A. G. Lee *Catullus The Poems* (Oxford 1991) translation of Catullus 64:

Pines in the past, born from the brow of Pelion,
Are rumoured to have swum through Neptune's clear waves
To Phasis' breakers and the frontiers of Aeetes,
When chosen young men, oaks of Argive adulthood,
Eager to rob the Colchians of a gilded hide,
Ventured the voyage past salt shoals in a swift hull,
Sweeping blue-green levels with palms of silver fir.
For them the Goddess Guardian of high citadels
In person made a car to fly with the light breeze
By joining interwoven pinewood to curved keel.
Its prow inured raw Amphitrite to ships' courses.
As soon as with its beak it ploughed the windy plain
And, by oarage spiralled, wave grew white with foam,
Out of the gleaming surge wild faces arose,
Aequoreal Nereids, marvelling at the portent.
In that and not another day's light mortal eyes
Beheld the bodies of the Nymphs of Ocean naked
Far as the sucklers standing out from the white surge.
Then Peleus, it is told, for Thetis burned with love,
Then Thetis did not despise human hymeneals,
Then the Father Himself felt Peleus should yoke with Thetis.
O born in a time of all the ages too much missed,
Hail, heroes, breed of Gods! O noble progeny
Of mothers beautiful, I hail you once again!
I shall invoke you often, invoke you in my song,
And you above all, blest by happy bridal torches,
Thessaly's pillar, Peleus, to whom Jove himself,
The Father of the Gods himself resigned his love.
Did Thetis, fairest Nereïne, embrace *you*?
Did Tethys allow *you* to wed her granddaughter
And Ocean's who encircles all the globe with sea?
But when at the appointed time those longed-for days
Arrived, the whole of Thessaly by invitation
Crowds the house, fills the palace with delighted throng.
They bring gifts with them. Faces manifest their joy.
Cieros is deserted; they leave Phthiotian Tempe
And Crannon's houses and the walls of Lárisa.
They flock to Pharsalus; they crowd Pharsalian roofs.
None tills the soil; the necks of oxen become soft.
No low-grown vine is cleared of weeds by bent-pronged rake.
No bullock cleaves the clod with deep-driven ploughshare.
No pruner's hook thins out the shade of leafy trees.
Slovenly rust attacks the solitary ploughs.
The king's own quarters, though, far as the sumptuous
Palace stretched backward, shine with lustrous gold and silver.
Ivory gleams on thrones, cups glow upon the board,
The whole house revels in the glint of royal treasure.
Indeed, there in the midst, the Goddess's bridal
Divan is placed, inlaid with Indian tooth and spread
With woven purple dipped in rosy murex dye.

This coverlet, embroidered with old-time human figures,
Reveals with wondrous art the virtues of heroes.
There, staring out from Dia's surf-resounding shore
And watching Theseus sailing off with his fast fleet,
Is Ariadne, nursing at heart unmastered passions,
Nor can she yet believe she sees what she is seeing,
That very moment woken from deceiving sleep
To find her poor self left behind on lonely sand.
The heedless youth in flight strikes the shallows with oars,
Leaving broken promises to the blustering gale.
Him, far off, from the wrack Minois, bitter-eyed,
Like some Bacchante's stone statue, watches, ah
Watches, and tosses inwardly on great waves of troubles,
Not keeping fine-spun snood upon her golden head,
Not covered by light raiment over veiled bosom,
Not tied about the milky paps with rounded band,
All which had slipped down off her body in disarray
And at her feet salt waves were playing games with them.
But she, not thinking then of snood nor troubled then
By floating robe, with all her heart, Theseus, and all
Her soul and all her mind clung desperately to you.
Poor girl, how Erycina obsessed her with continual
Sorrows, sowing thorny worries in her heart
At that time, ever since the day when proud Theseus,
Sailing from the curving shoreline of Piraeus,
Touched land at the unjust king's Gortynian precinct.
For they report that earlier, forced by cruel plague
To pay the penalty for Androgeos' murder,
Cecropia used to send the pick of her young men
And glory of her maidens to feast the Minotaur.
But when her narrow walls were harassed by this evil,
Theseus of his own will determined to lay down
His body for dear Athens rather than allow
Cecropia's living dead thus to be shipped to Crete.
And so, relying on light vessel and fair winds,
He came to great-souled Minos and his proud abode.
Soon as the maiden princess with longing look espied him,
She whom a virgin bed breathing out sweet odours
Still nurtured in the soft embraces of her mother,
Like myrtle that the streams of Eurotas bring forth
Or like the different colours springtime air draws out,
She did not turn away from him her smouldering
Eye-beams until throughout her frame she had caught fire
Deep down, and in her inmost marrow was all ablaze.
Ah, wretchedly arousing passions, cruel-hearted,
Holy Child, who mix for mankind joy with sorrow,
And you, the Queen of Golgi and leafy Idalium,
On what rough seas you tossed the girl with mind aflame
As often as she sighed for that fair-haired stranger!
How great the fears she suffered with a heavy heart!
How often then she turned paler than gleam of gold,
When, eager to contend against the savage monster,

Theseus willed either death or the prize of glory!
Not vainly pledging, though, to the Gods unpleasing
Little gifts she kindled vows on silent lips.
For as on Taurus' top, wildly waving its arms,
Oaktree or cone-bearing pine with sticky bark
By a furious whirlwind whose blast twists its stout trunk
Is toppled (torn up by the roots the tree full length
Falls prostrate, crushing everything in its wide way),
So Theseus laid the monster low, beast body beaten
As it tossed its useless horns against the empty air.
Thence with great renown he walked his way back, safe,
Directing his bewildered steps with slender thread,
Lest, while he tried to escape the Labyrinth's meanders,
The building's inscrutable maze should baffle him.
But why digressing further from my opening song
Remember how the daughter leaving her sire's face,
Leaving the embrace of blood-sister and even of mother
Who grieved in desperation for her wretched child,
Before all these preferred the sweet love of Theseus?
Or how he carried her by ship to Dia's foaming
Beaches, or how he left her blindfolded by sleep,
Departing, though her husband, with a heedless heart?
Often, they say, in frenzy, with her mind on fire,
She poured out shrill-edged cries from the depth of her heart,
And sometimes in her sorrow she clambered up steep cliffs
From whence to extend her view of the ocean's empty swell;
Sometimes ran out to meet the restless brine's breakers
Kilting up her bared legs' lightweight covering.
These words at last she spoke of bitter lamentation,
Distorting with chill little sobs her tearful face:
'So, faithless one who took me from my father's altars,
You leave me, faithless Theseus, on a lonely beach?
So, sailing off, contemptuous of the Gods' will,
You carry home, ah heedless, accursed perjury?
And was there nothing that could turn your cruel mind's
Intention? Had you then no kindliness at call
That your ungentle heart might wish to pity us?
Not these the promises you gave me once in gallant
Phrases, not these the things you told poor me to expect,
But married happiness, but longed-for hymeneals,
All which the airy winds have tattered into nothing.
No woman now should put her faith in a man's oath
And none expect a man's word to be trustworthy.
For while their lusting spirit craves to gain something
There's nothing they fear to swear, nothing forbear to promise;
But once the longing of their lustful mind is slaked
They don't recall their words or balk at perjury.
You can't deny that while you spun round in death's whirlpool
I rescued you and chose rather to lose a brother
Than fail deceitful you in time of utmost need—
For which I'm to be torn apart by beasts and birds,
Carrion in death, with no dust thrown for burial.

What lioness littered you below some lonely crag?
What sea conceived and spewed you out in the waves' spume?
What Syrtis, what devouring Scylla, what grim Charybdis,
You who can render such return for your sweet life?
If marriage, yours and mine, had not been to your mind
Because you dreaded the harsh rules of an old-world father,
You could at least have brought me to your family home
That I might serve you as a slave in joyful work,
Soothing the white soles of your feet in clear water
Or spreading your couch with a purple coverlet.
But why do I complain, out of my mind with woe,
In vain to unheeding airs, which unpossessed of feeling
Can neither hear nor return a spoken message?
Besides, by now he's almost half way on the waves
And there's no sign of man along the bare sea-wrack.
So, jumping on us hard in time's extremity,
Cruel Fortune even grudges ears to our complaints.
Almighty Jove, if only in that first of times
Cecropian hulls had never touched the Cnossian shore,
Nor bearing fearful tribute to an untamed bull
Had faithless sailor ever tied up line in Crete
Or this bad man, concealing cruel counsels under
A sweet outside had rested in our house as guest!
For where do I turn? What hope rely on in my ruin?
Am I to make for Ida's mountains? Ah, with wide
Gulf sundering, when stormy ocean lies between?
Or can I hope for father's help? Whom I deserted
To follow a youth spattered with my brother's blood?
Or comfort myself with a husband's faithful love?
Who's fleeing from me, bending tough oars in the surge?
Besides, this lonely island's uninhabited.
Every way out is blocked by sea's encircling waves.
There's no means of escape, no hope. Everything's dumb,
Everywhere's deserted, everything threatens doom.
Nevertheless my eyes shall not grow dim in death
Neither shall sensation leave my weary body
Before I claim, betrayed, just forfeit from the Gods
And pray in my last hour for Heaven to keep faith.
Wherefore, chastisers of men's deeds with vengeful forfeit,
Eumenides, whose forehead wreathed in snaky hair
Proclaims the furious anger breathed out from your heart,
Be present, come in haste, give ear to my complaints,
Which, woe is me, I am forced to bring forth from my very
Marrow, helpless, burning, blinded by mindless passion.
But since they are true children of my inmost heart
Be sure you suffer not our grief to go for nothing,
But with what mind Theseus has left me on my own,
With such mind, Goddesses, let him doom himself and his.'
After she had poured forth these words from her sad heart,
In anguish claiming punishment for cruel deeds,
Heaven's Ruler nodded his invincible assent,
And at that movement earth and the wild sea's expanse

Quaked and the firmament shook its glittering stars.
But Theseus' self, his mind thick-sown with blinding dark,
Let slip from his forgetful heart all the commands
Which hitherto he had kept constantly in mind,
Nor hoisted the sweet signal for his grieving parent
To prove that he was safely in sight of Erechtheus' port.
For earlier, we are told, commending to the winds
The son about to sail from the Goddess's walls,
Aegeus embraced the youth and gave him these commands:
'My only son, sweeter than length of life to me,
Son I am forced to send away to doubtful doom,
Though late restored to me in my extreme old age,
Whereas my fortune and your passionate valour
Rob me of you against my will (for my dim eyes
Have not yet looked their fill upon my son's dear form)
I shall not send you gladly with a happy heart
Nor let you show the signs of favourable fortune
But first give utterance to my mind's much bitterness
Befouling my white hair with soil and sprinkled dust,
Thereafter hang the roving mast with dyed canvas
So that the grief and burning kindled in our mind
Sails darkened with Iberian rust may publicize.
But should the Dweller in holy Itonus give you leave
(She who vouchsafes protection to our people and
Erechtheus' realm) to stain your right hand with bull's blood,
Then, truly, see that these commands stay fresh, stored up
In mindful heart and unerased by lapse of time,
That when your bright eyes first catch sight of our hills
The yard-arms lower their doom-laden cloth entirely
And plaited halyards hoist aloft shining white sails,
That seeing I may know your joy with happy mind
Soon as may be, when prospering time brings you back safe.'
These commands, hitherto kept constantly in mind,
Drifted from Theseus like clouds driven by the wind's
Breath from the airy summit of a snowy mountain.
His father, though, on look-out from the Acropolis
And wasting anguished eyes in continual weeping,
Soon as he saw the canvas of the swelling sail
Hurled himself headlong down from the highest of the rocks,
Believing Theseus lost to an ungentle fate.
So, entering the home polluted by his father's
Death, haughty Theseus had himself to endure such grief
As he had brought Minois by his heedless mind;
Who meanwhile, sadly watching his receding keel,
Wounded in spirit pondered troubles manifold.
But in another part Iacchus in bloom flew by
With rout of Satyrs and Nysigenous Sileni,
Seeking you, Ariadne, and burning with love for you.
For him the Thyads raved around with frenzied mind,
Shrieking *Evoe*, *Evoe*, twisting their heads about.
Part of them were shaking *thyrsi* with covered spike,
Part threw around the limbs of a dismembered steer,

Part wrapped themselves about with wreaths of writhing snakes,
Part thronged the *orgia* concealed in hollow creels,
Those *orgia* the profane desire in vain to hear.
Others with open palms were banging tambourines
Or clashing ringing clangour from thin rounded bronze.
For many, horns blared out cacophonous *boom-booms*
And barbarous reed-pipes screeched hair-raising music.
The coverlet, with such figures grandly decorated,
Embracing the divan veiled and enveloped it;
With eager study of which after Thessaly's folk
Were sated, they made way then for the holy Gods.
Here, even as Zephyrus ruffling the tranquil sea
With early morning breath arouses the slope waves
(While Dawn comes up to the threshold of the roving Sun)
Which slowly at first, being driven by a clement breeze,
Procéss and lightly break with a mournful guffaw,
Then, the wind strengthening, grow bigger, multiply
And swimming in the distance gleam with crimson light,
So, by the forecourt then leaving the royal palace,
The guests dispersed on roving feet each to his home.
And after their departure, first of all, from Pelion's
Summit Chiron came, bringing woodland gifts.
For all the flowers the plains bear, all that Thessaly
Grows on her mighty mountains, all that warm Favonius'
Fruitful breeze produces near the rippling river,
All these he brought himself, arranged in random bunches,
Charmed by whose delightful fragrance the house laughed.
Straightway Peníos comes, leaving verdant Tempe,
Tempe by overhanging woodland ringed above,
For the Haemonian Dryads to celebrate with dances,
Not empty-handed, for he carried, root and all,
Lofty beeches and tall laurels with straight stem,
Not without nodding plane-trees and the supple sister
Of burnt-out Phaëthon and airy cypresses.
These he placed all around the entrance, intertwined,
So that the forecourt might grow green, screened with soft leaves.
There follows after him Prometheus of crafty heart,
Bearing faded traces of the ancient punishment
Which formerly, with limbs fast bound by chain to flint,
He paid by hanging over a sheer precipice.
Then the Father of Gods with holy wife and children
Arrived from Heaven, leaving you, Phoebus, alone
Together with the sibling Dweller on Idrus' mountains;
For equally with you your sister despised Peleus
And refused to attend Thetis' nuptial torches.
But after they had bent their limbs to snow-white seats,
The tables were heaped lavishly with various courses;
Meanwhile, their bodies shaking with infirmity,
The three Parcae began to chant their soothsaying.
A fair white robe embracing all their trembling body
Fell about their ankles with its purple edge,
While rosy fillets rested on their snow-white heads

And their hands duly plied the everlasting task.
The left hand held the distaff mantled in soft wool;
The right, first, lightly drawing down the threads with upturned
Fingers shaped them, then, with downturned thumb twisting,
Revolved the spindle balanced by its rounded whorl;
And all the time their teeth tore off and smoothed the work
And to their thin dry lips clung bitten tufts of wool
Which previously obtruded on the even thread.
Moreover at their feet the soft fleeces of dazzling
White wool were safely stored in plaited osier baskets.
They then, plucking the fleeces, with clear-sounding voice
Poured out in a prophetic song such fates as these—
A song no after-age will ever charge with falsehood:
'O you, enhancing rare distinction with great virtues,
Emathia's guardian, most dear to the son of Ops,
Hear what the sisters scry for you in this glad light,
Their truthful oracle. But you that the fates follow
Run, spindles, drawing out the weft, run on.
For you there'll come soon, bringing heart's desire to bridegrooms,
Hesperus; with his lucky star there'll come a consort
To bathe your being for you in soul-searching love
And ready to consort with you in swooning slumbers,
Laying her smooth arms underneath your stalwart neck.
Run, spindles, drawing out the weft, run on.
No house has ever given shelter to such loves,
No love has ever joined lovers in such treaty
As is the harmony between Peleus and Thetis.
Run, spindles, drawing out the weft, run on.
There shall be born to you one free from fear—Achilles,
Known to the enemy not by back but valiant front,
Who many a time victorious in far-ranging race
Will overtake the fiery slots of the swift deer.
Run, spindles, drawing out the weft, run on.
There's not a hero shall compare with him in war,
When plains of Phrygia shall flow with Teucrian blood
And in the siege of that long war the walls of Troy
Shall be destroyed by the third heir of perjured Pelops.
Run, spindles, drawing out the weft, run on.
His extraordinary virtues and famed deeds
Shall mothers often own at their sons' funeral,
When they shall loose dishevelled hair from their white crowns
And with impotent palms shall bruise their withered breasts.
Run, spindles, drawing out the weft, run on.
For as a reaper lopping off the close-packed corn-ears
Beneath the burning sun reaps golden-yellow ploughland,
He shall cut down with raised steel bodies of Trojan-born.
Run, spindles, drawing out the weft, run on.
Scamander's wave shall witness to his great virtues,
Which spreads out every way in the swift Hellespont
And whose course he will choke with slaughtered heaps of bodies,
Warming the deep river with intermingled blood.
Run, spindles, drawing out the weft, run on.

Last witness will be the prize given him even in death
When heaped up in a lofty mound his rounded tomb
Duly receives the snow-white limbs of a butchered virgin.
Run, spindles, drawing out the weft, run on.
For soon as Fortune grants the weary Achaeans means
To undo Neptune's knot around the Dardan city,
His high tomb will be drenched in Polyxena's blood,
Who, like a slain beast falling to the two-edged sword,
Shall lay down, sinking to her knees, a headless body.
Run, spindles, drawing out the weft, run on.
Come therefore and consort in long-imagined love.
Her consort shall accept the Goddess in glad treaty
And at long last shall bride be given to eager groom.
Run spindles, drawing out the weft, run on.
Her nurse revisiting her at first light tomorrow
Shall fail to tie yesterday's ribbon round her neck,
Nor shall an anxious mother, sad at her quarrelling daughter
Sleeping apart, stop hoping for dear grandchildren.
Run, spindles, drawing out the weft, run on.'
Foretelling in the past such happiness for Peleus
From their inspired breast the Parcae sang their song.
For long ago Heaven's Dwellers in person used to visit
The chaste homes of heroes and show themselves at mortal
Meetings, while religion was not yet held in scorn.
Often the Father of Gods, enthroned in shining temple,
When with their festal days his annual rites had come,
Would watch one hundred bulls slump prostrate to the ground.
Often nomadic Liber from Parnassus' top
Would drive his baying Thyads with their hair flying,
While Delphians in concert rushing from their town
Gave the God joyous welcome with smoke of sacrifice.
And often Mavors in war's deadly competition
Or rapid Triton's Lady or the Amarynthian Maid
Would hearten by their presence armed companies of men.
But after Earth was stained with crime unspeakable
And all evicted Justice from their greedy thoughts,
Brothers poured the blood of brothers on their hands,
Sons no longer grieved when parents passed away,
Father prayed for death of son in his first youth
So as freely to possess the bloom of a new bride,
Mother, lying impiously with ignorant son,
Dared impiously to sin against divine Penates.
Our evil madness by confounding fair with foul
Has turned away from us the Gods' forgiving thoughts.
Wherefore they neither deign to visit such meetings
Nor let themselves be touched by light of day or eye.