly observed that the Elizabethan erotic mythological narrative poems such as Marlowe’s *Hero and Leander* bear a striking resemblance to the poems of Ovid, especially to his *Metamorphoses*. Indeed nowadays it is almost customary to refer to these verse narratives as Ovidian poems. And several scholars, discerning a more precise relationship between these Renaissance and Latin poems, have been aware that both groups belong to a class of Alexandrian Greek poems known as *epyllia*, or “little epics.” To my knowledge, though, no one has undertaken to show in what sense the Elizabethan poems in question actually are *epyllia*, or what relationship they bear to the Alexandrian poems of the same class. To do so is the aim of the present study.

Unfortunately, Miller fails to reference those “several scholars” in detail; his only source of information whom he mentions explicitly is Rose (1934: 321)—who, in turn, does not give any further references to support his claim. It might, however, be speculated that one of Miller’s other sources may have been Wilkinson’s (1955) study on Ovid, a study that contains chapters on Ovidian reception in the Middle Ages (366–98) and in the Renaissance (399–438). Wilkinson never explicitly calls the EE “epyllia,” but he uses the term in close connection when he refers to the EE as “poems in stanzas or couplets which are akin to the Greco-Roman *epyllia*” (409). Miller’s main model, however, is Crump (1931), whom he calls “the foremost modern authority on this type of poem” (Miller 1958: 31). In essence, Miller’s goal is twofold: for one thing, he attempts to demonstrate that the EE is a generic heir to the ancient “epyllion”; this end is achieved by way of reference to Crump’s authoritative catalog of criteria and her conception of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* as a series of “epyllia,” as detailed above. For another, by claiming a direct lineage between the two genres, Miller also attempts

to defend and ennoble the EE, as becomes evident in the final sentence of his article (38): “The long-range effect of such a study, I would hope, would be to heighten appreciation and to refurbish the reputation of these Elizabethan poems, now all too often looked upon with condescension or scarcely concealed contempt.” In other words, what is at work here is the classicizing idea that the quality of a post-antique literary genre is automatically put on a higher scale if it can be proven to have developed from an ancient genre.

As a response, Allen (1958) published a short article in the same journal and in the same year in order to oppose Miller’s claim. Allen had already written a longer article in 1940 in which he had thoroughly refuted the existence of the ancient genre of the “epyllion” (his criticism was mostly targeted against Crump), dismantling, point by point, the constructedness of the genre and consequently claiming that “we should banish from our critical vocabulary the term epyllion and from our critical thinking the grouping of poems under that name” (Allen 1940: 25). In his subsequent short note, he summarized and restated his former criticism, but supplemented it with an evaluation of some more recent literature on the topic, “fear[ing] that Mr. Miller has caught a tiger in his Classical comparison” (Allen 1958: 515). However, Allen’s criticism did not land on fertile soil (which may in part have been due to its condescending tone),<sup>17</sup> and the Millerian view subsequently spread and became mainstream in English philology.

As an example of the spreading influence of the “epyllion,” in the same year as Miller’s article was published, Germaine Greer (known these days as a main representative of the so-called “second-wave feminist movement”) attended a seminar on “The Epyllion” at the University of Melbourne. According to her lecture notes (today in the possession of the University Library of Melbourne), the seminar was held by an otherwise unknown “Miss Walker” who, inter alia, discussed *Venus and Adonis*, *The Rape of Lucrece* and *Hero and Leander* [insert Figure 2 here]. On the first page of Greer’s lecture notes, on the fourth line from the top, there is a reference to Wilkinson’s (1955) monograph—which, as noted above,

may have had an influence on Miller's (1958) introduction of the term "epyllion" into English philology. Therefore, even if Walker may not have been familiar with Miller's article at that point (as it was published in the same year as the lecture took place), she must have been familiar with the term "epyllion" and will have found the transition of its application from ancient to Elizabethan poems unproblematic. This assumption is reinforced by the fact that the term "epyllion" (*sic*) stands on the following line, without further comment, immediately after the notation of Wilkinson's monograph; it may thus be safe to speculate that Walker mentioned the term as originating with Wilkinson. Furthermore, Greer's misspelling is most illuminating, since it testifies to the fact that she must have taken her note on auditive reception; this, in turn, demonstrates that Walker probably neither used the blackboard to introduce the term, nor did she provide much explanation as to its meaning and origin. Consequently, it can be concluded that Walker seems to have regarded "epyllion" as an unproblematic and already fairly established term in order to describe the genre of the EE, and she appears to have assumed that it could be introduced to undergraduates without further explanation.

Five years later, Donno (1963), in her important and much-used edition of no fewer than thirteen EE, adopts an ambivalent stance towards the Millerian view: on the one hand, she chooses the title *Elizabethan Minor Epics* for her edition; on the other, she frequently uses the term "epyllion" in her introduction. In a footnote, she explains and justifies its use (Donno 1963: 6, n. 3):

The term 'epyllion' or 'minor epic' gained currency following the publication in 1931 of M. M. Crump's *The Epyllion from Theocritus to Ovid*. But scholars have pointed out that it was not a literary type recognized by the ancients and that its critical usage stems from the nineteenth century. [...] Whatever its propriety for certain examples of

classical poetry, it is a particularly useful term for classifying the Elizabethan genre with its mingling of disparate elements.

I suspect that the wide dissemination of Donno's edition must have played a (if not the) decisive role in the subsequent standardization of the term "epyllion" as a designation for the EE, since it became—and has remained—the standard edition, at least for some of the lesser known EE. But how do contemporary scholars tend to deal with what we might term "the epyllion question"? As demonstrated above, in contemporary classical scholarship there is a clear awareness that the term "epyllion" as such is not ancient, but modern. In contrast, there seems to be little corresponding awareness in contemporary English philology—on the contrary, in most cases where "epyllion" has been used in scholarship since the turn of the millennium to designate the EE (or specific representatives of the genre), the term is used without much (or any) further reflection.<sup>18</sup> For example, Alexander (2000: 101) writes, in his literary history (directed at a general audience of students of English):<sup>19</sup> "Epyllion was fashionable in the 1590s; Shakespeare's effort, *Venus and Adonis*, is inferior to *Hero and Leander*, which Marlowe may have written as an undergraduate." In a similar way, specialized studies on Elizabethan poetry and/or the EE tend to ignore this aspect. Brown (2004: 102–9), in a subchapter entitled "The Epyllion and the Eroticization of Elizabethan Literary Culture," acknowledges the fact that the "word epyllion derives from the Greek for small epic" (102–3) and argues that the genre itself is an innovation "in answer to the criticisms which had been leveled against poetry in the 1570s and 1580s" (104). However, despite the fact that the author recognizes the term's origin from Ancient Greek and, at the same time, makes the genre's post-classical provenance unmistakably clear, she does not raise the question as to the term's source. A reader of Brown's chapter might thus be inclined to conclude (wrongly) that "epyllion" was, in fact, a term that would already have been used by the authors of these EE poems. Along similar lines, Buté (2004: 260) revives the Millerian

view of a direct line from the ancient “epyllion” to the EE by stating that “le *minor epic* élisabéthain est une résurgence de l’épyllion classique, qui s’est développé pendant la période alexandrine en Grèce.” Even further, Weaver (2012), the author of the most recent study on the EE, uses the term throughout his monograph without any reference to, or reflection on, its provenance and terminological belatedness (nor does his bibliography contain any references to studies on the term’s history).

Indeed, it is only on rare occasions that we catch a glimpse of some sort of awareness in recent critical writing, such as in Kahn’s chapter, where she cites Lodge’s *Scyllaes Metamorphosis* as the first example of “the emergent genre of the long mythological Ovidian poem” (2007: 75)—which is then, in parentheses, explained as “later termed *epyllion* or brief epic”; or in Enterline’s chapter on “Elizabethan Minor Epic” in *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature* (2015), where the nineteenth-century origin of the term is acknowledged, but ancient “epyllion,” with all its stereotypes, is at the same time taken as an absolute truth.<sup>20</sup> The one example I was able to find of a more in-depth observation occurs in a recent study by Ellis (2003: 4):

Not only did the epyllion not survive, it is not even clear that it existed as a genre in the first place. The label was first applied to classical poetry in the nineteenth century, and only later to English examples. Whether the Elizabethans viewed these poems as a group is unknown, as is whether they would have drawn any distinction between the epyllion and the Ovidian complaint, which (if in fact it is a separate genre) has had a longer life.

Beyond the question of terminological validity, the author here draws attention to the problem of the ancient genre of “epyllion” as such. What is even more illuminating, though, is the way this problem is immediately linked to the question of the generic awareness of the EE by its authors and their contemporaries. In other words, the awareness of one problem in the history

of scholarship triggers awareness of a related problem in a different area. Aside from these exceptions, however, it can, in sum, be stated that contemporary English philology seems to show comparatively little interest in—or awareness of—the origin and history of the generic term “epyllion,” as a result of which an unknowing reader might be inclined to draw wrong conclusions about its supposed use as early as the Elizabethan era.

\* \* \* \* \*

I opened this chapter with a quote from Shakespeare’s *Venus and Adonis*, a poem about single-sided love. A quote from Marlowe’s *Hero and Leander* would have been an equally appropriate alternative, as an example, not of unrequited love, but, rather, of eternal love beyond death. We may justifiably wonder which of the two stories might be better suited as a metaphor for the relationship between (the invention of) the ancient “epyllion” and the EE; but either way, it seems to me to be clear that the relationship is a complex one. To summarize, from a historical perspective, the idea of the ancient “epyllion” is a modern construct: an anachronistic genre that was virtually invented around 1800. In contrast, the EE clearly constitutes a literary genre with a stable nucleus and a precisely pointed climax in the 1590s. In the first half of the nineteenth century, classicists applied the term “epyllion” broadly to any Greek or Latin hexameter poem that was, in one way or another, conceived as (relatively) small, irrespective of its content and dating. After around 1850, though, the idea arose that “epyllion” was a genre that was at home primarily (if not solely) in Hellenistic (Greek) and neoteric (Roman) poetry. Crump’s (1931) thesis subsequently cemented this view, but also widened it because she popularized the idea that Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* essentially consisted of a series of “epyllia.” The EE, in turn, was referred to as “epyllion” on only a few occasions in the later nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries, and these can be regarded as isolated cases which tie in with the general openness of the term as classicists had

originally used it. It was only in the wake of Crump's monograph that scholars of English philology began to see a common ground by perceiving the EE as an heir to the ancient "epyllion" due to the connection made to Ovid. Scholars like Rose (1934), Wilkinson (1955) and—above all—Miller (1958) contributed to the popularization of the idea of an "Elizabethan epyllion" and the subsequent dissemination of the term; and the Millerian view has remained standard in English philology to this day. It is, furthermore, insightful to note that contemporary English philology seems to take comparatively little notice of this problem, whereas classical philology is more informed and more reflected in this respect. At the same time, the adherence in Classics to the idea that the ancient "epyllion" did exist also feeds back into the way scholars of English literary history look at the issue: for it is only on the basis of the assumption that the "epyllion" constituted a stable literary genre with an uninterrupted and linear continuity from the Hellenistic to the Roman period (and beyond) that English literary criticism was able to pick up on this idea and expand it (teleologically) into the EE. The EE is therefore an exemplary case in point that demonstrates how a specific development in classical scholarship has shaped the perception of a genre in English poetry, and how blind spots are different in each discipline—but nevertheless intertwined.<sup>21</sup>

Appendix: List of EE in Chronological Order<sup>22</sup>

- 1560 Anonymous: *The Fable of Ovid treting of Narcissus* **A**
- 1565 Thomas Peend (?-?): *The Pleasant Fable of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis* **C**
- 1566 Thomas Underdowne (1566–1587): *The Excellent Historye of Theseus and Ariadne* **C**
- 1569 William Hubbard (?-?): *Ceyx Kyng of Thracine and Alcione his Wife* **C**
- 1587 Abraham Fraunce (~1558–~1593):  
*The Lamentations of Amintas for the death of Phyllis*
- 1589 Thomas Lodge (1558–1625):  
*Scillaes Metamorphosis: Enterlaced with the Unfortunate Love of Glaucus* **A B D R**
- 1592 Samuel Daniel (1562–1619): *The Complaint of Rosamond* **A R**
- 1593 William Shakespeare (1564–1616): *Venus and Adonis* **B R W**
- 1594 William Shakespeare: *The Rape of Lucrece* **W**  
 Thomas Heywood (~1570–1641): *Oenone and Paris* **B D W**  
 John Davies (1569–1626): *Orchestra* **W**  
 Henry Willobie (1575?–1596?): *Willobie His Avisa, The first triall of Avisa* **A**  
 Richard Barnfield (1574–1620): *Hellens Rape: A light Lanthorne for light Ladies*
- 1595 George Chapman (1559–1634): *Ovids Banquet of Sence* **A B D**  
 Michael Drayton (1563–1631): *Endimion and Phoebe: Ideas Latmus* **B D R**  
 Thomas Edwards (?-?): *Cephalus and Procris* **B D W**  
 Richard Barnfield: *Orpheus His Journey To Hell* **C**
- 1596 Richard Lynche (?-?): *The Love of Dom Diego and Ginevra* **M**
- 1597 Michael Drayton:  
*Rosamond to Henry, Henry to Rosamond: Englands Heroicall Epistles* **A**
- 1598 John Marston (1576–1634):  
*The Metamorphosis of Pigmaliions Image and Certaine Satyres* **B D R**

- Christopher Marlowe (1564–1593): *Hero and Leander* **A B D R W**
- George Chapman: *The Continuation of Hero and Leander* **A B D**
- Henry Petowe (1575/6–1636?):  
*The Second Part of Hero and Leander, Containing their Further Fortunes* **A B**
- 1600 John Weever (1576–1632): *Faunus and Melliflora* **B D**
- 1602 Francis Beaumont (1584–1616): *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus* **A D**  
 John Beaumont (1583–1627): *The Metamorphosis of Tobacco*
- 1607 William Barksted (?–?): *Mirrha the Mother of Adonis: or, Lustes Prodegies* **M**
- 1610 Giles Fletcher (1586?–1623): *Christs Victorie and Triumph* **A**
- 1611 William Barksted: *Hiren: or The Faire Greeke* **M**
- 1613 Samuel Page (1574–1630): *The Love of Amos and ill* **M**  
 H.A. (?–?): *The Scourge of Venus* **M**
- 1616 George Chapman: *The Divine Poem of Musaeus: Hero and Leander* **D**
- 1617 Dunstan Gale (?–?): *Pyramus and Thisbe* **M**
- 1624 Anonymous: *A Pleasant and Delightfull Poeme of Two Lovers, Philos and Licia* **M**
- 1628 Phineas Fletcher (1582–1650): *Venus and Anchises: Brittain's Ida* **D**  
 Abraham Cowley (1618–1667): *Tragicall History of Piramus and Thisbe*
- 1630 Abraham Cowley: *Constantia and Philetus*
- 1646 James Shirley (1596–1666): *Narcissus or The Self-Lover* **D**

## References

- Alexander, M. (2000), *A History of English Literature*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Alexander, N., ed. (1967), *Elizabethan Narrative Verse*, London: Edward Arnold.
- Allen, W., Jr. (1940), "The Epyllion: A Chapter in the History of Literary Criticism," *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 71: 1–26.
- Allen, W., Jr. (1958), "The Non-Existent Classical Epyllion," *Studies in Philology*, 55 (3): 515–18.
- Baldwin, T.W. (1955), "Marlowe's Musaeus," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 54 (4): 478–85.
- Bär, S. (2015), "Inventing and Deconstructing Epyllion: Some Thoughts on a Taxonomy of Greek Hexameter Poetry," *Thersites*, 2: 23–51.
- Bate, J. (1993), *Shakespeare and Ovid*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Bradbrook, M.C. (1964), *Shakespeare and Elizabethan Poetry: A Study of His Earlier Work in Relation to the Poetry of the Time*, Harmondsworth and Ringwood: Penguin Books.
- Braden, G. (1978), *The Classics and English Renaissance Poetry*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Brown, G. (2004), *Redefining Elizabethan Literature*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Burrow, C. (2002), "Re-embodiment Ovid: Renaissance Afterlives," in P. Hardie (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Ovid*, 301–19, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bush, D. (1963), *Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition in English Poetry*, 2nd rev. edn., New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Buté, N. (2004), "La rhapsodie des genres dans l'épyllion élisabéthain," *Études anglaises*, 57 (3): 259–70.
- Cameron, A. (1995), *Callimachus and his Critics*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

- Cheney, P. (2007), "Introduction: Shakespeare's poetry in the twenty-first century," in P. Cheney (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's Poetry*, 1–13, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chiari, S., ed. (2012), *Renaissance Tales of Desire: Hermaphroditus and Salmacis, Theseus and Ariadne, Ceyx and Alcione and Orpheus his Journey to Hell*, 2nd rev. edn., Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Courtney, E. (1996), "Epyllion," *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd rev. edn., 550.
- Crump, M.M. (1931), *The Epyllion from Theocritus to Ovid*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Demetriou, T. (2017), "The non-Ovidian Elizabethan epyllion: Thomas Watson, Christopher Marlowe, Richard Barnfield," in J. Valls-Russell, A. Lafont and C. Coffin (eds.), *Interweaving myths in Shakespeare and his contemporaries*, 41–64, Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Donno, E.S., ed. (1963), *Elizabethan Minor Epics*, New York: Columbia University Press and London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Ellis, J. (2003), *Sexuality and Citizenship: Metamorphosis in Elizabethan Erotic Verse*, Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press.
- Elze, K., ed. (1864), *Sir Walter Scott*, vol. 1, Dresden: Louis Ehlermann.
- Enterline, L. (2015), "Elizabethan Minor Epic," in P. Cheney and P. Hardie (eds), *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature*, vol. 2, 253–71, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fantuzzi, M. (1998), "Epyllion," *Der Neue Pauly*, 4: 31–3.
- Greer, G. (1958), "The Epyllion," Lecture notes, University of Melbourne. Available online: <https://digitised-collections.unimelb.edu.au/handle/11343/91816> (accessed January 15, 2018).
- Heumann, J. (1904), *De epyllio Alexandrino*, Königsee: Selmar de Ende.

- Hollis, A.S. (2006), "The Hellenistic Epyllion and its Descendants," in S.F. Johnson (ed.), *Greek Literature in Late Antiquity: Dynamism, Didacticism, Classicism*, 141–57, Aldershot and Burlington: Routledge.
- Hulse, C. (1981), *Metamorphic Verse: The Elizabethan Minor Epic*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Ilgen, K.D. (1796), *Hymni Homerici cum reliquis carminibus minoribus Homero tribui solitis et Batrachomyomachia*, Halle: Hemmerdeana.
- Kahn, C. (2007), "Venus and Adonis," in P. Cheney (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's Poetry*, 72–89, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Keach, W. (1977), *Elizabethan Erotic Narratives: Irony and Pathos in the Ovidian Poetry of Shakespeare, Marlowe, and Their Contemporaries*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Kennedy, W.J. (2007), "Shakespeare and the development of English poetry," in P. Cheney (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's Poetry*, 14–32, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Körting, G. (1884), *Encyklopaedie und Methodologie der romanischen Philologie mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des Französischen und Italienischen*, vol. 1, Heilbronn: Gebr. Henninger.
- Körting, G. (1910), *Grundriss der Geschichte der englischen Literatur von ihren Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, 5th rev. edn., Münster: Heinrich Schönigh.
- Lewalski, B.K., ed. (1973), *The Resources of Kind: Genre-Theory in the Renaissance*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and New York: University of California Press.
- Maslen, R.W. (2003), "Lodge's *Glaucus and Scilla* and the Conditions of Catholic Authorship in Elizabethan England," *EnterText*, 3 (1): 59–100.
- Merriam, C.U. (2001), *The Development of the Epyllion Genre Through the Hellenistic and Roman Periods*, Lewiston, Queenston and Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press.

- Miller, P.W. (1958), "The Elizabethan Minor Epic," *Studies in Philology*, 55 (1): 31–8.
- Miller, P.W., ed. (1967), *Seven Minor Epics of the English Renaissance*, Gainesville: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints.
- Most, G.W. (1982), "Neues zur Geschichte des Terminus 'Epyllion'," *Philologus*, 126 (1–2): 153–6.
- Reese, M.M., ed. (1968), *Elizabethan Verse Romances*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul and New York: Humanities Press.
- Rose, H.J. (1934), *A Handbook of Greek Literature: From Homer to the Age of Lucian*, 3rd rev. edn., London: Methuen.
- Smith, H. (1952), *Elizabethan Poetry: A Study in Conventions, Meaning, and Expression*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.
- Tilg, S. (2012), "On the Origins of the Modern Term 'Epyllion': Some Revisions to a Chapter in the History of Classical Scholarship," in M. Baumbach and S. Bär (eds), *Brill's Companion to Greek and Latin Epyllion and Its Reception*, 29–54, Leiden and Boston: Brill.
- Trimble, G. (2012), "Catullus 64: The Perfect Epyllion?" in M. Baumbach and S. Bär (eds), *Brill's Companion to Greek and Latin Epyllion and Its Reception*, 55–79, Leiden and Boston: Brill.
- Vessey, D.W.T.C. (1970), "Thoughts on the Epyllion," *The Classical Journal*, 66 (1): 38–43.
- Weaver, W.P. (2012), *Untutored Lines: The Making of the English Epyllion*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Wilkinson, L.P. (1955), *Ovid Recalled*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

---

<sup>1</sup> The text is quoted from Reese's (1968) edition.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Alexander (1967: 8–9) and the edition of the three earliest poems from the 1560s by Chiari (2012). Lodge's *Scyllaes Metamorphosis* (1589) is often, but imprecisely, regarded as the genre's first representative (cf. e.g. Kennedy 2007: 16–17 and Enterline 2015: 253).

<sup>3</sup> See the Appendix at the end of this chapter, which comprises a good three dozen titles. The actual production (potentially including some lost, or hitherto unpublished, texts) may even have been considerably higher.

<sup>4</sup> Further, less common, terms of designation are “Elizabethan verse romance” (Reese 1968), “Elizabethan erotic narrative” (Keach 1977) and “Elizabethan erotic verse” (Ellis 2003). Because of the decidedly Ovidian texture of most of the EE, terms such as “Ovidian epyllion” (cf. e.g. Cheney 2007: 7; Maslen 2003: 92) and “Ovidian romance” (Bradbrook 1964: *passim*) are sometimes also used. Cf. also Hulse (1981: 16–17) for further terms.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Cameron (1995: 268–9).

<sup>6</sup> For some standard definitions see e.g. the entries in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Courtney 1996) and *Der Neue Pauly* (Fantuzzi 1998).

<sup>7</sup> For a detailed discussion of these problems, cf. Allen (1940); Allen (1958); Bär (2015: 23–34), with further references. For a more “epyllion”-friendly evaluation, cf. e.g. Vessey (1970).

<sup>8</sup> The latest, and most profound, discussion of the history of scholarship of the ancient “epyllion” is provided by Tilg (2012) (see 34–7 for Tilg's discussion of the first attestation of the term by Ilgen). See furthermore Most (1982) (in parts outdated by Tilg 2012), as well as Bär (2015: 34–9) for an overview and further references.

<sup>9</sup> Tilg (2012: 47–54) provides an annotated list of all attestations of the term in classical scholarship between 1796 and 1855.

<sup>10</sup> On this aspect of the history of scholarship of the ancient “epyllion,” cf. the in-depth study by Trimble (2012).

<sup>11</sup> This is not least proven by the fact that Crump's book was reprinted by Bristol University Press in 1997.

<sup>12</sup> For reflections on the scope of the genre, see e.g. Hulse (1981: 16–34) and Demetriou (2017: 47–52). See also n. 2 above.

<sup>13</sup> There are only few examples of decidedly non-Ovidian EE, the most prominent of which is Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* (the main source of which is Musaeus' *Hero and Leander*; see Baldwin 1955 and Braden 1978: 55–153). For a discussion of further non-Ovidian EE, see Demetriou (2017). On Ovid(ianism) in English Renaissance poetry, see e.g. Smith (1952: 64–130); Keach (1977); Bush (1963: 69–88); Bate (1993); Burrow

---

(2002); Chiari (2012: 10–8). On the importance of Ovid in the Renaissance in general, see e.g. Wilkinson (1955: 399–438). On the complex question of genre theory in Renaissance literature, see e.g. Lewalski (1973).

<sup>14</sup> See Tilg (2012: 33–4, 47).

<sup>15</sup> Cowley is not mentioned as an “epylliast” in the chapter on “Elizabethan minor epic” in *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature* (cf. the list compiled by Enterline 2015: 269, n. 1).

<sup>16</sup> It might be rewarding (but would go far beyond the scope of this chapter) to investigate the entire “history of the history of literature” in this respect, viz. to diachronically track the terminology that was used to refer to the texts which are regarded as EE today.

<sup>17</sup> He consistently calls Crump “Miss Crump” (Allen 1940: 3, 4, 13) and Miller “Mr. Miller” (Allen 1958: 515–16). The combination of an honorific with a last name often functions as a marker of social and, at times, also ironic distance; here it is clearly used in order to establish a hierarchy between Allen and the scholars against whom he argues.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. n. 4 above for some examples of alternative terminology.

<sup>19</sup> See the preface (Alexander 2000: 1): “This history offers a map to the thousands of people who study English today.”

<sup>20</sup> Enterline’s (2015: 253) definition of the ancient “epyllion” seems to be almost copy-pasted from the definition given in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Courtney 1996), which, in turn, is entirely based on Crump (1931).

<sup>21</sup> I wish to thank my co-editor Emily Hauser for her most valued feedback on an earlier version of this chapter, as well as Sofia Heim, Johannes Nussbaum and Ursina Füglistner for their bibliographical assistance.

<sup>22</sup> The following list comprises all EE that I could find as being referred to as “epyllion” and/or “minor epic.” **A** = included in the edition by Alexander (1967). **B** = discussed in the monograph by Brown (2004). **C** = included in the edition by Chiari (2012). **D** = included in the edition by Donno (1963). **M** = included in the edition by Miller (1967). **R** = included in the edition by Reese (1968). **W** = discussed in the monograph by Weaver (2012).