

## Anne Finch, “The Cautious Lovers”

### Description

ANNE FINCH

#### “The Cautious Lovers”

*Silvia*, let's from the Croud retire;  
For, What to you and me  
(Who but each other do desire)  
Is all that here we see?

Apart we'll live, tho' not alone; 5  
For, who *alone* can call  
Those, who in Desarts live with One,  
If in that One they've All?

The World a vast *Meander* is,  
Where Hearts confus'dly stray; 10  
Where Few do hit, whilst Thousands miss  
The happy mutual Way:

Where Hands are by stern Parents ty'd  
Who oft, in *Cupid's* Scorn,  
Do for the widow'd State provide, 15  
Before that Love is born:

Where some too soon themselves misplace;  
Then in Another find  
The only Temper, Wit, or Face,  
That cou'd affect their Mind. 20

Others (but oh! avert that Fate!)  
A well-chose Object change:  
Fly, *Silvia*, fly, ere 'tis too late;  
Fall'n Nature's prone to range.

And, tho' in heat of Love we swear 25  
More than perform we can;  
No *Goddess* You, but *Woman* are,  
And I no more than *Man*.

Th' impatient *Silvia*

heard thus long;  
     Then with a Smile reply'd: 30  
 Those Bands cou'd ne'er be very strong,  
     Which Accidents divide.

Who e'er was mov'd yet to go down,  
     By such o'er-cautious Fear;  
 Or for one Lover left the Town, 35  
     Who might have Numbers here?

Your Heart, 'tis true, is worth them all,  
     And still preferr'd the first;  
 But since confess'd so apt to fall,  
     'Tis good to fear the worst. 40

In ancient History we meet  
     A flying Nymph betray'd  
 Who, had she kept in fruitful *Crete*,  
     New Conquest might have made.

And sure, as on the *Beach* she stood, 45  
     To view the parting Sails;  
 She curs'd her self, more than the Flood,  
     Or the conspiring Gales.

False *Theseus*, since thy Vows are broke,  
     May following Nymphs beware: 50  
 Methinks I hear how thus she spoke,  
     And will not trust too far.

*In Love, in Play, in Trade, in War*  
     *They best themselves acquit,*  
 Who, tho' their *Int'rests shipwreckt* are, 55  
     *Keep unrepov'd their Wit.*

## NOTES:

**9** *Meander* "A winding course, like a labyrinth" (*OED*).

**42** *Nymph* Poetical for woman in this context; an allusion to Ariadne, daughter of Minos and princess of Crete (*Britannica*).

**43** *Crete* The largest island in Greece. Inhabited by the Minoans, a Bronze Age civilization, ruled by King Minos (*Britannica*).

**45** *Beach* Refers to the shores of Naxos, the island where Ariadne was abandoned by her lover Theseus (*Ancient History Encyclopedia*).

**48** *Gales* “A wind of considerable strength” (*OED*).

**49** *Theseus* Athenian hero noteworthy for slaying the minotaur in the Cretan labyrinth with the help of Ariadne, who provided a yarn ball as aid for navigating the labyrinth (*Ancient History Encyclopedia*).

**56** *unreprov'd* “Uncensured” (*OED*).

**Source:** *Poems on Several Occasions* (London 1714), pp. 118-122. [*Google Books*]

*Edited by Roland Shepherd*