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# THE COMPLETE POETRY OF CATULLUS

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Translated and with commentary by

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of the worship of Cybele was the inland city of Pessinus at the foot of Mt. Dindymus. Cybele was identified with Rhea, who was closely connected with Mt. Ida in Crete, where she concealed the infant Zeus. Troy was called "Phrygian" by a poetic extension of the term, which more properly designated eastern Turkey.

12. **Gallae:** see head note.

13. **Dindymus:** mountain in Phrygia near the city of Pessinus, the center of Cybele's worship.

30. **Ida:** see note on line 2.

36. **slighting assistance from Ceres:** Ceres was the goddess of grain. Catullus means that the Gallae fell asleep without eating.

42-43. In *Iliad* 14.267-79, Hera bribes **Sleep** to overcome Zeus by promising him **Pasithea** (one of the three Graces), with whom Sleep has long been in love.

## Poem 64

Poem 64 represents the kind of poem that has come to be called an "epyllion," or miniature epic, characterized by allusive, interwoven episodes from various myths. Poem 64 presupposes familiarity with the elderly sea god Nereus and his fifty daughters, the Nereids, nymphs of the sea. The loveliest of these was Thetis, who was fated to have a son greater than his father. Fearing competition from such a son, Zeus arranged that she marry a mortal, the virtuous Peleus, king of Thessaly. To Peleus Thetis bore a son, Achilles, who became the greatest warrior at Troy. The marriage of Peleus and Thetis was an exceptional event, the union of a goddess and a mortal with the blessing of the gods.

Poem 64 begins with the meeting of Peleus and Thetis. Peleus was one of the heroes who joined Jason in search of the Golden Fleece. According to the *Argonautica* by Apollonius of Rhodes, Peleus was already married to Thetis when the Argo set sail (1.558). Catullus, however, imagines that Peleus first saw Thetis on this journey. He then describes the wedding of Peleus and Thetis with two major digressions. First, a tapestry on the wedding couch depicts the heroine Ariadne. This gives Catullus a chance to tell her story, which is intertwined with that of Theseus, hero of Athens. Returning to the wedding, Catullus depicts the three Fates arriving and foretelling the birth of Achilles and the devastation that he will inflict on the Trojans. Catullus concludes with regret that we are no longer worthy of being visited by gods and goddesses.

Pines descended from Pelion's peak, they say,  
anciently swam through Neptune's surging waters

to the land the Phasis lapped and Aeetes ruled,  
 when a band of chosen youths, the bastion of Argos,  
 hoping to take the Golden Fleece from Colchis, 5  
 dared traverse the salty depths in a hull,  
 sweeping the radiant blue with fir-tree hands.  
 The goddess herself, whose fortresses rise above cities,  
 joined the latticed pine to a rigid keel,  
 creating a craft that flew on the gentlest breeze. 10  
 That ship was the first to touch the rude Amphitrite.  
 Its beak no sooner divided the windy main,  
 a wave no sooner boiled beneath the oars,  
 than the watery daughters of Nereus lifted their heads  
 from the ocean's swirling foam to admire the prodigy. 15  
 Never before or since have nymphs emerged  
 from the swirl and shown their naked bodies, faces,  
 and bosoms to mortal eyes. That day they did.  
 Then Peleus burned, it is said, with love for Thetis.  
 Then Thetis no longer despised a human wedding. 20  
 Then the father himself considered Peleus worthy.

Born in an age that stirs unbearable longing,  
 heroes, descendants of gods, of virtuous mothers  
 the virtuous progeny, hail and hail again! 23B  
 In composing the songs I sing I shall often invoke you,  
 especially you, O pillar of Thessaly, Peleus, 25  
 so wondrously happy in marriage. For Jupiter, father  
 of gods, himself conceded his lover to you.  
 Did the loveliest daughter of Nereus, Thetis, embrace you?  
 Did Tethys and he who encircles the world with his stream,  
 Oceanus, permit you to marry their children's child? 30

When the long-awaited light of the chosen day  
 appears, the entire region of Thessaly throngs  
 to his home. The palace is filled with a festive assembly.  
 They carry their gifts in their hands, their joy on their faces.  
 Leaving Phthiotian Tempe, the houses of Crannon, 35  
 the walls of Larissa, and Cieros empty, they flock  
 to Pharsalus. Pharsalian houses are filled to capacity.  
 Farming has stopped. The oxen go soft in the shoulders.

The jagged rake neglects the creeping vine.  
 The bull and the blade relax from busting clods. 40  
 No shears reduce the shade that branches cast,  
 and squalid rust invades deserted plows.  
 Within the groom's palatial residence all  
 the corridors glow with sparkling gold and silver.  
 Ivory shines on the couches, cups on the table. 45  
 No room can be seen but gleams with royal wealth.  
 The very nuptial bed of the goddess is placed  
 in the midst of the dwelling. Burnished ivory glows  
 beneath a crimson blanket, dyed by the conch.  
 This garment adorned with antique human figures 50  
 displays heroic virtues with wondrous art.

Here on Dia's boisterous shore Ariadne  
 gazes at Theseus leaving, him and his fleet.  
 Her heart is full of uncontrollable fury.  
 She sees what she sees, but she hardly believes that she sees it. 55  
 How else could she feel when, emerging from treacherous sleep,  
 she found herself on an empty beach, deserted?  
 The heedless youth is shattering waves with his oars,  
 leaving to windy storms his empty promises.  
 Minos' daughter can only watch from a distance 60  
 with seaweed entangling her feet. She gapes like a Maenad  
 of marble, then staggers beneath emotional waves.  
 Her delicate turban fell from its golden peak;  
 the diaphanous gown disappeared that draped her shoulders;  
 no silken cincture bound her milky breasts. 65  
 All of her clothing slipped from her body, becoming  
 the toy of the salty waves that swirled at her feet.  
 But she was oblivious then to the fate of her turban  
 and flowing robe. Her entire heart and soul  
 and crumbling intellect, Theseus, hung upon you. 70  
 What a sorrowful girl! The goddess of Eryx sowed  
 insanity, ceaseless tears, and thorny cares  
 in her heart on that occasion, the day the insolent  
 Theseus, leaving the sheltered shores of Piraeus,  
 attained the criminal king's Gortynian towers. 75  
 Compelled by a deadly plague (the story goes)

to atone for Androgean slaughter, the city of Cecrops  
 became accustomed to giving the Minotaur feasts,  
 their finest youths and the flower of maidens at once.  
 The little town being vexed by such calamities, 80  
 Theseus chose to offer himself in person  
 for Athens, the city he loved, instead of permitting  
 the kingdom to send such living cadavers to Crete.  
 And thus on a rapid ship and gentle breezes  
 he came to the arrogant towers of mettlesome Minos, 85  
 attracting the amorous gaze of a royal virgin,  
 a girl who lay in her mother's gentle embrace  
 on a beautiful bed suffused with purest scents,  
 which rivaled the myrtle Eurotas' waters produce  
 and all of the blossoms that bend in the vernal breeze. 90  
 The moment the maiden lowered her glistening eyes  
 from the hero, a fire engulfed her entire frame,  
 igniting the depths of her being, her innermost marrow.  
 O sacred boy who cruelly stirs unruly  
 passions and blends the joys of men with sorrow, 95  
 and you, supreme in Golgi and leafy Idalium,  
 how great the waves in which you tossed the smoldering  
 maiden, constantly sighing for her fair-haired guest.  
 How great the fears she endured with her failing heart!  
 How pale her face became, and brighter than gold, 100  
 when Theseus, eager to fight a savage monster,  
 left on his quest for death or glory's rewards.  
 The gifts she promised the gods, while incense burned  
 and she made her silent prayers, were not in vain.  
 On Taurus' summit, tornadoes' unruly, twisting 105  
 winds upend a coniferous pine with its sticky  
 bark, or an oak with thrashing branches spins  
 its trunk in the blast. Uprooted, the tree collapses  
 and crushes what lies in the way of its headlong descent.  
 So Theseus leveled the monster, taming his strength, 110  
 as he tossed his horns in vain at the empty breeze.  
 And the hero returned in safety, showered with praise,  
 guiding his fallible feet with a slender thread.  
 Missteps unnoticed had otherwise foiled his attempt  
 to leave the building's winding paths behind. 115

But why have I strayed from the starting point of my song?  
 Why should I dwell on the way the daughter, deserting  
 her sire's smile and the arms of a sister and mother,  
 who desperately doted upon her piteous child,  
 preferred to these the honeyed love of Theseus 120  
 or how she disembarked on the foaming shore  
 of Dia or how her absent-minded husband  
 deserted her there when her eyes were locked in sleep?  
 People maintain that the furious woman filled  
 the air with piercing cries from the depths of her being. 125  
 Driven by grief, she climbed a jagged cliff  
 and surveyed the ocean's turbulent desolation,  
 then returned to the beach and braved the salty breakers,  
 raising her delicate skirts, exposing her ankles,  
 and uttered these words, this final complaint, between 130  
 the feeble sobs that shook her humid lips:  
 "Did you take me away from the shrines of my family, Theseus,  
 traitor, to leave me alone on an empty shore?  
 Do you sail for your home with the will of the gods neglected,  
 forgetful, guilty of perjury, laden with curses? 135  
 Had nothing the strength to bend your brutal mind's  
 decision? No mercy find a way to soften  
 your heart, to make you feel a twinge of compassion?  
 How different the promises showered on me in gentle  
 tones! How different the expectations you raised 140  
 in my piteous heart of a wedding, a happy marriage!  
 The winds have taken and scattered those empty hopes.  
 No woman should place her trust in a masculine vow  
 or think the speeches she hears from a man are sincere.  
 When their spirit is yearning for something they long to possess, 145  
 no oath is too awesome, no promise too costly to make.  
 But quell the lust of their questing minds, at once  
 their words are forgotten and perjury ceases to matter.  
 It was surely none other than I by whom you were snatched  
 from a deadly storm, who chose to abandon my brother 150  
 to stand at your treacherous side at the moment of crisis.  
 And *this* is your thanks: I'm left to be torn by the birds  
 and the beasts, to die and lie exposed, unburied.  
 What lioness bore you, lying in a rocky cave?

What swollen sea or shoal, what hungry Scylla 155  
 or vast Charybdis conceived and spat you forth  
 that you give such rewards for the sweet restoration of life?  
 If the notion of me as your wife was not to your liking  
 because you respected your father's harsh restrictions,  
 still nothing prevented your taking me into your house. 160  
 I would have been happy to work as a slave in your retinue,  
 to wash your glistening feet in crystal water  
 or care for your bedclothes, smoothing your purple sheets.  
 I must be out of my mind! Why else would I wail  
 in vain to these ignorant winds, these senseless entities, 165  
 who neither can hear nor reply to what I say.  
 That man by now is all but engulfed by the waves.  
 No mortal appears on the shore, just empty weeds.  
 My fate is cruel indeed; it mocks my demise  
 by depriving my dying complaints of listening ears. 170  
 Omnipotent Jupiter, would that Cecropian hulls  
 had never succeeded in reaching the shores of Cnossus,  
 the traitorous sailor conducting the furious bull's  
 unholy tribute had never docked in Crete,  
 and the evil guest whose handsome form concealed 175  
 such brutal designs had never slept in my palace.  
 Ruined, what hope do I have? What possible refuge?  
 Seek the peaks of Ida? The seething expanse  
 of the sea has placed its vast abyss in my way.  
 Should I hope for my father's assistance, the man I abandoned 180  
 to follow a youth still dripping my brother's blood?  
 Is my husband's faithful love a source of comfort?  
 He bends his oars in flight against the tide.  
 No houses are seen on the shore. The island is empty.  
 The encircling waves prevent departure. No method 185  
 appears, no hope of escaping. Everything here  
 is silent and empty. Everything points to death.  
 Death will not becloud my eyes, however,  
 nor senses depart my tired limbs before  
 I demand of the deities just revenge for betrayal, 190  
 appealing to heavenly faith in my final hour.  
 So, you who avenge the deeds of men, Eumenides,  
 Furies whose foreheads snaky ringlets frame

and show the seething wrath your hearts conceal,  
 be present here and now and heed the complaints 195  
 that burst from the depths of my being. What misery! Gods!  
 I'm helpless, on fire, blind with irrational rage.  
 As my grievance is real and my tears are wrung from my heart,  
 do not permit my sorrow to be forgotten,  
 but let the heedless mind of Theseus cause, 200  
 O goddesses, death and destruction to him and his kin."  
 Once she poured these words from her sorrowful breast,  
 urging the castigation of brutal crimes,  
 the rector of heaven bestowed his omnipotent nod.  
 At this the earth and heaving seas began 205  
 to shake, the heavens rattled their glistening stars,  
 and a blinding mist enveloped the mind of Theseus.  
 All the commands that he formerly kept secure  
 in his memory slipped from the grasp of his careless mind:  
 he forgot to raise the sign for his sorrowful father 210  
 to show he surveyed the Erechtheid harbor in safety.  
 For they say at the time that Aegeus trusted his son  
 to the winds, when his fleet was departing the goddess's walls,  
 he enfolded the youth in his arms and gave him these orders:  
 "My only son, more pleasing than life prolonged, 215  
 my child whom I send perforce on a perilous mission,  
 newly restored in the final stage of my life,  
 since fortune and your impassioned virtue combine  
 to take you away from me against my will  
 before your beauty has sated these tired eyes, 220  
 I'll not bid adieu with a smile and a happy heart  
 or permit you to fly a banner of happy fate,  
 but rather express the many pains in my heart,  
 by fouling with earth and dust my grizzled head,  
 then hanging tinted sails from your wandering mast, 225  
 so linens obscured by the dusky pigment of Spain  
 will signal the grief and the fires that burn in my heart.  
 But supposing the goddess who dwells in holy Itonus  
 and has deigned to defend our race and the homes of Erechtheus  
 allows you to rinse your hands in the blood of the bull, 230  
 be sure at that point these commands I entrust to your memory  
 retain their force and are not erased by time.



- The moment your eyes catch sight of the hills of our kingdom,  
 order the yardarms to lower their dreary garb  
 and the braided ropes to elevate whitened sails. 235  
 Observing this joyous sight with a jubilant heart  
 I will know at once that a happy day has restored you.”  
 As clouds compelled by the force of the winds depart  
 an airy mountain’s snowy peak, his instructions  
 slipped the mind of the once reliable Theseus. 240  
 From the citadel’s height, his father scanned the horizon,  
 wearing away his anxious eyes with tears.  
 As soon as he saw the tint of the billowing sail,  
 he dove from the highest peak of the jagged cliffs,  
 convinced ungentle Fate had deprived him of Theseus. 245  
 So brutal Theseus entered a house of mourning  
 because of the death of his father and felt the pitch  
 of pain his memory’s lapse had caused Ariadne,  
 who watched his vessel withdraw with tears in her eyes  
 absorbing the swarming griefs that wounded her heart. 250  
 From another direction, however, Iacchus was flying  
 to your side, Ariadne, ablaze with desire for you.  
 Sileni from Nysa and capering satyrs were there,  
 Delirious Thyades frantically thronged the divinity,  
 tossing their heads and shouting the Bacchic “Euhoe!” 255  
 some of them brandishing wands with leafy points,  
 some of them tossing the limbs of a slaughtered bull,  
 some of them wreathing their heads with coiling snakes,  
 some of them tending to mysteries hidden in baskets,  
 mysteries skeptics vainly desire to penetrate; 260  
 others were beating drums with lifted hands,  
 eliciting shrill responses from polished bronze;  
 many raised a raucous blare with horns;  
 barbarian flutes were singing their tremulous songs.
- Such were the figures contained in the richly adorned 265  
 fabric enclosing the couch in its woolen embrace.  
 Sating their eager desire to see it, the people  
 of Thessaly started departing, yielding to gods.  
 So Zephyr, who roughens the tranquil sea, awakens  
 the waves from their level rest with his breath in the morning, 270

while Aurora departs the porch of the vagrant Sun.  
 The breakers are sluggish at first in the gentle breeze  
 and splash on the beach with the sound of quiet laughter.  
 Later the wind and the number of waves increase,  
 and their crests on the deep reflect the roseate light. 275  
 In a similar manner the people of Thessaly flowed  
 from the palace, taking their separate paths to their homes.  
 Upon their departure, Chiron was first to arrive,  
 delivering rustic gifts from the summit of Pelion,  
 for he carried a jumbled array of flowery garlands 280  
 with all of the blossoms the fields produce, that Thessaly  
 bears on its giant hills, or the fertile breath  
 of the warming Favonus begets on the banks of a river.  
 Suffused by the odor, the house was full of smiles.  
 Peneus arrives deserting the verdure of Tempe, 285  
 Tempe a valley encircled by towering forests,  
 left to the dancing and song of Haemonian Dryads.  
 His hands were far from empty. He carried beech  
 and lofty laurel trees with soaring trunks,  
 a nodding plane, a cypress that reached the sky, 290  
 and a poplar (flaming Phaethon's flexible sister).  
 He interwove these trees around the palace,  
 creating a lobby of green, a leafy foyer.  
 Crafty-hearted Prometheus followed this god,  
 bearing the faded scars of the ancient penalty 295  
 paid when he hung from the top of a rugged cliff  
 with his arms and legs attached to the rocks by a chain.  
 The father of gods arrived with his sacred wife  
 and his children, though Phoebus, you stayed behind in the sky, 300  
 you and your sister who haunts the mountains of Idrus.  
 You joined with your sister in treating the hero with scorn;  
 she too was unwilling to celebrate Thetis' wedding.  
 The other gods reclined on ivory couches.  
 Their tables were high with a rich and various feast.  
 The Fates arrived betimes, their feeble bodies 305  
 shaking, and sang their melodious revelations.  
 Garments of white enclosed their palsied frames,  
 trimmed by scarlet borders touching their ankles.  
 Rosy ribbons reposed on snowy peaks,

and their hands performed their solemn, eternal task. 310  
 On the left, they held the distaff, cloaked by wool;  
 on the right, they extracted threads with the delicate touch  
 of fingers facing up. With a twist of the thumb,  
 they attached these threads to the spindle and spun the wheel.  
 From time to time, they smoothed the work with their teeth. 315  
 Their withered lips were flecked with bits of wool  
 that formerly caused the slender threads to bulge.  
 Wicker baskets lay at their feet to guard  
 woolen fleeces, soft and shiny white.  
 And while the Fates were combing the fleeces, prophecy 320  
 streamed from their lips in harmony shrill and divine,  
 a song no later age would ever disprove:

“Emathia’s fortress and beautiful jewel enhanced  
 by eminent virtues but most renowned in your son,  
 hear the oracular truths we sisters unfold 325  
 this happy day, but you, the guides of destiny,  
 spindles, spin on and on, enlarging the fabric.  
 The Evening Star will arrive, conferring the pleasures  
 that husbands desire, arrive escorting a wife,  
 who will flood your heart with overwhelming love, 330  
 circle your sturdy neck with her delicate arms,  
 and prepare to share a night of languid sleep.  
 Spindles, spin on and on, enlarging the fabric.  
 No home has ever contained such love before,  
 no love has ever united lovers with bonds 335  
 of harmony such as Thetis and Peleus share.  
 Spindles, spin on and on, enlarging the fabric.  
 To you will Achilles be born, a stranger to fear.  
 Though his back is unknown to the foe, his chest is familiar.  
 He will often outdistance the fiery hooves of a deer 340  
 and emerge from their wandering competition victorious.  
 Spindles, spin on and on, enlarging the fabric.  
 No hero will dare compare himself in war  
 when Teucrian blood has flooded the Phrygian fields  
 and the ruler descended third from the perjurer Pelops 345  
 wastes the walls of Troy with a lengthy siege.  
 Spindles, spin on and on, enlarging the fabric.

Mothers will often acknowledge his excellent virtues  
 and glorious deeds at the funeral pyres of sons,  
 when they loosen the scraggly locks on their snowy peaks 350  
 and bruise their withered breasts with palsied fists.

Spindles, spin on and on, enlarging the fabric.  
 As a reaper traversing a golden field in the heat  
 of the sun cuts down the crowding ears of grain,  
 his furious sword will level the ranks of the Trojans. 355

Spindles, spin on and on, enlarging the fabric.  
 Scamander's wave will testify to his excellence  
 as it spreads across the rapid Hellespont,  
 after its stream has been choked by slaughtered bodies  
 and its deepest currents warmed by human blood. 360

Spindles, spin on and on, enlarging the fabric.  
 A trophy awarded in death will testify too:  
 his rounded sepulcher, raised to royal height,  
 receives a stricken maiden's snowy limbs. 365

Spindles, spin on and on, enlarging the fabric.  
 The day that Fortune confers on the weary Achaeans  
 the power to break the Neptunian chains of Dardania  
 the lofty mound will drip with Polyxena's blood.

Her neck will bend to the axe like an animal victim.  
 Her knee will bend and headless body fall. 370

Spindles, spin on and on, enlarging the fabric.  
 So come and fulfill the love your souls desire.  
 Groom accept a goddess by lucky conveyance  
 and bride submit to his loving arms at last.

Spindles, spin on and on, enlarging the fabric. 375  
 Returning at dawn the nurse will fail to encircle  
 her neck with the ribbon she wore the day before.

Spindles, spin on and on, enlarging the fabric.  
 No quarrelsome maiden is here, no anxious mother  
 feeling the sting of divorce and despairing of grandchildren. 380  
 Spindles, spin on and on, enlarging the fabric."

Such were the happy, prophetic songs of the Fates  
 that poured from the goddesses' chests for Peleus then.

In days of old, before we banished piety,  
 the rulers of heaven visited chaste abodes 385

of heroes, presenting themselves in mortal assemblies.  
 Often the father of gods in a glistening temple,  
 when a yearly rite and festive days had come,  
 observed the falling to earth of a hundred bulls.  
 Often the wandering Liber drove from the peak 390  
 of Parnassus reveling Maenads with flowing hair,  
 whereat the joyous Delphians eagerly emptied  
 their city to greet the god with altars blazing.  
 Often amid the deadly contests of war,  
 the Rhamnusia maiden, mistress of Triton, or Mars 395  
 would rally the armored bands of men in person.  
 But since the earth has dripped with nefarious guilt,  
 since passions have routed justice from every mind,  
 and brothers have washed their hands in brotherly blood,  
 a son has refused to mourn his parents' demise, 400  
 a father has plotted the death of his youthful son  
 to pluck for himself the bloom of his daughter-in-law,  
 and an evil mother has evilly dared to offend  
 the gods of her family beneath her ignorant son,  
 the mad confusion of everything right and wrong 405  
 has driven away the righteous minds of the gods.  
 Wherefore, they neither attend such mortal assemblies  
 nor let themselves be touched by the light of day.

1. **Pelion:** a wooded mountain in Thessaly. Pines from Pelion were used to build the Argo, Jason's ship.

3. **the land the Phasis lapped and Aeetes ruled:** the Phasis river flowed through the kingdom of Colchis on the Black Sea. Its king, Aeetes, jealously guarded the Golden Fleece.

4. **the bastion of Argos:** in the generation before the Trojan War, all the young heroes of "Argos," i.e., Greece, accompanied Jason.

5. **Colchis:** see note on line 3.

8. **the goddess herself:** Minerva, Greek Athena, supervised the building of the Argo, which Catullus represents as the first ship.

11. **Amphitrite:** goddess of the sea, wife of Neptune.

14. **daughters of Nereus:** see head note.

19. **Peleus . . . Thetis:** see head note.

23B. Half of this line is omitted in the manuscripts. Editors disregard it in numbering the poem's lines.

29–30. **Tethys . . . Oceanus:** Titans, children of Uranos and Gaia, aunt and uncle to Jupiter, and the parents of Nereus.

32. **Thessaly:** large, fertile region in northeastern Greece.

35. **Phthiotian Tempe:** Tempe is a proverbially pretty valley in Thessaly. Phthiotis was a Thessalian district that was home to Peleus and Achilles.

35–37. **Crannon . . . Larissa . . . Cieros . . . Pharsalus:** towns in Thessaly. Pharsalus was the site of Caesar's victory over Pompey in 48 B.C.

52. **Dia's . . . shore Ariadne:** Ariadne was a princess of Crete, daughter of King Minos and Queen Pasiphaë and thus half-sister of Pasiphaë's monstrous offspring, the Minotaur. Theseus killed the Minotaur with the help of Ariadne, who fell in love with Theseus at first sight. He then eloped with her but abandoned her as she slept on the shore of the island of Naxos or "Dia," as it was originally called.

53. **Theseus,** son of Aegeus, king of Athens, was reunited with his father in the latter's old age. Having lost a war with Minos of Crete, the Athenians were forced to send fourteen youths and maidens annually to be sacrificed to the Minotaur, who was housed in the hopelessly complex labyrinth. Theseus joined the victims voluntarily to try to kill the Minotaur.

60. **Minos' daughter:** Ariadne; see note on line 52.

71. **goddess of Eryx:** Venus. Eryx is a mountain on the western tip of Sicily with a temple of Venus on its top. A city by the same name lay at its foot.

74. **Piraeus:** the port of Athens.

75. **Gortynian towers:** Gortyn was a Cretan city; here "Gortynian" just means "Cretan."

77. **Androgean slaughter:** Androgeus, Minos' son, was a victor in the Panathenaic Games, the Athenian equivalent of the Olympics, but was murdered afterwards by unknown assailants. Minos held the Athenians responsible and imposed the tribute (see note on line 53). According to Apollodorus (3.15.7) and others, the gods forced Athens to submit to Minos by sending a plague or famine.

**city of Cecrops:** Athens. Cecrops was its first king.

89. **Eurotas:** the river in southern Greece that flows through Sparta.

96. **supreme in Golgi and leafy Idalium:** Venus, since Golgi and Idalium were two of the towns in Crete famous for temples to her.

105. **Taurus:** actually a chain of mountains in Asia Minor, rather than the single peak that Catullus seems to envision. It stretches along the southern coast and eastern border of modern Turkey.

113. **a slender thread:** Theseus used a thread held at the entrance by Ariadne to guide himself out of the labyrinth.

155. **Scylla**: see note on Poem 60.2.
156. **Charybdis**: see note on Poem 60.2.
171. **Cecropian hulls**: see note on line 77 (city of Cecrops).
178. **Ida**: a mountain of Crete, not to be confused with the mountain of the same name that overlooks Troy; cp. note on Poem 63.2.
192. **Eumenides**: the "Kindly Ones," a euphemistic title of the Erinyes (Latin Furies), snake-haired hags who lived in the underworld and punished violations of intimate bonds.
211. **Erechtheid harbor**: Athens or, more exactly, Piraeus. Erechtheus was an early king of Athens, the child of Earth and Vulcan.
212. **Aegeus**: king of Athens. He was the father of Theseus by Aethra, princess of Troezen in southern Greece, unless (as rumor had it) the real father was Neptune. Aethra raised Theseus. To be acknowledged as Aegeus' heir, Theseus had to recover a sword and sandals left by Aegeus beneath a boulder in Troezen. He did so and made his way to Athens, killing criminals along the way. In Athens, the sorceress Medea nearly succeeded in having him poisoned, but Aegeus recognized the sword in the nick of time and embraced his son.
226. **pigment of Spain**: apparently a dye produced from iron ore. Judging by ancient descriptions, the color it produced corresponded to "navy blue."
228. **holy Itonus**: or Iton, a town in Thessaly with a temple of Athena.
229. **Erechtheus**: see note on line 211.
251. **Iacchus**: alternative name for Bacchus or Dionysus, the god of wine and revelry. Ariadne was saved when Dionysus, who just happened to be reveling on the wine-producing island of Naxos at the time, saw her and fell in love. He married her, made her immortal, and transformed the crown that she was wearing into a constellation; cp. note on Poem 66.59.
253. **sileni from Nysa and . . . satyrs**: Bacchus' male followers, satyrs were wild humanoid creatures with horses' manes, tails, and hooves. An elderly satyr was known as a silenus (plural sileni). Bacchus was raised by nymphs and satyrs on Mt. Nysa in Asia Minor. Nysa is a mythical location, derived from the name Dionysus, understood as meaning "god of Nysa."
254. **Thyades**: a likely emendation in the text, a synonym for the Maenads or Bacchantes, the ecstatic female followers of Bacchus. An Athenian woman named Thyia was supposedly the first Maenad.
255. **Euhoe!**: the traditional representation of a loud cheer used by Bacchus' followers.
259. **mysteries hidden in baskets**: followers of Bacchus practiced se-

cret rites. Some involved sacred objects that were kept concealed from non-initiates. Roman frescoes from the “Villa of Mysteries” in Pompeii show a Dionysiac revel in the middle of which lies a basket with a partially concealed representation of a phallus.

278. **Chiron:** the wise centaur, tutor of heroes including Achilles and Jason.

283. **Favonus:** Zephyr in Greek, the gentle west wind, a harbinger of spring.

287. **Haemonian Dryads:** Haemonia is a poetic name for Thessaly. Dryads are nymphs associated with oak trees.

291. **Phaethon’s flexible sister:** Phaethon was the illegitimate son of the Sun. Wanting assurance of this fact, he talked his father into letting him drive his chariot, but he lost control, set the earth on fire, and had to be blasted out of the sky by Jove. His sisters mourned him for such a long time that the gods finally turned them into trees, lithe poplars that sway as they continue to mourn.

294. **Prometheus:** the son of a Titan, Prometheus tricked Jove into accepting the less desirable portion of the ox as the divine portion in sacrifices. Angered, Jove took fire away from mankind. Prometheus stole some from the gods’ forge and gave it back. Jove then punished mankind by inventing women and Prometheus by nailing him to a cliff where Jove’s eagle ate his liver (Hesiod, *Theogony* 507–616). In Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound*, Prometheus knows that Thetis is fated to bear a son greater than his father and that this poses a danger for the amorous Zeus. As David Konstan points out in *Catullus’ Indictment of Rome: The Meaning of Catullus 64* (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1977), 26, the usual explanation for the wedding of Peleus and Thetis is that Zeus finally learned about this danger from Prometheus, freed him, and decreed that Thetis should marry a mortal (Hyginus, *Astrologia* 2.15). Hence Prometheus played a critical role in bringing about the wedding.

300. **Idrus:** Phoebus is a byname for Apollo. His sister is Diana. The passage is otherwise obscure. “Mountains of Idrus” apparently designates a site of Diana’s worship. Some myth known to Catullus (but not to us) must have explained why she and Apollo boycotted the wedding. Oddly, in Homer’s *Iliad* (24.63) Hera specifically states that Apollo did attend the wedding of Peleus, playing the lyre.

305. The **Fates** are pictured as three old women spinning wool. The threads they wind and snip symbolize lives.

323. **Emathia’s fortress:** Peleus. Emathia, actually a small district in Macedonia, is used here of Thessaly.



328. **Evening Star:** Venus, prominent at sunrise and sunset, is known as both the Evening and the Morning Star. As in Poem 62.1–2, its appearance in the evening signaled the time for the consummation of a wedding.

344. **Teucrian blood . . . Phrygian fields:** both adjectives are poetic ways of saying “Trojan.” Teucer was an early king of Troy; Phrygia was a nearby kingdom, occupying central Turkey.

345. **perjurer Pelops:** Pelops was the grandfather of Agamemnon, Troy’s conqueror. He won his throne and his bride, Hippodamia, by defeating her father Oenomaus in a chariot race. He won the race by inducing Oenomaus’ servant to replace the metal pins holding Oenomaus’ wheels in place with wax ones. The bribe was the privilege of sleeping with Hippodamia, but Pelops reneged on this promise, killing the servant instead.

357. **Scamander:** a river in the Trojan plain. In *Iliad* 21, it fights Achilles because he is polluting its stream with Trojan corpses.

364. **a stricken maiden:** see note on line 368.

366. **Achaean:** a Homeric term for the Greeks.

368. **Polyxena:** a princess of Troy. After the Trojan War, the ghost of Achilles appeared to the Greeks and demanded that she be sacrificed to him. The Greeks complied.

376. **the nurse will fail to encircle:** a reference to a belief that the loss of virginity thickened a girl’s neck.

390–92. **Liber . . . Parnassus . . . Maenads . . . Delphians:** Liber, the Greek Dionysus, was worshiped on Mount Parnassus, near the town of Delphi, in the winter. Maenads held outdoor revels in his honor.

395. **the Rhamnusian maiden:** Nemesis, the personification of vengeance, who had a famous temple in Rhamnus, a town near Athens.

**mistress of Triton:** Minerva, a warrior goddess, possibly so called from a stream named Triton in Boeotia.

**Mars:** god of war.

## Poem 65

Though sorrow, care, and exhaustion call me away  
 from the learned maidens, Ortalus,  
 and my mind, awash in troubles, cannot deliver  
 the Muses’ sweet conceptions,  
 for recently Lethe’s swirling currents bathed  
 my brother’s pallid foot—

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