

nam perhibent olim crudeli peste coactam
Androgeoneae poenas exsoluere caedis
electos iuuenes simul et decus innuptarum
Cecropiam solitam esse dapem dare Minotauro.
quis angusta malis cum moenia uexarentur, 80
ipse suum Theseus pro caris corpus Athenis
proicere optauit potius quam talia Cretam
funera Cecropiae nec funera portarentur.

For they say that once, compelled by a wicked sickness
In order to pay the price for the Androgeonian slaughter
Cecropia was accustomed to give a feast to the Minotaur,
Selected young men together with the most splendid of the maidens.
Since the narrow city walls were being troubled by these ills,
Theseus himself opted to lay down his own body on behalf of his dear Athenians rather than
such corpses, nor yet corpses, of Cecropia were carried to Crete

quis angusta malis cum moenia uexarentur, 80
ipse suum Theseus pro caris corpus Athenis
proicere optauit potius quam talia Cretam
funera Cecropiae nec funera portarentur.
atque ita naue leui nitens ac lenibus auris
magnanimum ad Minoa uenit sedesque superbas. 85
hunc simul ac cupido conspexit lumine uirgo
regia, quam suavis exspirans castus odores
lectulus in molli complexu matris alebat,
quales Eurotae praecingunt flumina myrtus
auraue distinctos educit uerna colores, 90
non prius ex illo flagrantia declinauit
lumina, quam cuncto concepit corpore flammam
funditus atque imis exarsit tota medullis.

Catullus describes the coverlet upon the bridal couch of Thetis. In line 51 the embroidered image is described as a representation of 'heroum mira virtutes indicat arte.' The hero Theseus is retreating from the shore and Ariadne awakens to find herself abandoned, which calls into question the heroism and virtue of Theseus' actions.

Lines 80-93 elaborate on the reason for Theseus' arrival on Crete and Ariadne's reaction upon seeing him.

80. Angusta moenia – the description of the city walls of Athens as narrow could suggest that they are stifling or confining Theseus. These city walls also act as the setting for line 210 - where Theseus sets out for Athens, leaving his father for the final time. Is there a sense that Catullus is playing down the size and importance of Athens here, suggesting it was a lot

smaller at this time, in much the same way as is seen in Tibullus and Ovid when they describe cows once grazing where the forum now stands?

81. His description as 'ipse...Theseus' in a position of prominence gives a sense of (self)importance.

82-3. Theseus seems to have a considerable amount of agency in these lines 'optavit' suggests that he is not compelled in his actions and the active indicative verb stands out among the passive subjunctives 'vexarentur' and 'portarentur'. The placement of 'potius' next to 'optavit' also seems to enhance this reading. The verbs describing Theseus's actions are at the start of the line, drawing attention to their position, and mirroring line 81, whereas the passive verbs are at the end of the line, framing and balancing this sentence.

'Funera...nec funera' repetition, long syllables, sombre tone and stress on the fate of the youths.

Cecropiae - reference to the city by naming one of its mythological founders. Etiological references are a Callimachean feature - as attested by his 'Aitia'

84. The alliteration and balance of the line, starting with spondees then gathering pace seems fitting for describing a journey. The verb falls neatly in between pairs of adjectives and nouns in this line and 85, with the position of the adjectives and nouns reversed.

85. Further alliteration. The adjectives 'magnanimam' and 'superbas' could both be interpreted ambiguously, suggesting excessive pride/arrogance of Minos.

86-93 Ariadne sees Theseus. Armstrong (2006) draws attention to the similarity between this episode and Catullus 51 – therefore also Sappho 31. Love at first sight, described as a sensation that steals down the limbs like a flame.

The visual aspect of this passage is interesting. The narrative relates to an embroidered coverlet on a wedding couch - we now have a description of the 'heroine' herself reclining on a couch. There is a sensual and vivid nature to the description and Ambuhl (2016) notes Homer, Hesiod, Apollonius and Callimachus's *Hecale* as important intertexts here. These ideas are further utilised by Vergil.

As noted above, aetiology is a frequent feature of Callimachean literature. I would be interested to compare this passage with Ovid's treatment of Ariadne in the *Fasti*, as Ovid uses this same story to explain the origin of the goddess Libera. Is there a reason why Catullus deliberately avoids any kind of etymological explanation in this poem? One of the sources of tension and contrast in this piece are the allusions to a mythical 'better' golden age (eg lines 22 and 386) but the actions of these supposed heroes are in opposition to this ideal.

86. Cupido lumine - is cupire really a fitting response for a maiden? The presence of Pasiphae again would suggest perhaps that Ariadne may share similar 'excessive' emotions. See lines 400 onwards where Catullus states that it is the wickedness of mortals in

Catullus's present age that has resulted in gods no longer having such interaction - however, we see that the characters of the heroic age are certainly not presented as virtuous.

86-7. Virgo regia – enjambment drawing attention to this description of A

87-8 castus lectulus - personification - contrast to Ariadne - and more so to Pasiphae?

Alebat - seems an unusual choice of verb and is the same verb as 'alma' - often used as an epithet of Venus (particularly in L's DRN)

Myrtus line 89 and verna 90 also suggest Venus

89 spondaic line - formal, grand. Eurotas - place in Arcadia/Sparta - placing the poem within the tradition of Theocritus etc creating a pastoral ideal. Textual ambiguity progignunt v praecingunt

90. Also grand style, with pattern created by adj & noun, v balanced and highly wrought

91. enjambment

92 alliteration

Works cited:

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Armstrong, R. 2006. Cretan Women. Pasiphae, Ariadne, and Phaedra in Latin Poetry, ch 5