

Catullus 64: Ariadne's speech

"Thus then, having borne me afar from my father's home, thus hast thou left me, faithless, faithless Theseus, on the lonely shore? thus departing, unmindful of the will of the gods, forgetful, ah! dost thou carry to thy home the curse of perjury? could nothing bend the purpose of thy cruel mind? was no mercy present in thy soul, to bid thy ruthless heart incline to pity for me? Not such were the promises thou gavest me once with winning voice, not this didst thou bid me hope, ah me! no, but a joyful wedlock, but a desired espousal; all which the winds of Heaven now blow abroad in vain. Henceforth let no woman believe a man's oath, let none believe that a man's speeches can be trustworthy. They, while their mind desires something and longs eagerly to gain it, nothing fear to swear, nothing spare to promise; but as soon as the lust of their greedy mind is satisfied, they remember not their words, they heed not their perjuries. I—thou know-est it—when thou wert tossing in the very whirl of death, saved thee, and set my heart rather to let my brother go than to fail thee, now faithless found, in thy utmost need. And for this I shall be given to beasts and birds to tear as a prey; my corpse shall have no sepulture, shall be sprinkled with no earth. What lioness bore thee under a desert rock? what sea conceived thee and vomited thee forth from its foaming waves? what Syrtis, what ravening Scylla, what waste Charybdis bore thee, who for sweet life returnest such meed as this? If thou hadst no mind to wed with me for dread of the harsh bidding of thy stern father, yet thou couldst have led me into thy dwellings to serve thee as a slave with labour of love, laving thy white feet with liquid water, or with purple coverlet spreading thy bed.

"But why should I, distracted with woe, cry in vain to the senseless airs—the airs that are endowed with no feeling, and can neither hear nor return the messages of my voice? He meanwhile is now tossing almost in mid-sea, and no human being is seen on the waste and weedy shore. Thus fortune too, full of spite, in this my supreme hour has cruelly grudged all ears to my complaints. Almighty Jupiter, I would the Attic ships had never touched Cnosian shores, nor ever the faithless voyager, bearing the dreadful tribute to the savage bull, has fastened his cable in Crete, nor that this evil man, hiding cruel designs under a fair outside, had reposed in our dwellings as a guest! For whither shall I return, lost, ah, lost? on what hope do I lean? Shall I seek the mountains of Crete? But barring them with broad flood the stormy, waters of the sea lie in between. Shall I hope for the aid of my father, the father I deserted of my own will, to follow a lover stained with my brother's blood? Or shall I console myself with the faithful love of my spouse, who is flying from me, bending his tough oars in the wave? Besides all that, the island is remote, and unfurnished with any dwelling; no way to depart opens for me; about me are the waters of the sea; no means of flight, no hope; all is dumb, all is desolate; all shows me the face of death. Yet my eyes shall not grow faint in death, nor shall the sense fail from my wearied body, before I demand from the gods just vengeance for my betrayal, and call upon the faith of the heavenly ones in my last hour.

"Therefore, O ye that visit the deeds of men with vengeful pains, ye Eumenides, whose foreheads bound with snaky hair announce the wrath which breathes from your breast, hither, hither haste, hear my complaints which I (ah, unhappy!) bring forth from my inmost heart perforce, helpless, burning, blinded with raging frenzy. For since my woes come truthfully from the depths of my heart, suffer not ye my grief to come to nothing: but even as Theseus had the heart to leave me desolate, with such a heart, ye goddesses, may he bring ruin upon himself and his own!" (Cat. 64.132-201)