

· THE POEMS OF ·
CATULLUS

Translated by
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· 64 ·

They say it was pine sprung from the crown of Mount Pelion
which swam clear across the perilous waters of Neptune
to the river Phasis in the realm of King Aetes,
back in those days when the best men the Argives could muster,
eager to carry the golden fleece out of Colchis, 5
dared to go racing their swift ship over the ocean
and stirred its cerulean surface with oars made of firwood.
Athena, who keeps the towers protecting the city,
she fashioned this hurtling carriage for those young men,
she joined the timbers of pine to the curve of the firm keel. 10
That ship, the Argo, first taught the seas about sailing.
And so, when its sharp beak plowed down through the wind-
driven waters,
when it churned the billows white by the work of its oarblades,
incredulous sea nymphs came bobbing right up to the surface,
eager to catch just a glimpse of this unheard-of marvel! 15
If ever sailors were witness to wonders, those men were,
who saw with their very own eyes the Nereids rising,
barebreasted mermaids afloat on the whiteheaded ocean.
They say it was then that Peleus burned to have Thetis,
who raised no objection to taking a mortal husband, 20
and the Father himself judged that they ought to be married.
O Heroes born in the happiest time of all ages,
the righteous offspring of gods & of mortal women,
I will not fail to celebrate you in my poem;
often I'll greet you, often your names will be mentioned, 25
and you especially, blessed beyond others in marriage,
Peleus, pillar of Thessaly, to whom the father
of heaven himself surrendered his very beloved!

Did Thetis enchant you—that loveliest of the Nereids?
30 Did Tethys give her consent to her granddaughter's marriage,
and Ocean, who cinches all of the world with his river?
And so at last, on the appointed day of the wedding,
the people of Thessaly throng to his palace together
in celebration, fillings its chambers completely,
35 gifts in their hands, expressions of joy on their faces.
Cieros is emptied, they pour from Phthiotic Tempe,
from the houses of Crannon & out through the gates of Larissa
they come to Pharsalus & gather under its rooftops.
The land's left untilled, the backs of the oxen grow tender,
40 the curved rake no longer loosens the soil of the vineyard,
the young bull no longer breaks up the packed earth with the
plowshare,
the dresser of vines no longer cuts back the branches of shade
trees,
and a thin film of rust spreads over the idle equipment.
But in his opulent palace, great chambers receding
45 create a vista resplendent with glittering gold & silver;
ivory glows on the couch legs, the cups on the table gleam,
and all of that house is gay with the splendor of riches.
A couch fit for the goddess is set in the center,
one made of polished Indian ivory draped with a purple
50 coverlet steeped in the crimson dye of the sea conch.
Embroidered with various figures of men from past ages,
its marvelous art reveals the great prowess of heroes.
For there, staring out from the resonant seacoast of Dia,
Ariadne watches the swift fleet of Theseus leaving,
55 and in her heart an unrestrainable fury arises,
for she still can't believe that she sees what she is seeing!
—no wonder, for sleep had deceived her: just now awakened,
she finds herself coolly abandoned there on the seashore.

Ungrateful, her lover flees, striking the waves with his oarblades,
leaving the storm winds to make good on his broken promise. 60
The weeping daughter of Minos stands still in the seaweed,
stands watching him in the distance: a Maenad in marble,
rocked by the waves of her anguish, she stands there & watches;
her golden hair is no longer tied up in its headband,
65 the delicate veil no longer covers her torso,
her tender white breasts are no longer bound up in their halter;
all of her garments have slipped to her feet in confusion,
adrift in the salt tide that evenly scoured the coastline.
—Not that she noticed the headband or the veil floating
70 beside her, for it was you that she thought of, Theseus:
the wretched girl clung to you in complete desperation!
Venus of Eryx had driven her crazy with sorrow,
sowing the seeds of that thorny grief in her spirit
much earlier, back in that time when the adamant hero
75 set out from the curved shore of the port at Piraeus
and sailed to the Cretan quarters of the harsh King Minos.
The story is that in those days the people of Athens
were forced by a plague to make restitution for slaying
one of the sons of King Minos by sending their finest
80 young men & maidens, a meal to the Minotaur's liking!
With these cares rocking the strait walls of his beloved city,
Theseus chose to offer himself as a victim,
rather than that any more of the living unliving
should be taken away from Athens to perish at Knossos.
85 So he set sail then, in a light boat, and favoring breezes
brought him to the tyrannous kingdom of greathearted Minos.
When she first caught sight of that handsome stranger, the royal
virgin (whose celibate couch still warmly enfolded
her in its maternal embraces, exuding the odors
90 of myrtle that grows on the banks of streams in Eurotas

and the varied flowers that whispering spring engenders)
 Ariadne kept her eyes fixed on him until they took fire,
 until that fire had traveled the length of her body
 and made its way into even her innermost marrow!
 95 O Cupid, you who arouse such extravagant passions,
 forever mixing great joys & great sorrows together,
 and you who rule upon Golgos & leafy Idalium,
 what were the waves like, on which you tossed the poor maiden's
 passionate heart as she sighed for her fair-haired stranger?
 100 How many times in exhaustion did she know terror,
 and find herself turning even paler than gold,
 while he impatiently waited to take on that savage
 in a fight which would end either with death or with glory?
 The gifts of incense she'd offered while praying to heaven
 105 in fearful silence were neither unwelcome nor wasted.
 Think of an oak, or a conebearing pine tree that oozes
 with rosin, shaking its branches high up on Mount Taurus;
 one which a fierce storm, wrenching the grain of its timber
 uproots & sends hurtling off to spread terrible havoc
 110 for a great distance, until it lies prone in destruction:
 then think of Theseus over the overcome monster
 vainly tossing its horns in the unresisting breezes.
 Unharméd—it had ended with glory—he felt his way back,
 using a thin thread to guide his wandering footsteps,
 115 or else, as he worked his way out of the labyrinth's windings,
 its indiscernible maze would have left him bewildered.
 But why should I digress from my earliest subject,
 and go on to tell how she turned from the face of her father
 and the embrace of her sister, and lastly the mother
 120 who grieved because she loved her daughter to distraction,
 choosing the sweet love of Theseus over them all?
 Or how she came to the foaming seacoast of Dia,

and how, when her eyes had been sealed up tightly in slumber,
 her careless lover abandoned her & departed?
 Often, they say, when her sorrow had turned into madness 125
 that could not be silent, she uttered shrill cries of anguish,
 and sadly worked her way up one of the steep mountains
 to take a long look at the ocean's vast expanses:
 then rushed abruptly down to plunge into the water,
 lifting her clingy robe up over her bare leg; 130
 and in her last moments of grief, in a voice broken
 by sobs, she spoke, as chilly tears streamed down her face:
 "So, you have torn me away from my family's altar
 to leave me on this empty island, have you, Theseus?
 —Gone off, ignoring the terrible justice of heaven, 135
 sailing your god-damned cargo of lies back to Athens?
 Could nothing, nothing at all, have turned that ferocious
 mind of yours from this plan? Was there no tenderness lurking
 within you, that might have urged you to offer me mercy?
 For it wasn't *this* that you promised me ever so blandly, 140
 it wasn't this at all that you led me to hope for
 when you spoke of the happy marriage, the wedding we dreamt
 of—
 words which the winds of heaven now tear into tatters!
 Let no woman ever believe any oath that a man swears,
 or ever expect him to keep faith with his fine speeches! 145
 When they want something, when they are anxious to get it,
 they take oaths without fear, and pour out their promises freely;
 but just as soon as their hot desire is sated,
 none of their lies & deceptions ever disturb them.
 You know that when death whirled you around in confusion 150
 I saved you, choosing to let my own brother perish,
 rather than fail in my duty to you who've betrayed me!
 And for my good service, I will be torn by birds & wild beasts

when my body lies here without any tomb to protect it.
 155 What lion gave birth to you under a rock in the desert?
 What sea conceived you, spewed you up out of its waters?
 Or was it Syrtis, or Scylla, or dreadful Charybdis,
 that you repay the sweet gift of life in this fashion?
 If, in your heart, you never intended our marriage
 160 for fear of what your stern father had earlier told you,
 nevertheless you could have brought me into your palace
 as a servant, whose pleasure it would have been to humbly
 attend you, bathing your white feet in clear water
 and laying the purple coverlet out in your chamber.
 165 But why should I cry out in vain to the ignorant air,
 a woman maddened by suffering? The air is senseless,
 unable to hear me, unable to make any answer.
 By now he must be nearly half-done with his journey,
 and no one at all appears on this bare stretch of seaweed.
 170 In my final moments, fortune cruelly mocks me,
 denying me those who would listen to my lamentations.
 O God almighty, I wish that they had never
 landed at Crete, those ships that came sailing from Athens,
 that the lying sailor had never come with his dreadful
 175 payment for the wild bull, or moored his ships in our harbor,
 wickedly hiding his bloodthirsty plot under a pleasant
 façade, while he stayed as an honored guest in the palace!
 Where can I go? What hope shall I cling to, abandoned?
 Shall I seek the mountains of Sidon?—but a great gulf
 180 of truculent water enforces my separation.
 Or should I beg help from the father that I deserted
 to follow a young man stained with the blood of my brother?
 Console myself with the trustworthy love of a husband
 who flees me, bending inflexible oars in the water?
 185 Here there is nothing but shoreline, an unpeopled island

with no way of crossing over the sea that surrounds it,
 no means of fleeing, no hope at all—everywhere silence,
 emptiness everywhere—terrible death shows his face here.
 Nevertheless, before I sink down into darkness,
 190 and before all feeling fades from my weary body,
 I will implore the gods for justice to right my betrayal,
 and beg the protection of heaven in my final moments.
 O Furies, charged with vengeance that punishes evil,
 you whose bleak foreheads are girded with writhing serpents
 which clearly display the outrage your cold hearts keep hidden, 195
 come here to me quickly, listen to my lamentation,
 which I deliver in pain from the depths of my passion,
 unwillingly forced to, afire, blinded with madness!
 —Since what I say is the truth, since I say it sincerely,
 200 do not allow my lament to fade without issue:
 but just as Theseus carelessly left me to die here,
 may that same carelessness ruin him and his dearest!”
 When she had emptied her heart of all of its sorrows,
 anxiously seeking revenge for the way she’d been treated,
 the ruler of heaven assented, majestically nodding, 205
 and with that gesture the earth & the rough seas were shaken,
 and the stars leapt in the firmament, quivering brightly.
 But Theseus, in a dark mood which muddled his judgement,
 let slip out of mind the instructions which he had clung to,
 forgetting to raise the white sail which his father awaited, 210
 the sweet sign that he was returning uninjured to Athens.
 For they say that when Aegeus consigned his departing
 son to the winds as his fleet left Athena’s protection,
 he first embraced the young man & then gave him these orders:
 “My only son, dearer to me than even long life is, 215
 whom I am forced to send off on a doubtful adventure,
 although just restored to me at the end of my lifetime,

because my misfortune & your passionate courage
 must take you away from me before my exhausted
 220 eyes could have had their fill of your image before me,
 I will not cheerfully let you leave here rejoicing,
 or allow you to show any signs of fortune's good favor:
 but first I will empty my heart of its wild lamentation,
 soiling my white hairs with earth & a downpour of ashes,
 225 and then hang dyed sails on your ship's swaying mastpole,
 so that this grief of ours, this heart-wringing fire
 will be proclaimed by sheets steeped in Iberian purple.
 —Yet, if the goddess who dwells on sacred Itonus,
 pledged to defend our people & the realm of Erectheus,
 230 allows you to dabble your right hand in the bull's blood,
 make certain that you remember these orders I give you
 and keep them in mind no matter how long a time passes:
 as soon as you catch your first glimpse of our hillside,
 take every last vestige of mourning down from your yardarms
 235 and set a white sail aloft in the twisted rigging,
 so that the minute I see it, I'll understand—and gladly
 welcome the fortunate hour of your reappearance!"
 Theseus, at first, paid attention to these instructions,
 but then they slipped from his mind, just as the wind-driven
 240 clouds scatter from the snowy peak of a mountain.
 His father, however, keeping vigil on the Acropolis,
 wasting his eyes with tears that never stopped flowing,
 when he first caught sight of those dark sails bellying outward
 threw himself down from the rocky peak into the ocean,
 245 believing that fate had cruelly taken Theseus.
 So, when the hero entered his home, it was darkened
 by mourning, and he received for himself as much sorrow
 as he had thoughtlessly given the daughter of Minos,
 who kept a sad watch as his ship sank into the distance,

dwelling on all of those cares with which she'd been wounded. 250
 But in another scene, flourishing Iacchus swaggered,
 surrounded by drunken Sileni & wanton young Satyrs;
 burning with love, he was searching for you, Ariadne.

 and Maenads also, who raged all around in a rapture, 255
 crying "Euhoe! Euhoe!" as their heads crazily nodded.
 Some of them whirled their weapons, spears tipped with vine-
 leaves;
 some tossed about the limbs of a bull they'd dismembered,
 and some were girding their bodies with writhing serpents
 or worshipping ritual emblems kept hidden in baskets, 260
 emblems which only initiates ever uncover.
 Others with uplifted hands were beating their tambours
 or shrilly clashing their hollow bronze cymbals together;
 many of them had horns which were raucously blaring,
 and the barbaric flute wailed out its hideous noises. 265
 Such were the figures which brightly adorned that rich hanging
 whose ample folds lay over the couch of the goddess.
 When the young Thessalians' desire to see it was sated
 completely, they gave way to the gods descending from heaven;
 you've seen the west wind rile the calm sea in the morning, 270
 how it herds the steepening wavelets, sweeps them before it
 as Dawn ascends to the gates of the journeying Sun;
 those waves move slowly at first, urged on by a mild wind,
 and advance with a muted sound of continuous laughter;
 but after the wind has arisen, they run on together 275
 and from a great distance they gleam with reflections of crimson:
 so, moving out of the palace & out of its courtyard,
 the mortal wedding guests drifted off in every direction.
 After they left, the first to arrive from Mount Pelion's
 summit was Chiron the Centaur, with pastoral presents; 280

for whatever grows wild in the fields or on the great mountains
 of Thessaly, whatever the mild Favonian breezes
 show in the way of flowers that grow beside rivers,
 he brought along with him, all woven together unsorted,
 285 and made the house laugh with odors that tickled the senses.
 Directly came Peneus next, from evergreen Tempe,
 Tempe, completely encircled by ominous forests,
 leaving the nymphs of the vale to continue their dancing;
 not empty-handed, he fetched along elegant beech trees
 plucked up by their dangling roots, and the straight-stemmed
 290 laurel
 and nodding plane tree besides, and the pliant sister
 of burnt-out Phaeton, as well as the towering cypress:
 he wove these together in a continuous pattern
 to make a green curtain of branches surrounding the courtyard.
 295 After him followed Prometheus, known for invention,
 still bearing the faded scars of that ancient atonement
 which he had made while chained arm & leg to a mountain,
 dizzily hanging from its precipitous summit.
 Next came the father of gods with his immortal children,
 300 all except you, alone up in heaven, Apollo,
 you & your sister who dwells on the mountains of Idrus;
 for she scorned Peleus too, even as you did,
 and had no wish to honor the marriage of Thetis.
 After they'd settled themselves on the snowy white couches,
 305 the tables before them were heaped with a various banquet.
 Meanwhile, the Parcae began to chant their prophetic
 song, swaying their bodies as they moved about infirmly.
 Their ancient limbs were covered in gleaming white garments
 which fell to their ankles; their robes were bordered in crimson,
 and their snowy white heads were encircled by crimson
 310 headbands:

their bony hands practiced the task they will practice forever.
 The left hand held on to the distaff, wrapped up in soft wool,
 and the right carefully drew the thread out, with the fingers
 turned upward to shape it; then down went the thumb, and
 neatly
 315 twirled the spindle poised on its circular flywheel;
 and as they spun, they tugged the threads clean with their teeth:
 bits of wool, which before had clung to the stuff they were
 working
 now stuck to their poor withered lips in little dry tufts.
 At their feet, baskets of plaited willow protected
 soft bundles of gleaming fleece that lay ready for spinning. 320
 And plucking the fibers, they chanted loudly & clearly,
 uttered oracular speech in a sacred poem,
 a poem no future age will condemn as untruthful:
 "Heroic actions have made your name even more lustrous,
 defender of Thessaly, dear to the ruler of heaven, 325
 attend the true oracle which the three sisters deliver
 on this festive day! As Destiny follows your motion,
run, spindles, run, drawing the threads that wait for the weaving.
 Hesperus will be here soon with those gifts which the newly
 married all long for; the bride will follow him closely, 330
 flooding your heart with love that will charm you completely
 as she lies by you at night in the tenderest slumber,
 asleep with her delicate arms clasping your strong neck.
Run, spindles, run, drawing the threads that wait for the weaving.
 No house before this has sheltered such a great passion, 335
 no love has ever linked lovers in any such union
 as this one which joins Peleus & Thetis together.
Run, spindles, run, drawing the threads that wait for the weaving.

Your son will be dreadful Achilles, unknown to Panic,
 340 whose enemies never will see him retreating from battle;
 often he'll easily win in long-distance races,
 outstripping even the deer who advances like fire.
Run, spindles, run, drawing the threads that wait for the weaving.

No hero will dare to confront him in hand-to-hand combat
 345 when the Phrygian fields are drenched with the blood of Trojans,
 and Agamemnon, the third heir of deceitful Pelops,
 tears down the walls of Troy when the long siege is over.
Run, spindles, run, drawing the threads that wait for the weaving.

Often the mothers of young sons about to be buried
 350 will testify to his uncommon prowess in battle,
 letting their unkempt hair fall loosely down to their shoulders
 as they mar their withered breasts with their hands in
 bereavement.
Run, spindles, run, drawing the threads that wait for the weaving.

Just as a reaper hacks down the dense ears of ripe grain
 355 under a burning sun, mowing the whole golden meadow,
 Achilles will waste the young Trojans' limbs with his iron.
Run, spindles, run, drawing the threads that wait for the weaving.

The waves of Scamander will witness his heroic actions,
 Scamander, which rushes into the stream of the Hellespont,
 360 whose neck he will narrow by flinging up great piles of corpses
 until its deep flood runs warm & red from the slaughter.
Run, spindles, run, drawing the threads that wait for the weaving.

But the last witness will be the gift given his spirit
 in death, when the hero's high-heaped, circular mounded barrow
 365 is graced with the snowy limbs of the sacrificed virgin.
Run, spindles, run, drawing the threads that wait for the weaving.

As soon as chance gives the exhausted Achaians the power
 to keep the chains which Neptune wove from keeping his city,
 that lofty tomb will be drenched with the blood of Polyxena,
 struck down like a beast under the double-edged axeblood, 370
 knees buckling as she pitches her headless corpse forward.
Run, spindles, run, drawing the threads that wait for the weaving.

Get going then, join those passions your hearts have desired;
 now let the bridegroom take the goddess in fortunate union,
 and let the bride be given right now to her eager new husband. 375
Run, spindles, run, drawing the threads that wait for the weaving.

The nurse who returns to attend her early tomorrow
 will find that her neck can't be circled by yesterday's ribbon:
run, spindles, run, drawing the threads that wait for the weaving;

the worried mother who fears that her daughter is lying 380
 alone will learn that her hopes for an heir aren't groundless!
Run, spindles, run, drawing the threads that wait for the weaving."

So, in a prophetic spirit announcing the future
 joy of Peleus, the Parcae once chanted their poem.
 For the gods would frequent the worshipful homes of heroes 385
 and show themselves present wherever men were assembled
 before contempt had become the response to religion.
 Often Jove the father, paying a regular visit
 to one of his temples during the annual feast days,
 would see a hundred bulls crash to earth in his honor. 390
 And Liber would rove on the peak of Parnassus, driving
 his Maenads, who shook their wild hair & cried out "Euhoe!"
 Then all of Delphi came pouring out of the city
 to greet the young god with smoke wreathing their altars.
 And often in deathbearing warfare, Mars, or Athena 395
 the mistress of Triton, or Nemesis, Virgin of Rhamnus,

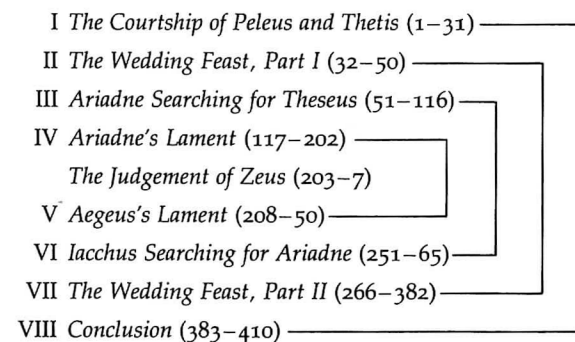
would show themselves to encourage bands of armed men.
But after the earth had been imbued with hideous evil,
and men had abandoned all their desire for Justice,
400 when one brother had soaked his hands in the blood of another,
when children no longer wept at the deaths of their parents,
when a father could wish for the death of his very own son,
for the new stepmother seems to have found him attractive;
when an unwitting young man lay with his impious mother,
405 who had no fear of the shades of her deified parents,
then good & evil were confused in criminal madness,
turning the righteous minds of the gods from our behavior.
So they no longer appear now when mortals assemble,
and shun the light of luminous day altogether.

Our only surviving example of the long poem as practiced by the neoterics, poem 64 demonstrates the erudition and concern for craftsmanship that came into Roman poetry with their work. It is also warmly sensual, vivid in its description, and emotionally powerful.

It is customarily described as a narrative poem about the marriage of Peleus and Thetis, but the reader who comes to it looking for the elements of

epic on the one hand or the elements of modern fiction on the other is going to be disappointed. It is hardly a narrative at all, in the conventional sense. Rather, the poem is a complex and subtle exploration of the relationship between the divine order and the human, a meditation on the themes of marriage and fidelity, seduction and betrayal, illustrated by the best examples that classical mythology and art had to offer.

The key to the poem is in its structure, and the complexity of that structure reminds us that the term "Alexandrian" once meant elegance as well as erudition. Poem 64 is composed of eight distinct tableaux, each made up of one or more related scenes, as follows:



The tableaux vary considerably in size, though they are responsive to a very basic kind of symmetry: the first four tableaux occupy 202 lines and the last four occupy 203 lines; they are joined together by a hinge, consisting of a single sentence of five lines. These tableaux form a "ring" structure: that is to say, the first and eighth tableaux deal with the contrast between the ways in which mortals and immortals mingled in the heroic age and in the present; the second and seventh tableaux describe the wedding feast. The four inner tableaux are descriptions of scenes embroidered on a coverlet in the bridal chamber: in the third and sixth tableaux two lovers search for their absent beloveds; in the fourth and fifth tableaux, Theseus brings grief to two different characters in two different ways. In the hinge at the exact center of the poem, Jupiter passes divine judgement on his perfidy. Such an outline illustrates, but does not exhaust, either the elegance of the concept or the possibilities for secondary relationships between tableaux.

Notes to individual references within this poem will be given under the heading of each tableau.

I. *The Courtship of Peleus and Thetis* (1–31): the hero Peleus and the sea nymph Thetis meet when he, aboard the *Argo*, a ship built from the tim-

bers of Mount Pelion with the divine aid of Athena, has set out from Greece with the other Argonauts, to capture the Golden Fleece from King Aetes of Colchis.

- 17 *Nereids*: legendary sea nymphs, the daughters of Nereus and Doris.
21 *the Father*: Zeus, who had planned on marrying Thetis himself but was warned by an oracle that her son would be greater than his father.
30 *Tethys*: Tethys married her brother Oceanus and gave birth to Nereus, who married *his* sister, Doris, who gave birth to Thetis and the other Nereids.
31 *Ocean*: Oceanus, originally conceived of as the river that wraps the world, was later personified.

II. *The Wedding Feast, Part I* (32–50) consists of two very brief scenes: in the first, the mortal wedding guests gather in Pharsalus (32–43); in the second, we are given a view of the interior of the palace (44–50).

- 36–38 A list of Thessalian cities: *Cieros* (or *Cierium*) is a town mentioned by Strabo. *Tempe* is the valley through which the river Peneus flows in the north of Thessaly; C. calls it *Phthiotic* after Phthiotis, far to the south. *Crannon* and *Larissa* were important towns in central Thessaly. Pharsalus: the seat of Peleus.

III. *Ariadne Searching for Theseus* (51–116): the first of four tableaux set on the coverlet in the bridal chamber. This tableau consists of two scenes: the first is of the awakened Ariadne, staring out at the blank ocean, searching for Theseus, who has left her sleeping on the island of Dia as he makes his way back to Athens. The second scene consists of a digressive cutback to the source of her sorrows: the arrival of Theseus at Crete, her falling in love with him, his slaying of the Minotaur with her help, and their departure together.

- 61 *Minos*: King of Crete.
62 *a Maenad*: The Maenads were female followers of Dionysus, who rescues and marries Ariadne; she is thus a Maenad by anticipation, though C. may simply be referring to her frenzied state at this point.
72 *Venus of Eryx*: Mount Eryx, in western Sicily, site of a famous temple of the goddess.
75 *Piraeus*: the seaport of Athens.
80 *the Minotaur*: Pasiphae, wife of Minos, fell in love with a bull by whom (with a little help from Daedalus) she conceived the Minotaur. Minos concealed his difficult stepson in the laby-

rinth at *Knossos*, where it batted on human sacrifices until Theseus, guided by a thread given him by Ariadne (the Minotaur's half sister) found his way into the monster's presence and dispatched him.

- 97 *Golgos and leafy Idalium*: on Cyprus, where Venus was held in particular esteem.
107 *Mount Taurus*: a mountain in southern Asia Minor, most likely chosen for its name.

IV. *Ariadne's Lament* (117–202): after a brief recapitulation of the events that brought her here, Ariadne goes into the lengthy monologue in which she pours out her sorrow and rage.

- 157 *Syrtis*: shallows off the coast of Africa. *Scylla*: the rock in the strait of Messina, opposite *Charybdis*, the whirlpool between Italy and Sicily.
179 *Sidon*: a port in Lebanon.
193 *Furies*: the Eumenides, whose task it was to punish murder and other crimes, including perjury.

The Judgement of Zeus (203–7): God gives his assent to the prayer of Ariadne.

V. *Aegeus's Lament* (208–50): The father of Theseus unwittingly explains the mechanism by which the punishment prayed for by Ariadne and assented to by Zeus will be carried out.

- 228 *sacred Itonus*: a town in Thessaly, site of a famous sanctuary of the goddess Athena.
229 *Erechtheus*: a mythical king of Athens.
241 *Acropolis*: the citadel of Athens.

VI. *Iacchus Searching for Ariadne* (251–65): the briefest of the four scenes on the coverlet. Ariadne in despair is sought by the god Dionysus, who will take her as his bride.

- 251 *Iacchus*: the name of a minor deity who came to be identified with Dionysus.
252 *Sileni and Satyrs*: the male attendants on Dionysus: Sileni (the plural of Silenus, originally the teacher and companion of the god) were pictured as bald, drunken old men with potbellies.
256 *Euhoë, Euhoë*: the ritual cry of the followers of Dionysus.

VII. *The Wedding Feast, Part II* (266–382) consists of three scenes: the departure of the mortal wedding guests (266–78), the arrival of the immortals (279–303), and the song of the Parcae (304–82).

- 280 *Chiron the Centaur*: In the traditional version of this story, Chiron gives the bride away and is also the tutor of the young Achilles.
- 281 *Favonian*: the Roman version of Zephyr, identified with the mild breezes of spring.
- 291–92 *the pliant sister of burnt-out Phaeton*: the poplar. Phaeton borrowed the chariot of his father, Helios, the Sun, but could not control the horses who drew it through the sky; blazing out of control, he was thunderbolted by Zeus. His sisters, the Heliades, wept so uncontrollably that they were turned into poplars, which, to this day weep the tears that Helios turns into amber.
- 295 *Prometheus*: After stealing fire from heaven, Prometheus was punished in the way that C. describes. One version of the story has him winning his freedom by warning Zeus of the prophecy about the son of Thetis.
- 300–
301 *Apollo*: The enmity of Apollo is not a usual part of the story. Fordyce says, “Catullus is following another version in which the death of Achilles at Apollo’s hand . . . has coloured the earlier part of the story and Apollo’s enmity is acknowledged from the beginning.” Apollo’s *sister* is Hecate, and Idrus is the name of the founder of Idrias, a town famous for its devotion to the goddess.
- 306 *the Parcae*: the Italian goddesses of fate, who spun, measured, and snipped the thread of life.
- 329 *Hesperus*: the evening star, at whose rising the marriage ceremony begins.
- 346 *Pelops*: obtained his bride Hippodamia by treachery and murder. His sons were Thyestes and Atreus, father of Agamemnon.
- 358 *Scamander*: the Trojan river. A reference to Achilles’ activities in *The Iliad*, Book 23.
- 365 *the sacrificed virgin*: The ghost of Achilles orders the Greeks to sacrifice Polyxena, daughter of Priam and Hecuba, to be his bride in the underworld.
- 367 *Achaians*: the Greeks.
- 368 *Neptune*: The walls of Troy were said to have been built by Neptune.

VIII. *Conclusion* (383–410): C. draws a contrast between the Heroic Age, when gods and mortals mingled freely, even in the marriage bed, and the present age of moral degeneracy, when the gods are not seen at all.

- 391 *Liber*: Dionysus. *Parnassus*: a mountain north of Delphi.

- 396 *Triton*: a mythical lake, which different writers located in different places. *Nemesis*, *Virgin of Rhamnus*: the goddess charged with punishing transgressions such as murder and perjury. *Rhamnus*: the site of a famous shrine to the goddess in Attica.