Metamorphoses

OVID

Metamorphoses

Metamorphoses

Translated from the Latin with AI (Claude) and edited



FORAGE
forage.com

Metamorphoses · Ovid

Translated from the Latin with AI (Claude) and edited. Reading edition, Forage, October 2026. forage.com/ovid/metamorphoses

Latin text: Hugo Magnus (1851–1924), *Die Metamorphosen des P. Ovidius Naso* (Gotha: F. A. Perthes, 1892), with doubtful readings checked against his critical edition (Berlin: Weidmann, 1914), via the Perseus Digital Library (github.com/PerseusDL/canonical-latinLit), CC BY-SA 4.0. Lines Magnus rejects, which he prints only in his notes, are omitted and skipped in the numbering (e.g. 1.546, 8.597–600 and 603–608). English: translated from the Latin with AI (Claude), then edited for accuracy and consistency. Not reviewed by a human specialist. Free to reuse under CC BY-SA 4.0. The small numbers set in the text are book and line.

The original text is in the public domain. This translation is free to share and adapt under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International license (CC BY-SA 4.0): creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0

Set in Source Serif 4.

CONTENTS

Introduction xi

Book 1 1

Prologue 1
The creation 1
The four ages 4
The giants 6
Lycaon 6
The flood 9
Deucalion and Pyrrha 11
Apollo and the Python 14
Apollo and Daphne 15
Io 18
Pan and Syrinx 22
Phaethon 24

Book 2 27

The palace of the Sun 27
Callisto 38
The raven and Coronis 42
Ocyroe 45
Battus 47
Aglauros and Envy 48
Europa and the bull 51

Book 3 55

Cadmus 55
Diana and Actaeon 59
Semele 63
Tiresias 65
Echo and Narcissus 66
Pentheus and Bacchus 71

Acoetes and the Tyrrhenian sailors 73

Book 4 79
The daughters of Minyas 79
Pyramus and Thisbe 81
Mars and Venus 84
Leucothoe and Clytie 85
Salmacis and Hermaphroditus 87
The daughters of Minyas become bats 91
Athamas and Ino 92
Cadmus and Harmonia 96
Perseus and Atlas 97
Perseus and Andromeda 99
Medusa 102

Book 5 105
Perseus and Phineus 105
Minerva visits the Muses 112
The daughters of Pierus 114
Ceres and Proserpina 115
Arethusa 122
Triptolemus and Lyncus 124
The Pierides become magpies 125

Book 6 127
Arachne 127
Niobe 131
Latona and the Lycian peasants 136
Marsyas 138
Pelops 139
Tereus, Procne and Philomela 139
Boreas and Orithyia 147

Book 7 149
Jason and Medea 149
Aeson made young 154
The death of Pelias 158

Medea's flight 159
Theseus and Aegeus 161
Minos and Aeacus 163
The plague at Aegina 165
The Myrmidons 167
Cephalus and Procris 169

Book 8 177
Scylla and Minos 177
The Minotaur and Ariadne 182
Daedalus and Icarus 183
Perdix 184
The Calydonian boar hunt 185
Althaea and the death of Meleager 191
Theseus at the house of Achelous 194
The Echinades and Perimele 195
Philemon and Baucis 196
Erysichthon and his daughter 199

Book 9 205
Achelous and Hercules 205
Nessus and Deianira 208
The death of Hercules 209
Alcmena and Galanthis 213
Dryope 215
Iolaus and the sons of Callirhoe 217
Miletus 218
Byblis and Caunus 219
Iphis and Ianthe 225

Book 10 231
Orpheus and Eurydice 231
The trees gather to Orpheus 234
Cyparissus 234
The song of Orpheus: Ganymede 236
Hyacinthus 236
The Cerastae and the Propoetides 238

Pygmalion 239
Myrrha 241
The birth of Adonis 247
Venus and Adonis 247
Atalanta and Hippomenes 249
The death of Adonis 253

Book 11 255
The death of Orpheus 255
Midas and the golden touch 257
Midas' ears 259
Laomedon and the walls of Troy 261
Peleus and Thetis 262
Peleus and Ceyx 263
Daedalion 264
The wolf 266
Ceyx and Alcyone 268
The House of Sleep 273
Aesacus 277

Book 12 281
The Greeks at Aulis 281
The House of Rumor 282
Achilles and Cycnus 283
Nestor's tale: Caeneus 286
The battle of the Lapiths and the Centaurs 288
Cyllarus and Hylonome 293
The end of Caeneus 295
Periclymenus 297
The death of Achilles 298

Book 13 301
The contest for the arms: Ajax 301
The speech of Ulysses 305
The death of Ajax 313
The fall of Troy 313
Polyxena 315

Hecuba's revenge 317
Memnon 319
Aeneas and Anius 320
Scylla 324
Galatea, Acis and Polyphemus 324
Glaucus 328

Book 14 331
Glaucus, Scylla and Circe 331
Aeneas and Dido 333
The Sibyl of Cumae 334
Achaemenides 336
Ulysses and Circe 338
Picus and Canens 341
The companions of Diomedes 344
The Apulian shepherd 346
The ships of Aeneas 347
Aeneas made a god 349
The kings of Alba 350
Pomona and Vertumnus 350
Iphis and Anaxarete 353
Romulus and Hersilia 355

Book 15 359
Numa; Myscelus and Croton 359
The teaching of Pythagoras 361
Numa and Egeria 372
Hippolytus 373
Tages and Cipus 375
Aesculapius comes to Rome 377
Julius Caesar made a god 381
Epilogue 384

INTRODUCTION

"My mind is bent on telling of bodies changed into new forms." So Ovid (43 BC–AD 17) opens the *Metamorphoses*, an epic of some 12,000 lines of Latin verse in fifteen books, finished around AD 8, the year the emperor Augustus banished him to the shores of the Black Sea. It runs in one unbroken song from the creation of the world out of chaos to Ovid's own day, linking more than two hundred stories in which people are turned into trees, stones, birds, animals, rivers and stars.

Many of the best-known myths of the ancient world reach us in Ovid's telling: Apollo and Daphne, Echo and Narcissus, Pyramus and Thisbe, Daedalus and Icarus, Philemon and Baucis, Orpheus and Eurydice, Pygmalion, Midas. Stories nest inside stories, gods punish and desire, and the moment of change is described with uncanny precision. The tone moves easily from comedy to horror to grief, and the poem ends with the philosopher Pythagoras' teaching that everything changes and nothing dies, and with Ovid's claim that his work will outlive him.

The *Metamorphoses* was among the most read books of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, a storehouse of myth for Chaucer, Shakespeare, Titian and Bernini. The translation here is in prose, passage by passage beside the Latin.

Book 1

Creation to Phaethon
The world made from chaos; the four ages; the flood; Apollo and Daphne; Io; Phaethon's parentage.

PROLOGUE

Ovid announces his subject, bodies changed into new forms, from the world's beginning to his own day.

1.1 My mind moves me to tell of forms changed into new bodies. Gods, since you changed those too, breathe your favor on what I have begun, and spin out an unbroken song from the very first origin of the world down to my own times.

THE CREATION

A god separates Chaos into earth, sea, air and sky, and the first human beings are made.

1.5 Before the sea and the lands and the sky that covers everything, nature had a single face throughout the whole world, and they called it Chaos: a rough, unordered mass, nothing but inert weight, and the warring seeds of ill-joined things heaped together in one place. No Titan yet offered his light to the world. No Phoebe renewed her fresh horns by waxing. The earth did not hang in the surrounding air, balanced by its own weight, and Amphitrite had not stretched out her arms along the long margin of the lands. Where there was air, there too were earth and sea and ether. So the earth could not be stood on, the water could not be swum, and the air had no light. Nothing kept its own form. One thing stood in the way of another, because in

a single body cold things fought with hot, wet with dry, soft with hard, and things with weight against things without it.[1]

1.21 A god, a kindlier nature, settled this strife. He cut the lands off from the sky and the waters off from the lands, and he separated the clear heavens from the thick air. When he had unwound these and freed them from the blind heap, he bound them, each set apart in its place, in harmonious peace. The fiery, weightless force of the vaulted sky flashed upward and made itself a place in the highest citadel. Next to it in lightness and in position is air. Earth, denser than these, drew the heavy elements down with it and was pressed down by its own weight. The encircling water took the outermost place and held the solid globe in check. When he, whichever of the gods he was, had arranged that mass in this way, cut it up, and shaped what he had cut into members, he first rolled the earth into the form of a great ball, so that it would not be uneven on any side.

1.36 Then he poured out the seas and ordered them to swell under the rushing winds and to surround the shores of the encircled earth. He added springs as well, and vast pools and lakes, and he bound the down-flowing rivers within slanting banks. Scattered in different places, some of these are swallowed by the earth itself, while others reach the sea, and there, received into the plain of freer water, they beat against shores instead of banks. He ordered the plains to stretch out, the valleys to sink, the woods to be covered with leaves, and the rocky mountains to rise. And as two zones cut the sky on the right and as many on the left, with a fifth hotter than these, so the god's care marked off the enclosed mass by the same number, and as many regions are stamped upon the earth. 1.49 Of these, the middle one cannot be lived in because of the heat. Deep snow covers two. Between them he placed two more and gave them a temperate climate, mixing flame with cold. Above these hangs the air, which is heavier than fire by exactly as much as it is lighter than earth and water. There he ordered the mists to

1 Titan here is the Sun, Phoebe the Moon, and Amphitrite, a sea goddess, stands for the sea.

settle, and the clouds, and the thunder that would shake human minds, and the winds that make lightning flashes together with thunderbolts. Yet the builder of the world did not allow the winds to hold the air everywhere at will. Even now, though each of them governs his blasts in a separate tract, they can scarcely be kept from tearing the world apart, so fierce is the discord among the brothers.

1.61 Eurus withdrew to Aurora and the Nabataean kingdoms, to Persia and the ridges that lie beneath the morning rays. The evening and the shores warmed by the setting sun lie nearest to Zephyrus. Bristling Boreas seized Scythia and the seven stars of the Plow. The land opposite is drenched with constant clouds and rain from Auster. Over all these he set the clear ether, which has no weight and holds none of the dregs of earth. Scarcely had he walled everything off within fixed boundaries when the stars, long hidden and pressed beneath that mass, began to blaze out across the whole sky. And so that no region would be left without its own living creatures, the stars and the forms of the gods occupy the floor of heaven. The waters fell to the shining fish to dwell in, the earth took in the wild beasts, and the moving air the birds.[2]

1.76 Still missing was a creature holier than these, more capable of lofty thought, one that could rule over the rest. Then the human being was born. Perhaps that craftsman of things, the source of a better world, made him from divine seed. Or perhaps the earth, newly made and only lately parted from the high ether, still held seeds of its kindred sky, and the son of Iapetus mixed it with rainwater and molded it into the likeness of the gods who govern all things. And while the other animals bend down and look at the ground, he gave the human being an uplifted face and told him to look at the sky and raise his upturned gaze to the stars. So the earth, which a moment before had been

2 Eurus, Zephyrus, Boreas and Auster are the east, west, north and south winds. The Nabataeans lived in northern Arabia.

rough and shapeless, was changed and put on the unknown shapes of human beings.[3]

THE FOUR AGES

The golden, silver, bronze and iron ages follow one another, each worse than the last.

1.89 Golden was the first age sown. With no one to enforce it, of its own accord, without law, it kept faith and did what was right. Punishment and fear were absent. No threatening words were read on bronze tablets fixed in place, and no suppliant crowd trembled before the face of its judge. Without anyone to enforce the law, they were safe. Not yet had the pine been felled on its mountains and come down into the flowing waves to visit a foreign world, and mortals knew no shores but their own. Not yet were towns surrounded by steep ditches. There was no straight war trumpet, no curved horn of bronze, no helmet, no sword. With no need for soldiers, nations lived out their gentle leisure free from care. 1.101 The earth herself, owing no service, untouched by the hoe and wounded by no plowshare, gave everything of her own accord. Content with foods that grew without compulsion, people gathered the fruit of the arbutus and mountain strawberries, cornelian cherries and blackberries clinging to the tough brambles, and acorns that had fallen from Jupiter's spreading tree. Spring was eternal, and gentle zephyrs with their warm breezes caressed flowers born without seed. Soon the unplowed earth bore grain as well, and the field, never left to lie fallow, grew white with heavy ears. Now rivers of milk flowed, now rivers of nectar, and golden honey dripped from the green holm oak.[4]

1.113 After Saturn had been sent down to dark Tartarus and the world was under Jupiter, the silver race came in, worse than gold but more precious than tawny bronze. Jupiter shortened the time of the old spring, and through winters, summers,

3 The son of Iapetus is the Titan Prometheus, in myth the maker of humankind.
4 Jupiter's tree is the oak.

unsteady autumns and a brief spring he completed the year in four seasons. Then for the first time the air glowed white-hot, scorched by dry heat, and icicles hung, bound fast by the winds. Then for the first time people went into houses. Their houses were caves and thick shrubs and twigs bound together with bark. Then for the first time the seeds of Ceres were buried in long furrows, and bullocks groaned under the weight of the yoke.[5]

1.125 Third after that came the bronze race, fiercer in temper and quicker to take up savage arms, but not yet wicked. The last is of hard iron. At once every crime burst into this age of baser metal. Shame fled, and truth and faith, and in their place came tricks and deceits, plots and violence and the wicked love of possessing. The sailor spread his sails to the winds, though he did not yet know them well. Keels that had long stood on high mountains leapt over unfamiliar waves. And the wary surveyor marked out with long boundary lines the ground that had once been common to all, like the light of the sun and the air. 1.137 The rich soil was no longer asked only for crops and the food it owed. People went down into the bowels of the earth, and the wealth she had hidden away and set close to the Stygian shades was dug up, a goad to evil. Now harmful iron had come forth, and gold more harmful than iron. Forth came War, which fights with both and brandishes clashing arms in a bloody hand. People live by plunder. Guest is not safe from host, nor father-in-law from son-in-law, and even between brothers affection is rare. The husband plots his wife's death, the wife her husband's. Terrible stepmothers mix lurid aconite. The son looks into his father's years before their time. Devotion lies defeated, and the maiden Astraea, last of the heavenly ones, has left the earth, soaked with slaughter.[6]

5 Saturn, ruler of the golden age, was overthrown by his son Jupiter.
6 Astraea, the maiden goddess of Justice, became the constellation Virgo.

THE GIANTS

The Giants pile mountains to attack heaven; from their blood springs a violent race.

1.151 And so that the high heavens would be no safer than the earth, they say the Giants grasped at the kingdom of heaven and piled up mountains to build a way to the lofty stars. Then the almighty father hurled his thunderbolt, shattered Olympus, and shook Pelion off Ossa, which lay beneath it. When those dreadful bodies lay buried under their own mass, they say that Earth, drenched with the copious blood of her sons, was soaked through. She gave life to the warm gore and, so that some memorial of her offspring would remain, turned it into human form. But that stock too despised the gods, lusted for savage slaughter and was violent. You could tell they were born of blood.[7]

LYCAON

Jupiter tells the gods how Lycaon tried to kill him and served him human flesh, and became a wolf.

1.163 When the father, Saturn's son, saw this from his highest citadel, he groaned. He recalled the foul feast at Lycaon's table, not yet widely known because the deed was recent, and conceived in his mind a vast anger worthy of Jupiter. He called a council, and nothing delayed those he summoned. There is a road on high, plain to see when the sky is clear. It is called the Milky Way, marked out by its very whiteness. By this road the gods travel to the halls of the great Thunderer and his royal home. To the right and left, the halls of the noble gods are thronged, their doors thrown open. The common gods live elsewhere, scattered in different places. Here the mighty and illustrious heaven-dwellers have set their household gods. This is the place which,

7 Pelion and Ossa are mountains in Thessaly that the Giants stacked on Olympus to climb to heaven.

if I may speak boldly, I would not be afraid to call the Palatine of great heaven.[8]

1.177 So when the gods had taken their seats in the marble chamber, he himself, on a higher seat and leaning on his ivory scepter, shook the awesome locks of his head three times, four times, and with them he shook the earth, the sea and the stars. Then he opened his indignant lips in words like these: "I was not more anxious for the rule of the world in that stormy time when each of the snake-footed ones was preparing to throw his hundred arms around a captured sky. For fierce as that enemy was, that war still hung on a single body and sprang from a single origin. Now, wherever Nereus roars around the whole world, I must destroy the race of mortals. I swear it by the rivers below, which glide beneath the earth through the Stygian grove! Everything has been tried first. But a body past healing must be cut away with the sword, so that the sound part is not dragged down too.[9]

1.192 I have demigods, I have rustic divinities: nymphs and fauns and satyrs and the silvani who live on the mountains. Since we do not yet think them worthy of the honor of heaven, let us at least allow them to live in the lands we have given them. Or do you believe, gods above, that they will be safe enough, when Lycaon, known for his savagery, has laid a trap for me, who hold and rule the thunderbolt, who hold and rule you?" They all roared together and, burning with zeal, demanded the man who had dared such things. So too, when an impious band raged to blot out the Roman name in Caesar's blood, the human race was stunned with terror at so great and sudden a ruin, and the whole world shuddered. Nor is the devotion of your people less pleasing to you, Augustus, than theirs was to Jupiter. When he had checked their murmuring with his voice and hand, they all held their silence. When the clamor had died

8 Augustus lived on the Palatine Hill in Rome. Lycaon was a king of Arcadia.
9 The snake-footed ones are the Giants. Nereus, an old sea god, stands for the sea.

away, subdued by their ruler's authority, Jupiter broke the silence again with these words:[10]

1.209 "He has certainly paid the penalty, so put that worry aside. But I will tell you what the crime was and what the punishment. Reports of how evil the times were had reached my ears. Hoping they were false, I glided down from the top of Olympus and, a god in human form, traveled the lands. It would take too long to list how much wickedness I found everywhere. The reports themselves fell short of the truth. I had crossed Maenalus, bristling with the lairs of wild beasts, Cyllene, and the pine woods of chilly Lycaeus. From there I entered the seat and inhospitable house of the Arcadian tyrant, as late twilight was drawing on the night. I gave signs that a god had come, and the people had begun to pray. Lycaon first mocked their pious prayers, then said, 'I will put it to an open test whether he is a god or a mortal. The truth will not be in doubt.'[11] 1.224 At night, when I was heavy with sleep, he prepared to kill me by an unexpected death. That was the test of truth that pleased him. Nor was he content with that. With a blade he cut the throat of a hostage sent from the Molossian people, and then, while the limbs were still half alive, he softened some in boiling water and roasted others over a fire set beneath them. The moment he placed this on the table, I, with avenging flame, brought the roof down upon household gods worthy of their master. He fled in terror, and when he reached the silence of the countryside, he howled and tried in vain to speak. His mouth drew its frenzy from himself. With his usual lust for slaughter he turned on the flocks, and even now he delights in blood. His clothes turned into shaggy hair, his arms into legs. He became a wolf, yet he kept traces of his old form.[12] 1.238 He has the same gray hair, the same violence in his face. The same eyes gleam, and the same image of savagery remains. One house has fallen, but not one

10 Probably the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 BC, though some take it as a conspiracy against Augustus.

11 Maenalus, Cyllene and Lycaeus are mountains in Arcadia, in the central Peloponnese.

12 The Molossians were a people of Epirus, in northwestern Greece.

house alone deserved to perish. Wherever the earth extends, the wild Fury reigns. You would think they had sworn an oath to crime. Let them all quickly pay the penalties they have earned. That is my sentence, and it stands." Some approved Jupiter's words aloud and added goads to his fury, while others played their part by assenting. Yet the loss of the human race grieved them all. They asked what the earth would look like without mortals, who would bring incense to the altars, and whether he meant to hand the lands over to wild beasts to ravage. As they asked these questions, the king of the gods told them not to be alarmed, since the rest would be his concern, and he promised a race unlike the first people, of miraculous origin.[13]

THE FLOOD

Jupiter and Neptune drown the world; only the peak of Parnassus stays above the water.

1.253 And now he was about to scatter his thunderbolts over all the lands. But he feared that so many fires might set the sacred ether ablaze and the long axis of the heavens might catch fire. He also remembered that it was fated that a time would come when sea and earth and the palace of heaven would be seized by fire and burn, and the besieged mass of the world would collapse. The weapons forged by the hands of the Cyclopes were put away. He chose a different punishment: to destroy the mortal race beneath the waves and send down rain from every part of the sky. At once he shut Aquilo in the caves of Aeolus, together with every blast that chases gathered clouds away, and he let Notus loose. Notus flew out on dripping wings, his terrible face shrouded in pitch-black gloom. His beard was heavy with rain, water streamed from his white hair, mists sat on his brow, and his feathers and the folds of his robe dripped with dew.[14]

1.268 When his hand squeezed the clouds that hung far and wide, there was a crash, and dense rain poured down from the

13 The Furies (Erinyes) were spirits of vengeance who pursued crime.

sky. Juno's messenger, Iris, dressed in many colors, drew up water and brought fresh supplies to the clouds. The crops were flattened, the farmers' prayers lay wept over and lost, and the labor of a long year perished for nothing. Nor was Jupiter's anger content with his own sky. His sea-blue brother helped him with waves of his own. He summoned the rivers, and when they had entered their sovereign's house, he said, "There is no time now for a long speech. Pour out your strength, for that is what is needed! Open your houses, clear away your dams, and give your streams free rein!" He had given the order. They went back, loosened the mouths of their springs, and rolled toward the sea in an unbridled course.

1.283 He himself struck the earth with his trident, and it trembled and with the shock opened paths for the waters. The rivers burst their bounds and rushed across the open plains, sweeping away crops along with orchards, flocks and people, houses and shrines with their sacred objects. If any house still stood and could withstand so great a disaster without falling, a higher wave covered its roof all the same, and its towers lay hidden beneath the flood. And now sea and land could not be told apart. Everything was sea, and the sea had no shores. One man took to a hill. Another sat in a curved boat and pulled his oars where he had lately plowed. One sailed over his crops or the roof of his sunken farmhouse, another caught a fish in the top of an elm.

1.297 An anchor, as chance would have it, lodged in a green meadow, or curved keels scraped the vineyards below. Where slender goats had lately cropped the grass, ungainly seals now laid their bodies down. The Nereids marveled at groves and cities and houses under water. Dolphins took over the woods, charged into the high branches and buffeted the swaying oaks. The wolf swam among the sheep, the wave carried tawny lions, the wave carried tigers. The boar's lightning strength was no help to him, nor were swift legs to the stag as he was swept

14 Aquilo is the north wind, which clears the sky; Notus is the rainy south wind. Aeolus is the keeper of the winds.

away. The wandering bird searched long for land where it could settle, and finally fell into the sea on weary wings. The boundless license of the sea had buried the hills, and strange waves beat against the mountain peaks. Most were carried off by the water. Those the water spared were overcome by long fasting, for lack of food.

DEUCALION AND PYRRHA

Deucalion and Pyrrha survive, consult Themis, and repeople the earth by throwing stones behind them.

1.313 Phocis separates the Aonian fields from the fields of Oeta. It was fertile land while it was land, but at that time it had become part of the sea, a broad plain of sudden waters. There a steep mountain reaches for the stars with its two peaks. Its name is Parnassus, and its summits rise above the clouds. When Deucalion came to rest there with the partner of his bed, carried in a small boat, for the sea had covered everything else, they worshiped the Corycian nymphs, the divinities of the mountain, and prophetic Themis, who held the oracle in those days. No man was better than he or more devoted to justice, and no woman more reverent toward the gods than she. When Jupiter saw the world flooded with standing water, and saw that only one man was left of so many thousands just now, and only one woman left of so many thousands just now, both innocent, both worshipers of the gods, he scattered the clouds, drove off the rain with the north wind, and showed the lands to the sky and the heavens to the lands.[15] 1.330 The sea's anger did not last either. The ruler of the deep laid down his three-pronged weapon and calmed the waters. He called sea-blue Triton, who rose above the depths, his shoulders covered with the purple shells that grow on them, and told him to blow into his echoing conch and call back the waves and rivers with the signal. Triton took up the hollow horn, a twisted shell that widens from its lowest spiral, the horn

15 Aonia is Boeotia. The Corycian nymphs lived in a cave on Parnassus, and Themis, goddess of right, held the oracle at Delphi before Apollo.

which, once it has filled with air in mid-sea, fills with its voice the shores lying beneath the rising and the setting Phoebus. This time too, as it touched the god's mouth, wet with his dripping beard, and was blown to sound the ordered retreat, it was heard by all the waters of land and sea, and it held in check all the waters that heard it.[16] 1.343 Now the sea had a shore, the riverbeds held brimming streams, the rivers sank, and the hills seemed to rise up out of them. The ground emerged, the land grew as the waters shrank, and after many days the woods showed their bare tops, with mud still clinging to their leaves. The world had been restored. When Deucalion saw it empty and the desolate lands keeping a deep silence, tears welled up and he spoke to Pyrrha: "O sister, O wife, O only woman left alive, joined to me first by our common race, through our fathers who were brothers, then by our marriage bed, and now by our very dangers: of all the lands that the setting and the rising sun look upon, we two are the whole crowd. The sea has taken everything else.[17]

1.356 Even now our hold on life is not secure enough. Even now the clouds terrify my mind. What would you feel now, poor woman, if fate had spared you without me? How could you bear your fear alone? Who would comfort you in your grief? For believe me, if the sea had you too, I would follow you, my wife, and the sea would have me too. Oh, if only I could restore the peoples by my father's arts and pour souls into molded earth! As it is, the mortal race survives in the two of us. So the gods have willed it, and we remain as the last specimens of humankind." He had spoken, and they wept. They resolved to pray to the heavenly power and seek help through the sacred oracle.

1.369 There was no delay. Together they went to the waters of the Cephisus, which, though not yet clear, were already cutting through their familiar channel. Then, when they had drawn water and sprinkled it on their clothes and heads, they turned

16 Triton is a sea god, the son of Neptune.

17 Deucalion was the son of Prometheus and Pyrrha the daughter of his brother Epimetheus. As cousins, he can call her "sister."

their steps toward the shrine of the holy goddess. Its gables were pale with foul moss, and its altars stood without fires. When they reached the temple steps, each of them fell face-down on the ground and, trembling, pressed kisses on the cold stone. Then they said, "If the gods are won over and softened by righteous prayers, if the anger of the gods can be turned aside, tell us, Themis, by what art the loss of our race can be repaired, and bring help, most gentle one, to a drowned world." The goddess was moved and gave her oracle: "Leave the temple, veil your heads, loosen your girded robes, and throw the bones of your great mother behind your backs."[18]

1.384 For a long time they stood stunned. Pyrrha was the first to break the silence. She refused to obey the goddess's command and, her voice trembling, begged her forgiveness, for she was afraid of wounding her mother's shade by throwing her bones. Meanwhile they went back over the words of the oracle they had been given, dark and hidden in obscurity, and turned them over in their minds and between themselves. Then the son of Prometheus soothed the daughter of Epimetheus with calming words and said, "Either my cleverness deceives me, or oracles are holy and urge no crime. Our great mother is the earth. I think the stones in the earth's body are what are called her bones. These are what we are told to throw behind our backs." Though the Titan's daughter was moved by her husband's reading, her hope still wavered, so deeply did they both distrust the heavenly counsel. But what harm can it do to try? They went off, veiled their heads, ungirded their tunics, and threw the stones, as ordered, behind their footsteps.[19]

1.400 The stones (who would believe this if antiquity did not stand witness?) began to lay aside their hardness and stiffness, to soften little by little, and once softened, to take on shape. Soon, as they grew and a gentler nature came over them, a kind of human form could be seen, though not yet distinct, like a figure begun in marble, not finished enough and very like rough

18 The Cephisus is a river in Phocis, below Parnassus.
19 Pyrrha's father, Epimetheus, was himself a Titan, a son of Iapetus.

statues. The part of them that was moist with some juice and earthy was turned to serve as flesh. What was solid and could not bend was changed into bones. What had just been a vein kept the same name. In a short time, by the power of the gods above, the stones thrown by the man's hands took on the appearance of men, and from the woman's throw woman was made anew. That is why we are a hard race, inured to toil, and we give proof of the origin from which we were born.[20]

APOLLO AND THE PYTHON

The earth breeds new creatures, among them the Python, which Apollo kills, founding the Pythian Games.

1.416 The other animals, in all their different forms, the earth produced of her own accord. The moisture left from before grew warm in the fire of the sun, the mud and the wet marshes swelled in the heat, and the fertile seeds of things, nourished in the life-giving soil as in a mother's womb, grew and in time took on some kind of shape. In the same way, when the seven-streamed Nile has left the soaked fields and returned its waters to their old bed, and the fresh silt has been baked by the heavenly star, the farmers turning the clods find a great many animals. Among them they see some just begun, at the very moment of their birth, and some unfinished and lacking their proper parts. Often in one and the same body one part is alive while the other is still raw earth. For when moisture and heat are blended in due measure, they conceive, and from these two everything arises. Fire is at war with water, yet moist heat creates all things, and this discordant harmony is fit for breeding. 1.434 So when the earth, muddy from the recent flood, grew hot again under the sun's rays from the sky and its deep heat, it brought forth countless species. Some of the old shapes it restored, some new monsters it created. She would not have wished it, but it was then that she bore you too, huge Python, and you, unknown serpent,

20 Latin vena means both a vein in rock and a vein in the body, so the word could keep its name.

were a terror to the new peoples, so much of the mountainside did you cover. The god of the bow, who had never before used such weapons except on deer and fleeing roe, destroyed him, weighed down with a thousand shafts, his quiver almost emptied, the poison pouring out through the black wounds. And so that time could not wipe out the fame of the deed, he founded sacred games with crowded contests, called the Pythian after the serpent he had subdued. Here any young man who won with fist, feet or wheels received the honor of a crown of oak leaves. There was no laurel yet, and Phoebus wreathed his temples, handsome with long hair, with leaves from any tree.[21]

APOLLO AND DAPHNE

Cupid makes Apollo love Daphne and Daphne flee him; she escapes by being turned into a laurel.

1.452 Phoebus' first love was Daphne, daughter of Peneus, and it was not blind chance that gave her to him but Cupid's cruel anger. The Delian, still proud from his recent conquest of the serpent, had seen Cupid bending his bow and drawing the string tight, and had said, "What business have you, playful boy, with a warrior's weapons? That gear suits my shoulders. I can deal sure wounds to wild beasts and to my enemies; I have just laid low with countless arrows the swollen Python, whose plague-bearing belly pressed down so many acres. You be content to stir up some love affairs or other with your torch, and do not lay claim to my glories." Venus' son answered him, "Your bow may pierce everything, Phoebus, but mine will pierce you. As far as all living things fall short of a god, so far does your glory fall short of mine."[22]

1.466 He said, and beating the air with his wings he swiftly alighted on the shady height of Parnassus. From his arrow-bearing quiver he drew two shafts with opposite effects: one drives

21 Python was the serpent of Delphi; the Pythian Games were held there in Apollo's honor.

22 Peneus is a river of Thessaly and its god, Daphne's father.

love away, the other makes it. The one that makes it is golden and gleams with a sharp point; the one that drives it away is blunt and has lead beneath the shaft. The second the god fixed in the nymph, Peneus' daughter, but with the first he wounded Apollo, piercing through his bones to the marrow. At once the one was in love; the other fled the very name of lover. She delighted in the darkness of the woods and the skins of the beasts she caught, a rival of the virgin Phoebe. A ribbon held back her hair, which fell in no order. Many sought her, but she turned away from her suitors, and, intolerant of men and knowing none, she roamed the pathless groves, caring nothing for what Hymen is, or Love, or marriage.[23] 1.481 Often her father said, "Daughter, you owe me a son-in-law"; often her father said, "Child, you owe me grandchildren." But she hated the wedding torch as if it were a crime. Her lovely face flushed with a modest blush, and clinging to her father's neck with coaxing arms she said, "Dearest father, let me enjoy my virginity forever. Diana's father granted her this before." He did give in; but that loveliness of yours forbids you to be what you wish, and your beauty fights against your prayer. Phoebus loved; he saw Daphne and longed to marry her; what he longed for he hoped for, and his own oracles deceived him. As light stubble burns once the ears of grain have been reaped, as hedges blaze from torches that a traveler happened to bring too close or left behind at daybreak, so the god went up in flames, so he burned in all his heart and fed a barren love with hope. 1.497 He looked at her hair hanging unadorned on her neck and said, "What if it were combed?" He saw her eyes flashing with fire like stars; he saw her lips, which it is not enough merely to have seen; he praised her fingers and her hands, her forearms, and her arms bare beyond the middle. Whatever was hidden he imagined finer still. She fled, swifter than the light breeze, and did not stop at these words as he called her back: "Nymph, daughter of Peneus, I beg you, stay! I am not chasing you as an enemy. Nymph, stay! So the lamb flees the wolf, so the deer the lion, so doves on trembling wings flee

23 Phoebe here is Diana, the virgin huntress; Hymen is the god of weddings.

the eagle, each its own enemy. Love is my reason for pursuing you. How wretched I am! Don't fall headlong, don't let the brambles scratch legs that do not deserve to be hurt, don't let me be the cause of your pain! The ground where you are hurrying is rough. Run more slowly, I beg you, and check your flight; I will pursue more slowly myself.

1.512 Yet ask whom you are pleasing. I am no mountain-dweller, no shepherd; I am no shaggy fellow guarding herds and flocks around here. You don't know, rash girl, you don't know whom you are fleeing, and that is why you flee. The land of Delphi serves me, and Claros and Tenedos and the palace of Patara. Jupiter is my father. Through me what will be, what has been and what is are revealed; through me songs are brought into harmony with strings. My arrow is sure indeed, but one arrow is surer than mine, the one that has wounded my heart when it was free. Medicine is my invention; throughout the world I am called the Helper, and the power of herbs is subject to me. Ah—love cannot be healed by any herbs, and the arts that help everyone else do not help their master!"[24]

1.525 He would have said more, but the daughter of Peneus ran from him in fear and left him there with his words unfinished—and even then she looked lovely. The winds bared her body, the breezes blowing against her set her clothes fluttering, and a light air sent her hair streaming behind her; her beauty was only increased by flight. But the young god could no longer bear to waste his coaxing words, and, just as Love himself urged, he followed her tracks at full speed. As when a Gallic hound sees a hare in an open field, and one runs for its prey, the other for its life—the one, seeming about to fasten on it, hopes any moment now to catch it, and grazes its heels with outstretched muzzle, while the other is unsure whether it has been caught, snatches itself from the very jaws and leaves behind the mouth that touches it—so it was with the god and the girl: he was swift with hope, she with fear. 1.540 But the pursuer, helped by the wings of

24 Claros, Tenedos and Patara were centers of Apollo's worship and oracles in the eastern Aegean and Asia Minor.

Love, was faster. He gave her no rest, pressed close on her back as she fled, and breathed on the hair spread over her neck. Her strength spent, she grew pale, and overcome by the strain of her swift flight, she looked at the waters of Peneus and said, "Help me, father, if you rivers have divine power! Change and destroy this shape that has pleased too well!" Her prayer was hardly finished when a heavy numbness seized her limbs. Her soft breast was wrapped in thin bark, her hair grew into leaves, her arms into branches; her foot, so swift a moment ago, stuck fast in sluggish roots; a treetop took her face. Only her radiance remained. Even so Phoebus loved her. He placed his right hand on the trunk and felt her heart still trembling beneath the new bark, and, embracing the branches in his arms as if they were limbs, he kissed the wood; yet the wood shrank from his kisses.

1.557 The god said to her, "Since you cannot be my wife, you will at least be my tree. My hair, my lyre, my quivers will always have you, laurel. You will attend Latin generals when the joyful voice sings out the triumph and the Capitol sees the long processions. You will stand at the doorposts of Augustus as their most faithful guardian, before his doors, and will protect the oak between. And as my head is forever young, with uncut hair, you too must always wear the lasting honor of your leaves." Paean had finished. The laurel nodded its newly made branches and seemed to move its top as if it were a head.[25]

IO

Jupiter rapes Io and turns her into a heifer; Juno sets hundred-eyed Argus to guard her.

1.568 There is a grove in Haemonia, closed in on every side by steep wooded slopes; they call it Tempe. Through it the Peneus, pouring out from the foot of Pindus, rolls on in foaming waters. Its heavy fall gathers clouds that drive along thin mists, showers spray on the treetops, and wearies far more than its neighbor-

25 Paean is a title of Apollo. Laurels flanked the door of Augustus' house on the Palatine, with the oak-leaf civic crown fixed between them.

hood with its roar. This is the home, this the seat, these are the inner chambers of the great river. Here, seated in a cave hollowed out of rock, he gave laws to the waters and to the nymphs who live in the waters. There the rivers of his country gathered first, not knowing whether to congratulate the father or console him: poplar-bearing Spercheus and restless Enipeus, old Apidanus, gentle Amphrysus and Aeas; and soon other rivers, which, wherever their impulse carries them, lead down to the sea their waters weary with wandering.[26]

1.583 Only Inachus was missing. Hidden away in the depths of his cave, he swelled his waters with his tears and, in utter misery, mourned his daughter Io as lost. He did not know whether she was alive or among the shades; but since he could not find her anywhere, he thought she was nowhere, and in his heart he feared worse. Jupiter had seen her returning from her father's river and had said, "Girl worthy of Jupiter, who will make some man or other happy in your bed, go into the shade of these deep woods"—and he had pointed to the shade of the woods—"while it is hot and the sun is at its highest in the middle of its course. If you are afraid to enter the lairs of wild beasts alone, you will go safely into the secret places of the woods with a god to protect you—and no common god, but I who hold the great scepter of heaven in my hand, I who hurl the roving thunderbolts.[27] 1.597 Don't run from me!"—for she was running. She had already left behind the pastures of Lerna and the tree-planted fields of Lyrcea when the god brought down a mist, hid the wide lands, stopped her flight and raped her. Meanwhile Juno looked down into the midst of the fields and wondered that drifting clouds had made it look like night under the bright day. She saw that they were not river mists and did not rise from the damp earth, and she looked around to see where her husband was, as one who knew by now the secret affairs of a husband caught so many times. When she did not find him in the sky, she said, "Either I am mistaken or I am wronged," and gliding down

26 Haemonia is an old name for Thessaly; Tempe is the valley of the river Peneus.
27 Inachus is the river of Argos and its god, Io's father.

from the height of heaven she stood on the earth and ordered the clouds to withdraw. He had sensed his wife's coming in advance and had changed the daughter of Inachus into a sleek heifer.

1.612 Even as a cow she was beautiful. Saturn's daughter, though against her will, admired the heifer's looks, and asked, as if she did not know the truth, whose she was, where she came from, and from what herd. Jupiter lied that she had been born from the earth, so that there would be no more questions about her origin. Saturn's daughter asked for her as a gift. What was he to do? It was cruel to hand over his love, but not to give her would look suspicious. Shame urged him one way, love dissuaded him the other. Shame would have been overcome by love; but if a cow, so trifling a gift, were refused to one who shared his blood and his bed, the cow might seem to be no cow. Though her rival had been given to her, the goddess did not at once lay aside all her fear; she distrusted Jupiter and was anxious that he might steal her away, until she handed her over to Argus, son of Arestor, to be guarded.

1.625 Argus had a head ringed with a hundred eyes. Of these, two at a time took their rest in turn, while the rest kept watch and stayed at their post. However he stood, he was looking at Io; even with his back turned, he had Io before his eyes. By day he let her graze; when the sun was deep beneath the earth, he shut her in and put chains around her undeserving neck. She fed on the leaves of trees and bitter grass; instead of a bed, the poor creature lay on the earth, which did not always have grass, and she drank from muddy streams. When she wanted to stretch out her arms to Argus in supplication, she had no arms to stretch out to Argus; when she tried to complain, a lowing came from her mouth, and she was terrified at the sounds, frightened by her own voice.

1.639 She came, too, to the banks where she had so often played, the banks of Inachus; and when she saw her new horns in the water, she was terrified and fled in panic from herself. The Naiads did not know who she was; Inachus himself did not know.

But she followed her father and followed her sisters, let herself be touched, and offered herself to them as they marveled. Old Inachus had plucked some grass and held it out to her. She licked his hands and kissed her father's palms, and could not hold back her tears; if only words would come, she would beg for help and tell her name and what had happened to her. Instead of words, the writing her hoof traced in the dust gave the sad proof of her changed body.

1.651 "How wretched I am!" cried her father Inachus, and, hanging on the horns and the snow-white neck of the moaning heifer, he said again, "How wretched I am! Are you the daughter I searched for through all the lands? Unfound, you were a lighter grief than you are now that you are found. You are silent and give no words in answer to mine; you only heave sighs from deep in your breast and—the one thing you can do—low in reply to what I say. And I, knowing nothing, was preparing a marriage chamber and wedding torches for you; my first hope was of a son-in-law, my second of grandchildren. Now you must take a husband from the herd, now a son from the herd. Nor may I end such great grief by death; it is my misfortune to be a god, and the door of death, shut against me, stretches out my mourning through all eternity."

1.664 As he lamented like this, starry Argus drove him away and dragged the daughter, torn from her father, off to distant pastures. He himself took up his place on the lofty summit of a mountain, where he sat and watched in every direction. The ruler of the gods could no longer bear the terrible suffering of Phoroneus' sister. He called his son, whom the shining Pleiad had borne, and ordered him to put Argus to death. It took him only a moment to put the wings on his feet, take the sleep-bringing wand in his powerful hand and put the cap on his hair. When he had arranged this, Jupiter's son leapt down from his father's citadel to the earth. There he took off his cap and laid aside his wings; only the wand he kept.[28]

28 Io's brother Phoroneus was an early king of Argos; Mercury's mother was Maia, one of the Pleiades.

1.676 With it, like a shepherd, he drove through the lonely countryside some goats he had rounded up on the way, and played on pipes of bound reeds. Captivated by the new sound, Juno's guard said, "You there, whoever you are, you could sit with me on this rock. There is no place where the grass is richer for a flock, and you can see the shade here suits shepherds." Atlas' grandson sat down, held back the passing day with his long talk, and tried, by playing on the joined reeds, to overcome the watching eyes. But Argus fought to conquer gentle sleep, and though sleep had been let in by some of his eyes, others still stayed awake. He asked, too—for the pipe had only recently been invented—how it had been invented.

PAN AND SYRINX

Mercury lulls Argus with the tale of Syrinx, turned into reeds, then kills him; Io is restored.

1.689 Then the god said, "In the cold mountains of Arcadia, among the hamadryads of Nonacris, there was one Naiad more celebrated than the rest; the nymphs called her Syrinx. More than once she had escaped the satyrs who chased her, and every god that the shady wood and the fertile countryside hold. She worshiped the Ortygian goddess in her pursuits and in her very virginity. Dressed in Diana's fashion, too, she could fool the eye and be taken for Latona's daughter, except that her bow was of horn and Diana's of gold. Even so she fooled people. As she was coming back from the Lycaean hill, Pan saw her, and, his head crowned with sharp pine needles, spoke these words"—it remained to tell the words, and how the nymph, scorning his pleas, fled through pathless country until she came to the calm stream of sandy Ladon; how here, when the waters blocked her course, she begged her sisters of the stream to change her; and how Pan, when he thought he had caught Syrinx at last, held marsh reeds instead of the nymph's body.[29] 1.707 And how, while

29 Ortygia, an old name for Delos, was Diana's birthplace; Nonacris and Mount Lycaeus are in Arcadia.

he sighed there, the air stirring in the reeds made a thin sound like someone lamenting; how the god, captivated by the new art and the sweetness of the voice, said, "This union with you will remain mine!"; and how in this way the reeds of unequal length, joined together with wax, kept the girl's name. The Cyllenian was about to tell all this when he saw that every eye had succumbed and their lights were covered in sleep. At once he checked his voice and deepened the slumber, stroking the drowsy eyes with his magic wand. Without delay, as Argus nodded, he struck him with his curved sword where the head meets the neck, threw him bleeding from the rock, and stained the steep cliff with blood. Argus, you lie dead; the light you had in so many eyes is put out, and a single night takes hold of a hundred eyes.

1.722 Saturn's daughter took the eyes and set them in the feathers of her bird, filling its tail with starry jewels. At once she blazed with anger and did not delay her vengeance. She set a horrifying Fury before the eyes and mind of her Argive rival, buried unseen goads in her breast, and drove her in terror, a fugitive, through the whole world. You, Nile, remained, the last stage of her boundless labor. As soon as she reached it, she sank down on her knees at the edge of the bank, stretched her neck back and lifted her face to the stars—the only thing she could lift—and with groans and tears and mournful lowing she seemed to complain to Jupiter and beg for an end to her sufferings.[30]

1.734 He threw his arms around his wife's neck and begged her to end the punishment at last, and he said, "Put aside your fears for the future: she will never be a cause of grief to you," and he called on the Stygian marshes to hear his words. As soon as the goddess was appeased, Io took on her former looks and became what she had been before. The bristles fled from her body, the horns shrank, the round of her eye narrowed, her gaping jaws contracted, her shoulders and hands returned, and the hoof split into five nails and vanished. Nothing of the cow's form remained in her except her whiteness. The nymph, content now

30 Juno's bird is the peacock.

with the service of two feet, stood upright; she was afraid to speak in case she lowed like a heifer, and timidly tried again the words she had so long left off.[31]

PHAETHON

Taunted that the Sun is not his father, Phaethon sets out to find him.

1.747 Now she is worshiped as a goddess, most celebrated, by crowds dressed in linen. Now Epaphus is believed at last to have been born from the seed of great Jupiter, and in cities everywhere he has temples joined to his mother's. His equal in spirit and in age was Phaethon, son of the Sun. Once, when Phaethon was boasting grandly, refusing to yield to him and proud of having Phoebus as his father, the grandson of Inachus could not bear it and said, "You are mad to believe everything your mother says; you are puffed up with the fantasy of a false father." Phaethon blushed, held back his anger out of shame, and brought Epaphus' insults to his mother Clymene.[32]

1.757 "To make you grieve the more, mother," he said, "I, so outspoken, I, so fierce, said nothing. I am ashamed that such insults could be spoken against me and could not be refuted. But if I really am born of heavenly stock, give me some sign of such great descent and claim me for heaven." He said this, threw his arms around his mother's neck, and begged her by his own head and Merops', and by his sisters' wedding torches, to give him proof of who his true father was. Whether you, Clymene, were moved more by Phaethon's prayers or by anger at the charge made against you is uncertain. You stretched both arms toward the sky and, gazing at the light of the sun,[33]

1.768 said, "By this radiance, brilliant with flashing rays, which hears and sees us, I swear to you, my son, that you are born of

31 The gods swore their most binding oaths by the Styx, the river of the underworld.

32 Io was identified with the Egyptian goddess Isis, whose worshipers wore linen; her son Epaphus was linked with the bull-god Apis.

33 Merops, king of Ethiopia, was Clymene's husband and Phaethon's supposed father.

this Sun you are looking at, of this Sun who governs the world. If I am lying, may he himself refuse to let me see him, and may this light be the last my eyes behold. It is no long labor for you to come to know your father's house: the home from which he rises borders on our land. If your heart is set on it, go, and you will learn the truth from him himself." At once, after his mother's words, Phaethon sprang up overjoyed, already grasping the heavens in his mind. He passed his own Ethiopians and the Indians who live beneath the fires of the sky, and eagerly made his way to the place where his father rises.

Book 2

Phaethon and Jupiter's loves
Phaethon drives the Sun's chariot; Callisto; the raven;
Aglauros and Envy; Europa and the bull.

THE PALACE OF THE SUN

The Sun swears to grant Phaethon's wish; Phaethon drives the chariot and sets the world on fire.

2.1 The palace of the Sun stood high on lofty columns, bright with glittering gold and with bronze that mimicked flame. Gleaming ivory covered its topmost gables, and its double doors shone with the radiance of silver. The workmanship surpassed the material, for there Mulciber had engraved the seas that encircle the lands at their center, the round of the lands, and the sky that hangs over that round. The waters hold the sea-blue gods: tuneful Triton, shifting Proteus, and Aegaeon, his arms clasping the huge backs of whales; Doris and her daughters, some of whom seem to swim, some to sit on a rock drying their green hair, some to ride on fish. They do not all have one face, and yet their faces are not different, just as sisters' faces should be. The land bears men and cities, woods and wild beasts, rivers and nymphs and the other divinities of the countryside. Above these was set an image of the shining sky, with six of the zodiac's signs on the right-hand door and as many on the left.[1]

2.19 As soon as Clymene's son had climbed the steep path there and entered the house of the father he had doubted, he at once turned his steps toward his father's face, and stood at a distance,

1 Mulciber is a name of Vulcan, the smith of the gods.

for he could not bear the light any nearer. Clothed in a purple robe, Phoebus sat on a throne gleaming with bright emeralds. To his right and left stood Day and Month and Year and the Centuries, and the Hours set at equal intervals. Young Spring stood there, wreathed with a crown of flowers; naked Summer stood there, wearing garlands of wheat-ears; Autumn stood there too, stained from trampling grapes, and icy Winter, shaggy with white hair. From his place in their midst, the Sun, with the eyes that see all things, saw the young man, frightened by the strangeness of it all, and said: "What brings you on this journey? What have you come to this citadel to seek, Phaethon, my son, a son no father would deny?"

2.35 He answered: "O light shared by the whole vast world, Phoebus, my father—if you allow me to use that name, and if Clymene is not hiding some fault behind a false pretense—give me proofs, father, by which I may be believed your true offspring, and take this uncertainty from my mind." He had spoken; and his father laid aside the rays that glittered all around his head and told him to come closer. Embracing him, he said: "You do not deserve to be disowned as mine, and Clymene told you your true origin. And so that you may doubt the less, ask for any gift you like, and you shall have it from my hand. Let the marsh by which the gods must swear, which my eyes have never seen, be witness to my promise." He had scarcely finished when the boy asked for his father's chariot, and the right to control the wing-footed horses for one day.[2]

2.49 His father regretted his oath. Shaking his shining head three and four times, he said: "Your words have made mine rash. If only I were allowed not to grant what I promised! I confess, my son, this is the one thing I would refuse you. But I may still dissuade you. What you want is not safe. You ask for a great deal, Phaethon—gifts that suit neither your strength nor years so boyish. Your lot is mortal; what you wish for is not for mortals. In your ignorance you even aspire to more than the gods above

2 The marsh is the Styx, the river of the underworld, by which the gods swear their most binding oaths; the Sun never sees it because it lies below the earth.

may have. Let each of them be as pleased with himself as he likes: no one but me has the power to stand on the fire-bearing axle. Even the ruler of vast Olympus, who hurls the savage thunderbolts with his terrible right hand, could not drive this chariot —and what do we have greater than Jupiter? 2.63 The first part of the road is steep, so steep that even in the morning, when they are fresh, the horses can barely struggle up it. In mid-heaven it is highest, and from there even I am often afraid to look down on the sea and the lands, and my heart trembles with fearful dread. The last part of the road slopes down and needs a sure hand on the reins; then even Tethys herself, who receives me in her waters below, is often afraid I will be hurled headlong. Besides, the sky is swept along in constant rotation, dragging the high stars with it and spinning them in a swift whirl. I push against it; the momentum that overcomes everything else does not overcome me, and I drive out against the rushing sphere. Suppose you are given the chariot: what will you do? Will you be able to go against the turning poles, so that the swift axis of the heavens does not carry you off? 2.76 Perhaps you imagine that there are groves up there, and cities of the gods, and shrines rich with gifts? The road runs through ambushes and the shapes of wild beasts. And even if you hold your course and are not drawn off by any straying, you will still have to pass through the horns of the Bull that faces you, the Haemonian Bow, the jaws of the violent Lion, the Scorpion curving its cruel arms in a long sweep, and the Crab curving its arms the other way. Nor is it in your power to control the four horses, fierce with the fires they have in their breasts and breathe out from mouth and nostrils. They barely tolerate me when their fierce spirits have grown hot, and their necks fight the reins. But you, my son—so that I may not be the giver of a deadly gift—beware, and while there is still time, correct your wish. 2.90 You ask, no doubt, for sure proofs so that you may believe you are born of my blood? I give sure proofs by fearing for you, and a father's fear proves me your father. Look—see my face! If only you could put your eyes into my breast and catch a father's anxieties within! Finally, look

around at all the rich world holds, and from all the many great goods of sky and earth and sea ask for anything: you will suffer no refusal. This one thing I beg you not to ask, which by its true name is a punishment, not an honor: it is a punishment, Phaethon, that you are asking for as a gift. Why do you hold my neck in your coaxing arms, you who do not understand? Do not doubt it: whatever you wish will be given—I have sworn by the Stygian waters—but wish more wisely."

2.103 He had finished his warnings; but the boy fought against his words, pressed his purpose, and burned with desire for the chariot. So his father, having delayed as long as he could, led the young man to the lofty chariot, Vulcan's gift. The axle was gold, the pole was gold, gold the rims that curved around the wheels, and the spokes stood in a silver row; along the yoke, chrysolites and gems set in order gave back a brilliant light as Phoebus' radiance struck them. And while great-hearted Phaethon marveled at it and examined the workmanship, look: wakeful Aurora opened her purple doors in the shining east, and her halls full of roses. The stars fled, their ranks marshaled by Lucifer, who was the last to leave his post in the sky. When Titan saw him make for the earth, and the world grow red, and the horns of the waning moon seem to vanish, he ordered the swift Hours to yoke the horses.[3]

2.119 The goddesses swiftly carried out his orders: from their high stalls they led the four-footed steeds, breathing fire and filled with the juice of ambrosia, and put on them the ringing bridles. Then the father touched his son's face with a sacred ointment, made it able to endure the consuming flame, and set the rays on his hair; and, drawing up from his anxious breast sighs that foretold grief, he said: "If you can at least obey these warnings of your father, spare the goad, boy, and use the reins more firmly. They hurry on of their own accord; the labor is to hold them back when they are eager. And do not take the road straight through the five zones: the track is cut slantwise in a wide curve, and, keeping within the limits of three zones, it

3 Lucifer ("light-bringer") is the morning star, the planet Venus at dawn.

avoids the southern pole and the Bear that is joined to the north winds. Let this be your way: you will see the clear tracks of the wheels. And so that heaven and earth may receive equal warmth, neither press the chariot down nor drive it up through the highest air.

2.136 If you go too high you will burn the dwellings of heaven, too low, the earth: you will go most safely in the middle. And do not let the right wheel swerve toward the twisting Serpent, nor the left lead you down to the low-lying Altar: keep between the two. The rest I leave to Fortune; I pray she helps you and takes better thought for you than you do yourself. While I am speaking, dewy night has touched the turning-posts set on the western shore. We are not free to delay; we are summoned. The darkness is put to flight and dawn shines out. Seize the reins in your hand—or, if your heart can still be changed, use my counsel, not my chariot, while you can, while you still stand on solid ground, and while you are not yet, in your ignorance, riding the chariot you so unwisely desired. Let me give the earth the light that you can watch in safety!"

2.150 With his young body he took possession of the light chariot, stood upright on it, delighted to grasp the reins put into his hands, and from there thanked his unwilling father. Meanwhile the Sun's winged horses, Pyrois, Eous, and Aethon, and the fourth, Phlegon, filled the air with fiery neighing and pounded the barriers with their hooves. When Tethys, knowing nothing of her grandson's fate, pushed these back and the boundless sky lay open to them, they tore along the road, and with their feet moving through the air they cut through the clouds in their way, and, lifted on their wings, outran the east winds that had risen from the same quarter. But the weight was light, not one the Sun's horses could recognize, and the yoke lacked its usual heaviness. And just as curved ships without their proper ballast roll and are carried unsteadily over the sea because they are too light, so the chariot, empty of its accustomed load, leaped into the air, was tossed up high, and seemed to be empty.

2.167 As soon as they felt this, the team of four rushed off and left the well-worn track, and did not run in their former order. He himself was terrified; he did not know which way to turn the reins entrusted to him, nor where the road was; nor, if he had known, could he have controlled them. Then for the first time the cold stars of the Plow grew hot under the rays and tried in vain to plunge into the sea forbidden to them; and the Serpent that lies nearest the icy pole, sluggish before with cold and frightening to no one, grew hot and took on new rage from the heat. You too, Boötes, they say, fled in confusion, though you were slow and your wagon held you back. And when unhappy Phaethon looked down from the height of heaven at the lands lying far, far below, he turned pale, his knees trembled with sudden fear, and in all that light, darkness rose over his eyes.

2.182 And now he wished he had never touched his father's horses; now he was sorry he had learned his parentage and had won his request; now, longing to be called Merops' son, he was carried along like a pine ship driven before a headlong north wind, whose helmsman, beaten, has let go the helm and abandoned the ship to the gods and to prayers. What was he to do? Much of the sky was left behind his back; more lay before his eyes. He measured both in his mind: now he looked ahead to the west, which fate did not allow him to reach, now he looked back to the east. Not knowing what to do, he was stunned; he neither let go the reins nor had the strength to hold them, nor did he know the horses' names. Trembling, he also saw marvels scattered everywhere across the varied sky, and the shapes of huge beasts. There is a place where the Scorpion bends its arms into twin arcs, and, with its tail and its claws curving on either side, stretches its limbs across the space of two signs.[4]

2.198 When the boy saw it, wet with the sweat of black venom and threatening wounds with its curved sting, out of his mind with cold fear he dropped the reins. When the horses felt them lying slack across their backs, they bolted, and with no one to

4 Merops was Clymene's husband, a king in Ethiopia, who passed as Phaethon's father.

check them they went through the air of an unknown region, and wherever their impulse drove them they rushed there lawlessly; high in the heavens they charged into the fixed stars and dragged the chariot through trackless places. Now they made for the heights, now they were carried down steep slopes and pathways into space closer to the earth. The Moon was amazed to see her brother's horses running below her own, and the scorched clouds smoked. The earth caught fire at every highest point, split open in cracks, and dried up as its moisture was taken away. The pastures turned gray, trees burned along with their leaves, and the dry crops furnished the fuel for their own destruction.

2.214 These are small things to lament: great cities perished together with their walls, and the fires turned whole nations, with their peoples, into ash. The woods burned with the mountains: Athos burned, and Cilician Taurus, Tmolus and Oeta, and Ida, dry then though once teeming with springs; Helicon of the maiden Muses, and Haemus, not yet Oeagrian. Etna blazed immensely with doubled fires, and twin-peaked Parnassus, Eryx and Cynthus and Othrys, and Rhodope, at last to lose its snows, and Mimas, Dindyma and Mycale, and Cithaeron, born for sacred rites. Scythia's cold was no help to it: the Caucasus burned, Ossa with Pindus, and Olympus, greater than both, and the towering Alps, and the cloud-bearing Apennines.[5]

2.227 Then indeed Phaethon saw the world on fire on every side, and could not endure such great heat. He drew into his mouth air as scorching as from a deep furnace, and felt his chariot glowing white-hot. He could no longer bear the ash and the flying cinders, and he was wrapped all around in hot smoke; covered in pitch-black darkness, he did not know where he was going or where he was, and he was swept along at the will of the winged horses. It was then, people believe, that the peoples of Ethiopia, as their blood was drawn to the surface of their bodies, took on their dark skin. It was then that Libya, its moisture snatched away by the heat, became dry; then the nymphs, with

5 Haemus, a Thracian range, was later linked with Orpheus, son of Oeagrus.

hair unbound, wept for their springs and lakes. Boeotia looked for Dirce, Argos for Amymone, Ephyre for the waters of Pirene. 2.241 Nor did the rivers that had been allotted wide-spread banks remain safe. The Tanais smoked in midstream, and old Peneus, and Teuthrantean Caicus, swift Ismenus with Phegian Erymanthus, Xanthus, fated to burn a second time, and yellow Lycormas, and Maeander, which plays in its winding waters, Mygdonian Melas, and Taenarian Eurotas. Babylonian Euphrates burned too, Orontes burned, swift Thermodon, Ganges, Phasis, and Hister. Alpheus boiled, the banks of Spercheus blazed, the gold that the Tagus carries in its stream flowed molten in the flames, and the river birds that used to throng Maeonian banks with their song grew hot in the middle of the Cayster. The Nile fled in terror to the ends of the earth and hid its head, which is still hidden: its seven mouths lay empty and dusty, seven valleys without a river. The same fate dried up the Ismarian rivers, Hebrus and Strymon, and the western rivers, the Rhine, the Rhone and the Po, and the Tiber, to whom mastery of the world had been promised.[6]

2.260 All the ground split apart; light penetrated through the cracks into Tartarus and terrified the king of the underworld and his wife. The sea shrank, and what had just been open sea was a plain of dry sand; mountains that the deep waters had covered rose up and added to the scattered Cyclades. The fish sought the depths, and the curved dolphins did not dare to leap above the surface into the air as they used to; the bodies of seals floated lifeless, belly up, on the surface of the deep. Nereus himself too, the story goes, and Doris and her daughters hid in caves grown warm. Three times Neptune had dared to thrust his arms out of the waters with a scowling face; three times he could not bear the fiery air.

2.272 But nurturing Earth, surrounded as she was by the sea, between the waters of the ocean and her springs, which had shrunk on every side and hidden themselves in the bowels of

6 Xanthus, the river of Troy, was burned again by Vulcan in the Trojan War; the Tiber is the river of Rome.

their dark mother, lifted her stifled face, parched, as far as the neck, put her hand to her brow, and, shaking everything with a great tremor, sank down a little lower than she usually is, and spoke thus in a dry voice: "If this is your will, and I have deserved it, why, greatest of gods, do your thunderbolts hold back? If I must perish by the power of fire, let me perish by your fire, and let my ruin be lightened by the one who causes it. I can barely open my throat to say even these words"—the heat had choked her mouth—"look, see my scorched hair, and all the ash in my eyes, all the ash over my face! Is this the reward, is this the honor you pay me for my fertility and my service—that I bear the wounds of the hooked plow and the hoe and am worked all year round, that I provide leaves for the flocks, mild nourishment and grain for the human race, and incense for you gods too?

2.290 But suppose I have deserved destruction: what have the waves done, what has your brother done to deserve it? Why are the seas allotted to him shrinking and drawing farther away from the sky? If neither your brother nor I can win your favor, at least take pity on your own heaven. Look around at both: both poles are smoking. If the fire damages them, your halls will fall. Look, Atlas himself is struggling, and can barely hold the white-hot axis of heaven on his shoulders. If the seas perish, if the lands, if the palace of heaven, we are thrown back into the confusion of ancient Chaos. Snatch from the flames whatever is still left, and take thought for the whole universe." So Earth spoke; for she could no longer endure the heat or say any more, and she drew her face back into herself, into the caverns closer to the dead.

2.304 But the all-powerful father called the gods to witness, and the very one who had lent the chariot, that unless he brought help everything would perish in a grievous doom. Then he climbed high to the topmost summit, from which he spreads clouds over the broad earth, from which he stirs the thunder and hurls his brandished lightning. But at that moment he had no clouds to spread over the earth and no rain to send down

from the sky. He thundered, poised a thunderbolt by his right ear, and flung it at the charioteer. With one stroke he drove him out of life and out of the chariot, and with savage fire he quelled the fire. The horses panicked. Leaping apart in opposite directions, they wrenched their necks from the yoke and left the broken reins behind. There lay the bridle, there the axle torn from the pole, here the spokes of the shattered wheels, and the remains of the wrecked chariot were scattered far and wide.

2.319 But Phaethon, the flames ravaging his red-gold hair, went hurtling headlong and was carried in a long trail through the air, as a star sometimes seems to have fallen from a clear sky even though it has not fallen. Far from his homeland, in another part of the world, the mighty Eridanus received him and bathed his smoking face. The Naiads of the West gave his body, still smoking from the three-forked flame, to a tomb, and they marked the stone with a verse: HERE LIES PHAETHON, DRIVER OF HIS FATHER'S CHARIOT; HE COULD NOT HOLD IT, YET HE FELL IN A GREAT ATTEMPT. For his father, pitiful in his sick grief, had covered and hidden his face. And, if we can believe it, they say that one day passed without the sun. The fires gave light, and that disaster was of some use.[7]

2.333 But Clymene, when she had said everything that had to be said in such great sorrows, mourning and out of her mind, her robe torn at the breast, searched the whole world. She looked first for his lifeless limbs, then for his bones, and found them, but bones buried on a foreign bank! She threw herself down on the place, bathed with tears the name she read on the marble, and warmed it against her bared breast. No less did the Heliades mourn, giving their tears, an empty gift to death. Beating their breasts with their palms, night and day they called on Phaethon, who would never hear their pitiful laments, and they lay stretched upon his grave. Four times the moon had joined her horns and filled her disc, and they, as was their custom (for habit had made it a custom), had raised their lament. Among them Phaethusa, the eldest of the sisters, wanting to throw her-

7 The Eridanus is a mythical river, later identified with the Po in northern Italy.

self to the ground, complained that her feet had grown stiff. Fair Lampetie tried to come to her, and was held back by a sudden root.[8]

2.350 A third, as she made to tear her hair with her hands, tore away leaves. One grieved that her legs were held fast in a trunk, another that her arms were becoming long branches. And while they marveled at this, bark closed around their groins, and step by step it wrapped their bellies, breasts, shoulders and hands, until only their mouths stood out, calling for their mother. What could their mother do but rush wherever her impulse drew her, here and there, and join her kisses to theirs while she still could? It was not enough. She tried to pull their bodies out of the trunks and broke off slender branches with her hands, but from them drops of blood came flowing, as if from a wound. "Spare me, mother, please," cried whichever of them was hurt, 2.362 "spare me, please: it is my body that is being torn in the tree. And now farewell"—and the bark closed over her last words. From there tears flow, and, hardened by the sun, they drip from the new branches as amber; the bright river receives it and sends it to be worn by the brides of Latium. Present at this marvel was Cycnus, son of Sthenelus, who, though related to you, Phaethon, through his mother's blood, was closer still to you in heart. He had left his kingdom (for he ruled the peoples of the Ligurians and great cities) and had filled the green banks, the river Eridanus, and the forest that the sisters had enlarged with his laments, when his voice grew thin, white feathers hid his hair, his neck stretched out far from his breast, a web joined his reddening toes, plumage clothed his sides, and a beak without a point took the place of his mouth.[9]

2.377 Cycnus became a new bird. He did not trust himself to the sky or to Jupiter, as one who remembered the fire unjustly hurled by him. He sought out pools and wide lakes, and, hating fire, he chose to live in rivers, the opposite of flames. Meanwhile Phaethon's father, unkempt and stripped of his own splendor, as

8 The Heliades, daughters of the Sun, are Phaethon's sisters.
9 Cycnus' name means "swan" (Greek kyknos).

he looks when he fails the world in eclipse, hated the light, himself and the day. He gave his mind over to grief, added anger to his grief, and refused his service to the world. "Enough," he said. "Since the beginning of time my lot has been restless, and I am weary of my labors, endless and unhonored. Let anyone else drive the chariot that carries the light!

2.389 If there is no one, and all the gods confess they cannot, let him drive it himself, so that, at least while he tries my reins, he may for once lay aside the lightning that robs fathers of their sons. Then, when he has felt the strength of the fire-footed horses, he will know that the one who failed to drive them well did not deserve death." As the Sun spoke like this, all the gods stood around him and begged him in suppliant voices not to bring darkness over the world. Jupiter, too, excused the fires he had hurled, and, like a king, added threats to his pleas. Phoebus gathered up the horses, still frenzied and trembling with terror, and in his pain raged at them with goad and whip. He raged indeed, and reproached them with his son and laid his death to their charge.

CALLISTO

Jupiter, disguised as Diana, rapes Callisto; Juno turns her into a bear, and Jupiter sets her among the stars.

2.401 But the all-powerful father went around the huge walls of heaven, inspecting them in case anything weakened by the force of the fire should collapse. When he saw that they were firm and kept their strength, he surveyed the earth and the works of men. Yet his own Arcadia was his more pressing care. He restored the springs and the rivers that did not yet dare to flow, gave grass to the earth and leaves to the trees, and ordered the damaged forests to grow green again. As he came and went, back and forth, he stopped short at a girl of Nonacris, and the fire he had caught grew hot in his very bones. It was not her task to soften wool by spinning it, or to vary her hair by arranging it. Once a brooch had fastened her dress and a white ribbon had held back

her careless hair, and she had taken up now a light javelin, now a bow, she was a soldier of Phoebe; and no girl who set foot on Maenalus was dearer to Trivia than she. But no favor lasts long.[10]

2.417 The sun stood high, a little past the middle of its course, when she entered a wood that no age had ever cut. Here she took the quiver from her shoulder, unstrung her pliant bow, and lay down on the ground that the grass had covered, resting her neck on her painted quiver. When Jupiter saw her tired and unguarded, he said, "This secret affair, at least, my wife will never know of; or if she does find out, quarrels are worth it, oh, they are worth it!" At once he put on the face and dress of Diana and said, "Girl, one of my own companions, on which ridges have you been hunting?" The girl raised herself from the turf and said, "Greetings, divine one, in my judgment greater," 2.429 "than Jupiter, even if he hears it himself." He laughed as he heard it, delighted to be preferred to himself, and gave her kisses that were neither restrained enough nor such as a virgin gives. As she was getting ready to tell him in which forest she had been hunting, he stopped her with an embrace and revealed himself by violating her. She indeed fought back, as much as a woman can (if only you could have seen her, Saturn's daughter: you would be kinder!), she indeed fought; but what girl, or who at all, could overcome Jupiter? Victorious, Jupiter made for the upper air. To her the grove and the forest that had witnessed it were hateful. As she retreated from there, she almost forgot to take up her quiver with its arrows, and the bow she had hung up.

2.441 Look—Dictynna, walking with her band along high Maenalus and proud of her kill of wild beasts, caught sight of her and, seeing her, called her. At the call she fled, fearing at first that it was Jupiter inside that form. But when she saw the nymphs walking along with her, she realized there was no trick and joined their number. Alas, how hard it is not to betray a crime by one's face! She barely lifted her eyes from the ground. She did

10 The girl is Callisto, an Arcadian nymph from Nonacris, whom Ovid never names here; Phoebe and Trivia are both names of Diana.

not walk close at the goddess's side, as she used to, nor at the head of the whole troop, but kept silent, and by her blushes gave signs of her wounded modesty. Were she not a virgin herself, Diana could have sensed her fault from a thousand signs; the nymphs, they say, did sense it.[11] 2.453 The moon's horns were rising again to fill their ninth disc when the goddess, faint from hunting in her brother's heat, came upon a cool grove, out of which a stream ran murmuring and turned over its worn sands. When she had praised the place, she touched the surface of the water with her foot. Praising this too, she said, "No witness is near: let us pour the water over our naked bodies and bathe." The Parrhasian girl blushed. All the others laid aside their clothes; one looked for reasons to delay. As she hesitated, her dress was taken from her, and when it was off, her crime lay open along with her naked body. She stood stunned, trying to hide her belly with her hands, and Cynthia said, "Go far from here, and do not pollute the sacred spring," and ordered her to leave her company.[12]

2.466 The wife of the great Thunderer had long since realized this, and had put off severe punishment to a suitable time. Now there was no reason for delay: already a boy, Arcas, had been born to her rival, and that in itself galled Juno. As soon as she turned her savage mind, along with her gaze, upon her, she said, "Of course this was all that was left, adulteress: that you should be fertile, that the wrong should be made known by a birth, and that the disgrace of my Jupiter should be proven. You will not get away with it. I will take away that shape of yours, you shameless creature, with which you please yourself and please my husband." She said this, and seizing her by the hair at the front, threw her face down on the ground. She stretched out her arms in supplication: her arms began to bristle with black hair, her hands to curve and grow into hooked claws and to serve as feet, and the face once praised by Jupiter to become ugly with wide gaping jaws.

11 Dictynna, originally a Cretan goddess, is here a name for Diana.
12 Parrhasian means Arcadian; Cynthia, from Mount Cynthus on Delos, is Diana.

2.482 And so that her prayers and pleading words might not sway anyone's heart, the power of speech was taken from her; an angry, menacing voice, full of terror, came from her hoarse throat. Yet her old mind remained, even when she had become a bear. Bearing witness to her sufferings with constant moaning, she raised such hands as she had to the sky and the stars, and felt Jupiter's ingratitude, though she could not put it into words. Ah, how often, not daring to rest in the lonely wood, she wandered in front of her house and in the fields that were once her own! Ah, how often she was driven over the rocks by the barking of hounds, and the huntress fled in terror from the hunters! Often she hid at the sight of wild beasts, forgetting what she was; a bear herself, she shuddered at the bears she saw in the mountains, and she was terrified of wolves, although her father was among them.[13]

2.496 Look—Lycaon's grandson Arcas arrived, knowing nothing of his mother, with nearly fifteen birthdays behind him. While he was tracking wild beasts, choosing suitable glades and encircling the Erymanthian woods with knotted nets, he came upon his mother. She stood still at the sight of Arcas and seemed to recognize him. He shrank back, and, not knowing, was frightened of her as she kept her eyes fixed on him without end. And as she longed to come closer, he would have pierced her breast with his wounding spear. The all-powerful one held him back, and removed both them and the crime together. Sweeping them up in a swift wind through the void, he set them in the sky and made them neighboring stars.[14]

2.508 Juno swelled with rage when her rival shone among the stars, and she went down into the sea to white-haired Tethys and old Ocean, whom the gods have often held in reverence. When they asked the reason for her journey, she began: "Do you ask why I, the queen of the gods, have come here from my heavenly

13 Her father, the Arcadian king Lycaon, was turned into a wolf by Jupiter in Book 1.

14 Callisto became the Great Bear; Arcas became the nearby constellation of the Bear-Ward (Boötes).

home? Another holds heaven in my place. Call me a liar if, when night has darkened the world, you do not see stars newly honored in highest heaven, my wounds, there where the last circle, the smallest in extent, surrounds the end of the axis. Is there really any reason why anyone should not want to injure Juno, or should tremble at offending her, when I am the only one who does good by doing harm?[15]

2.520 Oh, what great things I have accomplished! How vast my power is! I forbade her to be human: she has become a goddess. That is how I punish the guilty; that is how great my power is! Let him restore her old face and strip off her beast's features, as he did before for the Argive Phoronis. Why does he not drive Juno out, marry her, install her in my bedchamber, and take Lycaon as his father-in-law? But you, if the contempt shown to your wronged foster-child moves you, keep the Seven Oxen out of your blue waters, and drive off the stars that were received into the sky as the price of debauchery, so that the mistress may not bathe in your pure sea."[16]

THE RAVEN AND CORONIS

The raven reports Coronis' unfaithfulness; Apollo kills her, saves their son, and turns the raven black.

2.531 The gods of the sea nodded assent. Saturn's daughter rose into the clear air in her nimble chariot drawn by painted peacocks—peacocks painted as recently, when Argus was killed, as you, talkative raven, were recently and suddenly turned to black wings, though before you had been white. For this bird was once silvery, with snowy feathers, so that he rivaled the doves that are entirely without blemish, and yielded neither to the geese that would one day save the Capitol with their watchful cries, nor to the swan that loves rivers. His tongue was his undoing.

15 Tethys and Ocean, ancient sea deities, had raised Juno in their home.
16 The Argive Phoronis is Io, changed into a heifer and restored by Jupiter in Book 1. The Seven Oxen (Septentriones) are the stars of the Great Bear, which never set into the sea.

Because of his talkative tongue, the color that was white is now the opposite of white.[17]

2.542 In all Haemonia there was none more beautiful than Coronis of Larisa. She certainly pleased you, god of Delphi, as long as she was chaste—or unobserved. But Phoebus' bird discovered her adultery and, an informer who would not be won over, was making his way to his master to reveal the hidden fault. The chattering crow followed him on flapping wings, to find out everything. When she heard the reason for his journey, she said, "It is no profitable path you are taking: do not despise the warnings of my tongue. Look at what I was and what I am, and ask what I deserved: you will find that loyalty did me harm. For once upon a time Pallas had shut Erichthonius, a child created without a mother, in a chest woven of Attic wicker. She gave it to the three girls born of two-formed Cecrops, and laid down the rule that they were not to look at her secret.[18] 2.557 Hidden by light leaves, I was watching from a thick elm to see what they would do. Two of them, Pandrosos and Herse, guarded what had been entrusted to them without deceit. The third, Aglauros, called her sisters cowards and undid the knots with her hand, and inside they saw a baby and a snake stretched out beside him. I reported to the goddess what they had done. For this I was repaid with such thanks that I am said to have been driven from Minerva's protection, and I am ranked below the bird of night. My punishment can warn birds not to court danger with their voices. But, I suppose, she did not seek me out of her own accord, when I was asking for nothing of the kind? You may ask Pallas herself: angry though she is, in her anger she will not deny it. 2.569 For I am the daughter of famous Coroneus of the land of Phocis (I speak of well-known things). I had been a king's daughter, and I was courted by rich suitors (do not look down on me). My beauty harmed me. For as I was strolling with slow

17 Juno set the hundred eyes of the slain Argus in the peacock's tail (Book 1). Juno's sacred geese woke the defenders of Rome's Capitol during the Gallic attack of 390 BC.

18 Haemonia is Thessaly. Erichthonius, an early king of Athens, was born from the Earth; Cecrops, the city's first king, was half man and half snake.

steps along the shore, as I still do, on the surface of the sand, the god of the sea saw me and grew hot. When he had wasted time pleading with coaxing words, he prepared to use force and pursued me. I fled, leaving the firm shore behind, and wore myself out in vain on the soft sand. Then I called on gods and men, but my voice reached no mortal. A virgin was moved for a virgin and brought help. I was stretching my arms to the sky: my arms began to grow black with light feathers. 2.582 I struggled to throw the robe off my shoulders, but it was feathers and had driven its roots deep into my skin. I tried to beat my bare breast with my palms, but I no longer had either palms or a bare breast. I ran, and the sand no longer held back my feet as before, but I was lifted from the surface of the ground. Soon I was carried high through the air and given to Minerva as her blameless companion. Yet what good is this, if Nyctimene, made a bird for a dreadful crime, has taken over my place of honor? Or have you not heard the story that is known throughout all Lesbos, that Nyctimene defiled her father's bed? She is a bird, it is true, but conscious of her guilt she flees from sight and light, hides her shame in darkness, and is driven by all from the whole sky."[19]

2.596 As she was saying this, the raven answered: "May those warnings bring harm on you, I pray. I scorn your empty omen." He did not abandon the journey he had begun. He told his master that he had seen Coronis lying with a young man from Haemonia. When the lover heard of the crime, the laurel slipped from his head, and in the same moment the god's expression, his plectrum and his color all fell away. As his mind seethed with swelling anger, he seized his familiar weapons, bent the bow from its horns and strung it. With an arrow there was no escaping, he pierced that breast which had so often been joined to his own. 2.606 Struck, she gave a groan. As the iron was drawn from her body, she drenched her white limbs in crimson blood, and said: "I could have paid you my penalty, Phoebus, and given birth first. Now two of us will die in one." So much she said, and with her blood she poured out her life. Her body, emptied of its

19 Nyctimene became the owl, the bird later sacred to Minerva.

soul, was followed by the chill of death. Too late, alas, the lover regretted his cruel punishment. He hated himself for having listened, for having blazed up so. He hated the bird through which he had been forced to learn of the crime and the cause of his grief. He hated his bow and his hand, too, and along with his hand those rash weapons, the arrows. He cradled the fallen girl and strove to overcome fate with help that came too late, practicing his healing arts in vain.

2.619 When he saw that all these had been tried in vain, that the pyre was being prepared and her limbs were about to burn in the last fires, then he truly groaned. For heavenly faces may not be wet with tears, so he uttered groans drawn from deep in his heart. They were like the groans of a heifer forced to watch as the mallet, poised beside the right ear, shatters with a ringing blow the hollow temples of her suckling calf. He poured unwelcome perfumes on her breast, gave her his embraces, and performed the rightful rites of a wrongful death. Yet Phoebus could not bear that his own seed should sink into the same ashes. He snatched his son from the flames and from his mother's womb and carried him to the cave of two-formed Chiron. As for the raven, who hoped for a reward for his truthful tongue, Phoebus forbade him ever again to take his place among white birds.[20]

OCYROE

Chiron's daughter Ocyroe prophesies the fate of Aesculapius and is turned into a mare.

2.633 Meanwhile the half-beast was glad of his foster-child of divine stock and delighted in a burden mixed with honor. Then came the Centaur's daughter, her shoulders covered with reddish-gold hair. The nymph Chariclo had once borne her on the banks of a swift river and called her Ocyroe. She was not content to have learned her father's arts. She sang the secrets of the Fates. So when she had taken prophetic frenzy into her mind

20 The rescued son is Aesculapius, the god of healing. Chiron was a wise Centaur, half man and half horse, who reared many heroes.

and grew hot with the god she held shut in her breast, she looked at the infant and said: "Grow, child, bringer of health to the whole world. Mortal bodies will often owe themselves to you. You will have the right to restore souls that have been taken away. But once you have dared this, to the gods' indignation, your grandfather's flame will stop you from granting it again. From a god you will become a bloodless body, and then a god again, you who were just now a body, and so you will twice renew your fate.[21]

2.649 You too, dear father, are now immortal, created by the law of your birth to endure through all the ages. Yet you will long to be able to die, when you are tortured by the blood of the dread serpent taken into your wounded limbs. Then the gods will make you, once eternal, subject to death, and the three goddesses will unravel your thread." There was still more of fate to tell. She sighed from the depths of her breast, tears welled up and slid down her cheeks, and she said: "The Fates forestall me. I am forbidden to say more, and the use of my voice is shut off. My arts were not worth so much, since they have drawn the anger of a god upon me. I would rather not have known the future. Already my human face seems to be slipping away from me. Already grass pleases me as food. Already I feel the urge to gallop over the broad plains. I am turning into a mare, into bodies akin to mine. But why entirely? My father, after all, is only half a horse."[22]

2.665 As she was saying this, the last part of her lament could barely be understood, and her words were confused. Soon they seemed neither words nor yet the sound of a mare, but of someone imitating a mare. In a short time she let out true whinnies and moved her arms down into the grass. Then her fingers grew together, and a light hoof bound her five nails in one continuous piece of horn. Her mouth and neck lengthened. The

21 Ocyroe's name means "swift-flowing." Aesculapius was struck dead by the thunderbolt of Jupiter, Apollo's father, for raising the dead, and was later made a god.
22 Chiron was later wounded by an arrow dipped in the poisonous blood of the Hydra and, unable to bear the pain, gave up his immortality. The three goddesses are the Fates, who spin, measure and cut the thread of each life.

greater part of her long robe became a tail, and the loose hair that had lain over her neck turned into a mane falling to the right. Her voice and her face were made new together, and these marvels gave her a new name as well.[23]

BATTUS

Mercury steals Apollo's cattle and turns the old man Battus, who betrays him, into stone.

2.676 The hero, Philyra's son, wept and called in vain for your help, Delphic god. For you could not undo the commands of great Jupiter, and even if you could have undone them, you were not there then. You were living in Elis and the fields of Messenia. That was the time when a shepherd's skin covered you. In your left hand you carried a woodland staff, in your other hand a pipe of seven unequal reeds. While love occupied you and your pipe soothed you, it is said that your cows wandered unguarded into the fields of Pylos. The son of Maia, Atlas' daughter, saw them, drove them off, and with his special skill hid them in the woods. No one had noticed the theft except an old man well known in that countryside. The whole neighborhood called him Battus. He worked as keeper of the glades and grassy pastures of rich Neleus and guarded his herds of pedigree mares. Mercury was afraid of him. He drew him aside with a coaxing hand and said to him:[24] 2.692 "Whoever you are, stranger, if anyone happens to come looking for these cattle, say you have not seen them. And so that you do not go unrewarded for the favor, take this sleek cow as payment." He gave it to him. The stranger took it and replied: "Go safely. That stone will tell of your theft before I do," and he pointed to a stone. Jupiter's son pretended to leave. Soon he came back, his voice and shape both changed, and said: "Countryman, if you have seen any cows going along this path, help me and break your silence about the theft. You will be

23 Other sources call her Hippe or Euippe, "Mare."
24 Philyra's son is Chiron, whose mother was the nymph Philyra. The son of Maia is Mercury.

given a cow together with her bull." The old man, now that his reward was doubled, said: "They will be at the foot of those mountains." And at the foot of those mountains they were. Atlas' grandson laughed. "Would you betray me to me, you traitor? Betray me to me?" he said, and he turned that lying breast into hard flint, which even now is called the Informer. The old disgrace clings to a stone that never deserved it.[25]

AGLAUROS AND ENVY

Envy poisons Aglauros against her sister Herse, whom Mercury loves; Mercury turns Aglauros to stone.

2.708 From there the wand-bearer rose up on balanced wings. As he flew, he looked down on the fields of Munychia, on the land dear to Minerva, and on the groves of the cultivated Lyceum. That day, as it happened, chaste girls were carrying pure sacred objects, as was the custom, to Pallas' citadel for her festival, in garlanded baskets balanced on their heads. As they were returning, the winged god saw them. He did not keep a straight course but bent it round in the same circle. A kite, swiftest of birds, sees the entrails of a sacrifice but is afraid, while the attendants stand thick around the offering. So he wheels in a circle and dares not go farther, greedily circling his hope on beating wings. In just this way the nimble Cyllenian bent his course over the Actaean citadel and circled through the same air.[26] 2.722 Lucifer shines brighter than the other stars, and golden Phoebe brighter than Lucifer. By just so much did Herse outshine all the other girls as she walked, the glory of the procession and of her companions. Jupiter's son was stunned by her beauty. Hanging in the air, he blazed up just as a lead bullet does when a Balearic sling hurls it. It flies, grows white-hot as it goes, and finds beneath the clouds fires it did not have before. He changed

25 The Latin *index*, "informer," was also the name for the touchstone used to test gold.

26 Munychia was a hill by the harbor of Athens, and the Lyceum a grove just outside the city. "Actaean" means Athenian.

course, left the sky and headed for the earth. He did not disguise himself, so great was his confidence in his looks. That confidence was justified, but still he helped his looks along with care. He smoothed his hair and arranged his cloak so that it hung well and the border and all its gold showed. He made sure the smooth wand with which he brings and banishes sleep was in his right hand, and that his winged sandals gleamed on his freshly wiped feet.[27] 2.737 In a secluded part of the house there were three bedrooms adorned with ivory and tortoiseshell. You, Pandrosos, had the one on the right, Aglauros the one on the left, and Herse the one in the middle. The girl in the left-hand room was the first to notice Mercury coming. She dared to ask the god his name and the reason for his visit. The grandson of Atlas and Pleione answered her: "I am the one who carries my father's commands through the air. My father is Jupiter himself. I will not invent excuses. Only be willing to be loyal to your sister and to be called the aunt of my children. Herse is the reason for my journey. I beg you to favor a lover."

2.748 Aglauros looked at him with the same eyes with which she had lately seen the hidden secrets of golden-haired Minerva. In return for her service, she demanded a great weight of gold, and meanwhile she made him leave the house. The warrior goddess turned the circle of her grim eye on her and drew a sigh so deep and so violent that it shook both her breast and the aegis lying on that mighty breast. She remembered how this girl had uncovered secrets with a profane hand, back when, breaking the pact she had agreed to, she saw the motherless child of the god who dwells on Lemnos. And now, she thought, the girl would win the favor of the god, the favor of her sister, and riches too, once she had taken the gold she had greedily demanded.[28]

2.760 At once she made for the house of Envy, filthy with black gore. Envy's home is hidden deep in a valley. It has no sun, and

27 Phoebe is the Moon. The slingers of the Balearic Islands were famous in antiquity.

28 The god of Lemnos is Vulcan. His child Erichthonius, born from the earth without a mother, was hidden in the basket that Aglauros opened (see 2.552–561).

no wind can reach it. It is gloomy and full of sluggish cold, always without fire, always thick with murk. When the warrior maiden, so fearsome in battle, arrived there, she stopped in front of the house, since she may not enter that dwelling, and struck the doorposts with the tip of her spear. Shaken, the doors flew open. She saw Envy inside, eating vipers' flesh, the food of her vices, and at the sight she turned her eyes away. But Envy got up sluggishly from the ground, leaving the half-eaten bodies of snakes, and came forward with a lazy step. When she saw the goddess, beautiful in her form and her armor, she groaned, and her face twisted as she sighed from the depths. 2.775 Pallor sits on her face, and her whole body is wasted. Her gaze is never straight. Her teeth are livid with rot, her breast green with bile, her tongue steeped in poison. She never laughs, except when the sight of suffering moves her to it. She has no joy of sleep, kept awake by restless cares. Instead she watches the successes of others, unwelcome to her, and wastes away as she watches. She gnaws and is gnawed at once, and is her own punishment. Though Tritonia hated her, she addressed her briefly in these words: "Infect one of Cecrops' daughters with your poison. It must be done. Aglauros is the one." Saying no more, she fled, planting her spear and pushing off from the earth.[29]

2.787 Envy watched the goddess flee with a sidelong look and gave a low mutter, already resentful of Minerva's coming success. She took up her staff, wound all over with bands of thorns. Wrapped in black clouds, wherever she went she trampled the flowering fields, scorched the grass and nipped off the tallest blooms, and with her breath she polluted peoples, cities and homes. At last she caught sight of Tritonia's citadel, flourishing in talent, wealth and festive peace, and she could barely hold back her tears, because she saw nothing to cry about. Once she had entered the bedroom of Cecrops' daughter, she carried out her orders. She touched the girl's breast with a hand stained with rust and filled her heart with hooked thorns. She breathed

29 Cecrops was the first king of Athens and the father of Aglauros, Herse and Pandrosos.

harmful venom into her, scattered the pitch-black poison through her bones, and spread it deep in her lungs. 2.802 So that the source of the trouble should not range too widely, she set before the girl's eyes her sister, her sister's fortunate marriage, and the god in his handsome form, and she made it all seem great. Goaded by these images, Cecrops' daughter was gnawed by secret pain. Anxious by night, anxious by day, she groaned, and in utter misery she melted away with slow decay, like ice wounded by a fitful sun. She burned at the blessings of happy Herse no less gently than thorny weeds burn when a fire is set beneath them: they give no flames but are consumed by a gentle heat. Often she wished to die, so as not to see such a thing. Often she wished to tell her stern father, as if it were a crime. At last she sat down across the threshold to shut the god out when he came. He tried caresses, pleas and the gentlest words on her. "Stop," she said. "I will not move myself from here until you have been driven away." 2.818 "Let us stand by that bargain," said the swift Cyllenian, and he opened the doors with his heavenly wand. But as she tried to rise, the parts of the body we bend when we sit could not move for a sluggish heaviness. She struggled to lift herself with her trunk upright, but the joints of her knees were stiff. Cold slid through her groin, and her veins grew hard as the blood drained from them. An incurable cancer creeps far and wide and adds the healthy parts to the diseased. In the same way a deadly winter came little by little into her breast and closed the paths of life and breath. She did not try to speak, and even if she had tried, her voice had no way out. Stone already gripped her neck, her face had hardened, and a bloodless statue sat there. Nor was the stone white: her mind had stained it.

EUROPA AND THE BULL

Jupiter, disguised as a bull, carries Europa across the sea.

2.833 When Atlas' grandson had exacted this penalty for her words and her profane mind, he left the land named after Pallas and

rose into the air on beating wings. His father called him aside. Without admitting that love was the reason, Jupiter said: "Son, faithful minister of my commands, put off delay and glide down swiftly in your usual course. Make for the land that looks up at your mother from the left; the natives call it Sidonian. There you will see a royal herd grazing far off on the mountain grass. Drive it down to the shore." He said this, and at once the bullocks, already driven from the mountain, made for the shore as ordered, where the great king's daughter used to play with the Tyrian girls who were her companions.[30]

2.846 Majesty and love do not go well together, nor do they linger in one place. Setting aside the weight of his scepter, the father and ruler of the gods took on the look of a bull. He whose right hand is armed with three-forked fire, he who shakes the world with a nod, now mingled with the bullocks, lowed, and wandered about in his beauty on the tender grass. His color was that of snow which no hard foot has trodden and no rainy south wind has melted. His neck bulged with muscle, and a dewlap hung down between his shoulders. His horns were small, it is true, but you could argue they had been made by hand, and they were more translucent than a flawless gem. There was no menace on his brow and nothing fearsome in his eye. His face was all peace. Agenor's daughter marveled that he was so beautiful and that he threatened no fight. Yet gentle as he was, at first she was afraid to touch him. Soon she came close and held out flowers to his white mouth. 2.862 The lover rejoiced, and until the pleasure he hoped for should come, he kissed her hands. He could barely, barely put off the rest. Now he frolicked and leaped about in the green grass, now laid his snowy side down on the yellow sand. Little by little her fear left her, and now he offered his breast for the girl to pat, now his horns for her to wind with fresh garlands. The princess even dared to sit on the bull's back, not knowing whom she was riding. Then the god, little by little, moved from the land and the dry shore and set his deceiving

30 Mercury's mother Maia is one of the Pleiades, a cluster of stars. Sidon and Tyre were cities of Phoenicia, and the king's daughter is Europa, daughter of Agenor.

hooves in the shallows. From there he went farther out and carried his prize across the waters of the open sea. She was terrified. Carried away, she looked back at the shore she had left behind. With her right hand she held one of his horns, and her other hand rested on his back. Her fluttering garments billowed in the wind.

Book 3

Thebes
Cadmus founds Thebes; Actaeon; Semele; Tiresias; Echo and Narcissus; Pentheus defies Bacchus.

CADMUS

Cadmus kills the serpent of Mars, sows its teeth, and founds Thebes with the surviving warriors.

3.1 And now the god had laid aside the likeness of the deceitful bull, had revealed who he was, and was in the fields of Dicte. Meanwhile her father, knowing nothing of this, ordered Cadmus to search for the stolen girl, and added exile as the penalty if he did not find her: a father loving and wicked in one and the same act. Agenor's son wandered the whole world (for who could catch Jupiter in his stolen loves?), and as an exile he shunned both his homeland and his father's anger. He went as a suppliant to consult the oracle of Phoebus and asked what land he should make his home. "In lonely fields," said Phoebus, "you will meet a cow that has never borne the yoke and is free of the curved plow. With her as your guide, take to the road, and where she rests on the grass, see that you found city walls, and call that country Boeotia."[1]

3.14 Cadmus had hardly come down from the Castalian cave when he saw a heifer walking slowly along, unguarded, with no mark of servitude on her neck. He followed close behind, tracing her footprints with careful steps, and silently worshiped

1 Ovid plays on the name Boeotia as if it came from Greek *bous*, "cow." Dicte is a mountain in Crete.

Phoebus, the guide of his journey. He had already crossed the shallows of the Cephisus and the fields of Panope when the cow stopped. Lifting her handsome brow with its tall horns to the sky, she struck the air with her lowing. Then, looking back at the companions following behind her, she lay down and sank her flank onto the soft grass. Cadmus gave thanks, pressed kisses on the foreign soil, and greeted the unknown mountains and fields. He was about to offer sacrifice to Jupiter, and he ordered his attendants to go and fetch water from running springs for the libation.[2]

3.28 There stood an ancient forest, never violated by an ax. In the middle was a cave, thick with brushwood and osiers, whose fitted stones formed a low arch. It was rich in abundant waters, and hidden in it was the serpent of Mars, conspicuous for its crests and its gold. Its eyes flashed with fire, its whole body swelled with poison, its three tongues flickered, and its teeth stood in a triple row. When the men who had set out from the Tyrian people set their ill-fated steps in this grove, and the pitcher they let down into the water made a sound, the dark-blue serpent thrust its head out from the depths of the cave and gave out horrifying hisses. The pitchers slipped from their hands, the blood drained from their bodies, and a sudden trembling seized their stunned limbs. 3.41 The serpent twisted its scaly coils in rolling knots and, with a leap, curved itself into huge arcs. Raising more than half its length into the light air, it looked down on the whole wood. If you saw it whole, its body was as large as the Serpent that separates the twin Bears. Without delay it fell upon the Phoenicians, whether they were preparing to fight or to flee, or whether fear itself kept them from doing either. Some it killed with its bite, some in its long embrace, some with the rotting breath of its deadly poison. The sun, now at its height, had shrunk the shadows to almost nothing. Agenor's son wondered what was delaying his companions and went tracking the men. For protection he had a hide

2 The Castalian spring at Delphi was the site of Apollo's oracle. The Cephisus is a river and Panope a town in Phocis, on the way to Boeotia.

stripped from a lion. For weapons he had a lance with a gleaming iron head and a javelin, and courage, better than any weapon.[3]

3.55 When he entered the wood and saw the dead bodies, and above them their victorious enemy, its huge body stretched over them, licking their grim wounds with its bloody tongue, he said, "My most faithful friends, I will either avenge your deaths or share them." He spoke, and with his right hand he lifted a rock as big as a millstone and hurled it, huge as it was, with a huge effort. Its blow would have shaken high walls with lofty towers. Yet the serpent remained unwounded. Its scales protected it like a breastplate, and with the hardness of its black skin its hide warded off the mighty blow. But that same hardness did not also defeat the javelin. It stuck fast in the middle curve of the supple spine, and the whole iron head sank down into the creature's guts. 3.68 Wild with pain, the serpent twisted its head back toward its body, looked at the wound, and bit the shaft lodged there. When with great force it had worked the shaft loose on every side, it barely wrenched it from its back, but the iron head stayed fixed in its bones. Then indeed, with a fresh cause added to its usual rage, its throat swelled with bulging veins, white foam flowed around its pestilent jaws, the earth rang as its scales scraped over it, and the black breath that came from its Stygian mouth tainted and poisoned the air. Now it coiled itself in spirals that made an immense circle. At times it reared up straighter than a long beam. Now it surged forward with vast momentum, like a river swollen by rains, and drove the trees in its way before its chest.

3.81 Agenor's son gave way a little. He took its charges on the lion's hide and held back the menacing jaws with the point of his spear thrust out in front. The serpent raged, dealing useless wounds to the hard iron and fixing its teeth on the point. And now blood had begun to flow from its poisonous palate and had stained the green grass with its spatter. But the wound was

3 The constellation Draco (the Serpent) winds between the Great Bear and the Little Bear.

slight, because the serpent kept drawing back from the blow, pulling its injured neck away. By retreating it kept the stroke from settling in and would not let it go deeper. Then Agenor's son, following it all the way, drove the iron he had planted in its throat until an oak blocked the serpent's retreat, and the neck was pinned to the trunk. The tree bent under the serpent's weight and groaned as its trunk was lashed by the end of the tail.

3.95 While the victor was gazing at the size of his vanquished foe, suddenly a voice was heard. It was not easy to tell where it came from, but it was heard: "Son of Agenor, why do you gaze at the serpent you have killed? You too will be gazed at as a serpent." For a long while he stood terrified, having lost his color and his wits together, and his hair stood stiff with icy terror. And look, the hero's patron, Pallas, gliding down through the upper air, was there. She ordered him to plow the earth and bury the serpent's teeth in it, the seed of a people to come. He obeyed. When he had opened a furrow with the pressed-down plow, he scattered the teeth over the ground as he was told, a seed of mortal men. Then, past belief, the clods began to stir. First the points of spears appeared from the furrows. Next came helmets nodding with painted crests, then shoulders and chests and arms loaded with weapons rose up, and a crop of shielded men grew.[4]

3.111 So, when the curtain is raised in a theater on a festival day, the figures on it rise up, showing their faces first and then the rest of them little by little, until, drawn smoothly upward, they stand fully revealed and plant their feet on the lower edge. Frightened by this new enemy, Cadmus was getting ready to take up arms. "Don't take them," cried one of the people the earth had created, "and don't involve yourself in civil wars." With that, he struck one of his earthborn brothers with his rigid sword at close quarters, and he himself fell to a javelin thrown from a distance. The one who had given him over to death lived

4 The prophecy is fulfilled in Book 4, when Cadmus and his wife are turned into snakes.

no longer than he did, and breathed out the air he had only just received. The whole crowd raged in the same way, and in a war of their own these brothers of a moment fell by wounds they gave one another.[5] 3.124 And now these young men, allotted so brief a span of life, were beating against their blood-soaked mother with their warm breasts, until only five were left, one of whom was Echion. At Tritonia's warning he threw his weapons to the ground, and he both asked for and gave pledges of peace between brothers. These were the partners the Sidonian stranger had in his work when he founded the city that Phoebus' oracle had commanded. Now Thebes stood. Now, Cadmus, you could seem fortunate in your exile. Mars and Venus had become your parents-in-law. Add to this the offspring of so great a wife, so many sons and daughters, and grandchildren, dear pledges of love, these too already grown to manhood. But of course a man must always wait for his last day, and no one should be called happy before his death and his final funeral rites.[6]

DIANA AND ACTAEON

Actaeon sees Diana bathing; she turns him into a stag, and his own hounds tear him apart.

3.138 Amid so much good fortune, Cadmus, the first cause of grief for you was a grandson: the alien horns placed on his brow, and you, his hounds, glutted with your master's blood. But if you look into it properly, you will find that the fault in him was fortune's, not a crime. For what crime was there in a mistake? There was a mountain stained with the slaughter of all kinds of wild beasts. Midday had shrunk the shadows of things, and the sun stood equally distant from either end of its course, when the young Hyantian called in a calm voice to the companions of his labors as they roamed through the pathless coverts: "Friends,

5 Roman theater curtains were raised from a trench at the front of the stage at the end of a play, so the figures woven on them seemed to rise from the ground.
6 Cadmus married Harmonia, daughter of Mars and Venus. Echion and the other survivors were the "Sown Men," ancestors of the Theban nobility.

our nets and our spears are wet with the blood of beasts, and the day has had luck enough. When another dawn, riding on saffron wheels, brings back the light, we will take up our planned work again. Now Phoebus stands the same distance from either horizon and is cracking the fields with his heat. Stop the work at hand and take up the knotted nets." They carried out his orders and broke off their work.[7]

3.155 There was a valley thick with pines and pointed cypresses, called Gargaphie, sacred to Diana of the girded tunic. In its farthest recess was a woodland cave, shaped by no art. Nature, by her own genius, had imitated art, for she had drawn a natural arch out of living pumice and light tufa. On the right a spring splashed, clear with its thin stream, its wide pool ringed by a grassy edge. Here the goddess of the woods, when she was tired from the hunt, used to bathe her virgin limbs in the clear water. When she had come there, she handed her javelin, her quiver, and her unstrung bow to one of the nymphs, her armor-bearer. Another held out her arms to take the robe Diana had laid aside, and two untied the sandals from her feet. Meanwhile Crocale, daughter of Ismenus, more skilled than they, gathered into a knot the hair that was scattered over the goddess's neck, though her own hair hung loose. Nephele and Hyale and Rhanis and Psecas and Phiale drew water and poured it out of capacious urns.[8]

3.173 And while Titania was bathing there in her usual pool, look: Cadmus' grandson, his labors put off for a while, came wandering with uncertain steps through the unfamiliar wood and arrived at the grove. So his fate was carrying him. As soon as he entered the cave, wet with spray from the springs, the nymphs, naked as they were, beat their breasts at the sight of a man and filled the whole grove with sudden shrieks. Crowding around Diana, they covered her with their own bodies. But the

7 The grandson is Actaeon, son of Cadmus' daughter Autonoe. "Hyantian" means Boeotian.

8 Gargaphie was a spring near Plataea in Boeotia. The nymphs' Greek names are watery: Nephele "cloud," Hyale "glass," Rhanis "droplet," Psecas "drizzle," Phiale "bowl."

goddess herself was taller than they and stood above them all from the neck up. The color that tinges clouds struck by the rays of the sun facing them, or the color of a crimson dawn, was the color that came into Diana's face when she was seen without her clothes.[9]

3.186 Though she was surrounded by the crowd of her companions, she still stood turned to one side and twisted her face back. Much as she wished she had her arrows ready, she took up what she had, the water, and drenched the man's face. Sprinkling his hair with the avenging water, she added these words, foretelling the disaster to come: "Now you may tell that you saw me with my clothes put off, if you can tell it." Threatening no more, she gave his sprinkled head the horns of a long-lived stag. She gave length to his neck, sharpened the tips of his ears, changed his hands into feet and his arms into long legs, and covered his body with a spotted hide. 3.198 She added fear as well. The hero, Autonoe's son, fled, and in mid-flight marveled at his own speed. But when he saw his face and horns in the water, he was about to say "How wretched I am!" No voice followed. He groaned: that was his voice now, and tears flowed down a face that was not his own. Only his mind remained as it had been. What should he do? Go back home to the royal palace, or hide in the woods? Shame forbade the first, fear the second. While he hesitated, his dogs saw him. First Melampus and keen-nosed Ichnobates gave the signal with their barking: Ichnobates from Cnossos, Melampus of Spartan breed.

3.209 Then the others rushed in, swifter than the rushing wind: Pamphagus and Dorceus and Oribasus, all Arcadians; strong Nebrophonus, and fierce Theron with Laelaps; Pterelas, prized for his feet, and Agre for her nose; fierce Hylaeus, lately gashed by a boar; Nape, sired by a wolf; Poemenis, who had once followed the flocks; Harpyia, with her two pups at her side; Sicyonian Ladon with his lean, tucked-up flanks; Dromas and Canache and Sticte and Tigris and Alce; Leucon with his snowy coat and Asbolus with his black; mighty Lacon, and Aello,

9 Titania is Diana, so called as a descendant of the Titans.

strong in running; Thous, and swift Lycisce with her Cyprian brother; Harpalos, his black forehead marked in the middle with white; Melaneus, and Lachne with her shaggy body; Labros and Argiodus, born of a Cretan father but a Spartan mother; Hylactor with his shrill bark; and others it would take too long to name. Eager for their prey, this pack followed over cliffs and crags and rocks with no approach, where the way was hard and where there was no way at all.[10]

3.228 He fled through the very places where he had often been the pursuer. Alas, he fled from his own servants! He longed to shout, "I am Actaeon! Recognize your master!" Words failed his will, and the air echoed with barking. Melanchaetes made the first wounds in his back, Therodamas the next, and Oresitrophus clung to his shoulder. They had set out later than the rest, but had got ahead by a shortcut over the mountain. While they held their master down, the rest of the pack gathered and sank their teeth into his body together. Soon there was no room left for wounds. He groaned, a sound that, though not human, was still one no stag could make, and he filled the familiar ridges with mournful cries. 3.240 Down on his knees like a suppliant, like someone begging, he turned his silent face this way and that, as if it were his arms. But his companions, unaware, urged on the eager pack with their usual cries and looked around for Actaeon. As if he were absent, they vied with one another in calling for Actaeon (at his name he turned his head), and they complained that he was away and too slow to see the spectacle of the prey that had been offered. Absent was what he wished to be, but he was present; and he wished to see, not also to feel, the savage work of his own dogs. They surrounded him on every side and, plunging their muzzles into his body, tore apart their master in the false likeness of a stag.

10 The dogs' names are Greek and descriptive: for example, Melampus "Blackfoot," Ichnobates "Tracker," Pamphagus "Eat-all," Hylactor "Barker."

SEMELE

Disguised as Semele's old nurse, Juno tricks her into asking to see Jupiter in his full glory.

3.253 Opinion was divided. To some the goddess seemed more violent than was fair. Others praised her and called her actions worthy of her strict virginity. Each side found its reasons. Jupiter's wife alone did not so much say whether she blamed or approved, as rejoice in the disaster of the house descended from Agenor. The hatred she had gathered against her Tyrian rival she transferred to those who shared that woman's blood. And look, a fresh cause followed the earlier one: she was resentful that Semele was pregnant by the seed of great Jupiter. As she was loosening her tongue to rail, she said, "Yet what have I ever gained by all my railing?"[11] 3.263 "I must go after the woman herself. If I am rightly called Juno the greatest, if it is fitting that I hold the jeweled scepter in my right hand, if I am queen and Jupiter's sister and wife—his sister, at any rate—then I will destroy the woman herself. But I suppose she is content with a secret affair, and the wrong done to my marriage bed is brief! She conceives—that was all that was missing! She carries her guilt for all to see in her swollen womb, and wants to become a mother by Jupiter alone, which hardly happened even to me. That is how confident she is of her beauty. I will make that beauty betray her. I am not Saturn's daughter if she does not go down into the waters of the Styx, sent under by her own Jupiter."

3.273 With that she rose from her throne and, hidden in a tawny cloud, went to Semele's threshold. She did not remove the cloud until she had disguised herself as an old woman: she put gray hair at her temples, furrowed her skin with wrinkles, and carried her bent limbs with a tottering step. She made her voice an old woman's too, and became Beroe herself, Semele's nurse from Epidaurus. So when, after striking up a conversation and talking for a long time, they came to the name of Jupiter, she sighed and

11 The Tyrian rival is Europa, Cadmus' sister. Semele is a daughter of Cadmus.

said, "I hope it is Jupiter. But I fear everything. Many men have entered chaste bedrooms using the names of gods. And it is not enough for him to be Jupiter. Let him give a pledge of his love, if he really is the true one. Ask him to embrace you as great and as glorious as he is when lofty Juno receives him, and first to put on his own insignia."

3.287 With such words Juno had molded the unsuspecting daughter of Cadmus. Semele asked Jupiter for a gift without naming it. The god said to her, "Choose. You will suffer no refusal. And so that you may believe it all the more, let the divine power of the Stygian torrent be witness too. That god is the dread even of gods." Glad of what would harm her, too powerful for her own good, and about to perish through her lover's compliance, Semele said, "As Saturn's daughter is used to embracing you when you enter the bond of Venus, give yourself to me like that." The god wanted to stop her mouth as she spoke, but her hasty words had already gone out into the air. He groaned: she could not unwish her wish, and he could not unswear his oath. So, deeply grieved, he climbed to the high heavens and with a look drew the clouds after him. To them he added storms and lightning mixed with winds, and thunder, and the inescapable thunderbolt.[12] 3.302 Still, as far as he could, he tried to lessen his own strength. He did not now arm himself with the fire he had used to cast down hundred-handed Typhoeus: there was too much savagery in that. There is another, lighter thunderbolt, into which the hand of the Cyclopes put less savagery and flame, less anger. The gods call it the second-class weapon. He took this one and entered the house of Agenor's line. Her mortal body could not bear the uproar of heaven, and she burned up in the gifts of her marriage. The baby, still unformed, was snatched from his mother's womb and—if it is right to believe it—sewn, still tender, into his father's thigh, where he completed his mother's term. His aunt Ino secretly brought him up in his earliest cradle. Then he was handed over

12 The gods swore their most binding oath by the Styx, the river of the underworld.

to the nymphs of Nysa, who hid him in their caves and nourished him with milk.[13]

TIRESIAS

Tiresias, who has lived as a man and a woman, judges between Jupiter and Juno and is blinded.

3.316 While these things were happening on earth by the law of fate, and the cradle of twice-born Bacchus was safe, they say that Jupiter, mellowed with nectar, happened to have put aside his heavy cares. At his ease, he was trading lighthearted jokes with Juno and said, "Your pleasure is certainly greater than the pleasure that falls to males." She denied it. They decided to ask the opinion of learned Tiresias: he had known love from both sides.[14]

3.324 For once, in a green wood, he had struck with his staff the bodies of two great serpents as they mated, and, changed from a man into a woman—marvelous to tell—he had spent seven autumns. In the eighth he saw the same snakes again and said, "If striking you has such power that it changes the striker's lot into its opposite, I will strike you now too." When he struck those same snakes, his former shape returned, and the form he was born with came back. So he was taken as judge of the playful dispute, and he confirmed Jupiter's words. Saturn's daughter, they say, was more aggrieved than was just or than the matter warranted, and she condemned the eyes of her judge to eternal night. But the all-powerful father, since no god may undo what another god has done, gave him knowledge of the future in return for the sight taken from him, and lightened the punishment with honor.

13 Typhoeus was a monstrous giant who challenged the gods and was struck down by Jupiter's thunderbolt. The child is Bacchus.
14 Tiresias became the famous blind prophet of Thebes.

ECHO AND NARCISSUS

Echo wastes away for love of Narcissus, who falls in love with his own reflection and dies.

3.339 He became most famous throughout the Aonian cities and gave faultless answers to the people who came to consult him. The first to test the truth and reliability of his words was the blue water nymph Liriope. Once the river Cephisus had entangled her in his winding stream and, trapping her within his waters, raped her. Most beautiful of nymphs, she bore from her full womb a child who even then could have been loved by nymphs, and named him Narcissus. Asked about him, whether he would live to see the long years of a ripe old age, the prophet who spoke the fates said, "If he never knows himself." For a long time the seer's words seemed empty, but the outcome proved them true: the event, the manner of his death, and the strangeness of his madness. For the son of Cephisus had added one year to three times five and could seem either a boy or a young man. Many young men desired him, many girls. But in that tender beauty there was so hard a pride that no young men touched him, no girls.[15] 3.356 As he was driving frightened deer into his nets, he was seen by a talkative nymph who had learned neither to keep silent when someone speaks nor to speak first herself: Echo, who answers back. Echo was still a body then, not just a voice. And yet, chatterbox as she was, she had no other use of her mouth than she has now: she could give back, out of many words, only the last. Juno had done this, because often, when she might have caught the nymphs lying on the mountain with her Jupiter, Echo would cunningly keep the goddess busy with long talk until the nymphs could escape. When Saturn's daughter realized this, she said, "You will be given little power over this tongue that has tricked me, and only the briefest use of your voice." She made good her threats in fact. Still, at the end of

15 Aonian means Boeotian. The prophecy turns around the famous Delphic maxim "Know yourself."

what is said, Echo doubles the last sounds and brings back the words she has heard.

3.370 So when she saw Narcissus wandering through the pathless countryside and grew warm with desire, she followed his tracks in secret, and the more closely she followed, the nearer the flame that warmed her, just as quick-burning sulfur, smeared around the tops of torches, snatches at a flame brought close to it. Oh, how often she wanted to approach him with coaxing words and add soft pleas! Her nature fought against it and would not let her begin. But what it did allow, she was ready for: to wait for sounds to which she could send back words of her own. By chance the boy, separated from his faithful band of companions, had said, "Is anyone here?" and "Here!" Echo had answered. He was astonished, and as he cast his gaze in every direction, he shouted at the top of his voice, "Come!" She called him as he called. He looked behind him, and when again no one came, "Why," he said, 3.384 "are you running from me?" and he got back as many words as he had spoken. He persisted, and, deceived by the image of the answering voice, he said, "Here, let us come together!" Echo, who would never answer any sound more gladly, replied, "Let us come together!" She backed up her own words: coming out of the woods, she went to throw her arms around the neck she longed for. He ran, and as he ran he cried, "Take your hands off me, no embraces! I would die before I would give myself to you!" She answered nothing but "I would give myself to you!" Scorned, she hid in the woods, covered her face in shame with leaves, and from then on lived in lonely caves. Yet her love clung to her and grew with the pain of rejection. Sleepless cares wasted her pitiful body, thinness drew her skin tight, and all the moisture of her body vanished into the air. Only her voice and her bones were left: the voice remains; the bones, they say, took on the shape of stone.

3.402 So he had mocked her, so other nymphs born of waters or mountains, so, before that, gatherings of young men. Then one of those he had scorned raised his hands to the heavens and said, "So may he himself love, and so may he never possess what

he loves!" Rhamnusia assented to this just prayer. There was a pool, unmuddied, silvery with shining water, which neither shepherds nor goats grazing on the mountain nor any other herd had touched, which no bird or beast or branch fallen from a tree had disturbed. Grass grew around it, fed by the water nearby, and a wood that would never let the sun warm the place. Here the boy, tired from the effort of the hunt and from the heat, lay down, drawn by the look of the place and by the spring.[16]

3.416 While he drank, seized by the image of the beauty he saw, he was struck with wonder at himself and hung there motionless, his expression unchanging, like a statue carved from Parian marble. Lying on the ground, he gazed at the twin stars that were his eyes, at hair worthy of Bacchus, worthy of Apollo, at his beardless cheeks, his ivory neck, the beauty of his face and the blush mixed with snowy whiteness, and he admired everything for which he himself was admired. Unwittingly he desired himself; the one who approved was himself approved; while he sought, he was sought; he kindled the flame and burned in it at once. How often he gave useless kisses to the deceptive pool! How often he plunged his arms into the water to catch the neck he saw, and did not catch himself in it! 3.430 What he saw, he did not know, but what he saw set him on fire, and the same illusion that deceived his eyes excited them. Credulous boy, why do you vainly try to catch a fleeting image? What you seek is nowhere; what you love—turn away, and you will lose it. What you see is the shadow of a reflected image: it has nothing of its own; it comes with you and stays with you; with you it will go away—if you could go away. No thought of food, no thought of rest could draw him from there; stretched out on the shady grass, he gazed with insatiable eyes at the lying form, and through his own eyes he was destroyed. Raising himself a little and stretching out his arms to the surrounding woods,

3.442 "O woods," he said, "has anyone ever loved more cruelly? For you know, and you have been a convenient hiding place for

16 Rhamnusia is Nemesis, goddess of retribution, named after her shrine at Rhamnus in Attica.

many. In all the long ages of your life, through so many centuries, do you remember anyone who wasted away like this? He pleases me and I see him; but what I see and what pleases me, I cannot find—such is the delusion that holds a lover. And to make my pain worse, no vast sea separates us, no road, no mountains, no walls with gates shut: a little water keeps us apart. He himself wants to be held, for every time I have stretched my lips toward the clear water, he has strained toward me with upturned face. You would think he could be touched: it is the smallest thing that stands between us lovers. 3.454 Whoever you are, come out here! Why do you deceive me, matchless boy? Where do you go when I reach for you? Surely it is not my looks or my age that you flee—nymphs have loved me too. With your friendly face you promise me some kind of hope; when I stretch my arms to you, you stretch yours back; when I smile, you smile in return; I have often seen your tears, too, when I was weeping; you return my nods with signs; and, as far as I can guess from the movement of your lovely lips, you answer with words that never reach my ears. I am he! I have realized it; my own image does not deceive me. I burn with love for myself; I kindle the flames and I suffer them. What should I do? Should I be asked, or should I ask? And then what shall I ask for? What I desire, I have: my plenty has made me poor. 3.467 Oh, if only I could part from my own body! A strange wish for a lover: I would want what I love to be away from me! And now grief is taking my strength; not much time is left of my life, and I am dying in my first youth. Death is not hard for me, since in death I will lay down my sorrows; I only wish that he whom I love could live longer. As it is, we two will die together, one in heart, in a single breath." So he said, and, half out of his mind, he turned back to the same face, and his tears disturbed the water, and as the pool rippled, the form it gave back grew dim. When he saw it going away, he cried out, "Where are you fleeing? Stay! Do not abandon me, cruel one, when I love you! Let me at least look at what I cannot touch, and feed my wretched frenzy."

3.480 While he grieved, he pulled his tunic down from its upper edge and beat his bare chest with hands white as marble. His chest, where he struck it, took on a delicate flush, just as apples often do that are white in part and red in part, or as grapes in their mottled clusters take on a purple tinge when not yet ripe. As soon as he saw this in the water, now clear again, he could bear no more; but as yellow wax melts at a gentle flame, or the morning frost when the sun grows warm, so he, worn thin by love, melted away and was slowly consumed by a hidden fire. And now there was no longer the color of red mixed with white, nor the vigor and strength, nor what had pleased him when he saw it just now, nor did the body remain that Echo once had loved.

3.494 Yet when she saw this, though still angry and remembering, she grieved, and whenever the pitiful boy said "Alas!" she repeated "Alas!" with echoing voice, and when he struck his arms with his hands, she gave back the same sound of beating. His last words, as he gazed into the familiar water, were these: "Alas, boy loved in vain!" and the place returned just as many words; and when he said "Farewell!" Echo too said "Farewell!" He laid his weary head down on the green grass; death closed the eyes that marveled at their owner's beauty. Even then, after he had been received into the world below, he kept gazing at himself in the water of the Styx. His sisters the Naiads beat their breasts in mourning and laid their shorn hair as an offering for their brother; the Dryads beat their breasts; and Echo echoed the mourners. And now they were preparing the pyre, the brandished torches and the bier: the body was nowhere; in place of the body they found a saffron-yellow flower, its center ringed with white petals.

PENTHEUS AND BACCHUS

Pentheus scorns Tiresias' warning and orders the newly arrived god Bacchus to be seized.

3.511 This story, once known, brought the seer well-deserved fame throughout the cities of Achaea, and the prophet's name was great. Yet one man alone of them all, the son of Echion, Pentheus, a despiser of the gods, scorned him; he laughed at the old man's prophetic words and taunted him with his darkness and the misfortune of his lost sight. The seer, shaking his temples, white with gray hair, said, "How fortunate you would be if you too were robbed of this light, so that you would not see the rites of Bacchus! For the day will come, and I foresee that it is not far off, when a new god will arrive here, Liber, Semele's son; and unless you honor him with temples, you will be torn apart and scattered in a thousand places, and with your blood you will foul the woods, and your mother, and your mother's sisters. It will happen, for you will not honor the god, and you will complain that in this darkness of mine I saw all too much." As he was saying such things, Echion's son drove him away.[17]

3.527 Fulfillment followed his words, and the seer's prophecies came to pass. Liber arrived, and the fields roared with festive howling; the crowd rushed out; mothers and young wives mingled with men, common people and nobles, were swept along to the unknown rites. "What frenzy, you sons of the serpent, offspring of Mars, has stunned your minds?" said Pentheus. "Do bronze cymbals clashing on bronze have such power, and the pipe with its curved horn, and magic tricks, that you, whom no sword of war, no trumpet, no columns with drawn weapons could terrify, are conquered by women's voices, madness stirred up by wine, obscene mobs and empty drums? Shall I marvel at you, old men, who sailed across long seas and here set

17 Pentheus, king of Thebes and grandson of Cadmus, was the son of Echion, one of the warriors sprung from the serpent's teeth. Liber is an Italian name for Bacchus, Semele's son by Jupiter.

up Tyre, here your exiled household gods, and now let them be taken without a battle? Or at you, young men, of a fiercer age and closer to my own, who ought to be holding weapons, not thyrsi, and wearing helmets, not leaves?[18]

3.543 Remember, I beg you, from what stock you were born, and take on the spirit of that serpent who single-handed destroyed many! He died for his springs and his pool: but you must conquer for your good name! He put brave men to death; you must drive out soft ones and keep your fathers' honor. If the fates forbade Thebes to stand for long, I wish that siege engines and men had torn down its walls, and sword and fire had roared! We would be wretched but without disgrace; our lot would be one to lament, not to hide, and our tears would be free of shame. But now Thebes will be captured by an unarmed boy, who takes no pleasure in wars or weapons or horsemanship, but in hair drenched with myrrh, soft garlands, purple, and gold woven into embroidered robes. 3.557 I will force him at once—only stand aside—to confess that he has claimed a father not his own and invented his rites. Did Acrisius have spirit enough to scorn this sham divinity and shut the gates of Argos at his coming, and shall a newcomer terrify Pentheus and the whole of Thebes? Go quickly"—he gave this order to his servants—"go, and drag their leader here in chains! Let there be no lazy delay in carrying out my orders." His grandfather, Athamas, and all the rest of his family rebuked him and tried in vain to restrain him. He grew fiercer at their warnings; his rage was provoked by being held back and kept on growing; the very restraints did harm. So I have seen a torrent, where nothing blocked its course, run down more gently and with moderate noise; but wherever logs and piled-up rocks held it back, it went foaming and seething, made more violent by the obstacle.[19]

18 The first Thebans sprang from the teeth of Mars' serpent, killed and sown by Cadmus, who had come from Tyre. A thyrsus is the ivy-tipped staff carried in Bacchus' rites.

19 Acrisius, king of Argos and father of Danae, refused to admit Bacchus to his city. Athamas, husband of Ino, was Pentheus' uncle by marriage.

ACOETES AND THE TYRRHENIAN SAILORS

The captive Acoetes tells how Bacchus turned the pirates who kidnapped him into dolphins.

3.572 And now the servants came back, bloodied, and when their master asked where Bacchus was, they said they had not seen Bacchus. "But this man," they said, "a companion and servant of his rites, we did catch"; and they handed over, his hands tied behind his back, a man of the Tyrrhenian people who had once followed the god's rites. Pentheus looked at him with eyes that anger had made terrible, and though he could barely put off the time for punishment, he said, "You who are about to die, and by your death to be a lesson to others, tell me your name and the names of your parents and your country, and why you practice the rites of this new cult." Free of fear, the man said, "My name is Acoetes; my country is Maeonia; my parents were humble common folk.[20]

3.584 My father did not leave me fields for hardy bullocks to plow, or woolly flocks, or any herds; he was poor himself, and used to trick leaping fish with line and hooks and land them with his rod. His skill was all his wealth. When he handed his skill down to me, he said, 'Take what riches I have, successor and heir to my calling'; and dying, he left me nothing but the waters: that is the one thing I can call my inheritance. Soon, so as not to be stuck forever on the same rocks, I learned besides to steer a ship with my right hand on the helm, and I marked with my eyes the rainy star of the Olenian She-Goat, Taygete and the Hyades and the Bear, the homes of the winds, and the harbors suited to ships. By chance, making for Delos, I put in at the shores of the land of Chios, rowing in to the beach with the oars on the right; I made a light leap down and landed on the wet sand.[21] 3.600 When the night was over (dawn had just begun to

20 Tyrrhenian means Etruscan. Maeonia is Lydia, in western Asia Minor.
21 The Olenian She-Goat is the star Capella, whose rising brought rain; Taygete is one of the Pleiades, and the Hyades and the Bear are other stars sailors steered by.

redden), I got up, told the men to bring fresh water, and showed them the path that led to the stream. I myself, from a high mound, looked out to see what the wind promised me; then I called my comrades and went back to the ship. 'Here we are!' said Opheltes, the first of my crew, and, having found what he thought was prey in a deserted field, he led a boy of girlish beauty along the shore. The boy seemed to stagger, heavy with wine and sleep, and could hardly follow. I looked at his dress, his face, his walk: I saw nothing there that could be believed mortal. I sensed it and said to my comrades, 'What god is in that body, I am not sure; but in that body there is a god. 3.613 Whoever you are, oh, be gracious and help us in our labors. Pardon these men too.' 'Stop praying for us,' said Dictys—no one was quicker than he at climbing to the tops of the yards and sliding back down on a gripped rope. Libys agreed with him, so did fair-haired Melanthus, the guardian of the prow, so did Alcimedon, and Epopeus, who with his voice set the rest and the rhythm for the oars and cheered on their spirits, and so did all the others: so blind is the greed for plunder. 'Still, I will not allow this ship of pine to be violated by its sacred cargo,' I said. 'Here I have the largest share of authority'; and I blocked their way at the gangway. The boldest of the whole crew, Lycabas, raged—a man driven from a Tuscan city, who was paying the penalty of exile for a dreadful murder. 3.626 While I held my ground, he smashed my throat with his young man's fist and would have knocked me overboard into the sea if I had not, though stunned, caught hold of a rope and hung on. The impious crowd approved the deed. Then at last Bacchus (for it was Bacchus), as if his sleep had been broken by the shouting and his senses were returning to his breast after the wine, said, 'What are you doing? What is this shouting? Tell me, sailors, by what means did I come here? Where are you planning to take me?' 'Put away your fear,' said Proreus, 'and tell us what port you want to reach: you will be set down in the land you seek.' 'Turn your course to Naxos,' said Liber. 'That is my home; it will be a welcoming land for you.' 3.638 The cheats swore by the sea and by all the gods that it would be

so, and told me to set sail on the painted ship. Naxos lay to the right. As I was setting the sails to the right, Opheltes said, 'What are you doing, you fool? What frenzy—?' Each one was anxious for himself: most of them signaled to me with a nod, 'Head left!'; others whispered in my ear what they wanted. I was stunned, and said, 'Let someone else take the helm,' and withdrew from serving both their crime and my craft. They all abused me, and the whole crew muttered. One of them, Aethalion, said, 'So, of course, all our safety rests on you alone!' and he came up himself and took over my job, and leaving Naxos behind, headed the other way. 3.650 Then the god, mocking them, as if only now at last he had perceived the trick, looked out over the sea from the curved stern and, as if weeping, said, 'These are not the shores you promised me, sailors; this is not the land I asked for. What have I done to deserve punishment? What glory is it for you, if you, young men, deceive a boy, if you, many, deceive one?' I had been weeping for some time: the impious band laughed at my tears and drove the water back with hurrying oars. Now I swear to you by the god himself (for no god is closer at hand than he) that what I am telling you is as true as it is beyond belief: the ship stood still on the sea just as if it were held in a dry dock. The men, amazed, kept on beating with their oars, let down the sails, and tried to run with double power. 3.664 Ivy entangled the oars and crept up in twisting coils and spangled the sails with heavy clusters of berries. The god himself, his brow wreathed with grape-laden vines, shook a spear wrapped in vine leaves. Around him lay tigers and phantom shapes of lynxes and the savage bodies of spotted panthers. The men leaped overboard, whether madness made them do it or fear; and Medon was the first whose body began to turn dark and to bend, his spine pressed into a curve. Lycabas began to say to him, 'Into what marvel are you turning?' and as he spoke his jaws were wide and his nose hooked, and his hardened skin was taking on scales. And Libys, while trying to turn the oars that resisted, saw his hands shrink back into a short span, and that they were no longer hands, that now they could be called fins. 3.679 Another,

wanting to put his arms to the twisted ropes, had no arms, and arching backward with his limbless body he leaped into the waves: the end of him was a sickle-shaped tail, curved like the horns of the half-moon. On every side they leaped and scattered showers of spray, surfaced again and went back under the sea, played as if in a dance, tossed their frisky bodies, and blew out through wide nostrils the sea they had taken in. Of the twenty just now (for that was how many the ship carried), I alone remained. I was terrified and cold, my body trembling, hardly myself, when the god steadied me, saying, 'Shake the fear from your heart and make for Dia.' Carried there, I joined his rites, and I keep the rites of Bacchus faithfully."[22]

3.692 "We have lent our ears to your long, winding tale," said Pentheus, "so that my anger might spend its strength in the delay. Servants, seize him at once, torture his body with dreadful torments, and send him down to the night of the Styx!" Immediately Tyrrhenian Acoetes was dragged away and shut up in a solid-walled building; and while the cruel instruments of the death ordered for him, the sword and fire, were being prepared, the story goes that the doors flew open of their own accord, and of their own accord, with no one loosening them, the chains slipped from his arms. Echion's son persisted. He no longer ordered others to go, but went himself to where Cithaeron, chosen for the performance of the rites, rang with songs and the clear voices of the Bacchants. As a spirited horse snorts when the warlike trumpeter has given the signal with ringing bronze, and takes on a passion for battle, so the sky, struck by long howls, roused Pentheus, and when he heard the shouting, his anger blazed white-hot again.[23]

3.708 About halfway up the mountain, ringed at its edges by woods, there was an open plain, clear of trees and visible from every side. Here, as he watched the rites with profane eyes, the first to see him, the first to rush at him in a mad rush, the first to wound her own Pentheus with a hurled thyrsus, was his mother.

22 Dia was another name for Naxos.
23 Cithaeron is a mountain near Thebes, sacred to Bacchus.

"Oh, my two sisters," she cried, "come here! That boar, that enormous boar roaming our fields—that boar is mine to strike." The whole raging throng rushed at the one man; they all converged and chased him as he trembled—trembling now, now speaking less violent words, now condemning himself, now admitting that he had done wrong. Wounded, he still said, "Help me, Autonoe, my aunt! Let Actaeon's ghost move your heart."[24] 3.721 She did not know who Actaeon was, and she tore off the right arm of the man begging her; the other was ripped away by Ino's grasp. The unhappy man had no arms left to stretch out to his mother, but, showing the mutilated wounds where his limbs had been torn away, he said, "Look, mother!" At the sight Agave howled, tossed her head back and whirled her hair through the air, and, tearing off his head and clutching it in her bloody fingers, she cried, "Oh, my companions, this victory is our work!" No more quickly does the wind snatch from a tall tree leaves touched by autumn's cold and already barely clinging, than the man's limbs were torn apart by those unspeakable hands. Warned by such examples, the Ismenian women thronged to the new rites, offered incense, and worshiped at the holy altars.[25]

24 Autonoe, sister of Pentheus' mother Agave, was the mother of Actaeon, torn apart by his own hounds earlier in this book.

25 Ino was another sister of Agave. The Ismenian women are the women of Thebes, named after its river, the Ismenus.

Book 4

The daughters of Minyas; Perseus
Pyramus and Thisbe; Salmacis; Ino and Athamas; Perseus rescues Andromeda.

THE DAUGHTERS OF MINYAS

The daughters of Minyas refuse Bacchus' rites and tell stories while they spin and weave.

4.1 But Alcithoe, daughter of Minyas, did not think the god's rites should be accepted. Still reckless, she denied that Bacchus was Jupiter's son, and she had her sisters as partners in her impiety. The priest had ordered a festival: servants and their mistresses were to be released from work, cover their breasts with skins, loosen the ribbons in their hair, put garlands on their heads and take leafy thyrsi in their hands. He had prophesied that the anger of the offended god would be savage. Mothers and young wives obeyed. They put away their weaving, their wool baskets and their unfinished spinning, offered incense, and called on Bacchus, Bromius and Lyaeus, the fire-born, the twice-born, the only one with two mothers.[1] 4.13 To these they added the Nysean, and unshorn Thyoneus, Lenaeus and the planter of the joyous vine, Nyctelius, father Eleleus, Iacchus and Euhan, and all the many other names you bear, Liber, among the peoples of Greece. For your youth is undying. You are the eternal boy, you are seen as the most beautiful in high heaven, and when you

1 Alcithoe and her sisters were daughters of Minyas, king of Orchomenus in Boeotia. Bacchus was "fire-born" and "twice-born" because he was snatched from his mother Semele as she burned and carried to term in Jupiter's thigh.

stand before us without your horns, your head is a girl's. The East was conquered by you, as far as the point where sun-darkened India is washed by the distant Ganges. Revered one, you strike down the sacrilegious Pentheus and axe-bearing Lycurgus, and you throw the Tyrrhenian sailors' bodies into the sea. You press the necks of your yoked lynxes, splendid in their painted reins. Bacchants and satyrs follow you, and the drunken old man who props his staggering limbs on a fennel staff and clings none too firmly to his swaybacked donkey.[2] 4.28 Wherever you go, young men's shouts ring out, and with them women's voices, drums struck with open palms, hollow bronze cymbals and boxwood pipes with their long bore. "Come to us appeased and gentle," the Ismenian women pray, and they perform the rites as ordered. Only the daughters of Minyas stayed indoors, profaning the feast with Minerva out of season. They drew out wool, or twisted threads with their thumbs, or kept close to the loom and drove their servants on at their tasks. One of them, drawing out the thread with a light thumb, said: "While the others idle and crowd to these made-up rites, let us too, whom Pallas, the better goddess, keeps here, lighten the useful work of our hands with varied talk. Let us take turns telling something for our idle ears to share, something that will keep the time from seeming long." Her sisters approved, and told her to tell the first story.[3]

4.43 She wondered which of many stories to tell, for she knew a great many, and could not decide. Should she tell of you, Babylonian Dercetis, whom the people of Palestine believe stirred the waters of their lakes after you were changed in shape and scales covered your limbs? Or rather how her daughter took on wings and spent her last years on white towers? Or how a Naiad, with song and herbs too potent, turned young men's bodies into silent fish, until she suffered the same fate herself? Or how the

2 Lycurgus was a Thracian king punished for opposing Bacchus; the drunken old man is Silenus, the god's tutor.

3 The Ismenian women are the women of Thebes, named after the city's river, the Ismenus.

tree that used to bear white fruit now bears black, from the touch of blood? She chose this one, since it was not a common tale, and began like this, while the wool followed into her thread:[4]

PYRAMUS AND THISBE

Two young Babylonian lovers meet outside the city at night; a lioness leads each to suicide.

4.55 "Pyramus and Thisbe—he the most handsome of young men, she preferred above all the girls of the East—lived in neighboring houses, in the city whose lofty walls of baked brick Semiramis is said to have built. Being neighbors brought them acquaintance and the first steps; with time, love grew. They would have married, too, by the rite of the torch, but their fathers forbade it. What their fathers could not forbid was that both burned with equal passion, their minds captive. There was no one in their confidence; they spoke by nods and signs, and the more the fire was covered, the more fiercely the covered fire burned. The wall the two houses shared had been split by a thin crack, which it had developed long ago, when it was being built.[5] 4.67 That flaw had gone unnoticed by anyone for long ages, but you lovers were the first to see it (what does love not notice?), and you made it a path for your voices. Through it your endearments used to pass safely in the faintest murmur. Often, when they had taken their places, Thisbe on this side, Pyramus on that, and each in turn had caught the other's breath, they would say: 'Envious wall, why do you stand in lovers' way? How much would it be to let us join our whole bodies, or, if that is too much, at least to open for our kisses? Yet we are not ungrateful: we confess that we owe it to you that our words have found a passage to loving ears.'

4.78 After talking like this in vain from their separate sides, they said 'Goodbye' at nightfall, and each gave their own side of

4 Dercetis was a Syrian goddess with the body of a fish; her daughter Semiramis, the legendary queen of Babylon, was said to have become a dove.

the wall kisses that did not reach through to the other. The next dawn had put out the fires of night, and the sun's rays had dried the frosty grass, when they met at their usual place. Then, after many complaints in a low murmur, they decided that in the silence of night they would try to slip past their guards and get out of doors, and once they were out of their homes, they would leave the city buildings behind as well. So that they would not lose their way roaming the open country, they would meet at the tomb of Ninus and hide in the shade of a tree. There was a tree there, a tall mulberry loaded with snow-white fruit, next to a cool spring. They agreed on the plan. And the daylight, which seemed slow to leave, plunged into the waters, and from the same waters night came out.[6]

4.93 Thisbe cleverly turned the door on its hinge, went out into the darkness unseen by her family, and with her face veiled reached the tomb and sat down under the tree they had named. Love made her bold. Then, look, a lioness came, her foaming jaws smeared with the fresh blood of slaughtered cattle, to quench her thirst in the water of the nearby spring. Babylonian Thisbe saw her far off by the light of the moon and fled on frightened feet into a dark cave, and as she fled, she left behind her veil, which had slipped from her back. When the savage lioness had quenched her thirst with plenty of water, she was returning to the woods when she happened to find the thin veil without its owner and tore it with her bloody mouth.

4.105 Pyramus came out later. He saw the unmistakable tracks of the beast in the deep dust, and his whole face went pale. But when he also found the veil stained with blood, he said: 'One night will destroy two lovers. Of the two of us, she was the more deserving of a long life; mine is the guilty soul. I have killed you, poor girl, I who told you to come by night to a place full of terrors, and did not come here first myself. Tear my body apart and devour my wicked flesh with savage bites, all you lions who live beneath this rock! 4.115 But it is a coward's part merely to pray for

5 Semiramis was the legendary queen of Babylon.
6 Ninus was the legendary founder of Nineveh and husband of Semiramis.

death.' He picked up Thisbe's veil and carried it with him to the shade of the tree they had agreed on, and when he had given his tears and his kisses to the familiar garment, he said, 'Now take a draught of my blood too!' He drove the sword he was wearing into his belly, and at once, dying, pulled it out of the seething wound. As he lay on his back on the ground, the blood spurted high, just as when a pipe splits where the lead is flawed and through the thin, hissing hole shoots out long jets of water that burst through the air. The fruit of the tree, sprinkled with his blood, turned dark, and its root, soaked with blood, stained the hanging mulberries a deep purple.

4.128 And now, though she had not yet shaken off her fear, Thisbe came back, so as not to fail her lover. She searched for the young man with her eyes and her heart, eager to tell him of the great dangers she had escaped. She recognized the place and the shape of the tree she had seen, yet the color of the fruit made her unsure: she hesitated, wondering whether this was the one. While she hesitated, she saw, trembling, limbs twitching on the bloodstained ground. She stepped back, her face paler than boxwood, and shuddered like the sea, which trembles when a faint breeze ruffles its surface. But when, after a moment, she recognized her love, she beat her undeserving arms with loud blows, tore her hair, embraced the body she loved, filled his wounds with her tears, mingled her weeping with his blood, and pressing kisses on his cold face 4.142 cried out, 'Pyramus, what chance has taken you from me? Pyramus, answer: it is your dearest Thisbe calling your name. Hear me, and lift up your drooping head!' At Thisbe's name, Pyramus raised his eyes, already heavy with death, and when he had seen her, he closed them again. When she recognized her own veil and saw the ivory scabbard empty of its sword, she said: 'Your own hand and your love have destroyed you, unhappy boy. I too have a hand strong enough for this one thing; I too have love, and it will give me strength for the wound. I will follow you in death, and I will be called the most wretched cause and com-

panion of your death. You, who alas could be torn from me only by death, will not be torn from me even by death.

4.154 Yet hear this request in the words of us both, you most unhappy parents, mine and his: do not begrudge those whom unwavering love and their last hour have joined to be laid together in the same tomb. And you, tree, who now cover with your branches the pitiful body of one, and soon will cover two, keep the marks of our death, and always bear dark fruit, fit for mourning, a memorial of our twofold blood,' she said, and setting the point beneath her breast, she fell upon the sword, which was still warm from his death. Yet her prayers touched the gods, and touched the parents: for the fruit, when fully ripe, is dark, and what remained of them from the pyres rests in a single urn."

MARS AND VENUS

The Sun reveals Venus' affair with Mars, and Vulcan traps the lovers in a net before the gods.

4.167 She had finished. A brief pause followed, and then Leuconoe began to speak; her sisters were silent. "Even the Sun, who governs all things with his starry light, was captured by love: I will tell of the Sun's loves. This god is thought to have been the first to see the adultery of Venus with Mars: this god sees everything first. He was pained by the deed, and showed the husband, Juno's son, the theft of his marriage bed and the place where it happened. The husband lost his wits, and the work his craftsman's hand was holding dropped from it. At once he filed fine chains of bronze, nets and snares that could deceive the eye (the finest threads could not outdo that work, nor the spider's web that hangs from the highest beam). He made them respond to the lightest touch and the slightest movement, and set them skillfully all around the bed.[7]

4.182 When the wife and her lover came together on the couch, both were caught and held fast in the middle of their embrace

by the husband's skill and the chains prepared in this new way. The Lemnian at once threw open the ivory doors and let in the gods. There the two lay, shamefully bound; and one of the gods, not at all displeased, wished he might be shamed like that. The gods above laughed, and for a long time this was the best-known story in all of heaven.[8]

LEUCOTHOE AND CLYTIE

Venus makes the Sun love Leucothoe; jealous Clytie betrays her, and Clytie becomes the heliotrope.

4.190 Cytherea exacted a punishment that remembered his betrayal: in her turn, she wounded him who had wounded her secret love, with a love just like it. What good to you now, son of Hyperion, are your beauty, your color and your radiant light? You, who burn all lands with your fires, are burned by a new fire; you, who ought to watch over all things, gaze at Leucothoe, and fix on one girl the eyes you owe to the world. Now you rise too early in the eastern sky, now you sink too late into the waves, and lingering to look at her, you lengthen the winter hours. Sometimes you fail altogether: the sickness of your mind passes into your light, and, darkened, you terrify the hearts of mortals. 4.202 Nor are you pale because the image of the moon, closer to the earth, has blocked you: it is this love of yours that gives you that color. You love her alone. Neither Clymene nor Rhodos holds you, nor the most beautiful mother of Aeaean Circe, nor Clytie, who, though scorned, still sought your bed and at that very time carried a deep wound. Leucothoe made you forget many women—Leucothoe, whom Eurynome, the loveliest of the perfume-bearing race, bore. But when the daughter grew up, she surpassed her mother as far as her mother surpassed all

7 Leuconoe is another of the daughters of Minyas. The husband is Vulcan, the smith god.

8 Vulcan is called "the Lemnian" because his forge was on the island of Lemnos.

others. Her father Orchamus ruled the Achaemenid cities, and he is counted seventh in line from ancient Belus.[9]

4.214 Beneath the western sky lie the pastures of the Sun's horses. Instead of grass they have ambrosia: it nourishes their limbs, tired from their daily service, and restores them for their work. While the horses were grazing there on heavenly fodder and night was taking its turn, the god entered the chamber of his beloved, changed into the likeness of her mother Eurynome. Among twelve maidservants, by lamplight, he saw Leucothoe drawing out fine threads on her turning spindle. So, when he had kissed his dear daughter as a mother would, he said, 'This is a private matter. Servants, leave us, and do not rob a mother of the right to speak in secret.' They obeyed; and the god, left in the room without a witness, 4.226 said, 'I am the one who measures out the long year, who sees all things, through whom the earth sees all things: the eye of the world. Believe me, you please me.' She was terrified, and in her fear the distaff and spindle fell from her slackened fingers. Her very fear became her. He waited no longer, but returned to his true form and his usual brilliance. And the girl, though frightened by the unexpected sight, was overwhelmed by the god's splendor, gave up her protests and suffered his violence. Clytie was jealous (for her love for the Sun had known no limits), and, goaded by anger at her rival, she spread the story of the illicit union and, defaming the girl, told her father. Fierce and merciless, as his daughter begged him, stretching out her hands toward the Sun's light and saying, 'He forced me against my will,' he cruelly buried her deep in the earth and heaped a mound of heavy sand on top.

4.241 The son of Hyperion scattered the mound with his rays and opened a way for you to bring out your buried face. But you could no longer lift your head, nymph, crushed by the weight of earth, and you lay there, a lifeless body. Nothing, it is said, did the driver of the winged horses see more grievous than this since the fires of Phaethon. He tried, indeed, with the power of

9 The Achaemenid cities are those of Persia; Belus was the legendary founder of the Babylonian royal line.

his rays, to call those cold limbs back to living warmth, if he could. But since fate opposed his mighty efforts, he sprinkled the body and the place with fragrant nectar and, after many laments, said, 'Even so, you shall reach the sky.' At once the body, soaked in heavenly nectar, melted and drenched the earth with its fragrance; and a shoot of frankincense, slowly driving its roots down through the soil, rose up and broke through the mound with its tip.

4.256 But to Clytie—though love could have excused her resentment, and resentment her betrayal—the author of light came no more, and he put an end to his lovemaking with her. From then on the nymph wasted away, having used her love so madly. Unable to bear her home, she sat night and day on the bare ground under Jupiter's open sky, bareheaded, her hair uncombed. For nine days, without water or food, she fed her fasting on pure dew and her own tears, and never moved from the ground. She only gazed at the face of the god as he went on his way, and turned her face toward him. Her limbs, they say, stuck fast to the soil, and a ghastly pallor turned part of her color into bloodless leaves; part of her is red, and a flower very like a violet covers her face. Though she is held by a root, she turns toward her Sun, and, changed, she keeps her love."[10]

SALMACIS AND HERMAPHRODITUS

The nymph Salmacis embraces Hermaphroditus in her pool, and their two bodies merge into one.

4.271 She had finished, and the marvelous tale had captured their ears. Some said it could not have happened; others recalled that true gods can do anything—but Bacchus was not among those. When the sisters had fallen silent, they called on Alcithoe. Running her shuttle through the threads of the upright loom, she said: "I say nothing of the well-known loves of the shepherd Daphnis of Ida, whom a nymph, angry at a rival, turned to stone

10 Clytie becomes the heliotrope, a flower believed to turn its face to follow the sun.

(such is the resentment that burns in lovers). Nor do I tell how once, when the law of nature was overturned, Sithon was ambiguous, now a man, now a woman. You too, Celmis, now adamant, once most faithful to Jupiter when he was small, and the Curetes born from a heavy rain, and Crocus turned into tiny flowers along with Smilax, I pass over, and I will hold your minds with a sweet novelty. Learn why Salmacis is ill-famed, why it weakens men with its enervating waters and softens the limbs it touches. The cause is hidden; the spring's power is very well known.[11]

4.288 There was a boy born to Mercury and the Cytherean goddess, whom the Naiads raised in the caves of Ida. His face was one in which both mother and father could be recognized, and he took his name from them as well. As soon as he turned fifteen, he left his native mountains, and, leaving Ida, his nurse, he delighted in wandering through unknown places and seeing unknown rivers, his eagerness lightening the toil. He even went to the cities of Lycia, and to the Carians, Lycia's neighbors. Here he saw a pool of water shining right down to the bottom. There were no marsh reeds there, no barren sedge, no sharp-pointed rushes: the water was clear, and the edges of the pool were ringed with living turf and grass forever green. A nymph lived there, but not one suited to hunting, not one who would bend a bow or compete in running, the only one of the Naiads unknown to swift Diana.[12] 4.305 Often, it is said, her sisters told her: 'Salmacis, take up a javelin or a painted quiver, and mix your leisure with the hardships of the hunt.' She took up no javelin and no painted quiver, nor did she mix her leisure with the hardships of the hunt. Instead she would bathe her lovely limbs in her own spring, often comb her hair with a comb of Cytorian boxwood, and look into the water to ask it what suited her. Now, wrapped in a transparent robe, she would lie on soft

11 Salmacis was a spring near Halicarnassus in Caria, notorious in antiquity for making men soft.

12 His name, Hermaphroditus, joins those of his parents' Greek counterparts, Hermes and Aphrodite.

leaves or soft grass; often she gathered flowers. And she happened to be gathering them then too, when she saw the boy, and seeing him, wanted to have him. Yet she did not approach him, though she was eager to, until she had composed herself, looked over her clothes, arranged her expression, and earned the right to look beautiful.

4.320 Then she began to speak: 'Boy, most worthy to be believed a god—if you are a god, you could be Cupid; or if you are mortal, blessed are those who gave you life, happy is your brother, and fortunate indeed your sister, if you have one, and the nurse who gave you her breast. But far, far more blessed than all of them is she, if you have a bride, if you will think anyone worthy of the marriage torch. If there is one, let mine be a stolen pleasure; if there is none, let me be the one, and let us enter the same bridal chamber.' After this the Naiad fell silent. A blush colored the boy's face (for he did not know what love is), and even blushing became him.

4.331 This is the color of apples hanging on a sunny tree, or of dyed ivory, or of the moon reddening beneath its whiteness, when bronze cymbals sound in vain to help her. When the nymph kept demanding kisses, sisterly ones at least, and was already reaching her hands toward his ivory neck, he said: 'Will you stop? Or I will run away and leave all this to you.' Salmacis took fright. 'I give this place up to you freely, stranger,' she said, and pretended to walk away, turning on her heel, though even then she looked back. Then she hid, concealed in a thicket of shrubs, and dropped down on bended knee. But he, thinking of course that he was unobserved in the empty meadow, strolled here and there, dipped the tips of his toes in the playful water, then went in up to his ankles; and at once, captivated by the warmth of the coaxing water, he took the soft clothes off his tender body.[13] 4.346 Then indeed she wanted him, and Salmacis burned with desire for his naked form. The nymph's eyes blazed too, just as when Phoebus, at his most brilliant with his clear

13 The Romans beat bronze instruments during eclipses, believing the noise would help the moon.

disk, is reflected in the image of a mirror set opposite. She could barely stand the delay, barely put off her joys any longer; now she longed to embrace him, now, out of her mind, she could hardly restrain herself. He slapped his body with hollow palms and quickly dove into the stream, and as he stroked with alternate arms, he gleamed through the clear water, as if someone had encased ivory statues or white lilies in clear glass. 4.356 'I have won, and he is mine!' the Naiad cried, and flinging all her clothes far away, she plunged into the middle of the water. She held him as he fought, snatched kisses as he struggled, slipped her hands beneath him and touched his unwilling breast, and wrapped herself around the young man, now on this side, now on that. At last, as he strained against her and tried to slip away, she entwined him like a serpent that the king of birds holds and carries off on high: as it hangs, it binds his head and feet, and entwines his spreading wings with its tail; or as ivy weaves itself around tall trunks, or as an octopus beneath the sea holds the enemy it has caught, sending out its tentacles on every side. The descendant of Atlas held out, and denied the nymph the joys she hoped for. She pressed on, and clinging to him with her whole body joined to his, she said: 'Fight all you like, cruel boy, you still won't escape. Gods, ordain it so: let no day ever part him from me, or me from him.'

4.373 Her prayer found its gods: their two bodies were mingled and joined, and a single face was laid over them both, as when someone grafts branches onto bark and sees them unite as they grow and mature together. So, when their limbs had come together in that clinging embrace, they were no longer two, and yet the form was double, one that could be called neither woman nor boy: they seemed neither and both. And so, when Hermaphroditus saw that the clear water into which he had gone down a man had made him half-male, and that his limbs had grown soft in it, he stretched out his hands and said, though no longer in a man's voice: 'Father and mother, grant this gift to your son, who bears the names of you both: whatever man comes into this spring, let him leave it only half a man, and

grow soft at once at the touch of its waters.' Both parents were moved, granted the words of their two-formed son, and tainted the spring with an impure drug."

THE DAUGHTERS OF MINYAS BECOME BATS

Bacchus punishes the daughters of Minyas: their looms sprout vines and they are turned into bats.

4.389 Her tale was at an end. But the daughters of Minyas still pressed on with their work, scorning the god and profaning his festival. Suddenly unseen drums broke in with their harsh din, and the flute with its curved horn and the jingling bronze rang out. There was a scent of myrrh and saffron, and, past all belief, the looms began to turn green and the hanging cloth to put out leaves like ivy. Part of it turned into vines, and what had just been threads changed into tendrils; vine leaves sprang from the warp; the purple lent its sheen to painted grapes. And now the day was done, and the hour was coming on that you could call neither darkness nor light, but the borderland of dim night with light still in it. Suddenly the house seemed to shake, the oil-fed lamps to blaze, the rooms to glow with red fires, and phantom shapes of savage beasts to howl. 4.405 For some time now the sisters had been hiding throughout the smoke-filled house, scattering to different corners to avoid the flames and the light. As they sought the darkness, a membrane spread over their shrunken limbs and enclosed their arms in a thin wing. Nor did the darkness let them know by what means they had lost their former shape. No feathers lifted them, yet they held themselves up on translucent wings. When they tried to speak, they gave out a tiny voice to match their bodies and voiced their slight complaints in squeaks. They haunt houses, not woods, and hating the light they fly by night, and they take their name from the late evening.[14]

14 The Latin word for bat, *vespertilio*, comes from *vesper*, "evening."

ATHAMAS AND INO

Juno visits the underworld and sends a Fury to drive Athamas and Ino mad; Ino leaps into the sea.

4.416 Then indeed the godhead of Bacchus was renowned throughout Thebes, and his aunt told everywhere of the new god's great powers. Of all those sisters she alone was untouched by grief, except the grief her sisters had caused her. Juno saw her, proud and high-minded in her children, in her marriage to Athamas, and in the god she had nursed, and could not bear it. She said to herself: "A rival's son could transform the Maeonian sailors and plunge them into the sea, give a son's flesh to his own mother to be torn apart, and cover the three daughters of Minyas with strange new wings. Will Juno be able to do nothing but weep over her unavenged wrongs? Is that enough for me? Is this my only power? He himself teaches me what to do (it is right to learn even from an enemy). With the slaughter of Pentheus he has shown, enough and more than enough, what frenzy can do. Why should Ino not be goaded on, and follow her kinsfolk's example into frenzies of her own?"[15]

4.432 There is a downward path, gloomy with deadly yew; it leads through mute silence to the seats below. There the sluggish Styx breathes out mists, and down that way go the new shades, the phantoms of those who have received their burial. The city is roomy, with a thousand entrances and gates open on every side. As the sea receives the rivers from all the earth, so that place receives all souls; it is never too small for any people, nor does it feel the crowd increase. The bloodless shades wander without body or bones. Some throng the forum, some the palace of the lord of the depths, some pursue various crafts, imitations of their former life. Saturn's daughter Juno brought

15 Ino, daughter of Cadmus and sister of Bacchus' mother Semele, had nursed the infant god. Juno recalls Bacchus' earlier punishments: the sailors turned into dolphins, Pentheus torn apart by his mother Agave, the daughters of Minyas turned into bats.

herself to go there, leaving her heavenly seat, so much did she give way to hatred and anger.

4.449 As soon as she entered, and the threshold groaned under the weight of her sacred body, Cerberus raised his three heads and gave three barks at once. She summoned the sisters born of Night, a grim and implacable power. They were sitting before the prison's doors, which were shut with adamant, combing black snakes from their hair. As soon as they recognized her among the shadows of the gloom, the goddesses rose. The place is called the Accursed Seat. Tityos was offering his entrails to be torn, stretched out over nine acres. For you, Tantalus, no water can be caught, and the tree that overhangs you flees away. You, Sisyphus, either chase or push the rock that is bound to roll back. Ixion turns on his wheel, both following and fleeing himself. And the granddaughters of Belus, who dared to plot death for their cousins, ceaselessly fetch again the water they will lose.[16]

4.464 Saturn's daughter looked at them all with a grim stare, and at Ixion above all. Then, turning from him to Sisyphus, she said: "Why does this brother suffer endless punishment, while a rich palace houses proud Athamas, who with his wife has always scorned me?" She explained the reasons for her hatred and her journey, and what she wanted. What she wanted was that the house of Cadmus should not stand, and that the sisters should drive Athamas into crime. Commands, promises, and prayers she poured out all together, urging the goddesses on. When Juno had spoken, Tisiphone shook her white hair, disheveled as it was, and tossed back the snakes that hung across her face. Then she said: "There is no need of long, roundabout talk. Count whatever you command as done. Leave this unlovely kingdom and take yourself back to the air of a better sky."[17]

4.479 Juno went back gladly, and as she was about to enter heaven, Iris, daughter of Thaumas, purified her with sprinkled

16 The granddaughters of Belus are the Danaids, who murdered their husbands, their own cousins, on their wedding night; in the underworld they carry water in leaking vessels.

water. Without delay the relentless Tisiphone took up a torch soaked in blood, put on a robe red with dripping gore, girded herself with a twisting snake, and left her home. Mourning went with her as she went, and Dread, and Terror, and Madness with frantic face. She stood on the threshold. The doorposts of Aeolus' son, they say, trembled, a pallor stained the maple doors, and the sun fled the place. His wife was terrified by the portents, and Athamas was terrified. They were getting ready to leave the house, but the baleful Fury stood in their way and blocked the doorway. Stretching out her arms, knotted with coils of vipers, she shook out her hair. The snakes rustled as they were tossed; some lay on her shoulders, some slid around her breast, hissing, spewing venom, and flickering their tongues.

4.495 Then she tore two snakes from the middle of her hair, seized them in her pestilent hand, and hurled them. They glided all over the breasts of Ino and Athamas, breathing their noxious breath into them. Yet they inflicted no wounds on their limbs: it is the mind that feels the cruel blows. She had brought with her, too, monstrous liquid poisons: foam from Cerberus' mouth and the venom of Echidna, aimless wanderings and the oblivion of a blinded mind, crime and tears and rage and the love of slaughter, all ground together. She had mixed these with fresh blood and boiled them in a hollow bronze pot, stirring them with green hemlock. While the two of them cowered, she poured the maddening poison into both their breasts and stirred them to their inmost hearts. Then, whirling her torch again and again around the same circle, she quickly made fire chase fire.

4.510 So, victorious and her orders carried out, she went back to the empty realm of great Dis and unbound the snake she had girded on. At once Aeolus' son, raving in the middle of his hall, shouted: "Ho there, comrades, spread the nets in these woods! I just saw a lioness here with her two cubs!" In his madness he followed his wife's tracks as if she were a wild beast. He snatched Learchus from his mother's lap as the child laughed

17 Sisyphus and Athamas were both sons of Aeolus.

and stretched out his little arms, swung him two and three times through the air like a sling, and savagely dashed the baby's head against a hard rock. Then at last the mother was roused, whether grief did this or the poison spread within her. She howled aloud and fled, out of her mind, her hair streaming, carrying you, little Melicerta, in her bare arms, and cried, "Euhoe, Bacchus!" At the name of Bacchus Juno laughed and said, "May your foster child do you such services as these!"

4.525 A cliff overhangs the sea. Its base is hollowed out by the waves and shelters the water beneath it from the rain; its top stands stiff and juts its brow out over the open sea. Ino climbed it (madness had given her strength) and, held back by no fear, threw herself and her burden into the sea; the water, struck, foamed white. But Venus, pitying the ordeals of her blameless granddaughter, coaxed her uncle with these words: "Neptune, power of the waters, to whom fell the dominion next to heaven's, I ask a great thing, but take pity on my own, whom you see tossed on the vast Ionian sea, and add them to your gods. I too have some favor with the sea, if indeed I was once foam, thickened in the middle of the deep, and my Greek name still comes from it."[18]

4.539 Neptune granted her prayer. He took from them whatever was mortal and endowed them with an awe-inspiring majesty; he changed both their names and their looks, and named the god Palaemon, and his mother Leucothoe. Her Sidonian companions followed the traces of her footsteps as far as they could, and saw the last of them at the edge of the rock. Thinking her death beyond doubt, they mourned the house of Cadmus, beating their breasts with their hands and tearing their clothes and their hair, and they cast blame on the goddess as unjust and too cruel toward a rival. Juno could not bear their abuse and said, "I will make you yourselves the greatest monuments of my cruelty." The deed followed the word.

4.551 For the one who had been most devoted said, "I will follow my queen into the sea," and, about to leap, could not move

at all, but stuck fast, fixed to the cliff. Another, as she tried to beat her breast in the usual lament, felt her arms stiffen as she tried. One, who happened to have stretched her hands out toward the waves of the sea, now turned to stone and stretched those stone hands toward the same waves. Of another, as she was tearing the hair she had seized from her head, you could have seen the fingers suddenly hardened in her hair. In whatever gesture each was caught, she stayed fixed in it. Some became birds; even now these Ismenian women skim the waters of that gulf with the tips of their wings.

CADMUS AND HARMONIA

Cadmus and his wife Harmonia leave Thebes for Illyria and are turned into serpents.

4.563 Agenor's son did not know that his daughter and little grandson were gods of the sea. Overcome by grief, by the long chain of misfortunes, and by the many portents he had seen, the founder left his own city, as if it were the fortune of the place, not his own, that weighed him down. Driven through long wanderings, he reached the borders of Illyria with his wife, who shared his exile. Now, weighed down with sorrows and years, they went back over the first fortunes of their house and talked over their trials again. "Was that serpent sacred," Cadmus said, "the one my spear pierced through, when, setting out from Sidon, I scattered its viper's teeth over the ground, a new kind of seed? If the gods' concern is avenging it with such unerring anger, I pray that I myself may become a serpent and be stretched out into a long belly."[19]

4.576 He spoke, and like a serpent he was stretched out into a long belly. He felt scales growing over his hardened skin and his body, now black, becoming mottled with dark blue spots. He fell

18 Venus' Greek name, Aphrodite, was derived from *aphros*, "foam," since she was said to have been born from the sea.

19 In Book 3 Cadmus killed a serpent sacred to Mars and, on Minerva's advice, sowed its teeth, from which armed men sprang up.

forward onto his chest, and his legs, joined into one, gradually tapered to a smooth point. Now only his arms remained; he stretched out the arms that remained, and with tears streaming down his face, still human, he said: "Come here, my wife, come, my poor unhappy wife, and while something is left of me, touch me and take my hand, while it is a hand, while the snake has not taken all of me!" He wanted to say more, but suddenly his tongue was split in two. Words failed him as he tried, and whenever he prepared to utter some lament, he hissed: this was the voice nature left him. Striking her bare breast with her hand, his wife cried out:

4.591 "Cadmus, stay! Unhappy man, cast off these monstrous shapes! Cadmus, what is this? Where are your feet, where are your shoulders and hands, your color, your face, and, even as I speak, everything? Why do you not turn me too, you heavenly ones, into the same serpent?" She finished. He licked his wife's face and glided into the breast he loved, as if he recognized it, and embraced her and sought her familiar neck. All who were there (their companions were there) were terrified, but she stroked the slippery neck of the crested serpent. And suddenly there were two, and they crawled with coils entwined, until they slipped into the hiding places of a nearby grove. Even now they neither flee from people nor harm them with a wound, and, gentle serpents, they remember what they once were.

PERSEUS AND ATLAS

Returning with Medusa's head, Perseus is refused hospitality by Atlas and turns him into a mountain.

4.604 Yet for both of them their grandson had provided a great consolation for their changed form: conquered India worshiped him, and Achaea thronged to the temples it had built for him. Only Acrisius, son of Abas, sprung from the same stock, remained to bar him from the walls of his Argive city, to take up arms against the god, and to deny that he was of Jupiter's race. For he did not believe that Perseus either was Jupiter's son,

whom Danae had conceived from a shower of gold. Yet soon Acrisius (so strong is the presence of the truth) regretted both having outraged the god and having failed to acknowledge his grandson. The one was already set in heaven; the other, bringing back the memorable spoil of the viper-haired monster, was cleaving the soft air on whirring wings. As he hovered in victory over the Libyan sands, drops of blood fell from the Gorgon's head. The ground received them and brought them to life as snakes of many kinds, and so that land is full of serpents and dangerous with them.[20]

4.621 From there, driven through the vastness by warring winds, he was carried now this way, now that, like a rain cloud. From the high air he looked down on lands far below and flew over the whole world. Three times he saw the frozen Bears, three times the Crab's claws; often he was swept away to the west, often to the east. And now, as day was falling, afraid to trust himself to the night, he halted in the western world, the realm of Atlas, and sought a brief rest until Lucifer should call forth Aurora's fires, and Aurora the chariot of day. Here was Atlas, son of Iapetus, surpassing all men in his huge size. Under this king lay the farthest land and the sea that spreads its waters beneath the Sun's panting horses and receives his weary chariot. He had a thousand flocks and as many herds roaming over the grass, and no neighbors pressed upon his land.

4.637 The leaves of his trees, gleaming with radiant gold, covered branches of gold and fruit of gold. "Friend," Perseus said to him, "if you are moved by the glory of high birth, Jupiter is the author of my birth; or if you are an admirer of great deeds, you will admire mine. I ask for hospitality and rest." But Atlas remembered an ancient oracle; Themis of Parnassus had given him this oracle: "A time will come, Atlas, when your tree will be stripped of its gold, and a son of Jupiter will have the glory of this plunder." Fearing this, Atlas had enclosed his orchards with solid walls and given them to a huge serpent to guard, and he

20 Acrisius, king of Argos, had locked his daughter Danae away; Jupiter reached her as a shower of gold and fathered Perseus.

kept all strangers away from his borders. To this one too he said: "Go far away, or the glorious deeds you lie about will be far from you, and far from you your Jupiter!"

4.651 He added force to his threats and tried to drive him out with his hands, while Perseus lingered and mingled bold words with mild ones. Being weaker in strength (for who could be a match for the strength of Atlas?), Perseus said, "Well, since you think so little of my goodwill, take this gift!" and, turning his own face away, he held out Medusa's hideous head on his left. Atlas became a mountain as large as he had been: his beard and hair turned into forests, his shoulders and hands became ridges, what had been his head became the peak at the mountain's top, and his bones turned to stone. Then, enlarged in every part, he grew to an immense size (so you gods decreed), and the whole sky with all its stars rested on him.

PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

Perseus kills the sea monster and frees Andromeda, chained to a rock, then marries her.

4.663 Aeolus, son of Hippotes, had shut the winds in their everlasting prison, and Lucifer, who rouses us to our work, had risen, brightest in the high sky. Perseus took up his wings again and bound them to both his feet, girded on his hooked blade, and cleft the clear air with beating sandals. Leaving countless peoples around him and below him, he caught sight of the peoples of the Ethiopians and the lands of Cepheus. There unjust Ammon had ordered the innocent Andromeda to pay the penalty for her mother's tongue. As soon as Abas' descendant saw her, her arms chained to the hard rocks, he would have thought her a marble statue, had a light breeze not stirred her hair and warm tears flowed from her eyes. Without knowing it

he caught fire and was stunned, and, seized by the image of the beauty he saw, he almost forgot to beat his wings in the air.[21]

4.678 When he had come to a halt, he said, "You who do not deserve these chains, but rather those that bind eager lovers to each other, tell me, since I ask, the name of this land and your own, and why you wear these bonds." At first she was silent; an unmarried girl, she did not dare to speak to a man. She would have hidden her modest face with her hands if she had not been bound; she did what she could, and filled her eyes with welling tears. When he pressed her again and again, so as not to seem unwilling to confess some fault of her own, she told him the name of the land and her own, and how great her mother's confidence in her own beauty had been. And before she had told it all, the sea roared, and a monster, coming from the vast deep, loomed up, covering the broad expanse of water beneath its breast.

4.691 The girl screamed. Her grief-stricken father was there, and her mother with him, both wretched, but she with more reason. They brought no help with them, only the weeping and beating of breasts the moment called for, and they clung to her bound body, when the stranger spoke: "There will be long years left you for tears; the time for bringing help is short. If I were to ask for her hand as Perseus, son of Jupiter and of the woman whom Jupiter filled, locked away as she was, with fertile gold, Perseus, conqueror of the snake-haired Gorgon, who dared to travel through the airy breezes on beating wings, I would surely be preferred over all as a son-in-law. To such great endowments I am trying to add a service too, if only the gods are kind. I make this bargain: that she be mine if she is saved by my courage." The parents accepted the terms (for who would hesitate?), and they begged him, and promised a kingdom as her dowry besides.

4.706 Look! Just as a ship, speeding along with its beak fixed at the prow, plows the waters, propelled by the sweating arms of

young men, so the beast, parting the waves with the thrust of its breast, came on until it was as far from the rocks as a Balearic sling can send its whirled lead shot through the middle air. Then suddenly the young man pushed off from the ground with his feet and rose high into the clouds. When the hero's shadow was seen on the surface of the sea, the beast raged at the shadow it saw. As Jupiter's eagle, when it has seen in an empty field a serpent offering its livid back to Phoebus, seizes it from behind and, so that it cannot twist back its cruel jaws, fixes its greedy talons in its scaly neck, so the descendant of Inachus, hurling himself headlong through the void in swift flight, pressed down on the beast's back and, as it roared, buried his sword in its right shoulder up to the curved hook.

4.721 Hurt by the deep wound, it now reared high into the air, now plunged under the water, now turned about like a fierce boar terrified by a pack of hounds baying around it. He escaped its greedy bites on swift wings, and wherever it lay open he struck with his curved sword, now at its back encrusted with hollow shells, now at the ribs of its flanks, now where its tail, at its thinnest, ends in a fish's. The monster spewed from its mouth waves mixed with crimson blood, and his wings grew wet and heavy with the spray. No longer daring to trust his soaking sandals, Perseus caught sight of a rock whose top stands out when the waters are still and is covered when the sea is stirred. Bracing himself on it and gripping the top of the ridge with his left hand, three, four times he drove his sword through its belly, again and again.

4.735 Shouts and applause filled the shore and the high halls of the gods. Cassiope and Cepheus, her father, rejoiced, hailed him as son-in-law, and declared him the help and savior of their house. Freed from her chains, the girl walked forward, both the prize and the cause of his labor. He himself drew water and washed his conquering hands. So that the hard sand might not

21 Andromeda's mother Cassiope had boasted of her beauty, offending the sea nymphs; Ammon, an Egyptian and Libyan god identified with Jupiter, gave the oracle demanding her daughter's sacrifice.

harm the snake-bearing head, he softened the ground with leaves, spread out twigs that grow under the sea, and laid on them the face of Medusa, daughter of Phorcys. The fresh twigs, their spongy pith still alive, absorbed the monster's power, hardened at its touch, and took on a strange stiffness in their branches and leaves. The sea nymphs tried the wondrous feat on more twigs and were delighted that the same thing happened, and they produced more by scattering seeds from them over the waves. 4.750 Even now corals keep the same nature: they harden on contact with the air, and what was a pliant stem in the sea becomes stone above the sea. To three gods he built as many altars of turf: the left one to Mercury, the right one to you, warrior maiden; the altar of Jupiter stands in the middle. A cow was sacrificed to Minerva, a calf to the wing-footed god, a bull to you, highest of the gods. At once he took Andromeda, the reward for so great a deed, without a dowry. Hymen and Love shook the torches before them, the fires were fed with rich incense, garlands hung from the roofs, and everywhere lyres and the flute and song rang out, happy signs of glad hearts. The doors were unbarred, the whole golden hall stood open, and the Cephenian nobles came in to the king's banquet, laid out in splendid array.

MEDUSA

At the wedding feast Perseus tells how he killed Medusa and why her hair became snakes.

4.765 When they had finished the feast and their spirits had been opened by the gift of noble Bacchus, Lynceus' descendant asked about the way of life and the nature of the region, and the customs and character of its men. As soon as he had been told all this, his informant said, "Now, bravest Perseus, tell us, I beg you, with what courage and by what arts you carried off the head with its hair of serpents." Agenor's descendant told them that beneath cold Atlas lies a place made safe by the defense of a solid mass of rock. At its entrance, he said, lived twin sisters, the

daughters of Phorcys, who shared the use of a single eye. He had stolen it by a clever trick, slipping his hand under it while it was being passed from one to the other. Then, through remote and trackless regions and rocks bristling with rugged woods, he had reached the home of the Gorgons, and everywhere in the fields and along the roads he had seen the shapes of men and beasts, turned from their real selves to stone at the sight of Medusa.[22]

4.782 He himself, however, had looked at the dreadful form of Medusa reflected in the bronze of the shield he carried on his left arm, and while deep sleep held both the snakes and Medusa herself, he had cut the head from her neck. He added how Pegasus, swift on his wings, and his brother were born from their mother's blood, and he told of the dangers of his long journey, which were no fiction: what seas, what lands he had seen beneath him from on high, and what stars he had touched on his beating wings. Yet he fell silent sooner than they expected. One of the nobles took up the talk, asking why she alone of the sisters had snakes woven in among her locks. The guest replied: "Since you ask about something worth telling, hear the reason for what you ask. She was famed for her beauty and was the envied hope of many suitors, and of all her beauty nothing was more striking than her hair. I have met a man who said he had seen her. The ruler of the sea, they say, raped her in Minerva's temple. Jupiter's daughter turned away and covered her chaste face with her aegis; and so that this should not go unpunished, she changed the Gorgon's hair into foul snakes."

22 Lynceus' descendant is Perseus, whose great-great-grandfather Lynceus was king of Argos. The daughters of Phorcys are the Graeae, the Gorgons' sisters, gray-haired from birth.

Book 5

Perseus and the Muses
The fight at Perseus' wedding; the Muses' contest; Ceres and Proserpina; Arethusa.

PERSEUS AND PHINEUS

Phineus, Andromeda's former betrothed, attacks the wedding; Perseus turns him and his followers to stone.

5.1 While the son of Danae was telling these things among the gathered Cephenes, the royal halls filled with a roaring crowd. It was not the kind of shouting that celebrates a wedding feast, but the kind that announces savage war. You could compare the banquet, suddenly turned to uproar, to a calm sea that the fierce rage of the winds roughens as it whips up the waves. Foremost among them was Phineus, the reckless instigator of the fighting, brandishing an ash spear tipped with bronze. "Look," he said, "look, here I am, the avenger of the bride stolen from me! Neither your wings nor Jupiter, turned into counterfeit gold, will snatch you from me now." As he made to throw, Cepheus cried out: "What are you doing? What madness drives you, brother, raging like this, to such a crime? Is this the thanks repaid for such great services? Is this the dowry you pay for the life of the girl who was saved?[1]

5.16 It was not Perseus who took her from you, if you want the truth. It was the stern divine power of the Nereids, it was horned Ammon, it was the sea monster that was coming to glut itself on

1 Phineus was Cepheus' brother, and so Andromeda's uncle as well as her betrothed. Jupiter had come to Danae as a shower of gold and fathered Perseus.

my own flesh and blood. She was taken from you at the very moment she was about to die—unless, cruel as you are, you demand exactly that, that she should die, and you will find relief in our grief. Clearly it is not enough that she was chained up while you looked on, and that you, her uncle and her betrothed, brought her no help at all. Will you also resent that anyone saved her, and snatch away his reward? If it seems so great to you, you should have claimed it from those rocks it was fastened to. Now let the man who did claim it, the man who saved my old age from childlessness, take what he bargained for by his deeds and by his word; and understand that he was preferred not to you, but to certain death!"[2]

5.30 Phineus said nothing in reply. Looking from Cepheus to Perseus and back again, he did not know whether to aim at the one or the other; then, after a brief hesitation, he hurled his spear, whirled with all the strength his anger gave him, at Perseus—in vain. When it stuck in the couch, then at last Perseus leaped up from the cushions, and, fiercely sending the weapon back, he would have burst open his enemy's chest, had Phineus not gone behind the altar: and (outrageous!) the altar served the criminal. Still, the point did not strike for nothing: it lodged in Rhoetus' forehead. When he fell and the iron was wrenched out of the bone, he kicked and spattered the laden tables with blood. Then indeed the mob blazed into uncontrollable anger. They hurled their weapons, and there were some who said that Cepheus ought to die along with his son-in-law. But Cepheus had gone out over the threshold of the house, calling justice and good faith and the gods of hospitality to witness that this was being stirred up against his will.

5.46 Warlike Pallas was there; she shielded her brother with the aegis and gave him courage. There was an Indian, Athis, whom Limnaee, daughter of the river Ganges, was believed to have borne beneath its glassy waters. He was outstanding in beauty, which he enhanced with rich dress, still untouched at twice

2 Ammon, the Libyan Jupiter worshiped with a ram's horns, had ordered through his oracle that Andromeda be offered to the monster.

eight years of age. He wore a Tyrian cloak edged with a golden border; gilded necklaces adorned his neck, and a curved band his hair, wet with myrrh. He was skilled at hitting targets however distant with a thrown javelin, but more skilled still at drawing the bow. And now, as he was bending its pliant horns with his hand, Perseus struck him with a log that lay smoking in the middle of the altar, and smashed his face into its broken bones.

5.59 When Assyrian Lycabas saw him rolling that much-praised face in his blood—Lycabas, his closest companion, who made no secret of his true love—he first lamented Athis as he breathed out his life under the cruel wound, then seized the bow Athis had drawn and said: "Let your fight be with me. You will not rejoice for long in the boy's death, which brings you more hatred than glory." He had not yet finished saying all this when the piercing arrow flashed from the string; but it was dodged, and it hung caught in the folds of Perseus' clothing. Acrisius' grandson turned on him the curved sword proven in the slaughter of Medusa and drove it into his chest. But Lycabas, already dying, his eyes swimming in black night, looked around for Athis, leaned himself against him, and carried down to the shades the comfort of a death they shared.

5.74 Look: Phorbas of Syene, son of Metion, and Amphimedon of Libya, eager to join battle, had slipped and fallen in the blood that soaked the ground far and wide and kept it warm. As they rose, the sword met them, driven into the ribs of one and the throat of Phorbas. But Erytus, son of Actor, whose weapon was a broad double axe, Perseus did not attack with his hooked sword. Instead he lifted with both hands a huge mixing bowl, standing out with figures in high relief and enormously heavy, and dashed it against the man. Erytus vomited red gore and, falling on his back, beat the ground with his dying head. Next Perseus laid low Polydegmon, sprung from the blood of Semiramis, and Abaris of the Caucasus, and Lycetus, son of Spercheus, and long-haired Helices, and Phlegyas and Clytus, and he trampled the heaps he had piled up of the dying.

5.89 Phineus, not daring to meet his enemy hand to hand, hurled a javelin. A wild throw carried it onto Idas, who had kept out of the fighting in vain and had followed neither side. Glaring with fierce eyes at pitiless Phineus, Idas said: "Since I am dragged into taking sides, Phineus, take the enemy you have made, and pay for this wound with a wound!" And just as he was about to send back the weapon he had pulled from his wound, he collapsed, falling on limbs drained of blood. Here too Hodites, first among the Cephenes after the king, lay dead by Clymenus' sword; Hypseus struck Prothoenor, and Lynceus' descendant struck Hypseus. Among them too was aged Emathion, a lover of justice who feared the gods. Since his years kept him from fighting, he fought with words: he went at them and cursed their criminal arms.

5.103 As he clung to the altar with trembling hands, Chromis struck off his head with a sword. It fell straight onto the altar, and there, with half-living tongue, it uttered curses and breathed out its life into the midst of the flames. Next the twin brothers Broteas and Ammon, unbeaten with the boxing gloves —if swords could be beaten by boxing gloves—fell by Phineus' hand, and so did Ampycus, priest of Ceres, his temples wrapped in a white headband. You too, son of Lampetus, were not meant for uses like these: you were the one who, in the work of peace, played the lyre as you sang, and you had been bidden to grace the banquet and the feast with your song. As he stood far off, holding a plectrum unfit for war, Pettalus mocked him: "Sing the rest to the Stygian shades," he said, and drove his blade into his left temple. He collapsed, and with dying fingers he tried the strings of the lyre again; and by chance it made a pitiful song.

5.119 Fierce Lycormas did not let him fall unavenged. Tearing the sturdy bar from the right-hand doorpost, he smashed it against the bones in the middle of Pettalus' neck, and Pettalus fell forward to the ground like a slaughtered bullock. Pelates, from the Cinyps, was trying to wrench the oak bar from the left-hand doorpost too; as he tried, his right hand was pinned by the spear of Corythus the Marmarid and stuck fast to the wood. As

he hung there, Abas pierced his side. He did not fall, but, dying, hung from the post that held his hand. Menaleus too was struck down, who had taken Perseus' side, and Dorylas, the richest man in Nasamonian land—Dorylas, rich in land, than whom no one possessed broader acres or raised so many heaps of incense. A weapon, thrown at a slant, stuck in his groin: that spot is deadly. When the author of the wound, Bactrian Halcyoneus, saw him gasping out his life and rolling his eyes, he said, "Out of all your lands, keep this much earth that you are lying on," and left the bloodless body.

5.137 At him Abas' descendant, avenging Dorylas, hurled the spear snatched from the warm wound. It entered at the middle of his nose, was driven out through his neck, and stuck out on both sides. And while Fortune favored his hand, he laid low Clytius and Clanis, born of one mother, with different wounds: the heavy ash spear, poised by his powerful arm, was driven through both of Clytius' thighs, while Clanis bit on a javelin with his mouth. Celadon of Mendes died too; Astreus died, born of a Palestinian mother and an uncertain father; and Aethion, once shrewd at foreseeing what was to come, but deceived then by a false bird omen; and Thoactes, the king's armor-bearer; and Agyrtes, notorious for killing his father.

5.149 Yet more remained than had been done. All of them had one aim, to crush one man; on every side sworn bands fought for a cause that made war on merit and good faith. On Perseus' side were his father-in-law, dutiful in vain, and his new bride with her mother: they cheered him on and filled the halls with wailing. But the clash of arms and the groans of the falling drowned them out, and Bellona drenched the household gods, already defiled, with streams of blood and stirred up the battle afresh. Phineus and a thousand followers of Phineus surrounded the one man. Weapons flew thicker than winter hail past both his sides and past his eyes and ears. He set his shoulders against the stone of a great column, and, keeping his back safe and facing the ranks opposed to him, he held off his attackers. Pressing him on the left was Molpeus the Chaonian, on the right

Echemmon the Nabataean.[3] 5.164 As a tigress, goaded by hunger, who hears the lowing of two herds in different valleys does not know which to rush at first and burns to rush at both, so Perseus, unsure whether to turn right or left, drove Molpeus off with a wound that pierced his leg, and was content to see him run; for Echemmon gave him no time. He raged, and in his eagerness to leap and land a wound on Perseus' neck, he swung his sword with heedless force and broke it: the blade, striking the edge of the column, shattered and lodged in its owner's throat. Yet that blow was not enough to kill him. As he trembled and held out his weaponless arms in vain, Perseus ran him through with the Cyllenian curved sword. But when he saw his courage giving way before the crowd, Perseus said: "Since you yourselves force me to it, I will seek help from my enemy. Turn your faces away, if any friend is here!" And he raised the Gorgon's head.[4]

5.181 "Find someone else to be moved by your marvels," said Thescelus; and as he was preparing to hurl a deadly javelin, he froze in that pose, a statue of marble. Next to him, Ampyx aimed his sword at the breast of Lynceus' descendant, a breast full of great courage; and in the act of aiming his right hand stiffened and moved neither forward nor back. But Nileus, who had falsely claimed to be the son of the sevenfold Nile and had engraved seven rivers on his shield as well, partly in silver, partly in gold, said: "Look, Perseus, at the origins of our race! You will carry a great consolation for your death down to the silent shades: that you fell by so great a man." The last part of his speech was choked off in mid-sound; you would think his open mouth was trying to speak, but it gave no passage to words.

5.195 Eryx rebuked them. "It is your own lack of spirit," he said, "not the Gorgon's power, that numbs you. Charge with me, and lay low on the ground this youth who wields magic weapons!" He was about to charge: the ground held his feet fast, and he

3 Bellona was the Roman goddess of war.

4 Cyllenian: the curved sword was a gift from Mercury, the god born on Mount Cyllene.

remained a motionless stone, an armed statue. These men, though, suffered the punishment they deserved. But there was one soldier of Perseus', Aconteus, who, while fighting for him, caught sight of the Gorgon and hardened as stone spread over him. Astyages, thinking he was still alive, struck him with his long sword: the sword rang with shrill clangs. While Astyages stood amazed, he took on the same nature, and the look of wonder stayed on his marble face. It would take too long to name the men from the rank and file: two hundred bodies were left for the fight; two hundred bodies grew stiff at the sight of the Gorgon.

5.210 Then at last Phineus regretted his unjust war. But what could he do? He saw statues in every kind of posture and recognized his own men; he called on each by name and begged for help, and, hardly believing it, he touched the bodies nearest him: they were marble. He turned away, and so, a suppliant, holding out hands that admitted defeat and arms stretched out sideways, he said: "You win, Perseus. Take away your horrors; that stone-making face of your Medusa, whoever she is—take it away, I beg you. It was not hatred or desire for the kingdom that drove us to war: we took up arms for a bride. Your claim was better in merit, ours in time. I am sorry I did not give way. Grant me nothing, bravest of men, except this life; let everything else be yours."

5.223 As he said this, not daring to look at the man he was entreating, Perseus replied: "What I can grant, most cowardly Phineus—and it is a great gift for a coward—I will grant (put away your fear): no blade shall harm you. Indeed, I will give you a monument to last through the ages, and you will always be on display in my father-in-law's house, so that my wife may console herself with the image of her betrothed." He said this, and moved the daughter of Phorcys to the side toward which Phineus had turned his trembling face. Then too, as Phineus struggled to turn his eyes away, his neck stiffened, and the moisture of his eyes hardened into stone. But still the cowardly mouth, the suppliant look in marble, the lowered hands and the cringing expression remained.

5.236 Victorious, Abas' descendant entered his ancestral walls with his wife, and, as champion and avenger of his undeserving grandfather, he attacked Proetus; for Proetus had driven his brother out by force of arms and seized the citadel of Acrisius. But neither the help of arms nor the citadel he had wrongfully taken let him overcome the grim eyes of the snake-bearing monster. Yet you, Polydectes, ruler of little Seriphos, were not softened either by the young man's courage, proven in so many labors, or by his sufferings: hard as you are, you went on with your implacable hatred, and there was no end to your unjust anger. You even belittled his glory and claimed that Medusa's death was a fiction. "I will give you proof of the truth. Spare your eyes!" said Perseus, and with Medusa's face he turned the king's face into bloodless stone.[5]

MINERVA VISITS THE MUSES

Minerva visits the Muses on Helicon to see the spring made by Pegasus.

5.250 Up to this point Tritonia had kept her gold-born brother company. Then, wrapped in a hollow cloud, she left Seriphos, passing Cythnos and Gyaros on her right, and by the route over the sea that seemed shortest she made for Thebes and maiden Helicon. Reaching that mountain, she halted and spoke to the learned sisters: "Word has reached my ears of a new spring, which the hard hoof of Medusa's winged horse broke open. That is the reason for my journey. I wanted to see this marvel: I saw the horse himself born from his mother's blood." Urania answered: "Whatever your reason for visiting our home, goddess, you are most welcome to our hearts. The report is true, and Pegasus is the source of this spring." And she led Pallas down to the sacred waters.[6]

5 Perseus' grandfather Acrisius, king of Argos, had been driven out by his twin brother Proetus. Polydectes, king of the island of Seriphos where Perseus grew up, had sent him to fetch the Gorgon's head.

6 The learned sisters are the nine Muses, who lived on Mount Helicon; the new spring is Hippocrene, "the horse's fountain."

5.264 Pallas marveled for a long time at the waters created by the blows of a hoof; then she looked around at the groves of ancient woods, the caves, and the grass dotted with countless flowers, and called the daughters of Mnemosyne fortunate alike in their pursuits and in their home. One of the sisters answered her: "O Tritonia, who would have joined our choir had your excellence not carried you on to greater tasks, what you say is true: you are right to praise our arts and our home, and ours is a happy lot—if only we were safe. But (so true it is that nothing is forbidden to crime) everything frightens our maiden hearts. Dreadful Pyreneus is always before my eyes, and I have not yet fully come to my senses. That fierce man had seized Daulis and the fields of Phocis with Thracian soldiers and held an unjust rule. We were on our way to the temple on Parnassus. He saw us going, and, honoring our divinity with a deceitful face,[7]

5.280 he said (for he had recognized us), 'Daughters of Mnemosyne, stop! Do not hesitate, I beg you, to shelter in my house from the harsh weather and the rain' (it was raining); 'the gods above have often entered humbler huts.' Moved by his words and the weather, we agreed and went into the front of the house. The rain stopped; the south wind was overcome by the north winds, and the dark clouds were fleeing from a sky swept clean. We wanted to go: Pyreneus shut his doors and prepared to use force. We escaped it by taking to our wings. He stood high on his citadel, as if about to follow, and said, 'Whatever way you take, I will take the same.' Out of his mind, he hurled himself from the top of his highest tower, fell on his face, and with the bones of his face shattered, he struck the ground as he died, staining it with his criminal blood."

THE DAUGHTERS OF PIERUS

The Muses tell how the nine daughters of Pierus challenged them to a singing contest.

5.294 The Muse was still speaking when wings sounded through the air, and voices of greeting came from the high branches. Jupiter's daughter looked up, searching for the source of tongues that spoke so clearly, and thought a human being had spoken. It was birds: nine of them, lamenting their fate, had settled on the branches—magpies, which mimic everything. As she marveled, the goddess spoke to the goddess: "These too were defeated in a contest not long ago and swelled the flock of birds. Pierus, rich in the fields of Pella, was their father; Euippe of Paeonia was their mother. Nine times she called on mighty Lucina, nine times she gave birth. Puffed up by their number, this crowd of foolish sisters came here through so many cities of Haemonia and Achaea, and opened hostilities with words like these:[8]

5.308 'Stop deceiving the ignorant crowd with your empty sweetness. Compete with us, Thespian goddesses, if you have any confidence. We will not be beaten in voice or in skill, and we are as many as you. If you lose, give up Medusa's spring and Hyantean Aganippe; or if we lose, we will give up the Emathian plains as far as the snowy Paeonians. Let the nymphs judge the contest.' It was shameful, of course, to compete; but to give way seemed more shameful. The nymphs who were chosen swore by the rivers and sat down on seats carved from the living rock. Then, without drawing lots, the one who had offered to compete first sang of the wars of the gods above. She gave the Giants honor they did not deserve and belittled the deeds of the great gods. She told how Typhoeus, sent up from the lowest depths of the earth, struck fear into the heavenly ones, and how they all turned their backs and fled, until the land of Egypt and the Nile,

7 Mnemosyne (Memory) was the mother of the Muses by Jupiter.
8 Lucina is the goddess of childbirth; Pella and Paeonia are in Macedonia, Haemonia is Thessaly.

divided into seven mouths, took them in, exhausted.[9] 5.325 She told how earth-born Typhoeus came there too, and how the gods above hid themselves in false shapes. 'Jupiter,' she sang, 'became the leader of a flock, and that is why Libyan Ammon is still shown today with curving horns. The Delian hid in a raven, Semele's child in a goat, Phoebus' sister in a cat, Saturn's daughter in a snow-white cow, Venus in a fish, the Cyllenian in the wings of an ibis.' So far she had sung, moving her voice to the lyre; then we, the Aonian sisters, were called on. But perhaps you have no leisure, and no time to lend your ears to our songs." "Do not hesitate: tell me your song, from beginning to end," said Pallas, and sat down in the light shade of the grove. The Muse went on: "We entrusted the whole contest to one of us. Calliope rose, her loose hair bound up with ivy, tried out the plaintive strings with her thumb, and, striking the strings, followed with this song:[10]

CERES AND PROSERPINA

Calliope sings how Dis carries off Proserpina, Ceres searches the world for her, and Jupiter divides the year.

5.341 'Ceres was the first to turn the clod with the curved plow. She was the first to give the earth its crops and gentle foods, and the first to give laws: all things are Ceres' gift. She is the one I must sing. If only I could sing a song worthy of the goddess: the goddess is surely worthy of song. The vast island of Trinacris is heaped on the giant's limbs, and under its great mass it pins down Typhoeus, who dared to hope for a home in the heavens. He strains, it is true, and often fights to rise again, but his right hand lies pinned beneath Ausonian Pelorus, his left beneath you, Pachynus. His legs are crushed by Lilybaeum, and Etna weighs down his head. Beneath it, lying on his back, fierce

9 Thespiae and the Hyantes (an old name for the Boeotians) belong to the region of Helicon, where Aganippe is a second spring of the Muses; Emathia is Macedonia.
10 The Delian is Apollo, born on Delos; Semele's child is Bacchus; Phoebus' sister is Diana; the Cyllenian is Mercury.

Typhoeus hurls out sand and vomits flame from his mouth. Often he struggles to heave off the weight of the earth and to roll the towns and great mountains from his body.[11]

5.356 So the earth trembles, and the king of the silent dead himself is afraid that the ground may split open, laid bare by a wide chasm, and that daylight may break in and terrify the trembling shades. Fearing this disaster, the lord of the dead had left his shadowy seat. Borne in a chariot drawn by black horses, he was cautiously going round the foundations of Sicily. When he had made sure that no place was giving way, he laid aside his fear. Then Erycina, seated on her own mountain, saw him wandering. She embraced her winged son and said, "My son, my arms, my hands, my power, take up those weapons, Cupid, with which you conquer everyone, and drive your swift arrows into the heart of the god who drew the last lot of the threefold kingdom. You tame the gods above and Jupiter himself; you conquer and tame the powers of the sea, and him who rules the powers of the sea.[12]

5.371 Why does Tartarus hold back? Why not extend your mother's empire and your own? A third of the world is at stake. And yet even in heaven, so long-suffering have I become, we are scorned, and with me the power of Love is shrinking. Don't you see that Pallas and Diana the javelin-thrower have withdrawn from me? Ceres' daughter too will stay a virgin, if we allow it, for she has the same ambitions. But you, for the sake of our partnership in power, if that means anything to you, join the goddess to her uncle." So Venus spoke. He opened his quiver and, as his mother wished, picked out one arrow from his thousand. None was sharper, none surer, none more obedient to the bow. Setting the pliant bow against his knee, he bent it and with the barbed shaft struck Dis in the heart.

5.385 Not far from the walls of Henna there is a lake of deep water called Pergus. Not even the Cayster hears more songs of

11 Trinacris ("three-cornered") is Sicily; Pelorus, Pachynus and Lilybaeum are its three capes.

swans on its gliding waters. A wood crowns the water, encircling it on every side, and its leaves, like an awning, keep off the blows of Phoebus. The branches give coolness, the moist ground gives purple flowers: it is always spring. In this grove Proserpina was playing, picking violets or white lilies. With girlish eagerness she was filling her baskets and the fold of her dress, trying to outdo her companions in gathering, when, almost in a single moment, she was seen, loved and carried off by Dis, so headlong was his love. The terrified goddess cried out in a grief-stricken voice for her mother and her companions, but more often for her mother. She had torn her dress from its upper edge, and the flowers she had gathered fell from her loosened tunic. 5.400 Such was the innocence of her young years that even this loss stirred her girlish grief. Her abductor drove his chariot on, urging his horses and calling each by name, shaking over their necks and manes the reins dyed a dark rust color. He was carried past deep lakes and the pools of the Palici, which smell of sulfur and seethe up from the broken earth, and past the place where the Bacchiadae, a people sprung from Corinth between two seas, built their walls between two harbors of unequal size. Between Cyane and Pisaean Arethusa lies a stretch of sea, enclosed and narrowed between two horns of land. Here lived Cyane, the most famous of the Sicilian nymphs, and the pool too is named after her.[13]

5.413 She rose from the middle of her pool as far as her waist and recognized the goddess. "You will go no farther!" she said. "You cannot be Ceres' son-in-law against her will: the girl should have been asked for, not snatched. And if I may compare small things with great, Anapis loved me too. But I married him after he had courted me, not terrified like her." She spoke, and stretching out her arms in opposite directions she blocked his way. The son of Saturn held back his anger no longer. Urging on

12 Erycina is Venus, named for her famous temple on Mount Eryx in western Sicily.

13 The Palici were twin Sicilian gods worshiped at volcanic pools; the Bacchiadae, the old ruling clan of Corinth, founded Syracuse.

his terrifying horses, he whirled his royal scepter with his mighty arm and plunged it into the depths of the pool. The earth, struck, opened a road to Tartarus and took the chariot as it plunged headlong into the middle of the crater.[14]

5.425 But Cyane, grieving for the abducted goddess and for the rights of her spring treated with contempt, carried in her silent heart a wound past all consolation. She was entirely consumed by tears, and melted away into the very waters whose great divinity she had been until a moment before. You could have seen her limbs grow soft, her bones begin to bend, her nails lose their hardness. The slenderest parts of her melted first: her dark-blue hair, her fingers, her legs and feet, for slender limbs pass quickly into cold water. After that her shoulders, back, sides and breasts vanished and passed away into thin streams. Finally, in place of living blood, water entered her weakened veins, and nothing was left that you could grasp.

5.438 Meanwhile the frightened mother searched in vain for her daughter through every land and over every sea. Neither Aurora, coming with dewy hair, saw her resting, nor Hesperus. She lit pine torches from Etna's flames, one in each hand, and carried them restlessly through the frosty darkness. And when kindly day had dimmed the stars again, she searched for her daughter from the setting of the sun to its rising. Worn out by her labors, she had grown thirsty, and no spring had wet her lips, when by chance she saw a cottage thatched with straw and knocked at its little door. An old woman came out and saw the goddess, and when she asked for water, gave her a sweet drink that she had sprinkled with roasted barley. While the goddess was drinking what she had been given, a hard-faced, impudent boy stood in front of her, laughed, and called her greedy. She was offended, and since she had not yet drunk it all, she drenched him, as he spoke, with the barley and the liquid mixed together.

5.455 His face soaked up spots. The limbs that had just been arms became legs, and a tail was added to his altered body. He

14 Anapis is a river near Syracuse.

shrank into a small form, so that he would have no great power to do harm, smaller in size than a little lizard. The old woman marveled and wept and reached out to touch the creature, but he fled from her and looked for a hiding place. He has a name suited to his coloring, his body starred with scattered spots. To tell through what lands and over what waters the goddess wandered would take too long: the world ran out before her search did. She returned to Sicily, and while she was going everywhere in turn, she came to Cyane too. If Cyane had not been changed, she would have told her everything, but though she wished to speak, she had neither mouth nor tongue, nothing to speak with. Still, she gave clear signs. On the surface of her waters she showed the mother Persephone's girdle, which she knew well, and which had happened to fall there into the sacred pool.[15]

5.471 As soon as she recognized it, as if only then had she learned that her daughter had been carried off, the goddess tore her disheveled hair and beat her breast again and again with her palms. She did not yet know where her daughter was, yet she reproached every land, calling them ungrateful and unworthy of the gift of grain, and Trinacria above all, where she had found the traces of her loss. So there, with a savage hand, she broke the plows that turn the clods. In her anger she sent farmers and the oxen of the fields alike to their deaths, ordered the fields to betray what had been entrusted to them, and blighted the seeds. The land's fertility, famed throughout the wide world, was proved false. The crops died in their first green blades. Now too much sun, now too much rain ruined them. Stars and winds did harm, and greedy birds picked up the seed as it was sown. Darnel and thistles and unconquerable grass wore down the wheat harvests.

5.487 Then Alpheus' beloved raised her head from her Elean waters, swept her dripping hair back from her forehead to her ears, and said, "Mother of the girl sought through all the world,

15 The lizard's Latin name is *stellio*, from *stella*, "star." Persephone is the Greek form of Proserpina's name.

mother of the crops, stop your endless labors, and do not rage so violently against the earth, which is faithful to you. The earth has done nothing to deserve this; it opened unwillingly for the abduction. And I do not plead for my own country: I came here as a guest. Pisa is my homeland, and I trace my origin to Elis. I live in Sicily as a stranger, but this land is dearer to me than any other soil. Here I, Arethusa, now have my household gods, here my home: protect it, gentlest of goddesses.[16] 5.498 Why I left my home and was carried over so wide a sea to Ortygia, my story will find the right time to tell, when you are relieved of your cares and look more cheerful. The earth lets me pass and gives me a road. Carried down beneath its lowest caverns, I raise my head here and see the stars I had grown unused to. So while I was gliding beneath the earth in a Stygian stream, there I saw your Proserpina with my own eyes. She was sad, it is true, and her face not yet free of fear, but a queen all the same, but the greatest in that world of shadows, but still the mighty consort of the lord of the underworld."

5.509 When she heard these words, the mother was stunned as if turned to stone, and for a long time she was like one thunderstruck. When her heavy stupor had been driven out by heavy grief, she rode in her chariot out into the regions of heaven. There, her face all clouded and her hair streaming, she stood before Jupiter to reproach him and said, "Jupiter, I have come to you as a suppliant for my own flesh and blood and for yours. If the mother counts for nothing with you, let the daughter move her father, and do not, I beg you, care for her any less because I gave birth to her. See, my daughter, long sought, is found at last, if you call it finding to lose her more surely, or if you call it finding to know where she is. That she was carried off, I will bear, as long as he gives her back. For your daughter does not deserve a robber for a husband, even if she is no longer mine."

5.523 Jupiter replied, "Our daughter is a pledge and a burden we share, you and I. But if we are willing to give things their true

16 Arethusa was a spring on Ortygia, the island at Syracuse; the river Alpheus of Elis in Greece was believed to flow under the sea to mingle with it.

names, what was done here is not an injury but love. And that son-in-law will be no disgrace to us, if only you, goddess, consent. Even if all else were lacking, what a thing it is to be Jupiter's brother! And what of the fact that nothing else is lacking, and that he yields to me only by the lot? But if you are so set on separating them, Proserpina shall return to heaven, on one fixed condition: that she has touched no food there with her lips. For so the covenant of the Fates has decreed."

5.533 He had spoken. But Ceres was determined to bring her daughter out. Fate did not allow it, for the girl had broken her fast. While she was wandering innocently in the well-tended gardens, she had plucked a pomegranate from a bending tree, taken seven seeds from its pale rind, and pressed them in her mouth. Of all there, only Ascalaphus saw it. Orphne, it is said, not the least known among the nymphs of Avernus, once bore him to her Acheron in the dark woods. He saw, and by informing on her he cruelly robbed her of her return. The queen of Erebus groaned and turned the informer into a bird of ill omen. She sprinkled his head with water from Phlegethon and changed it into a beak, feathers and great eyes. 5.546 Robbed of himself, he was clothed in tawny wings. His head swelled, his long nails curved back, and he could barely move the feathers that sprouted along his sluggish arms. He became a loathsome bird, the herald of coming grief, the lazy horned owl, a dire omen for mortals. He, at least, may be thought to have earned his punishment by his informing tongue. But you, daughters of Achelous, why do you have the feathers and feet of birds while you keep the faces of girls? Was it because you, the skilled Sirens, were among Proserpina's companions when she was picking spring flowers? After you had searched for her in vain over the whole world, you prayed at once that you might hover above the waves on the oars of wings, so that the seas too might feel your care. You found the gods willing, and saw your limbs suddenly turn golden with feathers.[17]

17 The Sirens, daughters of the river god Achelous, were bird-women whose singing lured sailors to their deaths.

5.561 But so that your singing, born to charm the ear, and so rich a gift of voice would not lose the use of the tongue, your girls' faces and human voices remained. Jupiter, mediating between his brother and his grieving sister, divided the turning year equally. Now the goddess, a divinity shared by two kingdoms, spends as many months with her mother as with her husband. At once the look of her mind and of her face was changed. Her brow, which a moment before could have looked sad even to Dis, was joyful, like the sun that has been hidden by rain clouds and comes out from the clouds it has overcome.

ARETHUSA

Arethusa tells how she fled the river Alpheus and became a spring that flows under the sea to Sicily.

5.572 Kindly Ceres, free of care now that her daughter was restored, asked what had made you flee, Arethusa, and why you are a sacred spring. The waters fell silent. Their goddess raised her head from the deep spring, wrung her green hair dry with her hand, and told the old love affair of the river of Elis. "I was one of the nymphs who live in Achaea," she said, "and no other ranged the glades more eagerly or set her nets more eagerly. But though I never sought a reputation for beauty, and though I was strong, I was known as the beautiful one. My face, too often praised, gave me no pleasure. The bodily gift that others usually delight in made me, country girl that I was, blush, and I thought it a crime to please.

5.585 I was coming back, tired, from the Stymphalian woods, I remember. It was hot, and my exertion had doubled the great heat. I came upon a stream flowing without an eddy, without a murmur, clear to the bottom, so that every pebble in its depths could be counted; you would hardly have thought it was moving. Silvery willows and poplars fed by its water gave shade that grew of its own accord along the sloping banks. I went up and first dipped the soles of my feet, then waded in up to my knees. Not content with that, I untied my girdle, hung my soft clothes

on a bending willow, and plunged naked into the water. While I was striking it and drawing it toward me, gliding in a thousand ways and flinging out my arms, I felt some kind of murmur beneath the middle of the stream, and in terror I stepped onto the edge of the nearer bank. 'Where are you rushing, Arethusa?' Alpheus called from his waters, 5.600 'where are you rushing?' he said to me again in his hoarse voice. Just as I was, I fled without my clothes: the other bank had them. All the more he pressed on and burned, and because I was naked, I seemed readier for him. So I ran, and so he pressed me hard in his wildness, as doves on trembling wings flee the hawk, as the hawk drives on the trembling doves. All the way to Orchomenus and Psophis and Cyllene, to the valleys of Maenalus, cold Erymanthus, and Elis, I kept up the race, and he was no faster than I. But I could not keep running for long, since I was not as strong; he could endure a long exertion. Still, across plains, over mountains covered in trees, over rocks and crags and where there was no path at all, I ran. 5.614 The sun was behind me. I saw a long shadow running ahead of my feet—unless it was my fear that saw it. But certainly the sound of his feet terrified me, and his enormous panting breath was blowing on the ribbons in my hair. Worn out by the effort of my flight, I cried, 'Help me, I'm caught! Help your armor-bearer, Diana, to whom you have so often given your bow to carry and your arrows shut in their quiver.' The goddess was moved. She took one of the dense clouds and threw it over me. The river searched for me as I lay hidden in the mist, and, at a loss, looked all around the hollow cloud. Twice, not knowing, he circled the place where the goddess had hidden me, and twice he called, 'Ho, Arethusa! Ho, Arethusa!' What did I feel then, poor thing? Was it not what a lamb feels when it hears wolves howling around the high sheepfold, or a hare that, hiding in a bramble, sees the hounds' hostile jaws and dares not move a muscle? 5.630 Still he did not go away, for he saw no footprints farther on; he kept watch on the cloud and the place. A cold sweat seized my besieged limbs, and dark-blue drops fell from my whole body. Wherever I moved my foot,

a pool flowed out, dew dripped from my hair, and faster than I can now retell it to you, I was changed into water. But the river recognized the waters he loved, laid aside the human form he had taken, and turned back into his own waters, to mingle with me. Delia split open the ground, and plunging into dark caverns I was carried to Ortygia. It is dear to me because it bears my goddess's name, and it was the first to bring me up into the air above."[18]

TRIPTOLEMUS AND LYNCUS

Ceres sends Triptolemus to spread grain; Lyncus tries to kill him and is turned into a lynx.

5.642 So far Arethusa. The goddess of plenty yoked twin serpents to her chariot, curbed their mouths with bits, and was carried through the air between heaven and earth. She sent her light chariot to Tritonia's city, to Triptolemus, and ordered him to scatter the seeds she gave him, partly on untilled ground, partly on land tilled again after a long time. Now the young man had been carried high over Europe and the land of Asia; he turned toward the shores of Scythia. The king there was Lyncus, and Triptolemus entered the king's house.[19] 5.651 Asked how he had come, the reason for his journey, his name and his homeland, he said, "My homeland is famous Athens, my name Triptolemus. I came neither by ship over the waves nor on foot over the land: the air opened a path for me. I bring the gifts of Ceres, which, scattered over wide fields, will yield fruitful harvests and gentle foods." The foreigner was envious. So that he himself might be credited with so great a gift, he received him as a guest, and when he was heavy with sleep, attacked him with a sword. As he tried to pierce his breast, Ceres made him a lynx, and ordered

18 Ortygia was also an old name of Delos, the birthplace of Diana (called Delia after it), and Ortygia was one of her titles.

19 Triptolemus, a prince of Eleusis near Athens, was sent by Ceres to teach agriculture to the world.

the Mopsopian youth to drive her sacred team through the air once more.'[20]

THE PIERIDES BECOME MAGPIES

The nymphs judge the Muses the winners, and the insulting daughters of Pierus become magpies.

5.662 The greatest of us had finished her learned song. With one voice the nymphs declared that the goddesses who dwell on Helicon had won. When the defeated sisters hurled abuse at us, she said, 'Since it is not enough for you to have earned punishment by the contest, and you add insults to your offense, and our patience is not unlimited, we will proceed to punishment and follow where our anger calls.' The Emathian sisters laughed and scorned her threats. But as they tried to speak and, with loud shouts, to shake their insolent fists at us, they saw feathers sprouting through their nails and their arms being covered with plumage. Each saw another's face harden into a rigid beak, and new birds joining the woods. And as they tried to beat their breasts in grief, they were lifted by the motion of their arms and hung in the air: magpies, the scolds of the woods. Even now their old eloquence remains in these birds, their hoarse chattering and their enormous passion for talk."

20 "Mopsopian" means Athenian, from Mopsopia, an old name for Attica.

Book 6

Divine punishments
Arachne; Niobe; the Lycian peasants; Marsyas; Tereus, Procne and Philomela; Boreas.

ARACHNE

A Lydian weaver boasts she is better than Minerva and challenges the disguised goddess to a contest.

6.1 Tritonia had listened to this tale, and had approved the songs of the Aonian sisters and their just anger. Then she said to herself, "To praise is not enough; let us be praised ourselves, and not allow our divinity to be scorned unpunished." And she set her mind on the ruin of Maeonian Arachne, who, she had heard, would not yield to her the glory of the art of working wool. The girl was famous not for her place or her family's origins, but for her art. Her father, Idmon of Colophon, dyed the thirsty wool with Phocaean purple. Her mother had died, but she too had been of the common people, her husband's equal. Yet Arachne had won by her skill a memorable name throughout the cities of Lydia, though she was born in a small house and lived in little Hypaepa.[1] 6.14 To gaze at her marvelous work, the nymphs often deserted the vineyards of their own Tmolus; the nymphs of the Pactolus deserted their waters. And it was a pleasure to look not only at the finished cloth but also at the cloth as it was being made, so much grace was there in her art. Whether she was winding the raw wool into its first balls, or working the stuff

1 Arachne's name is the Greek word for "spider." Maeonia is an old name for Lydia, in western Asia Minor.

with her fingers and softening the fleece, drawn out again and again in long strands until it was like clouds, or twirling the smooth spindle with a light thumb, or embroidering with the needle, you would know that Pallas had taught her. Yet she denies it, and, offended at the thought of so great a teacher, she says, "Let her compete with me: if I lose, there is nothing I would refuse."

6.26 Pallas takes the shape of an old woman: she puts false gray hair on her temples and gives herself feeble limbs, which she props on a stick. Then she began to speak: "Not everything that comes with greater age is to be shunned: experience comes with later years. Do not scorn my advice. Aim for the greatest fame among mortals in working wool, but yield to the goddess, rash girl, and in a suppliant voice ask pardon for your words: she will grant pardon if you ask." Arachne glares at her, drops the threads she had begun, and, barely holding back her hand, her face confessing her anger, she answered the disguised Pallas with these words: "You come weak in mind and worn out by long old age. Too long a life does harm. Let your daughter-in-law, if you have one, or your daughter, if you have one, listen to talk like this.

6.40 I have advice enough of my own. And so that you don't think your warnings have done any good, my opinion is unchanged. Why doesn't she come herself? Why does she avoid this contest?" Then the goddess said, "She has come," and threw off the old woman's form and revealed Pallas. The nymphs and the Mygdonian women worship her divinity; the girl alone was not afraid. Even so she blushed: a sudden flush marked her face against her will and then faded again, as the sky turns crimson when dawn first stirs and a little later grows white at the rising of the sun. She holds to her purpose and, in her desire for a foolish victory, rushes to her doom; for Jupiter's daughter does not refuse, nor warn her any further, nor put off the contest any longer.

6.53 Without delay they take their places on opposite sides, and both stretch two looms with fine warp threads (the web is bound

to the beam, the reed separates the warp). The weft is threaded through the middle with sharp shuttles; their fingers draw it through, and once it is led between the warp threads, the notched teeth of the comb strike and pack it down. Both of them hurry, and with their robes girded up to their breasts they move their skilled arms, their eagerness beguiling the toil. There they weave purple that has known the Tyrian vat, and delicate shades with scarcely any difference between them, as when the sun's rays are struck by a shower and the rainbow stains the long sky with its huge curve: though a thousand different colors shine in it, the passage from one to the next deceives the watching eye, so alike are the colors that touch, and yet the outermost ones are far apart. There too pliant gold is worked in with the threads, and an ancient tale is spun out on the loom.

6.70 Pallas depicts the crag of Mars on Cecrops' citadel and the ancient quarrel over the naming of the land. Twice six heavenly gods sit on lofty thrones in august solemnity, with Jupiter in the middle. Each god is marked by his own features: the image of Jupiter is a king's. She shows the god of the sea standing and striking the rugged rock with his long trident, and from the middle of the wound in the rock seawater leaping out, the token by which he would claim the city. To herself she gives a shield, she gives a sharp-pointed spear, she gives a helmet for her head; her breast is guarded by the aegis; and she shows the earth, struck by her spear, bringing forth the gray-green olive with its berries, and the gods marveling. Victory crowns the work. Yet so that her rival for glory may learn from examples what reward to expect for such mad daring, she adds four contests in the four corners, bright with their own colors, picked out with small figures.[2]

6.87 One corner holds Thracian Rhodope and Haemus—now icy mountains, once mortal bodies!—who took for themselves the names of the highest gods. Another part holds the pitiable fate

2 The crag of Mars is the Areopagus at Athens, whose legendary first king was Cecrops. Neptune and Minerva competed to be the city's patron, and her gift of the olive won.

of the Pygmy mother: Juno defeated her in a contest and ordered her to become a crane and to declare war on her own people. She also painted Antigone, who once dared to compete with the consort of great Jupiter, and whom royal Juno turned into a bird; neither Ilium nor her father Laomedon could save her from taking on feathers and, as a white stork, applauding herself with her clattering beak. The one corner left holds Cinyras, bereaved: he is embracing the steps of a temple, which were once his daughters' limbs, and lying on the stone he seems to weep. She edges the outer borders with olives of peace. That is the limit; she ends her work with her own tree.[3]

6.103 The Maeonian girl portrays Europa, deceived by the image of a bull: you would have thought it a real bull, a real sea. Europa herself seemed to look back at the land she had left, to call to her companions, to fear the touch of the leaping water, and to draw up her timid feet. She also made Asterie, held by a struggling eagle; she made Leda lying beneath a swan's wings. She added how Jupiter, hidden in the image of a satyr, filled the lovely daughter of Nycteus with twin offspring; how he was Amphitryon when he took you, woman of Tiryns; how as gold he tricked Danae, as fire the daughter of Asopus, as a shepherd Mnemosyne, as a speckled serpent Deo's daughter. You too, Neptune, she pictured, changed into a fierce bullock, with the daughter of Aeolus. Appearing as Enipeus, you father the Aloidae; as a ram you deceive Bisaltis; the golden-haired, gentlest mother of crops felt you as a horse; the snake-haired mother of the winged horse felt you as a bird; Melantho felt you as a dolphin.[4] 6.121 To all of these she gave their proper faces, and to the places their proper face too. There is Phoebus in the guise of a countryman, and how he wore now a hawk's feathers, now a lion's hide, and how as a shepherd he tricked Isse, daughter of Macareus; how Liber deceived Erigone with a false bunch of

3 Rhodope and Haemus, a Thracian queen and king, called themselves Juno and Jupiter.

4 Deo's daughter is Proserpina (Deo is a name for Ceres); the snake-haired mother of the winged horse is Medusa, mother of Pegasus.

grapes; how Saturn, as a horse, begot the two-formed Chiron. The outermost part of the web, edged with a narrow border, has flowers woven in among twining ivy. Neither Pallas nor Envy could find fault with that work. The golden-haired warrior goddess was stung by its success and tore the embroidered cloth, with its crimes of the heavenly ones; and holding her shuttle of Cytorian wood, she struck Arachne, Idmon's daughter, on the forehead three or four times.

6.134 The unhappy girl could not bear it, and in her pride she bound her throat with a noose. As she hung there, Pallas took pity and lifted her up, and said, "Live, then, but hang all the same, wicked girl; and so that you may not be free of care for the future, let the same law of punishment be declared for your race and for your descendants to come." Then, as she left, she sprinkled her with the juices of Hecate's herb; and at once, touched by the grim drug, her hair fell away, and with it her nose and ears; her head became tiny, her whole body small; slender fingers clung to her sides in place of legs; the rest was belly. Yet from it she still lets out a thread and, as a spider, works at her webs as of old.

NIOBE

Niobe boasts of her fourteen children; Apollo and Diana kill them all, and she turns to weeping stone.

6.146 All Lydia is in an uproar; the rumor of the deed goes through the towns of Phrygia and fills the wide world with talk. Niobe had known Arachne before her marriage, when as a girl she lived in Maeonia and on Sipylus; yet she was not warned by her countrywoman's punishment to yield to the gods and use humbler words. Many things made her proud; but neither her husband's art, nor the lineage of them both, nor the power of a great kingdom pleased her as much—though all of them pleased her—as her own children; and Niobe would have been called the happiest of mothers, had she not seemed so to herself. For Manto, daughter of Tiresias, who foresaw what was to come, had gone

through the middle of the streets prophesying, stirred by a divine impulse: "Women of Ismenus, go in crowds and give Latona and Latona's two children incense with devout prayer, and wreathe your hair with laurel.[5] 6.162 Latona commands it through my mouth." They obey, and all the Theban women wreathe their brows with leaves as ordered and give incense and words of prayer to the holy flames. Look—here comes Niobe, thronged by a great crowd of attendants, striking in her Phrygian robes woven with gold, and beautiful, as far as her anger allows. Tossing her loose hair over both shoulders with a graceful movement of her head, she stopped, and, standing tall, cast her proud eyes around and said, "What madness is this, to put gods you have heard of above gods you have seen? Or why is Latona worshipped at altars, while my divinity still goes without incense? My father is Tantalus, the only one ever allowed to touch the tables of the gods above; my mother is a sister of the Pleiades; my grandfather is mighty Atlas, who carries the axis of heaven on his neck; Jupiter is my other grandfather, and I boast of him as my father-in-law too.

6.177 The peoples of Phrygia fear me; the royal house of Cadmus is under my rule; and the walls that were joined together by my husband's lyre are ruled, with their people, by me and my husband. Wherever in my house I turn my eyes, vast riches meet the view. On top of this comes a face worthy of a goddess. Add to this seven daughters, and as many sons, and soon sons-in-law and daughters-in-law. Ask now what grounds my pride has, and dare to prefer to me Latona, the Titaness, daughter of Coeus, whoever he is—Latona, to whom the great earth once refused even a tiny place when she was about to give birth. Neither heaven nor earth nor the waters received your goddess: she was an exile from the world, until, pitying her as she wandered, 6.190 'You wander a stranger on land,' said Delos, 'as I do on the waves,' and gave her a place that would not stand still. She became the mother of two: that is a seventh part of what my

5 Niobe, daughter of Tantalus, was queen of Thebes and wife of Amphion, whose lyre-playing raised the city's walls.

womb has borne. I am happy—who could deny it?—and happy I shall remain—who could doubt that too? My plenty has made me safe. I am too great for Fortune to harm; though she snatch away much, she will leave me much more. My blessings are already beyond fear. Suppose some of this crowd of my children could be taken from me: even stripped, I would not be reduced to the number of two, Latona's 'crowd'—and how far is she, with that, from being childless? Go—enough of these rites—go quickly, and take the laurel from your hair." They take it off and leave the rites unfinished, and, as far as they may, worship the goddess with a silent murmur.

6.204 The goddess was indignant, and on the very summit of Cynthus she spoke to her twin children with these words: "See, I, your mother, proud to have borne you, who would yield to no goddess but Juno, am now doubted whether I am a goddess at all; and unless you come to my aid, my children, I am being barred from altars that have been worshipped through all the ages. Nor is this my only grief: Tantalus' daughter has added insults to her dreadful deed, has dared to rank you below her own children, and has called me childless—may it fall back on her own head!—and, wicked woman, she has shown her father's tongue." Latona was about to add pleas to this account. "Stop!" said Phoebus. "Long complaint only delays the punishment." Phoebe said the same; and gliding swiftly through the air, hidden in clouds, they reached the citadel of Cadmus.[6]

6.218 Near the walls there was a level plain stretching far and wide, constantly pounded by horses, where crowds of wheels and hard hoofs had softened the clods beneath. There some of Amphion's seven sons mount their strong horses, sit astride backs red with Tyrian dye, and guide reins heavy with gold. One of them, Ismenus, who had once been the first burden his mother bore, while he is turning his horse's course in a fixed circle and reining in its foaming mouth, cries out, "Oh, no!" and carries arrows fixed in the middle of his chest; the reins slip

6 Mount Cynthus on Delos was the birthplace of Apollo and Diana. Tantalus too had offended the gods with his tongue, in some versions by betraying their secrets.

from his dying hand, and little by little he slides sideways off the horse's right shoulder. 6.230 The next, Sipylus, hearing the sound of a quiver through the empty air, was giving his horse free rein, as a ship's master, foreseeing rain at the sight of a cloud, runs before it and lets down all the canvas hanging around him, so that not the lightest breeze may slip away. Yet as he gives rein, the arrow that cannot be escaped overtakes him; the shaft stuck quivering in the top of his neck, and the bare iron stood out from his throat. Leaning forward as he was, he rolls down over the galloping legs and the mane, and stains the earth with his warm blood. Unhappy Phaedimus and Tantalus, heir to his grandfather's name, having finished their usual exercise, had moved on to young men's work in the gleaming wrestling ground; and they had already locked chest against chest in a tight grip, when an arrow sped from the drawn string pierced them both, joined just as they were. 6.245 Together they groaned; together they laid their bodies, bent double with pain, on the ground; together, lying there, they turned their eyes for the last time; together they breathed out their lives. Alphenor sees, and, beating his torn breast, flies to them to lift their cold limbs in his embrace, and falls in that devoted duty; for the Delian god burst open the inmost depths of his chest with death-bringing steel. When it was pulled out, part of his lung was torn out on the barbs, and with his life his blood poured out into the air. But long-haired Damasichthon is struck by no single wound. He had been hit where the leg begins and where the sinewy back of the knee makes a soft joint; and while he tries with his hand to pull out the deadly shaft, a second arrow was driven through his throat right up to the feathers. 6.259 His blood drove it out, and, spurting high, it leaps up and shoots far, boring through the air. The last, Ilioneus, had raised his arms in a prayer that would do no good, and had said, "O all you gods together"—not knowing that not all of them needed to be asked—"spare me!" The bow-bearer was moved, when the arrow could no longer be called back. Yet he died of the slightest wound, the arrow piercing his heart not deeply. The news of the disaster, the people's grief and

the tears of her own household made the mother certain of the sudden ruin: she wondered that the gods could do this, and was angry that they had dared it, that they had so much power. For Amphion, the father, driving a sword through his breast, had by dying ended his grief together with the light of life.

6.273 Ah, how far this Niobe was from that Niobe who had just now driven the people from Latona's altars and carried herself, head thrown back, through the middle of the city—envied by her own people then, but now pitiable even to an enemy! She throws herself on the cold bodies and, in no order, distributes last kisses among all her sons. Raising her bruised arms from them to the sky, she said, "Feed, cruel Latona, on my grief, feed on it, and glut your heart with my mourning: I go to my own funeral. Exult, and triumph, my victorious enemy! But why victorious? In my misery I have more left than you in your happiness: even after so many deaths, I win."

6.286 She had spoken, and the string twanged from the drawn bow. It terrified everyone except Niobe alone: misfortune has made her bold. The sisters were standing in black clothes, their hair unbound, before their brothers' biers. One of them, pulling at the arrow stuck in her body, sank down dying, her face on her brother. Another, trying to comfort her poor mother, suddenly fell silent and doubled over with a wound. This one collapses as she flees in vain; that one dies upon her sister; this one hides; that one you could see trembling. When six had been given to death, each suffering a different wound, the last was left. Her mother, covering her with her whole body, her whole robe, cried out, "Leave me one, the youngest! Of so many I ask only for the youngest, and only one." 6.301 And while she prays, the one she prays for dies. Bereft, she sinks down among her lifeless sons and daughters and husband, and grows rigid with her sorrows. The breeze stirs not a hair; the color in her face is bloodless; her eyes stand motionless in her grieving cheeks; there is nothing alive in her likeness. Her very tongue freezes inside against the hard roof of her mouth, and her veins lose the power to move; her neck cannot bend, her arms cannot move, her foot

cannot walk; inside, too, her vitals are stone. Yet she weeps. And, wrapped in the whirl of a powerful wind, she is snatched away to her homeland. There, fixed on a mountain top, she melts away, and even now the marble trickles with tears.[7]

LATONA AND THE LYCIAN PEASANTS

Lycian peasants refuse Latona a drink of water and muddy the lake, and she turns them into frogs.

6.313 Then indeed everyone, woman and man, fears the manifest anger of the divine power, and all worship with greater zeal the great godhead of the goddess who bore twins; and, as happens, starting from this recent event they retell earlier ones. One of them says, "In the fertile fields of Lycia too, the peasants of old scorned the goddess, and not unpunished. The story is little known, since the men were of no account, but it is a marvel. I saw with my own eyes the pond and the place made famous by the wonder. For my father, by then advanced in years and unable to bear the journey, had told me to drive some choice cattle from there, and had himself given me a man of that people as a guide on my way. While I was going over the pastures with him, look: in the middle of a lake stood an old altar, black with the ash of sacrifices, surrounded by trembling reeds. My guide stopped and said in a fearful murmur, 'Be kind to me!' and in a similar murmur I said, 'Be kind!'

6.329 Still, I asked whether it was an altar of the Naiads, or of Faunus, or of some local god, when my guide answered thus: 'No mountain divinity dwells in this altar, young man. She calls it her own to whom the royal wife once forbade the world, whom wandering Delos barely received when she begged, in the days when it floated, a light island. There, leaning on a palm and on Pallas' tree, Latona gave birth to twins, against their stepmother's will. From there too, it is said, the new mother fled from Juno, carrying her children, two divinities, at her breast.

7 Her homeland is Mount Sipylus in Lydia, where a rock resembling a weeping woman was pointed out as Niobe.

And now, in the land of Lycia that bred the Chimaera, when the heavy sun was scorching the fields, the goddess, wearied by her long labor and parched by the blazing heat of the sky, grew thirsty, and her hungry children had drained her milk-filled breasts.[8]

6.343 By chance she caught sight of a lake of modest size at the bottom of a valley; country people were gathering bushy osiers there, with rushes and the sedge that marshes love. The Titaness came near and, kneeling, pressed the ground, meaning to drink the cool water. The rustic crowd forbids her. The goddess addressed those who forbade her: "Why do you keep me from the water? The use of water is common to all. Nature has made neither the sun, nor the air, nor clear water anyone's private property: I have come to share a public gift. Yet I ask you as a suppliant to give it to me. I was not preparing to wash my body and tired limbs here, only to relieve my thirst. As I speak, my mouth has no moisture, my throat is parched, and there is hardly a passage for my voice in it. 6.356 A drink of water will be nectar to me, and I shall confess that I have received life along with it: you will have given me life in your water. Let these too move you, who stretch out their little arms from my breast." And, as it happened, the children were stretching out their arms. Whom could the goddess's gentle words not have moved? Yet these men persist in forbidding her as she pleads, and add threats if she does not go far away, and insults besides. Nor is that enough: they even stirred up the lake itself with their feet and hands, and kicked up the soft mud from the bottom of the pool this way and that with spiteful leaps. Anger put off her thirst; for Coeus' daughter no longer pleads with the unworthy, nor can she bear any longer to speak words beneath a goddess; and raising her palms to the stars, 6.369 she said, "May you live forever in that pond!" The goddess's wish comes true: they love to be under the water, now to submerge their whole bodies in the hollow marsh, now to put out their heads, now to swim on

8 Pallas' tree is the olive. Juno, Jupiter's wife, hounded Latona because she was bearing his children.

the surface, often to settle on the bank of the pond, often to leap back into the cool lake. But even now they exercise their foul tongues in quarrels, and, all shame driven off, though they are under water, under water they still try to slander. Their voice too is now hoarse, their necks puff up and swell, and their very insults widen their gaping jaws. Their backs touch their heads, their necks seem to have been cut away, their spines are green, their bellies, the largest part of the body, are white, and they leap as new frogs in the muddy pool.'"[9]

MARSYAS

Apollo defeats the satyr Marsyas in music and flays him; the tears of his mourners become a river.

6.382 So when someone or other had told how the men of the Lycian race were destroyed, another recalled the satyr whom Latona's son defeated on Tritonia's reed pipe and then punished. "Why are you tearing me from myself?" the satyr cried. "Oh, I repent! Oh," he kept shouting, "a pipe is not worth this much!" As he shouted, the skin was ripped from the surface of his limbs, and he was nothing but one wound. Blood flowed everywhere, his sinews lay bare and exposed, and his trembling veins pulsed with no skin to cover them; you could have counted his throbbing organs and the fibers glistening in his chest. The fauns who dwell in the countryside, spirits of the woods, wept for him, and so did his brothers the satyrs, and Olympus, dear to him even then, and the nymphs, and everyone who pastured woolly flocks and horned herds on those mountains. The fertile earth grew wet. Soaked, it took in the falling tears and drank them deep into its veins, and when it had made them into water, it sent them out into the open air. From there, seeking the swift

9 The repeated "sub aqua, sub aqua" ("under water, under water") imitates the frogs' croaking.

sea between sloping banks, the clearest river in Phrygia bears the name Marsyas.[10]

PELOPS

Pelops shows the ivory shoulder the gods gave him after his father cut him up.

6.401 With these words the crowd at once returned to present matters and mourned Amphion, destroyed along with his offspring. The mother bore the blame. Yet even then, they say, one person wept for her: Pelops. Drawing his robe down from his chest, he showed the ivory on his left shoulder. At the time of his birth this shoulder had been flesh, the same color as the right. Later, they say, when his father's hands had cut him to pieces, the gods joined his limbs together again. The other parts were found, but the place between the throat and the top of the upper arm was missing. Ivory was set there to serve for the part that could not be found, and by that work Pelops was made whole.[11]

TEREUS, PROCNE AND PHILOMELA

Tereus rapes his wife's sister Philomela and cuts out her tongue; the sisters take a terrible revenge.

6.412 The leading men of the neighboring lands gathered, and the nearby cities begged their kings to go and offer comfort: Argos and Sparta and Mycenae, city of Pelops' line; Calydon, not yet hated by grim Diana; fertile Orchomenus and Corinth, famed for its bronze; fierce Messene and Patrae and lowly Cleonae; Pylos, city of Neleus, and Troezen, not yet the city of Pittheus; and the other cities enclosed by the Isthmus between two seas, and those that lie outside it and are seen from the Isthmus between two seas. Who could believe it? You alone, Athens, held

10 The satyr Marsyas took up the pipe Minerva (Tritonia) had thrown away and challenged Apollo to a contest. Olympus here is his pupil, a legendary piper, not the mountain.

11 Pelops was Niobe's brother. Their father Tantalus cut him up and served him to the gods, and Ceres ate the shoulder before the crime was discovered.

back. War stood in the way of that duty. Foreign hosts, carried over the sea, were terrifying the Mopsopian walls. Thracian Tereus had routed them with his auxiliary forces, and by his victory he had won a glorious name.[12]

6.426 He was powerful in wealth and men, and he happened to trace his descent from great Gradivus, so Pandion bound him to himself through marriage with Procne. Neither Juno, patron of brides, nor Hymen, nor any Grace was present at that bed. The Eumenides held torches snatched from a funeral, the Eumenides spread the couch, and an unholy owl brooded over the house and sat on the roof of the bridal chamber. Under this omen Procne and Tereus were joined, and under this omen they became parents. Thrace congratulated them, of course, and they themselves gave thanks to the gods. They ordered that the day on which Pandion's daughter was given to the illustrious king, and the day on which Itys was born, should be called festivals. So well hidden is what is truly good for us. Now Titan had led the seasons of the circling year through five autumns, when Procne, coaxing her husband, said, "If I have found any favor[13] 6.441 with you, either send me to visit my sister, or let my sister come here! You can promise your father-in-law that she will return in a short time. Letting me see my sister will be as good as a great gift to me." He ordered ships to be launched into the sea, and with sail and oar he entered the Cecropian harbor and touched the shores of Piraeus. As soon as he was admitted to his father-in-law, right hand was joined to right, and they began to talk under a favorable omen. He had started to explain the reason for his coming, to relay his wife's request and to promise that her sister, if sent, would quickly return. Then, look, Philomela came in, rich in grand attire and richer still in beauty, like the naiads and dryads we hear of walking in the depths of the woods, if only you were to give them such dress and adornment.

6.455 At the sight of the girl Tereus blazed up, just as if someone set fire beneath whitening ears of grain, or burned leaves and

12 Mopsopian means Athenian, from Mopsopus, an early king of Attica.

hay stored in a loft. Her face indeed deserved it. But an inborn lust also goaded him, and the people of those regions are prone to desire: he burned with his nation's vice and his own. His impulse was to corrupt the vigilance of her attendants and the loyalty of her nurse, and even to tempt the girl herself with huge gifts and spend his whole kingdom on her, or else to seize her and defend his prize with savage war. There was nothing he would not have dared, gripped by unbridled love, and his breast could not contain the flames shut inside it. Now he could hardly bear delay. With eager lips he returned to Procne's request, and under cover of her wishes he pursued his own. 6.469 Love made him eloquent. Whenever he pressed further than was proper, he said that Procne wanted it so. He added tears as well, as though she had asked for those too. O gods above, how much blind night mortal hearts contain! Through the very contriving of his crime Tereus was thought devoted, and he won praise from his wickedness. What of the fact that Philomela wanted the same thing? Coaxingly she held her father's shoulders in her arms and begged to go and see her sister, pleading by her own welfare against her own welfare. Tereus watched her, and in watching he already fondled her. Seeing her kisses and her arms around her father's neck, he took it all as goads and torches and fuel for his frenzy. Whenever she embraced her father, he wished he were her father, and he would have been no less wicked for that. 6.483 Their father was won over by the pleas of both. She rejoiced and thanked her father, and, unhappy girl, she thought it a success for both of them, though it would bring grief to both. Now only a little toil remained for Phoebus, and his horses were beating the downward slope of Olympus with their hooves. A royal feast was set on the tables, with Bacchus in gold, and then they gave their bodies to peaceful sleep. But the Odrysian king, though he had retired, burned for her. Recalling her face, her movements, her hands, he pictured as he wished what he had not yet seen. He fed his own fires, and longing kept sleep away. It was daylight, and Pandion, clasping the right hand of his

13 Gradivus is a title of Mars. The Eumenides are the Furies.

departing son-in-law, entrusted his companion to him as tears welled up:

6.496 "Dear son-in-law, since a loving duty has compelled me, and both of them have wished it, and you too have wished it, Tereus, I give her to you. As a suppliant I beg you, by your good faith and our kindred hearts, and by the gods above, to protect her with a father's love, and to send this sweet comfort of my anxious old age back to me as soon as possible. Every delay will be long for me. And you too, Philomela, if you have any devotion, come back to me as soon as possible. It is enough that your sister is far away." So he charged them, and as he did he kissed his daughter, and gentle tears fell among his instructions. As a pledge of good faith he asked for the right hands of both, joined them as they were given to each other, and asked them to remember to greet his absent daughter and grandson for him. With his mouth full of sobs he could barely say his final farewell, and he feared what his mind foreboded.

6.511 As soon as Philomela was placed on board the painted ship, the sea was driven by the oars and the land pushed back. "I have won!" he cried. "What I prayed for is carried with me!" The savage exulted, scarcely able to put off his pleasure, and never turned his eyes from her. So it is when Jupiter's bird, the predator, has set a hare down in its high nest with hooked talons: there is no escape for the captive, and the robber gazes at his prize. Now the journey was done, and they had disembarked from the weary ships onto their own shores, when the king dragged Pandion's daughter into a high-walled lodge hidden in ancient woods. There, pale and trembling and fearing everything, and already asking in tears where her sister was, he shut her in. Openly declaring his crime, he raped her by force, a virgin and alone, while again and again she cried in vain to her father, often to her sister, and above all to the great gods. 6.527 She trembled like a frightened lamb that, wounded and shaken loose from the jaws of a gray wolf, does not yet believe itself safe, or like a dove, its feathers soaked with its own blood, that still shudders and fears the greedy talons that held it. Soon, when

her mind returned, she tore her loosened hair like a mourner, beat her arms in lamentation, and stretched out her hands. "O savage, with your dreadful deeds," she said, "O cruel one! Neither my father's charges, given with loving tears, moved you, nor care for my sister, nor my virginity, nor the laws of marriage! You have confounded everything. I have been made my sister's rival, you are a husband to two, and Procne must now be my enemy. 6.539 Why not tear out this life too, traitor, so that no crime is left for you to commit? I wish you had done it before that unspeakable coupling; then my shade would have been free of guilt. Yet if the gods above see these things, if the powers of the gods mean anything, if everything has not perished with me, someday you will pay me the penalty. I myself will cast shame aside and tell what you have done. If I am given the chance, I will go among the people. If I am kept shut up in the woods, I will fill the woods with it and move the rocks that witnessed it. The upper air will hear this, and any god there may be in it."

6.549 Such words stirred the brutal tyrant's anger, and no less his fear. Goaded by both, he freed from its sheath the sword he wore at his side, seized her by the hair, bent her arms behind her back, and forced her to endure chains. Philomela was offering her throat; at the sight of the sword she had conceived the hope of dying. But as her tongue protested and kept calling her father's name and struggled to speak, he gripped it with pincers and cut it out with his savage sword. The last stump of the tongue's root quivered, while the tongue itself lay trembling and murmuring on the black earth. As the tail of a mutilated snake will leap, it writhed and, dying, sought its mistress's feet. Even after this crime—I would hardly dare believe it—he is said to have gone back again and again in his lust to her mangled body.

6.563 After such deeds he brought himself to return to Procne. When she saw her husband she asked for her sister, but he gave false groans and told a made-up story of her death, and his tears won belief. Procne tore from her shoulders the robe that gleamed with broad bands of gold. She put on black clothing,

built an empty tomb, brought offerings of atonement to spirits that were not there, and mourned the fate of a sister who should not have been mourned like this. The god had passed through the twice six signs, and a year was over. What was Philomela to do? A guard blocked escape, the walls of the lodge stood rigid, built of solid stone, and her mute mouth had no way to reveal the deed. But grief is greatly inventive, and resourcefulness comes in misery.

6.576 Cunningly she hung the warp on a foreign loom and wove purple signs into the white threads, a disclosure of the crime. When it was finished she gave it to a single serving woman and asked her by gestures to take it to her mistress. Asked, the woman carried it to Procne, not knowing what she was handing over in it. The savage tyrant's wife unrolled the cloth, read the pitiful poem of her own fortune, and—astonishing that she could—was silent. Grief pressed her lips shut, and words indignant enough failed the tongue that searched for them. There was no time for tears: she rushed ahead, ready to confound right and wrong, wholly absorbed in the image of revenge.

6.587 It was the time when the Sithonian women celebrate the rites of Bacchus held every other year; night is the accomplice of those rites. By night Rhodope rang with the clash of shrill bronze, and by night the queen left her house, equipped herself for the god's rites, and took up the weapons of frenzy. Her head was covered with vine leaves, deerskins hung from her left side, and a light spear rested on her shoulder. Rushing through the woods with a crowd of her women around her, terrible Procne, driven by the frenzy of grief, feigned your frenzy, Bacchus. At last she came to the remote lodge. Howling and crying "Euhoe!" she broke down the doors and seized her sister. She dressed her captive in the trappings of Bacchus, hid her face with ivy leaves, and, dragging her along in a daze, led her within her own walls.

6.601 When Philomela realized she had reached that unspeakable house, the unhappy girl shuddered and her whole face went pale. Finding a suitable place, Procne removed the emblems of the rites, uncovered the shamed face of her wretched sister, and

tried to embrace her. But Philomela could not bring herself to raise her eyes in return, for she saw herself as her sister's rival. With her face cast down to the ground, she wanted to swear and call the gods to witness that this disgrace had been forced on her, and her hand served her for a voice. Procne burned, unable to contain her own anger. Cutting short her sister's weeping, she said, "This is no matter for tears, but for steel, or for anything you have that can outdo steel. I have prepared myself, sister, for every crime. 6.614 Either I will set the royal palace ablaze with torches and hurl Tereus, the author of all this, into the middle of the flames, or I will tear out with steel his tongue, or his eyes, or the parts that robbed you of your honor, or I will drive his guilty soul out through a thousand wounds. I have prepared something great; what it is, I am not yet sure." While Procne was saying such things, Itys came to his mother. He reminded her of what she could do. Gazing at him with pitiless eyes, she said, "Ah, how like your father you are!" She said no more, but began preparing the grim crime, seething with silent anger. 6.624 Yet when her son came up and greeted his mother, drew her neck down with his little arms, and mixed kisses with childish caresses, the mother was indeed moved. Her anger broke and halted, and her unwilling eyes grew wet with tears forced from them. But as soon as she felt her mind wavering from too much devotion, she turned from him back to her sister's face. Looking at each in turn, she said, "Why does one bring me caresses, while the other is silent, her tongue torn out? He calls me mother; why can she not call me sister? Look what husband you have married, daughter of Pandion! You are unworthy of your blood. Devotion to a husband like Tereus is a crime."

6.636 Without delay she dragged Itys off, as a tigress of the Ganges drags a doe's suckling fawn through the dark woods. When they reached a remote part of the lofty house, he stretched out his hands, already seeing his fate, and cried "Mother, mother!" and reached for her neck. Procne struck him with a sword where chest meets side, and did not turn her face away. Even that one wound was enough to kill him, but

Philomela cut open his throat with the steel. They tore apart the limbs while they were still alive and held some breath. Then part of them bubbled in hollow bronze cauldrons, part hissed on spits, and the inner rooms dripped with gore.

6.647 To this feast the wife invited Tereus, who knew nothing. Pretending it was a sacred rite of her ancestral custom, which only the husband may attend, she sent away companions and servants. Tereus himself, sitting high on his ancestral throne, ate, stuffing his own flesh and blood into his belly. So deep is the night of his mind that he said, "Fetch Itys here!" Procne could not hide her cruel joy. Eager now to be the messenger of her own calamity, she said, "The one you ask for, you have inside." He looked around and asked where. As he asked and called again, Philomela leapt out, just as she was, her hair spattered from the frenzied slaughter, and threw Itys' bloody head into his father's face. Never did she more wish she could speak and declare her joy in words. 6.661 The Thracian thrust back the tables with a huge shout and summoned the viper sisters from the valley of the Styx. Now he longed, if only he could, to split open his chest and drag out the dreadful feast and the flesh sunk inside him; now he wept and called himself his son's pitiable tomb; now he pursued the daughters of Pandion with drawn sword. You would have thought the Cecropian women's bodies were hanging on wings: they were hanging on wings. One of them made for the woods, the other went under roofs. Even now the marks of the slaughter have not left her breast, and her feathers are stamped with blood. He, swift with grief and the desire for revenge, was turned into a bird with a crest standing on its head. An enormous beak juts out in place of a long spear point. The bird's name is the epops [hoopoe], and it looks armed for battle.[14]

14 Ovid does not say which sister became which bird; in Latin tradition Philomela usually became the nightingale and Procne the swallow.

BOREAS AND ORITHYIA

Refused Orithyia's hand, the North Wind carries her off to Thrace, where she bears winged twins.

6.675 This grief sent Pandion down to the shades of Tartarus before his time, before the last days of a long old age. Erechtheus took the scepter of the land and the governing of affairs, and no one could say whether he was more powerful in justice or in strong arms. He had fathered four sons and as many daughters, and two of the daughters were equal in beauty. Of these, Procris, you were the wife who made Cephalus, son of Aeolus, happy. But Tereus and the Thracians harmed Boreas' suit, and the god was long denied his beloved Orithyia, while he kept asking and preferred prayers to force. When coaxing achieved nothing, bristling with anger, which is usual for that wind and all too familiar, he said, "And rightly so! Why did I give up my weapons—savagery and strength, anger and threatening passion—and turn to prayers, which disgrace me?[15] 6.690 Force suits me. By force I drive away gloomy clouds, by force I shake the seas and overturn knotted oaks, harden the snows and pelt the earth with hail. I too, when I meet my brothers in the open sky—for that is my field—wrestle with such effort that the middle air resounds with our clashes and fires leap out, struck from the hollow clouds. I too, when I have entered the vaulted hollows of the earth and fiercely set my back beneath the deepest caverns, trouble the ghosts and the whole world with tremors. By this means I should have sought a marriage. Erechtheus should not have been begged to be my father-in-law, but made one by force." Having said this, or words no weaker, Boreas shook out his wings. Their beating blew over the whole earth, and the wide sea shuddered.

6.705 Trailing his dusty cloak over the highest peaks, he swept the ground, and, wrapped in darkness, the lover clasped Orithyia, trembling with fear, in his tawny wings. As he flew, the

15 Boreas, the North Wind, was said to make his home in Thrace.

fires he fanned burned more fiercely. Her abductor did not rein in his airy course until he reached the peoples and walls of the Cicones. There the Athenian girl became the wife of the frozen king, and a mother too, giving birth to twin sons who had their mother's other features and their father's wings. Yet they say these wings were not born with their bodies. As long as there was no beard beneath their red-gold hair, the boys Calais and Zetes were featherless. Soon, at the same time, wings began to cover both their sides like birds', and at the same time their cheeks turned golden. So when boyhood gave way to youth, they sailed with the Minyans across an unknown sea in the first ship, to seek the fleece shining with its gleaming wool.[16]

16 The Minyans are the Argonauts, who sailed with Jason in the Argo, said to be the first ship ever built.

Book 7

Medea; Cephalus
Jason and Medea; Aeson made young; Theseus; the plague at Aegina; Cephalus and Procris.

JASON AND MEDEA

Medea falls in love with Jason and uses her magic to help him win the Golden Fleece.

7.1 And now the Minyans were cutting through the sea in the ship from Pagasae. They had seen Phineus, dragging out a destitute old age in unending night, and the young sons of the North Wind had chased the girl-faced birds away from the wretched old man's mouth. After enduring much under the famous Jason, they had at last reached the swift waters of the muddy Phasis. While they approached the king and demanded the fleece of Phrixus, and the Minyans were given terrible terms and enormous labors, Aeetes' daughter meanwhile conceived a powerful fire. She struggled long, and when reason could not conquer her frenzy, she said: "It is useless to resist, Medea: some god or other stands in your way. It would be a wonder if this, or something very like it, were not what they call love.[1] 7.14 For why do my father's orders seem too harsh to me? They are indeed too harsh. Why am I afraid that a man I have only just seen may die? What is the cause of such great fear? Shake the flames kindled in your virgin heart out of it, if you can, unhappy girl!—If I could, I would be saner. But a strange new force drags me against my

1 The Minyans are the Argonauts, Jason's crew. Phineus was a blind king tormented by the Harpies until Calais and Zetes drove them off.

will: desire urges one thing, reason another. I see the better course and approve it; I follow the worse. Why, princess, do you burn for a stranger and dream of marriage in a foreign world? This land too can give you someone to love. Whether he lives or dies is up to the gods. Still, let him live! I may pray for that even without love: for what wrong has Jason done? 7.26 Who but a cruel heart would not be touched by Jason's youth, his birth, his courage? Even if all else were lacking, who could fail to be moved by his face? It has certainly moved my heart. But unless I bring help, he will be scorched by the bulls' breath, or will clash with a crop of his own sowing, enemies born from the earth, or will be handed to the greedy dragon as a wild beast's prey. If I allow this, then I will confess that I am a tigress's daughter, that I carry iron and rock in my heart. Why do I not also watch him die and defile my eyes with the sight? Why not urge on against him the bulls, and the fierce earthborn men, and the dragon that never sleeps? 7.37 May the gods grant better! And yet this is not something for me to pray for, but something for me to do.—Shall I then betray my father's kingdom, and shall some stranger or other be saved by my help, so that, safe thanks to me, he may spread his sails to the winds without me and become another woman's husband, while I, Medea, am left to be punished? If he can do this, or prefer another woman to me, let the ungrateful man die. But his face is not of that kind, nor are the nobility of his mind and the grace of his form such, that I should fear treachery or that he would forget what I have done for him. And he will give me his pledge first, and I will compel the gods to witness our compact. Why fear when you are safe? Prepare yourself and drive off all delay: Jason will owe himself to you forever; he will join you to himself with the solemn marriage torch, and throughout the Pelasgian cities you will be celebrated by crowds of mothers as the savior of their sons. 7.51 Am I then to leave my sister, my brother, my father, my gods, and the soil where I was born, carried off by the winds? Well, my father is cruel, my land is a foreign one, my brother is still a baby; my sister's prayers are on my side, and the greatest of gods is within me. I will not

be leaving great things; I will be pursuing great things: the glory of having saved the young men of the Achaeans, knowledge of a better land, and cities whose fame flourishes even here, and the culture and arts of those places; and the son of Aeson, for whom I would gladly give everything the whole world possesses. With him as my husband I will be called fortunate and dear to the gods, and touch the stars with my head. 7.62 And what of the mountains, whatever they are, that are said to clash together in the middle of the waves, and Charybdis, enemy of ships, who now sucks the sea down and now spews it back, and greedy Scylla, girdled with savage dogs, barking in the Sicilian deep? Surely, holding what I love, clinging to Jason's breast, I will be carried over the long seas; with my arms around him I will fear nothing—or if I fear anything, I will fear only for my husband.— Do you call it marriage, Medea, and give fine names to your guilt? No—look how great a sacrilege you are approaching, and while you still can, escape the crime." So she said, and before her eyes stood what was right, and devotion, and modesty; and Cupid, defeated, was already turning his back in flight.

7.74 She was going to the ancient altars of Hecate, daughter of Perses, hidden in a shady grove deep in a secluded wood. And now she was strong, and the passion she had driven off had died down, when she saw the son of Aeson, and the extinguished flame blazed up again. Her cheeks reddened, her whole face glowed hot again; and as a tiny spark that has lain hidden under a covering of ash is apt to feed on the winds, to grow, and, once stirred, to rise again to its former strength, so her love, already slackening, love you would have thought was fading, flared up when she saw the young man, at the sight of him standing there. And as chance would have it, Aeson's son was more handsome than usual that day: you could have forgiven the lover. She gazed, and kept her eyes fixed on his face as if she were seeing it for the first time; in her madness she thought it no mortal face

she was looking at, and she could not turn herself away from him.[2]

7.89 But when the stranger began to speak, and took her right hand, and in a low voice asked for help and promised to marry her, she said, with tears pouring down: "I see what I am doing: it is not ignorance of the truth that will deceive me, but love. You will be saved by my gift; once saved, keep your promises." He swore by the rites of the three-formed goddess, by whatever divine power dwelt in that grove, by the all-seeing father of his future father-in-law, by his own success and his great dangers. She believed him; he at once received the enchanted herbs, learned their use, and went back to his lodging rejoicing. The next dawn had driven away the glittering stars: the people gathered at the sacred field of Mars and took their places on the ridges. In the middle of the throng sat the king himself, clad in purple and distinguished by his ivory scepter.[3]

7.104 And look: the bronze-footed bulls were breathing Vulcan's fire from nostrils of adamant, and the grass their vapors touched burst into flame; and as full furnaces roar, or as stones broken down in an earthen kiln catch fire when sprinkled with water, so their chests, churning the flames shut up inside them, and their scorched throats roared. Yet the son of Aeson went to meet them. As he came, they turned their terrible faces toward him, and their iron-tipped horns, and pawed the dusty ground with their cloven hooves, and filled the place with smoky bellowing. The Minyans went rigid with fear. He went up to them and did not feel the fire they breathed—such is the power of drugs—and stroked their hanging dewlaps with his bold right hand, and, putting them under the yoke, forced them to draw the plow's heavy weight and to cut with iron a field that had never felt it.

7.120 The Colchians were amazed; the Minyans cheered him with shouts and added to his courage. Then from a bronze helmet he took the serpent's teeth and scattered them over the

2 Hecate was a goddess of witchcraft, crossroads and the night, often identified with Diana; here she is the daughter of the Titan Perses.

3 Aeetes, Medea's father, was the son of the Sun, who sees everything.

plowed fields. The earth softened the seeds, steeped in strong poison beforehand, and the sown teeth grew and became new bodies. And just as an infant takes on human form in its mother's womb, and is put together inside, part by part, in due proportion, and does not come out into the common air until it is fully formed, so, when the image of a man had been completed in the womb of the pregnant earth, it rose up in the teeming field, and—what is more wonderful—brandished weapons at the moment of its birth. When the Pelasgians saw them preparing to hurl their sharp-pointed spears at the Haemonian youth's head, they lowered their faces and their spirits in fear. 7.134 She too was terrified, she who had made him safe; when she saw the young man, one alone, attacked by so many enemies, she went pale and suddenly sat down, cold and bloodless. And in case the herbs she had given him should prove too weak, she sang a spell to help him and called upon her secret arts. He hurled a heavy stone into the midst of his enemies and turned the warfare away from himself against them. The earthborn brothers perished by each other's wounds and fell in civil battle. The Achaeans congratulated the victor, held him fast, and clung to him in eager embraces. You too, girl from a foreign land, would have liked to embrace the victor; but regard for your reputation held you back. You rejoiced as far as you were allowed, with silent feeling, and gave thanks to your spells and to the gods who were their source.

7.149 It remained to lull with herbs the ever-wakeful dragon which, conspicuous for its crest and triple tongue and terrifying with its hooked teeth, guarded the golden tree. After she had sprinkled it with the juice of a Lethaean herb and three times spoken the words that bring peaceful sleep, words that calm the troubled sea and stop rushing rivers, sleep came to eyes that had never known it, and the Aesonian hero took possession of the gold. Proud of his spoil, and carrying with him the giver of the gift as a second spoil, he reached the harbor of Iolcus as victor, with his wife.

AESON MADE YOUNG

Medea gathers herbs by night in her dragon chariot and makes Jason's old father young again.

7.159 The Haemonian mothers and aged fathers brought offerings for their sons' return, and melted heaps of incense in the flames, and the vowed victim fell, its horns overlaid with gold. But Aeson was absent from the celebrations, already nearer to death and worn out by the years of old age. Then the son of Aeson spoke: "O my wife, to whom I confess I owe my life—though you have given me everything, and the sum of your services is past belief—yet if spells can do this (and what can spells not do?), take some years from mine and add them, once taken, to my father." He could not hold back his tears. She was moved by the devotion of his plea, and Aeetes, whom she had abandoned, came into her mind, a mind so unlike Jason's. Yet without admitting such feelings, she said: "What crime has fallen from your lips, husband? Do you think I can transfer any span of your life to someone else? Hecate would not allow it, and what you ask is not fair. But I will try, Jason, to give you a greater gift than the one you ask for. 7.176 By my art I will try to renew my father-in-law's long life—not with your years—if only the three-formed goddess helps me and, present in person, nods assent to my great daring." Three nights were still lacking before the horns of the moon would meet completely and form a full circle. When she shone at her fullest and looked down on the earth with her image complete, Medea went out of the house, dressed in an ungirdled robe, barefoot, her hair loose and streaming over her shoulders, and through the mute silences of midnight she made her wandering way alone. Deep rest had released men, birds and beasts; the hedges were without a murmur, the leaves hung motionless and silent, the damp air was silent; only the stars twinkled. Stretching out her arms to them, she turned around three times, three times sprinkled her hair with water taken

from a stream, three times opened her lips in a howl, and, kneeling on the hard ground,

7.192 "Night," she said, "most faithful keeper of secrets, and you golden stars who, with the moon, take over from the fires of day; and you, three-headed Hecate, who come as one who knows my undertakings, a helper to the chants and the art of magicians; and you, Earth, who supply magicians with potent herbs; you breezes and winds, mountains, rivers and lakes, all you gods of the groves, all you gods of the night: be present. With your help, whenever I wished, rivers have run back to their sources while their banks marveled; with my chant I calm the churning seas and churn the calm ones; I drive the clouds away and draw the clouds on; I banish the winds and summon them; with words and spells I burst the jaws of snakes; I move living rocks, and oaks torn from their soil, and whole forests; I command the mountains to tremble, the ground to rumble, and the shades of the dead to come out of their tombs. 7.207 You too, Moon, I draw down, though the bronzes of Temesa lessen your labors; even my grandfather's chariot grows pale at my song, Aurora grows pale at my poisons. You dulled the bulls' flames for me and pressed their necks, which had never borne a load, under the curved plow; you turned the serpent-born men's savage war upon themselves; you lulled to sleep the guardian who had never known it, and, deceiving the gold's protector, sent it to the cities of Greece. Now there is need of juices by which old age may be renewed, return to its bloom, and gather back its first years. And you will give them. For the stars have not glittered in vain, nor is a chariot drawn by the necks of winged dragons here in vain." And there was the chariot, sent down from the sky.[4]

7.220 As soon as she had mounted it, stroked the bridled necks of the dragons, and shaken the light reins in her hands, she was swept aloft. She looked down on Thessalian Tempe below and

4 Witches were thought to draw the moon down from the sky, and bronze was clashed to help her during eclipses; Temesa in southern Italy was famous for its copper.

steered her serpents toward Thracian lands; and she surveyed the herbs that Ossa bore, and high Pelion, and Othrys and Pindus, and Olympus, greater than Pindus; those that pleased her she partly tore out by the root, partly cut with the curve of a bronze sickle. Many herbs pleased her on the banks of the Apidanus, many on the banks of the Amphrysus, and you were not spared either, Enipeus; the Peneus too, and the waters of the Spercheus, contributed something, and the reedy shores of Boebe. At Euboean Anthedon she also plucked a life-giving herb, not yet famous for the change of Glaucus' body. And now the ninth day and the ninth night had seen her traveling over all the fields in her chariot drawn by the dragons' wings, when she returned. The dragons had been touched by nothing but the scent, and yet they cast off the skin of their aged years.[5]

7.238 On arriving she stopped short of the threshold and the doors, with only the sky for a roof, and avoided all contact with men. She set up two altars of turf, Hecate's on the right, and on the left the altar of Youth. When she had wreathed them with sacred boughs and wild foliage, she dug two pits in the earth not far away and performed the rites, plunging her knife into the throat of a black-fleeced sheep and drenching the wide pits with its blood. Then, pouring over it cups of clear wine, and pouring next cups of warm milk, she poured out words at the same time, called on the divine powers of the earth, and begged the king of the shades, with his stolen bride, not to hurry to rob the old man's limbs of life. 7.251 When she had placated them with prayers and long murmuring, she ordered Aeson's worn-out body to be brought out into the open air, and, having loosened it into deep sleep with a spell, she laid it out on a bed of herbs, like a lifeless corpse. Far from here she ordered the son of Aeson to go, and far from here the attendants, and warned them to keep their uninitiated eyes away from the secret rites. They scattered as ordered. Medea, her hair streaming loose like the Bacchants, circled the blazing altars, dipped torches split into many strands

5 Glaucus, a fisherman of Anthedon, became a sea-god after eating a magic herb; Ovid tells his story in Book 13.

in the black blood of the pit, lit them, so dipped, on the twin altars, and three times purified the old man with fire, three times with water, three times with sulfur. Meanwhile a powerful drug was boiling in a bronze cauldron set on the fire, leaping up and whitening with swelling foam. In it she boiled roots cut in a Haemonian valley, seeds and flowers and black juices. 7.266 She added stones brought from the farthest East, and sands washed by the ebbing tide of Ocean; she added frost gathered under the moon at night, the ill-omened wings of a screech owl together with its flesh, and the entrails of a shape-shifting wolf, which used to change its wild beast's face into a man's. Nor did she leave out the thin scaly skin of a Cinyphian water snake, or the liver of a long-lived stag; and to these she added besides the beak and head of a crow that had lived through nine generations. When with these and a thousand other nameless things the foreign woman had prepared her design, greater than mortal, she stirred everything with a long-dried branch of the gentle olive and mixed the bottom with the top. And look: the old stick, turned in the hot cauldron, first grew green, before long put on leaves, and suddenly was loaded with heavy olives. 7.282 And wherever the fire made foam spill over from the hollow cauldron and hot drops fell on the ground, the earth burst into spring, and flowers and soft grasses sprang up. As soon as Medea saw this, she drew her sword and cut open the old man's throat, and, letting the old blood run out, filled him with the juices. When Aeson had drunk them in, through his mouth or through the wound, his beard and hair put off their gray and took on a dark color; his gauntness was driven out and fled, pallor and decay departed, the hollow wrinkles were filled out with new flesh, and his limbs grew full and vigorous. Aeson marveled, and remembered that this was how he had been forty years before. Liber had seen the wonders of so great a marvel from on high, and, reminded that his nurses could have their youthful years given back to them, received this gift from the Colchian woman.[6]

6 Liber is Bacchus; his nurses were the nymphs who reared him as an infant.

THE DEATH OF PELIAS

Medea tricks the daughters of Pelias into killing their father, then flees through the air.

7.297 So that her trickery would not stop there, the woman from the Phasis pretended to hate her husband and fled as a suppliant to the threshold of Pelias. Since he himself was weighed down by old age, his daughters received her. In a short time the cunning Colchian captured them with a show of false friendship. And as she told, among the greatest of her services, how she had stripped the decay of age from Aeson, and dwelt on that part of the story, the daughters of Pelias were led to hope that their own father could grow young again by the same art. This they begged of her, and told her to name her price without limit. For a little while she was silent and seemed to hesitate, and with pretended gravity she kept their minds in suspense as they pleaded. Then, when she had promised, she said: "So that you may have greater faith in this gift, the oldest in your flock, the leader among the sheep, will become a lamb through my drug."[7]

7.312 At once a woolly ram, worn out by countless years, was dragged in, its horns curling around its hollow temples. When she had stabbed its withered throat with a Haemonian knife and stained the blade with its scanty blood, the sorceress plunged the animal's limbs, together with her potent juices, into a hollow bronze cauldron. And see—they shrank its limbs and burned away its horns, and with its horns its years, and a tender bleating was heard from the middle of the cauldron. Instantly, while they marveled at the bleating, out leaped a lamb, frisked away, and looked for a milky udder. The daughters of Pelias were astounded; and once the promise had proved its truth, then indeed they pressed her all the harder.

7.324 Three times Phoebus had unyoked his horses after plunging them into the Iberian river, and on the fourth night the

7 Pelias, Jason's uncle, had seized the throne of Iolcos. The Phasis is the river of Medea's homeland, Colchis.

radiant stars were twinkling, when the deceitful daughter of Aeetes set plain water and herbs without any power over a fierce fire. And now a sleep like death held the king, his body slack, and with their king his guards—a sleep that her chants and the power of her magic tongue had given. As they had been told, the daughters had entered the threshold with the Colchian and stood around the bed. "Why do you hesitate now and do nothing? Draw your swords," she said, "and drain out the old blood, so that I may refill the empty veins with young blood. Your father's life and youth are in your hands. If you have any devotion, and the hopes you nurse are not empty, do your duty by your father: drive out his old age with your weapons, and thrust in the steel to let the foul matter out."

7.339 At these urgings, the more dutiful each daughter was, the quicker she was to be undutiful, and to avoid being wicked, she did a wicked thing. Yet none of them could bear to watch her own blows: they turned their eyes away, and with faces averted dealt blind wounds with cruel hands. He, streaming with blood, still raised himself on his elbow, and, half-mangled, tried to rise from the bed; and in the midst of so many swords, stretching out his pale arms, he said, "What are you doing, my daughters? Who arms you to bring about your father's death?" Their courage failed, and their hands fell. As he was about to say more, the Colchian cut his throat, and his words with it, and plunged his mangled body into the boiling water.

MEDEA'S FLIGHT

Medea's flight passes scenes of old transformations; she kills her sons at Corinth and reaches Athens.

7.350 Had she not gone up into the air with her winged serpents, she would not have escaped punishment. She fled high above shady Pelion, the Philyrean home, above Othrys and the places made famous by what befell old Cerambus. He, lifted into the air on wings with the nymphs' help, when the heavy earth was overwhelmed by the sea pouring in, escaped Deucalion's flood

undrowned. She left on her left Aeolian Pitane, and the image of a long serpent made of stone, and the grove of Ida, where Liber hid a bullock, his son's theft, under the false likeness of a stag; and the place where the father of Corythus lies buried in a little sand; and the fields that Maera terrified with her strange new barking; and the city of Eurypylus, where the women of Cos wore horns at the time when Hercules' troop was departing; and Phoebus' Rhodes, and the Telchines of Ialysos, whose eyes blighted everything by their very gaze, until Jupiter, loathing them, sank them beneath his brother's waves.[8]

7.368 She passed also the walls of Carthaea on ancient Cea, where the father Alcidamas would one day marvel that a gentle dove could be born from his daughter's body. Then she saw the lake of Hyrie and the Cycnean vale, made famous by a sudden swan. For there Phyllius, at a boy's command, had handed over birds and a fierce lion, tamed; ordered also to subdue a bull, he had subdued it; but, angry that his love was spurned so often, he refused the boy the bull, the last of his prizes, when he asked for it. The boy, indignant, said, "You will wish you had given it," and leaped from a high rock. Everyone thought he had fallen: turned into a swan, he hung in the air on snowy wings. But his mother Hyrie, not knowing he had been saved, melted away in weeping and made a lake that bears her name. Next to these lies Pleuron, where on trembling wings Combe, daughter of Ophius, escaped the wounds her sons would have dealt her.[9]

7.384 Next she looked on the fields of Calaurea, sacred to Latona's daughter, which witnessed the king turned into a bird together with his wife. On the right was Cyllene, where Menephron was to sleep with his mother in the manner of savage beasts. Far off from there she looked back at Cephisus weeping over the fate of his grandson, turned by Apollo into a bloated seal, and at the house of Eumelus, who mourned his son now living in the

8 Pelion was the home of the Centaur Chiron, son of the nymph Philyra. Medea's flight passes a string of obscure transformation stories, many known only from these brief allusions.

9 The boy is Cycnus, whose name means "swan."

air. At last, on her serpents' wings, she reached Ephyre of the spring Pirene. Here, the ancients spread the tale, human bodies in the earliest age sprang from mushrooms swollen by rain. But after the new bride had burned from the Colchian's poisons, and both seas had seen the king's palace ablaze, her impious sword was drenched in the blood of her sons; and the mother, wickedly avenged, fled from Jason's arms. From there, carried off by the Titan's dragons, she entered the citadel of Pallas, which saw you, most just Phene, and you, old Periphas, flying side by side, and the granddaughter of Polypemon resting on new wings. Aegeus received her—a man to be condemned for this one deed alone; and hospitality was not enough: he also bound her to himself in the pact of marriage.[10]

THESEUS AND AEGEUS

Medea tries to poison Theseus, but his father Aegeus recognizes him in time.

7.404 And now Theseus had arrived, a son unknown to his father, who by his own courage had brought peace to the Isthmus between two seas. To destroy him, Medea mixed the aconite she had long ago brought with her from the shores of Scythia. That poison, they say, sprang from the teeth of Echidna's dog. There is a blind cave with a gloomy mouth; there is a sloping path, down which the Tirynthian hero dragged Cerberus, bound in chains of adamant, as he resisted and turned his eyes aside from the daylight and its glittering rays. Roused to rabid fury, the dog filled the air with his threefold barking and spattered the green fields with white foam. This foam, people think, congealed, and drawing nourishment from the rich and fertile soil, gained the power to harm. Because it springs up hardy on hard rock, country people call it aconite. Through his wife's cunning, Aegeus

10 Ephyre is an old name for Corinth, where Jason had abandoned Medea to marry the king's daughter.

himself, the father, held it out to his son as if to an enemy.[11] 7.421 Theseus had taken the cup he was offered in his unsuspecting hand, when his father recognized on the ivory hilt of his sword the emblems of his own family and struck the crime from his lips. She escaped death in a mist raised by her spells. But his father, though he rejoiced that his son was safe, was still stunned that so enormous a crime had come so small a margin from being committed. He warmed the altars with fires and loaded the gods with gifts, and axes struck the muscular necks of oxen whose bodies were bound with ribbons. No day, it is said, ever dawned more festive for the descendants of Erechtheus. The elders and the common people held banquets, and, with wine stirring their wits, they sang songs too: "Marathon marveled at you, greatest Theseus, for the blood of the Cretan bull; and that the farmer plows Cromyon safely is your gift and your work. Through you the land of Epidaurus saw the club-bearing son of Vulcan fall; the shore of the Cephisus saw cruel Procrustes fall; Ceres' Eleusis saw the death of Cercyon.[12]

7.440 That Sinis has fallen, who misused his great strength: he could bend tree trunks, and would force pines down from on high to the earth to scatter bodies far and wide. The road to Alcathoe, the walls of the Leleges, lies open and safe now that Sciron is laid low; and when the robber's bones were scattered, the earth refused them a resting place, the sea refused them a resting place; long tossed about, they are said to have hardened with age into crags, and to the crags the name of Sciron clings. If we wished to count your honors and your years, your deeds would outnumber your years. For you, bravest of men, we offer public vows; to you we drink our draughts of Bacchus." The palace echoed with the people's approval and the prayers of their goodwill, and nowhere in the whole city was there any place of sadness.[13]

11 The Tirynthian hero is Hercules, whose last labor was to bring Cerberus up from the underworld. Ovid derives "aconite" from the Greek akonē, "whetstone."
12 The song lists the monsters and bandits Theseus killed on his journey from Troezen to Athens.
13 Alcathoe is Megara, named after its founder Alcathous.

MINOS AND AEACUS

Minos gathers allies for war on Athens, but Aeacus of Aegina sides with the Athenians.

7.453 And yet (so true is it that no pleasure is unmixed, and some worry always intrudes on happiness) Aegeus did not enjoy a carefree joy at the return of his son. Minos was preparing war. Though he was strong in soldiers and strong in ships, he was strongest of all in a father's anger, and he was avenging the death of Androgeos with a just war. First, however, he gathered friendly forces for the war, and with his swift fleet roamed the seas where he was held to be powerful. Here he won over Anaphe and the realm of Astypalaea—Anaphe by promises, the realm of Astypalaea by war; here low-lying Myconos, the chalky fields of Cimolos, Cythnos blooming with thyme, little Seriphos, marble Paros, and the place where the impious Sithonian woman betrayed Arne (she received the gold her greed had demanded and was changed into a bird that even now loves gold: the jackdaw, black-footed, clothed in black feathers).[14] 7.469 But Oliaros and Didymae, Tenos and Andros, Gyaros and Peparethos, rich in glossy olives, did not help the ships of Cnossos. Turning from there to the left, Minos made for Oenopia, the realm of the line of Aeacus: the ancients called it Oenopia, but Aeacus himself named it Aegina after his mother. A crowd rushed out, eager to see a man of such great fame. Telamon came to meet him, and Peleus, younger than Telamon, and the third son, Phocus. Aeacus himself came out too, slow with the weight of old age, and asked the reason for his coming. Reminded of his grief as a father, the ruler of a hundred peoples sighed and spoke these words to him: "I beg you to help the war I have taken up for my son, and to have a part in a campaign of devotion; I ask for comfort for his tomb."[15]

14 Minos' son Androgeos had been killed while visiting Athens.

15 Aeacus was the son of Jupiter and the nymph Aegina, daughter of the river-god Asopus.

7.484 Asopus' grandson answered him, "You ask in vain, and for what my city must not do; for no land is more closely bound to the sons of Cecrops than this one: such is our treaty." Minos went away gloomy, saying, "Your treaty will cost you dear," and he thought it more useful to threaten war than to wage it and use up his strength there beforehand. The Lyctian fleet could still be seen from the walls of Oenopia when an Attic ship, driven on under full sail, arrived and entered the friendly harbor, bringing Cephalus and, with him, the instructions of his country. The young sons of Aeacus, though they had not seen Cephalus for a long time, recognized him nevertheless, gave him their right hands, and led him into their father's house. The hero, striking to look at and still keeping the tokens of his former beauty, came in holding a branch of his people's olive; and at his right and left, younger than he, were two men, Clytus and Butes, sons of Pallas.[16]

7.501 After the first meeting had had its exchange of words, Cephalus delivered the message of Cecrops' descendant, asked for help, recalled their treaty and the oaths of their fathers, and added that what was being sought was dominion over all Achaea. When eloquence had thus aided the cause entrusted to him, Aeacus, his left hand resting on the shining hilt of his scepter, said: "Do not ask for help, Athens, but take it; and without hesitation count as yours the forces this island has—and it has everything (such is the state of my affairs). We do not lack strength; I have soldiers to spare, both for myself and against the enemy—thanks be to the gods—a fortunate time, one that leaves no excuse." 7.512 "Indeed, may it be so," said Cephalus. "I pray that your city may grow in citizens! Just now, as I arrived, I felt joy when young men so handsome and so alike in age came out to meet me. And yet I miss many of those I saw here once before, when I was received in your city." Aeacus groaned and spoke thus in a sad voice: "A tearful beginning was followed by better fortune. If only I could tell you of the one without the

16 Cecrops was a legendary first king of Athens, so "the sons of Cecrops" are the Athenians.

other! Now I shall go back over it in order; and so as not to delay you with a long, roundabout tale: they lie as bones and ashes, those you ask about with such good memory. And how small a part of all I lost they were!

THE PLAGUE AT AEGINA

Aeacus tells Cephalus how a plague sent by Juno destroyed the people of Aegina.

7.523 A terrible plague fell on my people through the anger of unjust Juno, who hated the land named after her rival. While the evil seemed a mortal one, and the harmful cause of so great a disaster lay hidden, we fought it with the art of healing: destruction overcame our aid, which lay defeated. At first the sky pressed down on the earth with thick darkness and shut in a sluggish heat beneath the clouds; and while the moon four times filled out her disk by joining her horns, and four times, waning, unwove her full disk, the hot south winds blew with deadly heat. It is known, too, that the infection reached the springs and lakes, and that many thousands of snakes roamed the untilled fields and fouled the rivers with their poisons. The power of the sudden disease was first detected in the deaths of dogs and birds and sheep and cattle, and among the wild beasts. The unhappy plowman marveled to see his strong bulls collapse in the middle of their work and sink down in the middle of the furrow; from the woolly flocks, as they uttered sickly bleats, the wool fell of its own accord and their bodies wasted away.[17]

7.542 The spirited horse, once of great fame in the dust of the racecourse, disgraced his victories, and, forgetting his former honors, groaned at his stall, doomed to an inglorious death. The boar did not remember how to rage, nor the hind how to trust her speed, nor the bears how to attack the strong herds. Listlessness held everything; in woods and fields and roads lay foul bodies, and the air was tainted by the stench. I will tell you

17 Juno's rival is the nymph Aegina, loved by Jupiter, after whom the island was named.

something astonishing: dogs and greedy birds did not touch them, nor gray wolves; they fell apart and rotted, harmed with their breath, and spread the contagion far and wide. With heavier loss the plague reached the wretched farmers and lorded it within the walls of the great city. First their vitals were scorched; the sign of the hidden flame was a flush and labored breathing. The rough tongue swelled; mouths, parched by feverish breath, gaped open, and with gaping jaws they caught at the heavy air.

7.558 They could not bear bedding or any covering, but laid their chests on the hard ground; and their bodies did not grow cool from the earth, but the earth grew hot from their bodies. Nothing could check it: the cruel disaster broke out against the healers themselves, and their arts harmed those who practiced them. The closer anyone was to the sick and the more faithfully he served them, the sooner he came to share their death. And when hope of recovery had gone and they saw that the disease would end only in death, they gave in to their desires and cared nothing for what was good for them: for nothing was good for them. Everywhere, casting off shame, they clung to springs and rivers and deep wells, and their thirst was not put out by drinking before their life was. Many, too heavy to rise from there, died in the very water: yet someone would drink even that. 7.572 So great was the wretches' loathing of their hateful beds that they leaped up, or, if their strength would not let them stand, they rolled their bodies onto the ground; and each fled his own home; to each man his own house seemed deadly, and since the cause was hidden, the cramped place was blamed. You could have seen them wandering half-alive in the streets while they could still stand, others weeping and lying on the ground, rolling their weary eyes in a final movement; and they stretched out their limbs toward the stars of the overhanging sky, breathing their last here and there, wherever death had caught them. What was my state of mind then? Surely what it ought to have been: to hate my life and long to be one of my own people? Wherever I turned my eyes, there the people lay strewn, as rot-

ten apples fall when branches are shaken, or acorns from a tossed holm oak.

7.587 You see the temple opposite, high at the top of its long flight of steps: it belongs to Jupiter. Who did not offer useless incense on those altars? How often, while a husband was praying for his wife or a father for his son, did he breathe his last at altars that would not be moved, and a portion of unburned incense was found in his hand! How often bulls led up to the temples, while the priest was pronouncing the vows and pouring pure wine between their horns, fell without waiting for the blow! I myself, when I was sacrificing to Jupiter for myself, my country and my three sons, saw the victim give a dreadful bellow and suddenly collapse without a single blow, staining the knives held beneath it with only a little blood. 7.600 The diseased entrails, too, had lost the marks of truth and the warnings of the gods: the grim sickness reached right into the vitals. I saw corpses flung down before the sacred doors, before the very altars, so that their deaths might bring more reproach on the gods. Some shut off their breath with a noose, escaping the fear of death by death and summoning of their own accord the fate that was already coming. The bodies sent to their deaths were not carried out with any of the customary funeral rites, for the gates could not hold so many funerals. Either they lay unburied, weighing on the earth, or they were given to tall pyres without offerings. And now there was no reverence left: people fought over pyres and burned in fires meant for others. There was no one left to weep, and the souls of mothers and young wives, of young men and old, wandered unmourned. There was no room for tombs, and not enough wood for the fires.

THE MYRMIDONS

Jupiter answers Aeacus' prayer by turning ants into men, the Myrmidons.

7.614 Stunned by such a whirlwind of miseries, I said, 'O Jupiter! If the stories are true that tell of you going to the embraces of

Aegina, daughter of Asopus, and if, great father, you are not ashamed to be our parent, either give me back my people or lay me too in the tomb.' He gave a sign with lightning and a favorable thunderclap. 'I accept,' I said, 'and may these be, I pray, propitious signs of your will. The omen you give me I take as a pledge.'[18]

7.622 It happened that nearby there stood a very rare oak with spreading branches, sacred to Jupiter and grown from the seed of Dodona. Here we saw grain-gathering ants in a long column, carrying great loads in their tiny mouths and keeping to their own path along the wrinkled bark. As I marveled at their number, I said, 'Give me as many citizens as these, best of fathers, and fill my empty walls.' The tall oak trembled and, its branches moving without any wind, made a sound. My limbs bristled with fearful dread, and my hair stood on end. Still I kissed the earth and the oak's trunk. I would not admit to myself that I hoped, and yet I did hope, and cherished my prayers in my heart.[19]

7.634 Night came on, and sleep took hold of bodies worn out by cares. Before my eyes the same oak seemed to stand, with as many branches and as many creatures on its branches, trembling with the same motion and scattering the grain-bearing column over the fields below. Then suddenly they seemed to grow, to look larger and larger, to raise themselves from the ground and stand with upright trunks, to put off their thinness, their many feet and their black color, and to take on human form in their limbs. Sleep left me. Awake, I condemned my vision and complained that there was no help in the gods above. But in the palace there was a great murmur, and I seemed to hear human voices, voices I had grown unused to. While I suspected that these too belonged to sleep, Telamon came in haste and, flinging open the doors, 7.648 'Father,' he said, 'you will see

18 Aegina, a nymph and daughter of the river god Asopus, bore Aeacus to Jupiter; the island was named after her.

19 Dodona, in northwestern Greece, was the site of Jupiter's oldest oracle, where the god spoke through the rustling of sacred oaks.

things greater than you could hope or believe: come out!' I came out, and just such men as I had seemed to see in my dream I now saw, one after another, and recognized them. They approached and saluted me as king. I paid my vows to Jupiter, and divided the city among the new peoples, and the fields emptied of their former farmers; and I called them Myrmidons, not cheating the name of its origin. You have seen their bodies; the habits they had before, they have still: they are a thrifty race, patient of toil, tenacious of what they gain and careful to keep what they have gained. These men, matched in years and spirit, will follow you to war as soon as the east wind that brought you here so happily"—for it was the east wind that had brought him —"has turned into the south wind."[20]

CEPHALUS AND PROCRIS

Cephalus tells how he tested his wife Procris and later killed her by mistake with his own javelin.

7.661 With such talk and more they filled the long day. The last part of the daylight was given to the table, the night to sleep. The golden Sun had raised his radiance (the east wind was still blowing and kept back the sails that were to return home) when the sons of Pallas came to Cephalus, who was older, and Cephalus together with the sons of Pallas went to the king. But deep sleep still held the king. Phocus, son of Aeacus, received them at the threshold, for Telamon and his brother were levying men for the war. Phocus led the Athenians into an inner space and lovely recesses, and sat down there with them.

7.672 He saw that Aeolus' son held in his hand a javelin made of an unknown wood, with a golden point. After saying a few things first, in the middle of their conversation, he said, "I am fond of the woods and of hunting wild beasts, but for some time now I have been wondering what forest the shaft you hold was cut from. Certainly if it were ash, it would be tawny in color; if cornel, it would have knots in it. Where it comes from I do not

20 The name Myrmidons recalls the Greek word myrmēx, "ant."

know. But my eyes have never seen a lovelier weapon for throwing than that one." One of the Athenian brothers took him up and said, "You will admire its usefulness even more than its looks. It hits whatever it aims at; no chance steers it once it is thrown, and it flies back, bloody, with no one to bring it back." 7.685 Then indeed the young son of the Nereid asked everything: why it was so, where it came from, who had given so great a gift. What he asked, Cephalus told him; but—he was ashamed to tell it—he kept silent about the price at which he had got it. Touched by grief for the wife he had lost, with tears welling up, he spoke thus: "This weapon, son of a goddess—who could believe it?—makes me weep, and will make me weep for a long time, if the Fates grant me a long life. This destroyed me, together with my dear wife: if only I had never had this gift! There was Procris—if perhaps Orithyia has reached your ears more readily, she was the sister of Orithyia who was carried off—and if you wished to compare the looks and character of the two, she was the one more worthy to be carried off. Her father Erechtheus joined her to me; love joined her to me. I was called happy, and I was.[21]

7.699 The gods decided otherwise, or perhaps I would be happy even now. The second month after our marriage rites was passing when, as I was spreading nets for antlered deer, saffron-robed Aurora, having put the darkness to flight, saw me early in the morning from the topmost summit of ever-flowering Hymettus, and carried me off against my will. May I be allowed to tell the truth without offending the goddess: though she is lovely to look at with her rosy face, though she holds the borders of light and the borders of night, though she is fed on the waters of nectar, I—loved Procris. Procris was in my heart, Procris was always on my lips. I kept speaking of the sacred rites of our marriage bed, our new union, our fresh bridal chamber and the first vows of the bed I had abandoned. 7.711 The goddess was angered and said, 'Stop your complaints, ungrateful man: have your Procris! But if my mind foresees truly, you will wish you

21 Phocus was Aeacus' son by the Nereid Psamathe. Orithyia, daughter of the Athenian king Erechtheus, was carried off by the North Wind, Boreas (6.682–721).

had never had her.' And she sent me back to Procris in anger. As I returned, turning over in my mind what the goddess had said, I began to fear that my wife had not kept her marriage vows faithfully. Her beauty and her youth urged me to believe in adultery; her character forbade me to believe it. But still, I had been away; and the woman I was coming back from was herself an example of the crime; and we lovers fear everything. I decided to look for something to grieve over, and to tempt her chaste fidelity with gifts. Aurora favored this fear and changed my appearance (I seem to have felt it).

7.723 I entered Pallas' Athens unrecognizable and went into my house. The house itself was free of fault: it showed signs of chastity and was anxious for its master who had been carried off. Only with difficulty, through a thousand tricks, did I gain access to the daughter of Erechtheus. When I saw her, I was stunned, and almost abandoned the test of her faithfulness I had planned. I barely kept myself from confessing the truth, barely from kissing her, as I ought to have done. She was sad—and yet no woman could be lovelier than she was in her sadness—and burned with longing for the husband who had been snatched away. Imagine for yourself, Phocus, what beauty she had, when grief itself so became her. Why should I tell how often her chaste character repelled my attempts, how often she said, 'I am keeping myself for one man; wherever he is, I keep my joys for him alone!' 7.737 To whom, if he were sane, would that test not have been proof enough of her faithfulness? I was not content, and I fought for my own wounding, until, by talking of giving her a fortune for one night and by increasing my gifts, I at last forced her to hesitate. I cried out, 'Shame on you! Here is the pretender: your false lover was, to my sorrow, your true husband! Faithless woman, you are caught, and I am the witness!' She said nothing. Overcome only by silent shame, she fled the treacherous threshold and her wicked husband; and, hurt by me and hating the whole race of men, she wandered in the mountains, devoting herself to the pursuits of Diana. Then, deserted, I felt a more violent fire reach my very bones. I begged her forgiveness and

confessed that I had done wrong, and that I too could have yielded to a similar fault if such great gifts had been offered to me.

7.751 When I had confessed this, she, having first avenged her injured modesty, was restored to me and spent sweet years with me in harmony. Besides that, as if in giving herself she had given me only small gifts, she gave me a dog as a present, of which her own Cynthia, when handing it over to her, had said, 'He will outrun them all.' At the same time she gave me the javelin which, as you see, I hold in my hands. Do you ask what became of the other gift? Hear something marvelous: you will be moved by the strangeness of the deed. The son of Laius had solved by his wit the riddles that minds before him had not understood, and the obscure prophetess lay hurled headlong, forgetful of her own riddles. At once a second plague was sent against Aonian Thebes, and many country folk feared the wild beast, dreading the ruin of their flocks and of themselves. We young men of the neighborhood came and surrounded the broad fields with a ring of nets.[22]

7.767 With light leaps the swift creature cleared the nets and passed over the top lines of the snares we had set. The leashes were slipped from the dogs; it fled them as they followed and mocked them, no slower than a swift bird. With a great shout of agreement everyone called on me for my Laelaps (that was the gift's name). He had long been struggling to get free of his bonds and straining at the leash that held back his neck. Scarcely was he let go, and already we could not tell where he was. The hot dust held the prints of his feet; he himself had vanished from our sight. No spear is swifter than he, nor the lead shot sent from a whirled sling, nor the light reed that flies from a Gortynian bow.[23] 7.779 The top of a hill in the middle overlooks the fields below: I climbed up there and took in the spectacle of that strange race, in which the beast seemed one moment to be

22 Cynthia is Diana. Oedipus, son of Laius, solved the Sphinx's riddle, after which she threw herself to her death and a monstrous fox was sent to ravage Thebes.
23 Laelaps means "Hurricane" in Greek. Gortyn was a city in Crete, whose archers were famous.

caught, the next to slip away from the very wound. Nor did the cunning creature flee in a straight line and out into open space; it baffled the jaws of its pursuer and wheeled round in a circle, so that its enemy could not use his charge. The dog pressed close and followed, matching its pace; seeming to have it, he did not have it, and snapped vainly at the air. I turned to my javelin for help. While my right hand was balancing it, while I was trying to fit my fingers into the throwing-loops, I turned my eyes away; and when I brought them back again to the same place—a wonder!—I saw two marble figures in the middle of the plain: you would think one was fleeing, the other catching. Clearly some god wished both of them to be unconquered in the contest of speed, if any god was there with them."

7.794 So far he spoke, and then fell silent. "What fault is there in the javelin itself?" Phocus asked. And Cephalus told him the javelin's guilt in this way: "Joys are the beginning of my grief, Phocus: I will tell of them first. Oh, it is a pleasure to remember that blessed time, son of Aeacus, when in those first years I was happy, as was right, in my wife, and she was happy in her husband. Mutual care and wedded love held the two of us. She would not have preferred Jupiter's bed to my love, nor was there any woman who could capture me—not even if Venus herself were to come: equal flames burned in our hearts. When the Sun was just striking the mountaintops with his first rays, I used to go off to hunt in the woods, as young men do.

7.806 No servants, no horses, no keen-scented hounds used to go with me, nor did knotted nets follow: I was safe with my javelin. But when my right hand had had its fill of slaughtering game, I would seek out the cool and the shade, and the breeze that came out of the chill valleys. The gentle breeze was what I sought in the midday heat, the breeze I waited for; it was the rest from my labor. 'Come, Breeze,' I used to sing (for I remember it), 'come and help me, enter my bosom, dearest one, and, as you always do, be willing to relieve the heat that burns me.' Perhaps I added—so my fate was dragging me on—more endearments, and used to say, 'You are my great delight, you restore me and

comfort me, you make me love the woods and lonely places; this breath of yours my lips are always trying to catch.'[24]

7.821 Someone or other lent an ear that was deceived by these ambiguous words, and thought that the name 'Breeze,' called so often, was a nymph's: he believed I was in love with a nymph. At once the rash informer of an imaginary crime went to Procris and repeated in a whisper what he had heard. Love is a credulous thing. Overcome by sudden grief, as I am told, she fell in a faint; and when she recovered after a long time, she called herself wretched and ill-fated, and complained of my faithlessness. Stirred by an empty charge, she feared what was nothing, feared a name without a body, and grieved, poor woman, as if over a real rival. Yet often she doubted, and hoped in her misery that she was deceived; she refused to believe the report, and unless she saw it herself, she would not condemn her husband's wrongdoing. The next day Aurora's light had driven away the night. I went out and made for the woods, and, successful in the hunt, there in the grass 7.837 'Come, Breeze,' I said, 'and heal my weariness.' And suddenly, amid my words, I seemed to hear some sort of moan. Still I went on saying, 'Come, dearest one!' and when the fallen leaves made a slight rustle again, I thought it was a wild beast and sent my flying weapon. It was Procris. Holding the wound in the middle of her breast, she cried out, 'Ah me!' When I recognized the voice of my faithful wife, I ran headlong, out of my mind, toward the voice. I found her half-alive, fouling her clothes with spattered blood, and pulling—oh, my misery!—her own gift out of the wound. I lifted her body, dearer to me than my own, in my gentle arms, and tearing the clothing from her breast, I bound up the cruel wound and tried to stop the blood, and begged her not to leave me guilty of her death. 7.851 Her strength failing and already dying, she forced herself to say these few words: 'By the bond of our marriage bed, by the gods above and by my own gods, I beg you as a suppliant, by anything I have deserved of you, and by the love that remains even

24 The Latin aura means "breeze," but it could also be heard as a woman's name, Aura; the confusion drives what follows.

now, as I die, the cause of my death: do not let Breeze marry into our bridal chamber.' She spoke, and only then did I realize that there had been a mistake over the name, and I told her. But what good was it to tell her? She sank, and her little strength fled with her blood. As long as she could look at anything, she looked at me, and breathed out her unhappy soul upon me and into my mouth; but with a happier face she seemed to die at peace." Weeping, the hero told this to his weeping listeners; and look, Aeacus came in with his two sons and the new soldiers, whom Cephalus received together with their strong weapons.

Book 8

Minos, Daedalus, Meleager
Scylla betrays her father; Daedalus and Icarus; the Calydonian boar; Philemon and Baucis.

SCYLLA AND MINOS

Scylla cuts her father's purple lock to give his city to Minos, who sails away in disgust.

8.1 Now, as Lucifer, the Morning Star, was unveiling the shining day and putting the hours of night to flight, the east wind dropped and moist clouds rose. The calm south winds gave passage to the sons of Aeacus and to Cephalus on their way home, and, driven happily along by them, they reached the harbor they were making for sooner than they had expected. Meanwhile Minos was laying waste the Lelegeian coast and testing the strength of his Mars against the city of Alcathous, which Nisus ruled. On Nisus' head, among his honored white hairs, in the very middle of his crown, there clung a lock bright with purple, the guarantee of his great kingdom. Six times the horns of the rising moon had grown again, and the fortune of the war still hung in the balance; for a long while Victory flew between the two sides on wavering wings.[1]

8.14 There was a royal tower built onto the singing walls. Latona's son is said to have laid down his golden lyre on these walls, and its sound had lodged in the stone. Nisus' daughter often used to climb up there and strike the echoing stones with a

1 Alcathous' city is Megara, west of Athens. The Leleges were an early people of the region.

little pebble, in time of peace. In wartime too she often used to watch from it the contests of stern Mars. And by now, as the war dragged on, she knew even the names of the chieftains, their arms, horses, dress and Cydonian quivers. Above all she knew the face of their leader, Europa's son, and knew it even better than she needed to. In her judgment, if Minos had hidden his head in a helmet crested with plumes, he was handsome in a helmet. If he had taken up a shield gleaming with bronze, taking up a shield became him.[2] 8.28 When he drew back his arms and hurled a pliant spear, the girl praised his skill combined with strength. When he set an arrow to the string and bent his wide bow, she swore that this was how Phoebus stood when he took up his arrows. But when he took off the bronze and bared his face, and, dressed in purple, sat on the back of a white horse marked out by its embroidered saddlecloth and guided its foaming mouth, then Nisus' daughter was scarcely mistress of herself, scarcely of sound mind. She called the javelin he touched happy, and happy the reins he gripped in his hand. She longed, if only she were allowed, to carry her girlish steps through the enemy lines. She longed to fling her body from the top of the towers into the Cnossian camp, or to open the bronze gates to the enemy, or to do anything else Minos might want. And as she sat gazing at the white tents of the Dictaean king,[3] 8.44 "Whether I should rejoice or grieve," she said, "that this tearful war is being waged, I cannot tell. I grieve that Minos is the enemy of the one who loves him. But if there were no war, I would never have known him. Yet he could end the war by taking me as a hostage: he could have me as his companion, me as the pledge of peace. If the woman who bore you, most beautiful of all beings, was such as you are, the god had good reason to burn for her. Oh, three times happy I would be if I could glide on wings through the air and set foot in the camp of the Cnossian king! I would

2 Minos was the son of Jupiter and Europa, whom the god carried off to Crete in the form of a bull. "Cydonian" means Cretan.

3 "Dictaean" and "Cnossian" both mean Cretan, after Mount Dicte and the city of Cnossus.

confess who I am and confess my flames, and ask with what dowry he would like to be bought. Only let him not demand my father's citadel. 8.55 For let the marriage bed I hope for perish sooner than I prevail by treachery! And yet the mercy of a gentle victor has often made defeat a gain for many. He is certainly waging a just war for his murdered son. He is strong both in his cause and in the arms that defend his cause, and, I think, we shall be beaten. For what end awaits the city when his Mars, and not my love, unbars these walls to him? Better that he should conquer without slaughter and delay and the cost of his own blood. At least I will not have to fear, Minos, that someone may wound your breast without knowing it. For who is so hard-hearted that he would knowingly dare to aim a cruel spear at you? I like the plan, and my mind is made up: I will hand over my country, and myself with it, as my dowry, and put an end to the war.[4] 8.69 But wishing is not enough! Guards watch the approaches, and my father holds the keys of the gates. He is the only one I fear, unhappy as I am, and he alone stands in the way of my prayers. If only the gods would make me fatherless! Surely each of us is our own god: Fortune resists idle prayers. Another girl, fired by so great a passion, would long ago have rejoiced to destroy whatever stood in the way of her love. And why should any girl be braver than I? I would dare to go through fire and swords. And yet for this there is no need of any fire or swords: what I need is my father's lock. That purple is more precious to me than gold. It will make me blessed and give me my heart's desire."

8.81 As she was saying such things, night, the greatest nurse of cares, came on, and with the darkness her daring grew. It was the first quiet of the night, when sleep takes hold of hearts weary with the cares of the day. Silently she entered her father's bedroom and (oh, the crime!) the daughter robbed her own father of his fateful lock. Having seized her unspeakable prize, she made her way through the midst of the enemy (so sure was

4 Minos' son Androgeos had been killed in Attica, and this war was waged to avenge him.

she of her deserving) to the king. He was alarmed, and she addressed him thus: "Love urged this deed. I, Scylla, royal daughter of Nisus, hand over to you the household gods of my country and my own. I ask for no reward but you. Take this purple lock as a pledge of my love, and believe that I am handing you not a lock but my father's head." And with her guilty right hand she held out the gift. Minos shrank from what she held out, and, shaken by the image of so unheard-of a deed, he replied:

8.97 "May the gods banish you from their world, you disgrace of our age, and may land and sea be denied to you! Certainly I will not let Crete, the cradle of Jupiter, which is my world, be touched by such a monster." So he said. Then, as the most just of lawgivers, he imposed terms on his conquered enemies, and after that he ordered the fleet's cables to be loosed and the bronze-fitted ships to be driven on by the rowers. Scylla saw the keels launched and floating on the sea, and saw that the leader was not granting her the reward of her crime. Her pleas exhausted, she passed into violent rage. Stretching out her hands in a frenzy, her hair streaming, she cried: "Where are you fleeing, leaving behind the one who did you such service, you whom I put before my country, put before my father?

8.110 Where are you fleeing, cruel man? Your victory is both my crime and my service. Were you not moved by the gifts I gave, nor by my love, nor by the fact that all my hope was heaped on you alone? For where shall I return, deserted as I am? To my country? It lies defeated. But suppose it still stood: my treachery has shut it against me. To my father's face? I gave him to you! The citizens hate me, as I deserve, and the neighbors fear my example. I am cast out, deprived of every land, so that Crete alone might be open to me. If you bar me from this too and leave me, ungrateful man, then your mother was not Europa. You were born of the inhospitable Syrtis, of Armenian tigers, of Charybdis lashed by the south wind.[5] 8.122 You are not Jupiter's

5 The Syrtes were dangerous shoals off the coast of Libya. Charybdis was a whirlpool in the strait between Italy and Sicily.

son, nor was your mother lured by the likeness of a bull (that tale of your birth is false!). The one who begot you was a bull, a real one, savage, and never captivated by love for any heifer. Exact your punishment, Nisus, my father! Rejoice at my misfortunes, you walls I have just betrayed! For I confess it: I have deserved it, and I am worthy to die. But still, let one of those whom I wickedly wronged destroy me. Why do you, who conquered through my crime, pursue that crime? Let this be a crime against my country and my father, but let it be a service to you. Truly worthy of you as a wife is the adulteress who deceived the fierce bull with wood and carried in her womb an ill-matched offspring. Do my words reach your ears at all? Or do the winds carry off my empty words, and the same winds your ships, ungrateful man?[6] 8.136 Now, now it is no wonder that Pasiphae preferred a bull to you: you had more savagery in you. How wretched I am! He orders them to hurry, and the water torn apart by the oars resounds. My land recedes, and I recede along with it. You achieve nothing, you who vainly forget my services. I will follow you against your will, and clinging to your curved stern I will be dragged across the long seas." Scarcely had she spoken when she leapt into the waves and caught up with the ships, for desire gave her strength. She clung to the Cnossian keel, an unwelcome companion. As soon as her father saw her (for he was now hovering in the air, newly made a sea eagle with tawny wings), he went to tear her with his hooked beak as she clung there. In fear she let go of the stern, and as she fell a light breeze seemed to hold her up so that she would not touch the sea. It was feathers: changed by feathers into a bird, she is called the ciris, and she took this name from the shorn lock.[7]

6 Minos' wife Pasiphae, inflamed with desire for a bull, hid inside a wooden cow made by Daedalus and bore the Minotaur.

7 The name "ciris" was derived from the Greek verb keirein, "to shear."

THE MINOTAUR AND ARIADNE

Daedalus builds the Labyrinth for the Minotaur; Theseus kills it with Ariadne's help and abandons her.

8.152 As soon as he left his ships and reached the land of the Curetes, Minos paid his vows to Jupiter with the bodies of a hundred bulls, and his palace was adorned with the spoils fastened up there. The disgrace of his family had grown, and the strangeness of the two-formed monster laid bare the mother's foul adultery. Minos resolved to remove this shame from his marriage chamber and to shut it away in a house of many windings, with blind passages. Daedalus, most famous for his genius in the craftsman's art, constructed the work. He confused the landmarks and led the eye astray in the windings of its many paths. The Phrygian Maeander plays in its clear waters and flows back and forth in its uncertain course. Running into itself, it sees the waters that are still to come, and, turning now toward its source, now toward the open sea, it keeps its wavering waters at work. Just so Daedalus filled the countless paths with wandering. He himself was scarcely able to find his way back to the entrance, so deceptive was the building.[8]

8.169 There he shut up the double form of bull and young man. Twice the monster fed on Actaean blood, and then it was overcome by the third lot, drawn again after nine years. With a girl's help the difficult door was found by winding back the thread, though none of those before had ever reached it a second time. At once Aegeus' son carried off Minos' daughter and set sail for Dia, and on that shore he cruelly abandoned his companion. She was deserted and lamenting long, and Liber brought her embraces and help. So that she might shine as an everlasting constellation, he took the crown from her forehead and sent it into the sky. It flew through the thin air, and as it flew its jewels were turned into shining fires. They settled in place, keeping the

8 The Curetes were Cretan spirits who guarded the infant Jupiter, so their land is Crete.

shape of a crown, midway between the Kneeler and the man who holds the serpent.[9]

DAEDALUS AND ICARUS

Daedalus makes wings to escape Crete; his son Icarus flies too near the sun and falls.

8.183 Meanwhile Daedalus hated Crete and his long exile, and he was moved by longing for his native land, but he was shut in by the sea. "He may block the lands and the waves," he said, "but the sky at least lies open; that is the way we will go. Minos may possess everything, but he does not possess the air." So he said, and he turned his mind to arts unknown and made nature new. He laid feathers in order, beginning with the smallest, a long one beside a shorter one, so that you would think they had grown on a slope. In the same way a country panpipe sometimes rises little by little, with reeds of unequal length. Then he bound the feathers with thread in the middle and with wax at the base, and, having arranged them so, bent them in a gentle curve to imitate real birds. The boy Icarus stood beside him, not knowing that he was handling his own peril. With a beaming face he would catch at feathers that a passing breeze had stirred, or soften the yellow wax with his thumb, and by his play he hindered his father's marvelous work. When the finishing touch had been put to the undertaking, the craftsman himself balanced his body on the two wings and hung in the air he had set in motion.

8.203 He instructed his son too. "I warn you, Icarus," he said, "to fly in the middle course. If you go too low, the water may weigh down your wings, and if you go too high, the fire may scorch them. Fly between the two. And I tell you not to look at Bootes or Helice or Orion's drawn sword: take your path with me as your guide." At the same time he handed down the rules of flight

9 Athens (Actaea) owed Minos a tribute of young people, chosen by lot every nine years, to be fed to the Minotaur. Theseus, son of Aegeus, killed it with the help of Minos' daughter Ariadne.

and fitted the strange wings to the boy's shoulders. Amid the work and the warnings the old man's cheeks grew wet, and the father's hands trembled. He gave his son kisses that would never be repeated. Rising on his wings, he flew ahead and feared for his companion, like a bird that has led its tender young from a high nest into the air. He urged him to follow and taught him the ruinous arts, moving his own wings and looking back at his son's.[10] 8.217 Some fisherman catching fish with his quivering rod, or a shepherd leaning on his crook, or a plowman on his plow handle, saw them and stood amazed. He believed that those who could travel the sky were gods. And now Juno's Samos was on their left, with Delos and Paros left behind, and on the right were Lebinthos and Calymne, rich in honey. Then the boy began to delight in his daring flight. Drawn by longing for the sky, he left his guide and flew higher. The nearness of the scorching sun softened the fragrant wax that bound the feathers. The wax melted, and he flapped his bare arms, but with nothing to row with he caught no air. His mouth, crying out his father's name, was swallowed by the blue water, which took its name from him. But the unhappy father, now a father no longer, called, "Icarus!" "Icarus," he called, "where are you? In what region shall I look for you?" "Icarus," he kept calling. He caught sight of feathers on the waves and cursed his arts. He laid the body in a tomb, and the land is called after the one buried there.[11]

PERDIX

Daedalus once threw his gifted nephew from the Acropolis, and Minerva turned the boy into a partridge.

8.236 As he was laying his poor son's body in the tomb, a chattering partridge looked out from a muddy ditch, clapped its wings, and proclaimed its joy in song. At that time it was the only bird

10 Bootes, Helice (the Great Bear) and Orion are constellations by which sailors steered.

11 The Icarian Sea in the eastern Aegean and the island of Icaria were named after him.

of its kind, never seen in earlier years, and it had only recently been made a bird, a lasting reproach to you, Daedalus. For his sister, unaware of what fate held, had handed her son over to him to be taught. The boy had passed twelve birthdays, and his mind was quick to take in instruction. He even took the spine he noticed in the middle of a fish as a model. He cut a row of continuous teeth into sharp iron and discovered the use of the saw. 8.247 He was also the first to bind two iron arms at a single joint, so that, with the two kept an equal distance apart, one part would stand still while the other drew a circle. Daedalus envied him and threw him headlong from Minerva's sacred citadel, pretending he had fallen. But Pallas, who favors talent, caught him, made him a bird, and clothed him in feathers in midair. But the vigor of his once quick mind passed into his wings and feet, and the name he had before remained. Yet this bird does not lift its body high, nor does it build its nests in branches and lofty treetops. It flutters near the ground and lays its eggs in hedges, and, remembering its old fall, it fears high places.[12]

THE CALYDONIAN BOAR HUNT

Diana sends a monstrous boar against Calydon, and the heroes of Greece gather to hunt it.

8.260 Now the land of Etna held the weary Daedalus, and Cocalus, who had taken up arms on behalf of his suppliant, was thought kind. Now, thanks to Theseus' glory, Athens had ceased to pay its mournful tribute. The temples were hung with garlands, and the people called on warlike Minerva, with Jupiter and the other gods, honoring them with the blood of vowed victims, with offerings, and with caskets of incense. Wandering rumor had spread the name of Theseus through the Argive cities, and the peoples whom rich Achaia held begged for his help in their great dangers. Calydon too, though it had Meleager, came as a suppliant and sought his help with anxious prayers. The reason

12 The boy was called Perdix, the Latin and Greek word for "partridge." Minerva's citadel is the Acropolis of Athens.

for asking was a boar, the servant and avenger of a hostile Diana. For they say that Oeneus, after a year full of good harvests, had offered the first-fruits of the crops to Ceres, his wine to Lyaeus, and the oil of Pallas to golden-haired Minerva.[13]

8.276 These coveted honors began with the gods of the fields and reached all the gods above. Only the altars of Latona's daughter were passed over and left without incense, idle, so they say. Gods too are touched by anger. "But we will not bear this unpunished," she said. "We may be called unhonored, but we will not also be called unavenged." And, spurned, she sent a boar through the fields of Oeneus to avenge her. It was so huge that grassy Epirus has no bulls larger, and the fields of Sicily have only smaller ones. His eyes glittered with blood and fire, and his bristling neck was rigid. Hot foam flowed with a hoarse screeching down over his broad shoulders, and his tusks were a match for the tusks of Indian elephants. Lightning came from his mouth, and leaves caught fire at his breath. One moment he trampled the crops still growing in the blade, the next he mowed down the ripe harvest, the hopes of a farmer who would weep, and intercepted Ceres in the ear. In vain the threshing floor, and in vain the granaries, waited for the harvests they had been promised. 8.294 The vines heavy with grapes were laid low along with their long shoots, and the berries of the ever-leafy olive along with its branches. He raged against the flocks too: neither shepherd nor dog could defend them, nor could fierce bulls defend the herds. The people fled in all directions and believed themselves safe only inside the city walls, until Meleager and a chosen band of young men came together with him, eager for glory. There were the twin sons of Tyndareus, one renowned for boxing, the other for horsemanship; Jason, builder of the first ship; and Theseus with Pirithous, a happy harmony. There were the two sons of Thestius; the sons of Aphareus, Lynceus and swift Idas; Caeneus, no longer a woman;

13 Cocalus, king of Sicily, sheltered Daedalus from Minos. Athens' tribute was the young men and girls sent to Crete to be devoured by the Minotaur, until Theseus killed it.

fierce Leucippus; and Acastus, famous with the javelin. There were Hippothous and Dryas, and Phoenix, son of Amyntor; the matched sons of Actor; and Phyleus, sent from Elis.[14]

8.309 Telamon was there too, and the father of great Achilles. With the son of Pheres and Iolaus of Boeotia came tireless Eurytion, and Echion, unbeaten at running. There were Lelex of Naryx, Panopeus, Hyleus, fierce Hippasus, and Nestor, still in his early years. There were those whom Hippocoon sent from ancient Amyclae, and Penelope's father-in-law with Ancaeus of Parrhasia. There were the shrewd son of Ampycus, and the son of Oecles, still safe from his wife. And there was the pride of the Lycaean woods, the girl from Tegea. A polished brooch gripped the top of her robe, and her hair was simple, gathered into a single knot. From her left shoulder hung a rattling ivory quiver, the keeper of her arrows, and her left hand held a bow as well. Such was her dress. As for her face, you could truly call it girlish in a boy, boyish in a girl.[15] 8.324 At the same moment the Calydonian hero saw her, at the same moment he desired her, though the god refused it. He drank in hidden flames and said, "Oh, happy the man, if she ever thinks anyone worthy of her!" Time and modesty let him say no more, because the greater work of the great contest pressed on him. There was a forest, thick with trunks, which no age had ever felled. It began on the plain and looked down over sloping fields. When the men arrived there, some spread nets and some loosed the dogs from their leashes. Others followed the clear prints of feet, eager to find their own danger. There was a hollow valley where streams of rainwater used to run down. The bottom of the marshy pool held pliant willow, light sedge, marsh rushes, osiers, and little reeds beneath tall canes.

8.338 Roused from here, the boar charged violently into the midst of his enemies, like lightning struck from colliding

14 The sons of Tyndareus are Pollux the boxer and Castor the horseman. Caeneus was born a girl, Caenis, and changed into a man by Neptune (told in Book 12).
15 Penelope's father-in-law is Laertes; the son of Ampycus is the seer Mopsus; the son of Oecles is Amphiaraus, later betrayed to his death by his wife; the girl from Tegea is Atalanta.

clouds. The grove was flattened by his onrush, and the woods crashed as he drove through them. The young men shouted and held their weapons out before them in strong right hands, the broad iron points quivering. He rushed on and scattered the dogs as each one stood in the way of his fury, and drove off the barking pack with sidelong blows. The first spear, hurled by Echion's arm, missed and made only a slight wound in the trunk of a maple. The next looked certain to stick in the back it was aimed at, had its thrower not used too much strength, but it went too far. The man who threw it was Jason of Pagasae. "Phoebus," said the son of Ampycus, "if I have worshiped you and worship you still, grant that my weapon strike true and reach what I aim at!"

8.352 As far as he could, the god granted the prayer. The boar was struck by him but not wounded, because Diana had taken the iron from the javelin in flight, and the shaft arrived without its point. The beast's anger was stirred, and it blazed no more gently than lightning. Flame flashed from his eyes and breathed from his chest as well. A boulder flies when the cord is drawn back and launched against walls or towers full of soldiers. Just so the wound-dealing boar charged at the young men with sure onslaught, and laid low Hippalmus and Pelagon, who were guarding the right wing; their comrades snatched them up where they lay. But Enaesimus, son of Hippocoon, did not escape the deadly strokes. As he trembled and was ready to turn his back, his knee was slashed and his sinews gave way.

8.365 Perhaps the Pylian too would have perished long before the time of Troy. But he launched himself on his planted spear and vaulted into the branches of a tree that stood nearby. Safe in that spot, he looked down at the enemy he had escaped. The savage beast whetted his tusks on an oak trunk, intent on slaughter. Trusting in his freshly sharpened weapons, he ripped open the thigh of great Eurytus' son with his curving snout. But the twin brothers, not yet stars in the sky, both conspicuous, both rode horses whiter than snow. Both brandished spear-points that quivered as they shook them through the air. They would have

dealt wounds, had the bristling beast not gone into the dark woods, which neither javelins nor horses could pass. Telamon gave chase, but in his eagerness to go on he grew careless and fell headlong, caught by the root of a tree.[16]

8.380 While Peleus was helping him up, the girl from Tegea set a swift arrow to the string and shot it from her curved bow. The shaft lodged under the beast's ear, grazing the surface of his body and reddening his bristles with a little blood. Yet she was no happier at the success of her shot than Meleager was. He is thought to have been the first to see the blood, and the first to show his comrades what he had seen. He said to her, "You will win the honor your courage has earned." The men blushed and urged one another on. They stirred up their spirits with shouting and threw their weapons without order. Their very numbers spoiled the throws and kept the blows from reaching what they aimed at. Then, look—raging against his own fate, the Arcadian with the double ax said, "Learn, young men, how much better men's weapons are than women's, and leave this work to me!"

8.394 "Though Latona's daughter herself should shield him with her own weapons, still my right hand will destroy him, against Diana's will." Puffed up, he had spoken such words with a boastful mouth. Lifting his two-edged ax in both hands, he had risen up on his toes, poised on the tips of his feet. But the beast struck first at the bold man. He aimed his twin tusks where the nearest way to death lay, at the top of the groin. Ancaeus fell, and his entrails slid out and poured forth, tangled in streams of blood, until the earth was soaked with gore. Pirithous, Ixion's son, was going straight at the enemy, shaking a hunting spear in his strong right hand. The son of Aegeus said to him, "Keep back, you who are dearer to me than myself, half of my soul—stand off! The brave may fight from a distance. Reckless courage was Ancaeus' ruin."

8.408 He spoke, and hurled a heavy cornel-wood shaft tipped with bronze. It was well balanced and would have fulfilled his

16 The Pylian is Nestor, king of Pylos, who would fight at Troy in old age. The twins, Castor and Pollux, later became the constellation Gemini.

wish, but a leafy branch from a lopped tree blocked it. Aeson's son also threw a javelin, but chance turned it aside to the death of an undeserving barking dog. Thrown into its flanks, the javelin pinned it through the flanks to the ground. But the hand of Oeneus' son had mixed fortune. Of the two spears he threw, the first stuck in the earth, the second in the middle of the boar's back. The beast raged, whirling his body round and round and pouring out hissing foam with fresh blood. Without delay, the author of the wound came up and goaded his enemy to fury. Then he buried his gleaming hunting spear in the shoulders that faced him.

8.420 His comrades showed their joy with a cheering shout and sought to clasp his victorious right hand in theirs. They gazed in wonder at the huge beast lying over a wide stretch of ground, and did not yet think it safe to touch him; but still each one stained his own weapon in the boar's blood. Meleager himself set his foot on the deadly head and pressed down. Then he said, "Take the spoil that is mine by right, girl of Nonacris, and let my glory be shared with you." At once he gave her the hide, the back bristling with stiff hair, and the head remarkable for its enormous tusks. She was delighted with the gift, and with the giver of the gift. The others were envious, and a muttering ran through the whole band. Among them, stretching out their arms and shouting in a huge voice, 8.433 "Come, put it down, woman, and do not steal the honors that are ours," the sons of Thestius cried. "Do not let confidence in your beauty deceive you, or the giver, captivated by love, may prove to be far away from you." They took the gift from her, and from him the right to give it. The son of Mars would not bear it. Gnashing his teeth in swelling anger, he said, "Learn, you robbers of another's honor, how far deeds differ from threats." Then he drove his sacrilegious sword into the breast of Plexippus, who feared no such thing. Toxeus was unsure what to do, wanting to avenge his brother and at the same time fearing his brother's fate. Meleager did not let him

hesitate long. He warmed again, in a brother's blood, the blade still warm from the first killing.[17]

ALTHAEA AND THE DEATH OF MELEAGER

Meleager kills his uncles over the boar's hide, and his mother burns the log that holds his life.

8.445 Althaea was carrying gifts to the temples of the gods for her son's victory when she saw her brothers carried back dead. She beat her breast, filled the city with mournful cries, and changed her golden robes for black. But as soon as the author of their death was made known, all her grief fell away, and she turned from tears to a passion for revenge. There was a log which the three sisters had put into the fire when the daughter of Thestius lay in childbed. As they spun the threads of fate with pressing thumb, they said, "We give the same span of time to the wood and to you, newborn child." When they had spoken this spell and the goddesses had gone, the mother snatched the blazing branch out of the fire and sprinkled it with running water. It had long been hidden in the innermost part of the house, and, being kept safe, it had kept your years safe, young man.[18]

8.460 His mother brought it out, ordered pine-torches and kindling to be laid, and set hostile flames to the pile. Then four times she tried to put the branch on the flames, and four times she checked herself. Mother and sister fought within her, and the two names pulled one heart in different directions. Often her face grew pale with fear of the crime to come; often seething anger lent her eyes its own red. One moment she looked like someone threatening some cruelty or other, the next like someone you could believe was moved to pity. And when the fierce burning of her heart had dried her tears, tears were still found. A ship is driven one way by the wind and the other way by a tide running against the wind, and it feels the double force

17 Meleager was sometimes said to be the son of Mars rather than of Oeneus.
18 The three sisters are the Fates, who spin, measure and cut the thread of each life.

and obeys both, unsure. Just so the daughter of Thestius drifted between wavering feelings. By turns she laid her anger aside and revived it once it was laid aside.

8.475 Yet the sister began to prevail over the parent. To soothe the shades of her own blood with blood, she was dutiful through an undutiful act. For when the deadly fire had gathered strength, she said, "Let this pyre burn my own flesh and blood." Holding the fatal wood in her dreadful hand, the unhappy woman stood before the funeral altars and said, "Three goddesses of punishment, Eumenides, turn your faces to these frenzied rites. I take vengeance, and I commit sacrilege. Death must be atoned for by death, crime added to crime, funeral to funeral. Let this wicked house perish under heaped-up griefs. Shall Oeneus be happy and enjoy his victorious son, while Thestius is left childless? Better that you both mourn.[19] 8.488 Only you, my brothers' ghosts, souls newly dead, take note of my service. Accept the offering to the dead that I have prepared at such cost, the evil pledge of my womb!—Ah, where am I being swept away? Brothers, forgive a mother. My hands fail at what they have begun. I admit he has earned his death; it is the one who brings about his death that I shrink from.—So will he go unpunished? Will he live, victorious and swollen with his very success, and hold the kingdom of Calydon, while you lie there, a handful of ash and cold shades? I will not allow it. Let the criminal perish too, and drag down with him his father's hope, his kingdom, and his country in ruin. Where is a mother's heart? Where are the sacred bonds of parents, and the labor I endured for twice five months? 8.501 Oh, if only you had burned as a baby in those first flames, and I had let it happen! You lived by my gift; now you will die by your own desert. Take the reward of what you have done. Give back the life I gave you twice, first at your birth, then when I snatched the log from the fire—or else add me to my brothers' tombs! I want to, and I cannot. What shall I do? One moment my brothers' wounds are before my eyes, and the image of so great a slaughter; the next, devotion and the name of

19 The Eumenides ("Kindly Ones") are the Furies, avengers of crimes against kin.

mother break my resolve.—Wretch that I am! Yours will be an evil victory, brothers, but win! Only let me follow the comfort I give you, and follow you." She spoke, and with her trembling right hand turned away, she threw the funeral brand into the middle of the flames. The log itself gave a groan, or seemed to, as it was seized by the unwilling flames and burned.

8.515 Unknowing and far away, Meleager was burned by that flame. He felt his insides scorched by hidden fires, and with courage he mastered his terrible pain. Yet he grieved that he was falling by a cowardly, bloodless death, and he called Ancaeus' wounds fortunate. With groans he called on his aged father, his brothers, his loving sisters, and, with his last breath, the partner of his bed—perhaps his mother too. The fire and the pain grew, and then died down again. Both were extinguished together, and little by little his spirit departed into the light air, as little by little white ash veiled the embers. High Calydon lay low. Young and old mourned, common people and nobles groaned, and the mothers of Calydon by the Euenus tore their hair and beat their breasts. His father flung himself on the ground and defiled his white hair and aged face with dust, railing at his long life.

8.531 For as for the mother, her own hand, conscious of the dreadful deed, had exacted the penalty from her by driving a blade through her body. Even if a god had given me a hundred mouths resounding with tongues, a capacious genius, and all of Helicon, I could not do justice to the sad words of his wretched sisters. Heedless of decorum, they beat their bruised breasts. While the body remained, they cherished it and cherished it again; they kissed him, and they kissed the bier where he was laid. When he had become ash, they gathered his ashes and pressed them to their breasts. They lay prostrate on the tomb, and, embracing the name carved on the stone, they poured their tears upon the name. At last Latona's daughter, glutted with the disaster of Parthaon's house, lifted them up, all but Gorge and the daughter-in-law of noble Alcmena. Feathers sprouted on their bodies. She stretched long wings along their arms, made

their mouths into horn, and sent them, transformed, through the air.[20]

THESEUS AT THE HOUSE OF ACHELOUS

Flooding stops Theseus on his way home, and the river-god Achelous takes him in as his guest.

8.547 Meanwhile Theseus, having done his part in the shared labor, was making his way to the Erechthean citadel of Tritonia. Achelous, swollen with rain, blocked his path and delayed him on his way. "Come under my roof, famous descendant of Cecrops," he said, "and do not trust yourself to these greedy waters. They are used to carrying off solid beams and rolling boulders sideways with a mighty roar. I have seen tall stables near the bank swept away, flocks and all. There it did the cattle no good to be strong, nor the horses to be swift. This torrent, too, when the snows melt on the mountain, has drowned many young men's bodies in its whirling flood. It is safer to rest until the rivers run in their usual course, and the stream's own bed can hold its waters, slender again." The son of Aegeus nodded and answered, "I will make use, Achelous, of your house and your advice"; and he made use of both.[21]

8.562 He went into a hall built of porous pumice and rough tufa. The floor was damp with soft moss, and shells alternating with purple murex paneled the ceiling. And now Hyperion had measured out two parts of the daylight, and Theseus and the companions of his labors reclined on the couches. On one side was the son of Ixion, and on the other the hero of Troezen, Lelex, his temples already sprinkled with a few gray hairs. With them were the others whom the river of the Acarnanians had thought worthy of equal honor, overjoyed to have so great a guest. At once barefoot nymphs set the tables placed before them with

20 Parthaon was Oeneus' father; Alcmena's daughter-in-law is Deianira, wife of Hercules. The sisters became guinea-fowl, called meleagrides in Greek.
21 Achelous is the great river of western Greece and its god. Erechtheus and Cecrops were early kings of Athens, the city of Minerva (Tritonia).

food, and when the meal had been cleared away, they served wine in jeweled cups. Then the greatest hero, looking out over the waters spread beneath his gaze, said, "What is that place?" He pointed with his finger. "And tell me the name that island bears—though it does not seem to be just one."[22]

THE ECHINADES AND PERIMELE

Achelous tells how he swept nymphs out to sea as islands and saved Perimele by changing her.

8.577 The river replied: "What you see is not one island. Five lands lie there; the distance hides the gaps between them. And so that you may wonder less at what scorned Diana did, these were once Naiads. They had sacrificed twice five bullocks and invited the gods of the countryside to the rites, and then, forgetting me, they danced their festive dances. I swelled with anger, and I grew as great as I ever run when I am at my fullest. Monstrous alike in rage and in waters, I tore forests from forests and fields from fields, and I rolled the nymphs out into the sea together with the ground they stood on. Only then did they remember me. My waves and the sea's split the unbroken land and broke it into as many pieces as the Echinades you see in the midst of the waters.[23] 8.590 Yet, as you see for yourself, far off—look, far off—one island has drawn away, one dear to me; sailors call it Perimele. I loved her, and I took from her the name of virgin. Her father Hippodamas could not bear it, and he pushed his daughter's body off a cliff into the deep to die. I caught her, and as I bore her up while she swam, I said, 'O trident-bearer, who drew by lot the realm of the restless waves, next to the heavens, bring help, Neptune. I pray you, give a place to her whom her father's cruelty has drowned—or let her herself become a place.' While I was speaking, new earth embraced her swimming limbs, and a heavy island grew over her changed body."

22 Hyperion here stands for the Sun.
23 The Echinades are a group of small islands off the mouth of the Achelous River in western Greece.

PHILEMON AND BAUCIS

An old couple welcome disguised gods to their cottage and are rewarded while their neighbors drown.

8.611 With this the river fell silent. The marvelous tale had moved them all. Ixion's son, who scorned the gods and was fierce of mind, laughed at them for believing it and said, "What you tell is fiction, Achelous, and you think the gods too powerful if they give shapes and take them away." They were all astonished and did not approve of such words. Above them all Lelex, ripe in mind and in years, spoke: "The power of heaven is immense and has no limit, and whatever the gods above have willed is done. And so that you may doubt it less: in the Phrygian hills there stands an oak beside a linden, enclosed by a low wall. I have seen the place myself, for Pittheus sent me to the lands of Pelops, which his father once ruled. Not far from there is a pool. It was once land where people lived, and now it is water crowded with diving birds and marsh coots.[24]

8.626 Jupiter came here in mortal guise, and with his father came Atlas' grandson, bearer of the caduceus, his wings laid aside. They went to a thousand houses looking for a place to rest, and a thousand houses bolted their doors against them. Yet one took them in. It was small, it is true, thatched with straw and marsh reed. But in that cottage pious old Baucis and Philemon, her equal in age, had been joined in their youthful years, and in that cottage they had grown old together. They made their poverty light by admitting it and by bearing it without resentment. It makes no difference whether you ask for masters or servants there: the whole household is two, and the same two obey and command. So when the heaven-dwellers reached the little home and, bowing their heads, entered the low doorway, the old man set out a bench and told them to rest their limbs, and attentive Baucis threw a rough cloth over it.

24 Pittheus, king of Troezen, was Theseus' grandfather; his father Pelops had ruled in Phrygia before moving to Greece.

Then she pushed aside the warm ash on the hearth, roused yesterday's fire, fed it with leaves and dry bark, and with her old woman's breath coaxed it into flame.[25]

8.644 She brought down split kindling and dry twigs from the roof, broke them small, and set them under a little bronze pot. She stripped the leaves from the cabbage her husband had gathered in the well-watered garden. With a two-pronged fork she lifted down a smoke-blackened side of pork that hung from the dark beam, cut a small piece from the long-kept chine, and softened it in boiling water. Meanwhile they beguiled the hours in between with talk, and they shook out a mattress of soft river sedge that lay on a couch with a frame and feet of willow. They covered it with cloths that they used to spread only on feast days, but even this was cheap old cloth, quite fit for a willow couch. The gods reclined. The old woman, her skirts tucked up and trembling, set the table, but the table's third leg was too short. A potsherd made it even. When she had slipped it underneath and taken away the slope, they wiped the level tabletop with green mint.

8.664 On it were set the two-colored berry of chaste Minerva, autumn cornel cherries preserved in liquid lees, endive and radish and a lump of curdled cheese, and eggs lightly turned in embers that were not too hot—all in earthenware. After this a mixing bowl embossed in the same silver was set down, along with cups carved from beech wood and coated with yellow wax where they were hollow. There was a short wait, and the hearth sent out hot dishes. The wine, of no great age, was brought round again and then, set a little aside, made room for the second course. Here there were nuts, here dried figs mixed with wrinkled dates, and plums, and fragrant apples in wide baskets, and grapes gathered from purple vines. In the middle was a white honeycomb. And above all, there were kindly faces, and a goodwill neither grudging nor poor.[26]

25 Atlas' grandson is Mercury, son of Jupiter and Maia; the caduceus is his herald's staff.

26 Minerva's berry is the olive, the fruit of her sacred tree.

8.679 Meanwhile they saw that the mixing bowl, drained so often, kept refilling of its own accord, and that the wine welled up by itself. Astonished by the strange sight, they were afraid. With upturned palms Baucis and timid Philemon offered prayers and begged pardon for the meal and for their lack of preparation. They had a single goose, guardian of their tiny homestead, and its owners were getting ready to kill it for their divine guests. Quick on the wing, it wore out the old pair, slow with age, and dodged them for a long time, until at last it seemed to take refuge with the gods themselves. The gods above forbade its killing and said, 'We are gods, and your impious neighbors will pay the penalty they deserve. You two will be spared this disaster. Only leave your house, come along with us as we go, and climb the heights of the mountain together with us.' Both obeyed. Leaning on their sticks, they struggled to plant their steps up the long slope.

8.695 They were as far from the summit as an arrow can travel in a single shot when they turned their eyes and saw everything else sunk in a marsh, with only their own house left standing. While they marveled at this and wept for their neighbors' fate, that old cottage, small even for its two owners, turned into a temple. Columns took the place of forked posts, the thatch grew yellow, the roof looked golden, the doors were carved, and the ground was paved over with marble. Then Saturn's son spoke these words calmly: 'Tell us, just old man, and you, woman worthy of a just husband, what you wish for.' Philemon exchanged a few words with Baucis and then disclosed their shared decision to the gods: 'We ask to be your priests and to guard your shrine. And since we have spent our years in harmony, let the same hour take us both, so that I may never see my wife's tomb, nor be buried by her.'

8.711 Fulfillment followed their prayers. They were the temple's guardians as long as life was granted them. One day, worn out by years and age, they happened to be standing before the sacred steps, telling the story of the place. Baucis saw Philemon putting out leaves, and old Philemon saw Baucis putting out

leaves. And now, as a treetop grew over both their faces, they spoke to each other while they still could, and they said together, 'Farewell, dear spouse,' and at that same moment the leafy growth covered and hid their faces. The Thynian who lives there still points out the neighboring trunks that grew from their two bodies. Old men who were no liars told me this, and there was no reason why they should want to deceive me. Indeed, I have seen garlands hanging on the branches, and as I laid fresh ones there I said, 'Let those whom the gods cared for be gods, and let those who worshiped be worshiped.'"[27]

8.725 He had finished, and both the story and its teller had moved them all, Theseus most of all. As Theseus wanted to hear more of the gods' wondrous deeds, the Calydonian river leaned on his elbow and addressed him: "There are some, bravest of men, whose form has been changed once and has stayed in its new state. There are others who have the right to pass into many shapes, like you, Proteus, dweller in the sea that embraces the earth. For people have seen you now as a young man, now as a lion. Now you were a violent boar, now a serpent they would fear to touch, and at times horns made you a bull. Often you could appear as a stone, often too as a tree. Sometimes, imitating the look of flowing water, you were a river, and sometimes fire, the enemy of water.[28]

ERYSICHTHON AND HIS DAUGHTER

Erysichthon cuts down Ceres' sacred oak, and Hunger makes him so ravenous that he devours himself.

8.738 No less power belongs to the wife of Autolycus, Erysichthon's daughter. Her father was a man who scorned the divine power of the gods and burned no incense on their altars. He is even said to have violated Ceres' grove with an ax and to have defiled her ancient woods with iron. Among them stood a huge

27 Thynian here means Bithynian, from the region of Asia Minor next to Phrygia.
28 Proteus is a shape-shifting sea god, the "old man of the sea" who changes form to escape anyone who seizes him.

oak, its wood strong with age, a grove in itself. Ribbons, tablets of remembrance and garlands encircled its middle, proof of prayers that had been answered. Often the Dryads danced their festive dances beneath it. Often, too, they joined hands in a line and circled the girth of its trunk, and the measure of the oak came to fifteen arm-spans. The rest of the wood stood as far below it as the grass stood below the whole wood.[29]

8.751 Not even for that did Triopas' son keep his ax away from it. He ordered his servants to cut down the sacred oak, and when he saw them hesitate at the order, the wicked man snatched an ax from one of them and uttered these words: 'Even if it were not just a tree the goddess loves but the goddess herself, it will now touch the ground with its leafy crown.' He said this, and as he poised the blade for slanting strokes, Deo's oak trembled and gave a groan. Its leaves and its acorns together began to grow pale, and its long branches took on a pallor. As soon as his impious hand made a wound in its trunk, blood flowed from the shattered bark, just as gore pours from the severed neck when a huge bull falls as a victim before the altar.[30]

8.765 They were all aghast, and one of them dared to try to stop the crime and hold back the cruel double ax. The Thessalian looked at him and said, 'Take the reward for your pious mind!' He turned the blade from the tree against the man and cut off his head. Then he struck at the oak again, and from the middle of the oak came a voice: 'I am a nymph within this wood, most dear to Ceres, and as I die I prophesy that punishment for your deeds is close at hand, and that is my comfort in death.' He carried his crime through. At last, weakened by countless blows and dragged by ropes, the tree crashed down and flattened much of the forest with its weight. The Dryads, stunned by the loss of the groves and by their own, all sisters, went in black robes to Ceres in mourning and begged her to punish Erysich-

29 Erysichthon's daughter, not named here, is Mestra; her husband Autolycus was a famous trickster and the grandfather of Ulysses.
30 Deo is a Greek name for Demeter, the goddess the Romans called Ceres.

thon. She assented, and with a nod of her most lovely head she shook the fields laden with heavy harvests.

8.782 She devised a kind of punishment that would be pitiable, if his deeds had not put him beyond anyone's pity: to torment him with baneful Hunger. Since the goddess herself could not go to Hunger, for the Fates do not allow Ceres and Hunger to meet, she spoke to one of the mountain spirits, a rustic Oread, with these words: 'There is a place in the farthest regions of icy Scythia, a gloomy soil, a barren land without crops and without trees. Sluggish Cold lives there, and Pallor, and Trembling, and starving Hunger. Tell her to hide herself in the sacrilegious man's wicked heart. Let no abundance of food overcome her, and let her defeat my powers in the contest. And so that the length of the journey does not frighten you, take my chariot, take my dragons, and guide them with the reins high through the air.'

8.796 And she gave them. Carried through the air in the chariot she had been given, the nymph came down in Scythia, and on the summit of a frozen mountain (they call it Caucasus) she relieved the serpents' necks of the yoke. She saw Hunger, whom she had been seeking, in a stony field, tearing up the scanty grass with her nails and teeth. Her hair was matted, her eyes hollow, her face pale. Her lips were gray with neglect, her throat rough with scurf. Her skin was hard, and her entrails could be seen through it. Her dry bones jutted out beneath her bent loins. In place of a belly there was only the place where a belly should be. You would think her breast was hanging loose, held only by the framework of her spine. Her thinness had made her joints look larger, her round kneecaps swelled, and her ankles stuck out in huge lumps. The nymph saw her from far off, for she did not dare go near, and delivered the goddess's orders. Though she stayed only a little while, though she was far away, though she had only just arrived, she still seemed to have felt hunger, and turning the reins, she drove the dragons back high through the air to Haemonia.[31]

31 Haemonia is a poetic name for Thessaly, Erysichthon's homeland.

8.814 Hunger carried out Ceres' orders, although she is always opposed to Ceres' work. Borne by the wind through the air to the house she had been told of, she went straight into the sacrilegious man's bedroom. He lay relaxed in deep sleep, for it was night, and she clasped him in both her arms. She breathed herself into the man, blew on his throat and chest and mouth, and spread starvation through his empty veins. Her charge fulfilled, she left the fertile world and went back to her needy home, her familiar caves. Gentle Sleep was still soothing Erysichthon with his peaceful wings. In his dream he reached for food, worked his jaws on nothing, wore out tooth against tooth, exercised his cheated gullet on empty food, and in place of a feast devoured the thin air in vain. But when sleep was driven off, a raging desire to eat burned in him and ruled his greedy throat and inflamed entrails.

8.830 At once he demanded whatever the sea, the earth and the air produce. With tables set before him he complained of starving, and in the midst of feasts he looked for feasts. What could have been enough for cities, enough for a whole people, was not enough for one man, and the more he sent down into his belly, the more he wanted. The sea receives rivers from all the earth and is never sated with water, and drinks up streams from distant lands. A ravenous fire never refuses fuel and burns countless logs, and the greater the supply it is given, the more it seeks, and the very abundance makes it more voracious. Just so, the mouth of impious Erysichthon took in every feast and, in the same moment, demanded more. In him all food was only a reason for food, and by eating he kept making room inside himself.

8.843 And now through hunger and the deep abyss of his belly he had diminished his inherited wealth, but even then his dreadful hunger remained undiminished, and the flame of his gullet blazed on unappeased. At last, when he had sent all his property down into his entrails, his daughter remained, who did not deserve such a father. Penniless, he sold her too. Being nobly born, she refused to have a master, and stretching out her

hands over the nearby sea, she said, 'Rescue me from a master—you who hold as your prize the virginity you took from me by force.' Neptune held that prize. He did not scorn her prayer. Though her master, following, had just seen her, Neptune changed her form, giving her a man's face and the clothes that suit those who catch fish. Her master, looking at her, said, 'You who hide the dangling bronze with a little bait, you master of the rod, 8.857 so may the sea be calm for you, so may the fish in the water be trusting and feel no hook until it is caught: tell me where she is, the girl who stood on this shore just now in a cheap dress, her hair disheveled. I saw her standing on the shore, and her footprints go no farther.' She sensed that the god's gift was working well, and delighted to be asked about herself, she answered his question with these words: 'Whoever you are, forgive me. I have not turned my eyes from this water in any direction, I have been so intent on my work. And so that you may doubt it less—so may the god of the sea help this craft of mine—no man has stood on this shore for a long time except me, and no woman either.' Her master believed her, turned on his heel, tramped off across the sand and went away deceived. And her own form was given back to her.

8.871 But when her father realized that his daughter had a body that could change its shape, he often sold Triopas' granddaughter to masters. She would get away now as a mare, now as a bird, now as a cow, now as a stag, and so supplied her greedy father with ill-gotten food. Yet when the violence of that affliction had consumed all his means and had given new fodder to his grievous disease, he began to tear his own limbs apart with mangling bites, and the wretched man fed his body by diminishing it. But why do I dwell on others' stories? I too, young man, have the power to change my body, though it is limited in number. For sometimes I appear as I am now, sometimes I am turned into a snake, and sometimes, as leader of the herd, I take my strength into my horns—my horns, while I still could! Now one side of my forehead lacks its weapon, as you see yourself." Groans followed his words.

Book 9

Hercules; forbidden loves
Achelous and Hercules; the death of Hercules; Dryope; Byblis;
Iphis and Ianthe.

ACHELOUS AND HERCULES

Achelous tells how he wrestled Hercules for Deianira in three shapes and lost a horn.

9.1 The hero, Neptune's son, was asking the god the cause of his groans and of his maimed forehead, when the Calydonian river, his unkempt hair wreathed with reeds, began: "It is a sad favor you ask. For who, once beaten, would want to recall his battles? Still, I will tell it in order. It was not so shameful to be beaten as it is honorable to have fought, and so great a victor is a great consolation to me. Perhaps the name of Deianira has reached your ears in talk. She was once a most beautiful girl, the envied hope of many suitors. When I entered the house of the father-in-law we were seeking, along with them, I said, 'Son of Parthaon, take me as your son-in-law'; Alcides said the same. The others gave way to the two of us.[1]

9.14 He told of the Jupiter he would bring as a father-in-law, of the fame of his labors, and of his stepmother's commands overcome. Against this I said, 'It is shameful for a god to give way to a mortal' (he was not yet a god). 'You see in me the king of the waters that flow in winding courses through your kingdom. I will not be a son-in-law sent to you as a stranger from foreign

1 The hero is Theseus, guest of the river-god Achelous of Calydon. The son of Parthaon is Oeneus, king of Calydon and Deianira's father.

shores. I will be one of your own people and a part of your realm. Only do not hold it against me that royal Juno does not hate me, and that I am spared all punishment of imposed labors. As for the Jupiter you boast of as your father, son of Alcmena, either he is a false father, or a true one through a crime. You claim a father by your mother's adultery. Choose: would you rather Jupiter were a fiction, or that you were born in disgrace?'

9.27 All the while I was speaking he had been glaring at me with fierce eyes. He could not keep a firm rein on his blazing anger, and he answered with just these words: 'My right hand is better than my tongue. So long as I win at fighting, you can win at talking.' Then he came at me fiercely. Having just spoken so grandly, I was ashamed to give way. I threw the green robe off my body, put up my arms against him, held my hands curved and ready in front of my chest, and braced my limbs for the fight. He scooped up dust in his hollowed palms and sprinkled me with it, and in turn he grew golden himself from the touch of the tawny sand. Now he grabbed at my neck, now at my darting legs, or you would think he grabbed, attacking me from every side. My weight protected me, and his assaults were in vain. I was just like a massive breakwater that the waves attack with a great roar: it stands firm, safe in its own weight. 9.42 We drew apart a little and came together again for battle, and stood our ground, determined not to give way. Foot was locked with foot, and leaning forward with my whole chest I pressed fingers against fingers and forehead against forehead. Just so I have seen powerful bulls clash, when the sleekest mate in the whole pasture is sought as the prize of the fight. The herds watch and tremble, not knowing which one the victory of so great a kingdom awaits. Three times Alcides tried without success to thrust my chest, straining against his, away from him. At the fourth try he broke my hold, loosened my clasping arms, and with a shove of his hand (I am resolved to confess the truth) he at once spun me around and clung heavily to my back. If you will believe me, and I am not seeking false glory by what I say now, I seemed to be crushed under a mountain set on top of me. 9.57 Even so, with

difficulty I worked my arms, streaming with sweat, between us, and with difficulty I freed my body from his hard grip. He pressed on me as I panted, kept me from regaining my strength, and got hold of my neck. Then at last my knee was forced to the ground, and I bit the sand. Inferior in strength, I turned to my arts and slipped from the man, transformed into a long snake. When I had wound my body into curving coils and flickered my forked tongue with a fierce hiss, the Tirynthian laughed and mocked my arts: 'Overcoming snakes was the work of my cradle,' he said. 'And even if you outdo other serpents, Achelous, what fraction of the Lernaean serpent will you be, one single snake?[2]

9.70 She grew fertile from her own wounds. Not one of her hundred heads was cut off with impunity: each time, her neck grew stronger with a double heir. That creature, branching with snakes born from slaughter and growing by her own injury, I subdued, and once I had subdued her, I laid her open. What do you think will become of you, turned into a false snake, wielding weapons not your own, hidden in a borrowed form?' He had spoken, and he clamped the chains of his fingers round the top of my neck. I was choking, as if my throat were squeezed in pincers, and I struggled to wrench his thumbs from my gullet. Beaten in this form too, I still had a third form left, a savage bull's. Changed into a bull in my limbs, I fought back. He threw his arms round my brawny neck from the left side, and as I charged he followed, dragging me. He forced down my hard horns, drove them into the ground, and laid me low in the deep sand.

9.85 And that was not enough for him. While his savage right hand held my rigid horn, he broke it and tore it from my forehead, leaving it maimed. The Naiads filled the horn with fruit and fragrant flowers and made it sacred, and Good Plenty is rich through my horn." He had spoken. A nymph, one of his attendants, her dress girt up in Diana's fashion and her hair streaming

2 As a baby, Hercules strangled two snakes that Juno sent to his cradle. The Lernaean serpent is the many-headed Hydra.

down on both sides, came in and brought the whole of autumn in the richly laden horn, the dessert course of delicious fruit. Day came on, and as the first sun struck the peaks, the young men departed. They did not wait for the rivers to be at peace and flow calmly, and for all the waters to subside. Achelous hid his rustic face and his head, maimed of a horn, in the middle of his waves.[3]

NESSUS AND DEIANIRA

Hercules shoots the Centaur Nessus, who gives Deianira his poisoned shirt as a love charm.

9.98 Yet the only thing that humbled him was the loss of the ornament taken from him. In all else he is unharmed, and the damage to his head, too, is hidden by willow leaves or by reeds laid over it. But you, fierce Nessus, were destroyed by passion for the same girl, your back pierced by a flying arrow. For the son of Jupiter, returning with his new wife to his native walls, had come to the swift waters of the Euenus. The river was fuller than usual, swollen by winter rains, thick with whirlpools and impassable. The hero was fearless for himself but anxious for his wife, and Nessus approached him, Nessus, strong in limb and familiar with the fords,[4] 9.109 "With my help," he said, "she will be set down on that bank, Alcides. You use your strength and swim!" And the Aonian hero handed over to Nessus the frightened girl from Calydon, pale with fear and afraid both of the river and of Nessus himself. Then, just as he was, weighed down by his quiver and the lion's skin (he had thrown his club and his curved bow across to the far bank), he said, "Since I have begun, let rivers be conquered!" He did not hesitate. He did not look for where the river was gentlest, and he scorned to be carried down by giving way to the waters. He was already on the bank, picking up the bow he had thrown, when he recognized

3 Bona Copia ("Good Plenty"), the goddess of abundance, was shown holding the horn of plenty, the cornucopia.

4 Nessus was a Centaur, half man and half horse. The Euenus is a river in Aetolia.

his wife's voice. Nessus was preparing to cheat him of what had been entrusted to him, and Hercules shouted, "Where is it carrying you, that confidence

9.121 in your feet, vain as it is, you violent creature? I am speaking to you, two-formed Nessus. Listen, and do not steal what is mine! If no respect for me moved you, at least your father's wheel could have held you back from a forbidden union. You will not escape, though you trust in your horse's strength. I will catch you by a wound, not by running." His deed proved his last words. With a shot arrow he pierced the fleeing back, and the barbed iron stuck out from the Centaur's chest. As soon as it was pulled out, blood spurted from both holes, mixed with the venom of the Lernaean poison. Nessus caught it up. "I will not die unavenged," he said to himself, and he gave his tunic, soaked in the warm blood, as a gift to the woman he had seized, as if it were a charm to stir up love.[5]

THE DEATH OF HERCULES

The poisoned shirt burns Hercules alive; on his pyre his immortal part is taken up to the gods.

9.134 A long interval of time passed, and the deeds of great Hercules had filled the earth and glutted his stepmother's hatred. Returning victorious from Oechalia, he was preparing to pay his vows to Jupiter at Cenaeum, when talkative Rumor reached your ears first, Deianira. Rumor loves to add falsehoods to the truth and grows from the smallest beginnings through her own lies, and she said that Amphitryon's son was in the grip of passion for Iole. Being in love, Deianira believed it. Terrified by the report of a new love, at first she gave way to tears, and, poor woman, poured out her pain in weeping. But soon she said, "Yet why do I weep? My rival will rejoice at these tears. Since she is coming, I must hurry and devise something new, while I can, and before

5 Ixion, father of the Centaurs, was bound to a turning wheel in the underworld for trying to violate Juno.

another woman holds my bed.[6] 9.147 Shall I complain or keep silent? Go back to Calydon or stay? Leave the house, or, if nothing more, stand in their way? What if, remembering, Meleager, that I am your sister, I prepare a crime, and prove by cutting my rival's throat what injury and a woman's pain can do?" Her mind ran down many courses. Over all of them she preferred to send the robe steeped in Nessus' blood, to restore its strength to failing love. She did not know what she was handing over, and she herself handed her own grief to Lichas, who did not know either. With coaxing words, most wretched woman, she told him to give the gift to her husband. The hero took it, unaware, and put on his shoulders the venom of the Lernaean serpent.[7]

9.159 He was offering incense and words of prayer to the first flames and pouring wine from a bowl onto the marble altars. The power of the poison grew hot, and released by the flames it spread far and wide through the limbs of Hercules. While he could, he held back his groans with his usual courage. When his endurance was overcome by the pain, he pushed the altars away and filled wooded Oeta with his cries. At once he tried to tear off the deadly robe. Where it was pulled, it pulled the skin with it, and, horrible to tell, it either clung to his limbs, resisting his efforts to rip it away, or laid bare his torn flesh and his huge bones. His very blood hissed and boiled with the burning poison, like a white-hot blade plunged into an icy pool.[8]

9.172 There was no end. Greedy flames sucked up his vitals, dark sweat streamed from his whole body, his scorched sinews crackled, and as his marrow melted with the unseen corruption, he raised his hands to the stars and cried: "Feed, Saturn's daughter, on my disasters! Feed, cruel one, watch this plague from on high, and glut your savage heart! Or if I am pitiable even to an enemy, that is, to you, take away this life, sick with dreadful torments, hateful, born for labors. That will be a gift to me; such

6 Oechalia was the city of King Eurytus, Iole's father, which Hercules sacked. Cenaeum is a headland of Euboea.

7 Meleager, Deianira's brother, killed the Calydonian boar (Book 8). Lichas was Hercules' attendant.

8 Oeta is a mountain range in southern Thessaly.

gifts befit a stepmother. Was it for this that I overcame Busiris, who defiled temples with strangers' blood? For this that I robbed savage Antaeus of his mother's nourishment? That I was not shaken by the triple form of the Spanish herdsman, nor by your triple form, Cerberus?[9] 9.186 Was it you, my hands, that forced down the horns of the mighty bull? Is it your work that Elis keeps, and the waters of Stymphalus, and the Parthenian wood? By your valor was the belt of chased gold from the Thermodon brought back, and the apples guarded by the sleepless dragon? The Centaurs could not stand against me, nor the boar that ravaged Arcadia. It did the Hydra no good to grow through loss and regain double strength. What then? I saw the Thracian horses fat with human blood, their stalls full of mangled bodies; I saw them, threw them down, and killed their master and the horses themselves. By these arms the huge Nemean beast lies crushed; on this neck I held up the sky. Jupiter's cruel wife is worn out with giving orders; I am not worn out with carrying them out.[10] 9.200 But a new plague is here, one that cannot be resisted by valor, or by spears and arms. A devouring fire wanders deep in my lungs and feeds through all my limbs. But Eurystheus is well! And there are people who can believe there are gods!" He said this, and, wounded, he strode across high Oeta, just as a bull carries hunting spears fixed in its body after the man who threw them has fled. You might have seen him often groaning, often roaring, often trying again to tear off the whole robe, knocking down trees, raging at the mountains, or stretching his arms out to his father's sky. Then he caught sight of Lichas, trembling and hiding in a hollow rock, and as his pain had gathered all its fury,[11]

9 Busiris, an Egyptian king, sacrificed strangers; the giant Antaeus drew strength from his mother, Earth. Geryon was the three-bodied herdsman of Spain, and Cerberus the three-headed hound of the underworld.

10 These are among the labors of Hercules: the Cretan bull, the Augean stables in Elis, the Stymphalian birds, the hind of Mount Parthenius, the Amazon's belt (from the river Thermodon), the apples of the Hesperides, the Erymanthian boar, the Hydra, the man-eating horses of Diomedes, and the Nemean lion.

11 Eurystheus, king of Tiryns, imposed the labors on Hercules at Juno's prompting.

9.213 "Was it you, Lichas," he said, "who gave me this deadly gift? Will you be the author of my death?" Lichas trembled, pale with fear, and timidly spoke words of excuse. As he was speaking and getting ready to clasp the hero's knees, Alcides seized him, whirled him around three or four times, and hurled him, harder than a catapult, into the Euboean waves. As he hung in the airy breezes, he hardened. They say that rain congeals in icy winds and becomes snow, and that the soft snow, whirled about, binds together and gathers into a solid mass of thick hail. In the same way, an earlier age reports, Lichas, thrown through the void by those powerful arms, bloodless with fear and with no moisture left in him, was turned into hard flint. 9.226 Even now a small crag rises from the deep Euboean sea and keeps the traces of a human shape. Sailors are afraid to step on it, as though it could feel, and they call it Lichas. But you, glorious son of Jupiter, cut down the trees that steep Oeta had borne and built them into a pyre. You ordered the son of Poeas to take your bow, your roomy quiver, and the arrows that would see the kingdom of Troy a second time. With his help the flame was set beneath, and while the pile was being seized by the greedy fire, you spread the Nemean fleece over the top of the heap of timber and lay down with your neck resting on your club. Your face was no different than if you were reclining as a guest at a banquet, crowned with garlands, among cups full of wine. And now the flame, strong and spreading on every side, roared and made for the untroubled limbs of the man who scorned it. The gods were afraid for the earth's champion.[12]

9.242 Jupiter, son of Saturn, sensed it, and spoke to them with a joyful face: "This fear of yours is my delight, gods above. With all my heart I gladly congratulate myself that I am called ruler and father of a grateful people, and that my offspring is safe in your favor too. For although you grant this to his own mighty deeds, I myself am in your debt. But do not let your loyal hearts tremble with empty fear: think nothing of the flames of Oeta! He

12 The son of Poeas is Philoctetes, whose arrows from Hercules were later needed to take Troy, which Hercules himself had once sacked.

who has conquered everything will conquer the fires you see, and he will feel Vulcan's power only in the part he has from his mother. What he took from me is eternal, free from death and immune to it, and no flame can subdue it. When it has finished with earth, I will receive it into the heavenly regions, and I trust that my act will be a joy to all the gods. If anyone, though, if anyone should happen to be pained that Hercules becomes a god, he will not want the reward to be given, but he will know it was deserved, and will approve it against his will."

9.259 The gods assented. Even his royal wife seemed to hear the rest of Jupiter's words with no harsh look, but the last with a harsh one, and to resent being singled out. Meanwhile Mulciber had carried off whatever the flame could ravage. No recognizable likeness of Hercules remained; he kept nothing drawn from his mother's image, and preserved only the traces of Jupiter. As a new snake, when it has shed its old skin, revels and gleams in fresh scales, so the Tirynthian, once he had put off his mortal limbs, flourished in his better part. He began to seem greater and to become awe-inspiring in his majestic dignity. The almighty father snatched him up through the hollow clouds and carried him in his four-horse chariot to the shining stars.

ALCMENA AND GALANTHIS

Alcmena tells how Lucina, sent by Juno, blocked Hercules' birth until a servant girl tricked her.

9.273 Atlas felt the weight. Still Eurystheus, son of Sthenelus, had not given up his anger, and he cruelly turned against the son the hatred he had felt for the father. But Alcmena of Argos, troubled by long anxieties, had Iole: someone to whom she could pour out an old woman's complaints, to whom she could tell of her son's labors, attested by the whole world, and of her own misfortunes. At Hercules' command Hyllus had taken Iole into his bed and his heart, and had filled her womb with noble seed, when Alcmena began: "May the gods at least favor you and cut short the delays when, your time come, you call on Ilithyia, who

presides over fearful women in labor. Out of favor to Juno, she made things hard for me.[13]

9.285 When the birth of Hercules, bearer of labors, was near, and the sun was pressing on the tenth sign, the weight stretched my womb, and what I carried was so great that you could tell Jupiter was the father of the hidden burden. I could no longer bear my labor. Even now, as I speak, a cold shudder grips my limbs, and remembering is part of the pain. Seven nights and as many days I was tormented. Worn out by suffering, stretching my arms to the sky, I called with loud cries on Lucina and the Nixi, her partners. She came indeed, but bribed beforehand and wanting to make a present of my life to cruel Juno.[14] 9.297 When she heard my groans, she sat down on the altar there before the doors. With her left knee pressed under her right and her fingers interlaced like the teeth of a comb, she held back the birth. She also spoke spells in a silent voice, and the spells held back the birth once it had begun. I strained, and in my madness I hurled useless reproaches at ungrateful Jupiter, longed to die, and lamented in words that would have moved hard flint. The mothers of Cadmus' city were there, offering vows and encouraging me in my pain. One of the serving women, a girl of the common people, was there too, golden-haired Galanthis, quick to carry out orders and loved for her services. She sensed that cruel Juno was up to something, and as she kept going in and out of the doors, she saw the goddess sitting on the altar, her arms on her knees and her fingers locked together. 'Whoever you are,' she said, 'congratulate my mistress. Alcmena of Argos has been delivered, and the new mother has her prayer.'

9.314 The goddess who rules the womb leapt up, terrified, and released her joined hands, and with the bonds released I was delivered. The story goes that Galanthis laughed at having fooled the goddess. As she laughed, the cruel goddess seized her

13 Atlas holds up the sky, now heavier with Hercules. Hyllus is Hercules' son; Ilithyia is the goddess of childbirth.

14 The tenth sign marks the tenth month of pregnancy. Lucina is another name for the birth goddess, and the Nixi were deities who helped women in labor.

by her very hair and dragged her along, and when she tried to lift her body from the ground, she held her down and changed her arms into forelegs. Her old quickness remains, and her back has not lost its color, but her form is different from before. Because she helped a woman in childbirth with a lying mouth, she gives birth through her mouth, and she still frequents our houses as she did before."[15]

DRYOPE

Iole tells how her sister Dryope picked a nymph's flowers and was turned into a lotus tree.

9.324 She said this, and stirred by the memory of her old servant she groaned. As she grieved, her daughter-in-law spoke to her: "Yet, mother, you are moved by the lost form of a woman not of your blood. What if I were to tell you the strange fate of my own sister? Though tears and grief hinder me and keep me from speaking. Dryope was her mother's only child (my father had me by another woman), the most famous beauty among the women of Oechalia. She had lost her virginity, raped by the god who holds Delphi and Delos, and Andraemon took her as his wife; he is thought fortunate in his wife. There is a lake whose sloping banks give it the shape of a seashore, and groves of myrtle crown the ridge above. Dryope had come here, not knowing her fate, and, to make you more indignant still, to bring garlands to the nymphs. On her breast she carried her little boy, not yet a year old, a sweet burden, and nursed him with her warm milk.[16]

9.340 Not far from the pool a water-loving lotus was blooming, rivaling Tyrian purple and promising berries. Dryope had picked some of its flowers to offer her son as playthings, and I was about to do the same, for I was there. Then I saw drops of blood fall from the flower and the branches stir with a trem-

15 Galanthis became a weasel, which the ancients believed gave birth through its mouth.

16 The god who holds Delphi and Delos is Apollo.

bling shudder. It seems, as the country people, slow to tell it, now at last report, that the nymph Lotis, fleeing the lewdness of Priapus, had changed her features into this tree and kept her name. My sister had not known this. Terrified, she wanted to step back and leave after praying to the nymphs, but her feet were held fast by roots. She struggled to tear them free, but could move nothing except her upper body. From below, pliant bark grew up and little by little covered her whole groin. When she saw it, she tried to tear her hair with her hand, and her hand filled with leaves: leaves were covering her whole head.[17]

9.356 Her boy Amphissus (his grandfather Eurytus had given him this name) felt his mother's breasts stiffen, and no milk followed when he sucked. I stood there, a witness to the cruel event, and could bring you no help, sister. As far as I could, I held back the growing trunk and branches with my embrace, and, I confess, I wanted to be hidden under the same bark. Then her husband Andraemon and her most unhappy father came, looking for Dryope. As they looked for Dryope, I showed them the lotus. They kissed the warm wood, threw themselves down, and clung to the roots of their tree. My dear sister now had nothing that was not tree except her face. Her tears bedewed the leaves made from her wretched body, and while she could, while her mouth still offered a path for her voice, she poured out laments like these into the air:

9.371 'If the wretched are believed, I swear by the gods that I did not deserve this horror. I suffer punishment without any crime. I have lived innocent. If I am lying, may I wither and lose the leaves I have, and be cut down with axes and burned. But take this baby from his mother's branches and give him to a nurse. See that he often drinks his milk beneath my tree, and plays beneath my tree! And when he can talk, see that he greets his mother and says sadly, "My mother is hidden in this trunk." But let him fear pools, and not pick flowers from trees, and let him think that every bush is the body of a god! 9.382 Farewell, dear husband, and you, sister, and father! If you have any devotion,

17 Priapus was a rustic fertility god. Lotis was a nymph he pursued.

protect my leaves from the wound of the sharp pruning hook and from the bite of the flock. And since I cannot bend down to you, stretch yourselves up here and come to my kisses while I can still be touched, and lift up my little son. I can say no more. Already the soft bark is creeping over my white neck, and I am being buried in the topmost crown. Take your hands from my eyes. Without your service, let the spreading bark close my dying eyes!' At the same moment her lips ceased to speak and ceased to be, and long after her body was changed, the new branches stayed warm."

IOLAUS AND THE SONS OF CALLIRHOE

Hebe makes Iolaus young again, and Themis foretells two other boys suddenly grown into men.

9.394 While Iole was telling this marvelous event, and while Alcmena dried the tears of Eurytus' daughter with her thumb, though she was weeping herself, something new checked all their sadness. For on the high threshold stood Iolaus, almost a boy, his cheeks covered with faint down, his face restored to his early years. Hebe, Juno's daughter, had given him this gift, won over by her husband's prayers. When she was about to swear that she would grant such gifts to no one after him, Themis would not allow it. "For already," she said, "Thebes is stirring up wars of discord. Capaneus can be conquered only by Jupiter, the brothers will be equal in their wounds, and the prophet, still alive, will see the land of the dead as the earth is snatched from under him. The son, avenging parent on parent, will be dutiful and criminal by the same deed;[18] 9.409 and stunned by his woes, an exile from his mind and from his home, he will be hounded by the faces of the Furies and by his mother's ghost, until his wife demands the fatal gold and the sword of Phegeus' house

18 Iolaus, Hercules' nephew and companion, is rejuvenated. Themis foretells the war of the Seven against Thebes: the brothers Eteocles and Polynices, the prophet Amphiaraus swallowed by the earth, and his son Alcmaeon, who killed his mother to avenge him.

drains the side of its kinsman. Then at last Callirhoe, daughter of Achelous, will come as a suppliant to great Jupiter and beg these years for her infant sons, so that he will not let the victor's death go long unavenged. Moved by her, Jupiter will anticipate the gifts of his stepdaughter and daughter-in-law and make them men while they are still beardless boys."[19]

MILETUS

The gods want youth for their own favorites, but Jupiter says even he is ruled by fate.

9.418 When Themis, who knew what was to come, had said this with her prophetic lips, the gods above grumbled in a babble of talk, and the murmur ran: why were they not allowed to give the same gifts to others? Pallas' daughter complained that her husband was old; gentle Ceres complained that Iasion was going gray; Mulciber demanded a renewed life for Erichthonius. Venus too was touched by concern for the future and bargained to renew Anchises' years. Every god had someone to favor, and the unruly revolt grew with partisanship, until Jupiter opened his lips and said, "Oh, if you have any reverence for me, where are you rushing? Does anyone think himself so powerful that he can overcome even the fates? It was by the fates that Iolaus returned to the years he had already spent. By the fates Callirhoe's sons must grow young, not by ambition or by arms.[20] 9.433 The fates rule you as well—and, so that you may bear this in better spirit, they rule me too. If I had the power to change them, the late years would not be bowing our Aeacus. Rhadamanthus would have the unending flower of life, and so would my Minos, who is despised because of the bitter weight of old age and no

19 Alcmaeon was killed by the sons of Phegeus, his first wife's father, after his second wife, Callirhoe, demanded the necklace of Harmonia. Hebe is Jupiter's stepdaughter in the tradition that Juno bore her alone, and his daughter-in-law as Hercules' wife.

20 Pallas' daughter is Aurora, the Dawn, whose husband Tithonus was given immortality without youth. Iasion, Erichthonius and Anchises were mortal favorites of Ceres, Vulcan and Venus.

longer reigns with his former authority." Jupiter's words moved the gods, and none could bring himself to complain when he saw Rhadamanthus and Aeacus worn out with years, and Minos too. While Minos was in the prime of life, his very name had terrified great nations. Now he was feeble. He feared Miletus, son of Deione, who was proud of his youthful strength and of having Phoebus as his father. Though he believed Miletus was rising against his throne, he still did not dare to drive him from his ancestral home. Of your own accord, Miletus, you fled. On a swift keel you measured out the Aegean waters, and in the land of Asia you built walls that bear their founder's name.[21]

BYBLIS AND CAUNUS

Byblis falls in love with her twin brother, writes to him, and dissolves into a spring when rejected.

9.450 Here you came to know Cyanee as she followed the curves of her father's banks. She was the daughter of the Maeander, the river that so often winds back to the same place, and she bore you twin children of outstanding beauty, Byblis and Caunus. Byblis is a lesson that girls should love only what is allowed—Byblis, seized with desire for her brother, Apollo's grandson. She loved him not as a sister loves a brother, nor in the way she should. At first, indeed, she recognized no flames. She did not think it wrong to kiss him so often, or to throw her arms around her brother's neck, and for a long time she was deceived by the false shadow of sisterly devotion. Little by little her love went astray. She dressed with care to go and see her brother, she was too eager to look beautiful, and if any girl there was more beautiful, she envied her. 9.464 But she did not yet understand herself, and beneath that fire she formed no wish; yet inside she was burning. Now she called him "my lord," now she hated the names of kinship; now she would rather he called her Byblis than sister. Still, while she was awake, she did not dare let

21 Miletus, a great Greek city on the coast of Asia Minor, was said to take its name from him.

shameful hopes into her mind. But when she lay relaxed in peaceful sleep, she often saw what she loved. She even seemed to unite her body with her brother's, and she blushed, though she lay asleep. Sleep left her. For a long time she was silent, going over the image of her dream, and then, her mind wavering, she spoke these words: "Poor me! What does this vision of the silent night mean? How I would hate it to come true! Why have I seen these dreams?

9.476 He is handsome, it is true, even to hostile eyes. I like him, and I could love him if he were not my brother, and he would be worthy of me. But being his sister is my ruin.—As long as I never try anything like this awake, let sleep often come back with such an image! Sleep has no witness, yet it does not lack a counterfeit of pleasure. O Venus, and winged Cupid with your tender mother, what joys I had! How real the desire was that came over me! How I lay, melted to my very marrow! How sweet it is to remember! Yet that pleasure was brief, and the night ran headlong, jealous of what we had begun. Oh, if we could change our name and be joined, how good a daughter-in-law, Caunus, I could be to your father! 9.489 How good a son-in-law, Caunus, you could be to my father! If only the gods would let us share everything except our ancestors! I would want you to be of nobler birth than I am! As it is, most beautiful one, you will make some woman or other a mother. But to me, who had the bad luck to draw the same parents as you, you will be nothing but a brother. The one thing we shall share is the thing that stands in our way. What, then, do my visions mean for me? And what weight do dreams have?—or do dreams have weight after all? Gods forbid!—and yet the gods have certainly had their own sisters. So Saturn married Ops, joined to him by blood, Oceanus married Tethys, and the ruler of Olympus married Juno. The gods above have laws of their own! Why am I trying to measure heavenly things by human customs and by bonds of a different kind? 9.502 Either this forbidden passion will be driven from my heart, or, if I cannot do this, may I die first, I pray, and be laid out dead on my bier, and may my brother kiss me as I lie there.—

And yet this business needs the consent of two. Suppose I want it: to him it will seem a crime! But the sons of Aeolus did not shrink from their sisters' beds! Yet how do I know about them? Why have I gathered these examples? Where am I being swept? Away from here, you shameful flames! Let my brother be loved only as a sister may rightly love him!—Still, if he had been seized by love for me first, perhaps I could have given in to his frenzy. So shall I, who would not have refused him had he courted me, do the courting myself? Will you be able to speak? Will you be able to confess? Love will force me: I will be able! Or, if shame keeps my lips closed, a secret letter will confess my hidden fires. That is what I want. This is the plan that has won over my wavering mind."[22]

9.518 She raised herself onto her side and, propped on her left elbow, said, "Let him think what he will: let me confess my mad love. Ah me! Where am I slipping? What fire is my mind conceiving?" And with a trembling hand she set down the words she had planned. Her right hand held the stylus; the other held the blank wax. She began and hesitated. She wrote and condemned the tablets. She marked and erased; she changed, faulted, approved. By turns she put the tablets down and took them up, and took them up and put them down again. She did not know what she wanted; whatever she seemed about to do, she disliked. On her face boldness was mixed with shame. She had written "sister." She decided to erase "sister" and to cut these words into the corrected wax: "The good health she will never have unless you give it, a lover sends to you. She is ashamed, ah, ashamed to say her name.[23]

9.532 And if you ask what I want, I would wish my case could be pleaded without my name. I wish I were not known as Byblis until my hope of what I pray for was certain. You might, indeed, have read the signs of my wounded heart: my color, my thin-

22 In Homer's *Odyssey* the sons of Aeolus, keeper of the winds, are married to their sisters.

23 Roman letters opened with *salutem*, "greeting," a word that also means "health" or "well-being."

ness, my face, my eyes so often wet, sighs heaved for no evident reason, embraces again and again, and kisses that—if you happened to notice—could be felt to be no sister's kisses. And yet I myself did everything (the gods are my witnesses) to come to my senses at last, though I had a deep wound in my heart, though a fiery frenzy raged within. For a long time, unhappy as I am, I struggled to escape Cupid's violent weapons, and I have endured harder things than you would think a girl could bear. Defeated, I am forced to confess, and to beg your help with timid prayers. 9.547 You alone can save the one who loves you; you alone can destroy her: choose which you will do! It is no enemy who begs this. It is one who, though joined to you as closely as can be, longs to be joined still more closely and to be bound to you by a nearer tie. Let old men know the laws. Let them inquire what is allowed, what is sinful and what is right, and observe the fine balances of the law. Reckless love suits our years! We do not yet know what is allowed; we believe that everything is allowed, and we follow the examples of the great gods. No harsh father, no concern for our reputation, no fear will stand in our way (if indeed there is any cause to fear!). 9.558 We shall hide our sweet stolen pleasures under the name of brother and sister. I am free to talk with you in private, and we embrace and kiss openly—how much is still lacking? Pity one who confesses her love, and who would not confess it if the utmost passion did not force her. Do not deserve to be inscribed on my tomb as the cause of my death!" Her hand was furrowing the wax with such words, in vain, when the tablet, now full, gave out, and the last line clung to the margin. At once she sealed her crime with the imprint of her gem, which she moistened with her tears (moisture had failed her tongue). In her shame she called one of her servants and, coaxing the frightened man, said, "Take these, most faithful one, to my—" and after a long pause she added, "brother."

9.571 As she handed them over, the tablets slipped from her hands and fell. She was disturbed by the omen, but she sent them all the same. The servant found a suitable moment,

approached, and delivered the hidden words. Maeander's young grandson was stunned. In sudden anger he flung away the tablets he had received when he had read only part, and he barely kept his hands off the face of the trembling servant. "Get away while you can," he said, "you wicked agent of forbidden lust! If your death would not drag our shame down with it, you would have paid me the penalty with your life." The man fled in terror and reported Caunus' fierce words to his mistress. You turned pale, Byblis, when you heard you had been rejected, and your body, gripped by an icy chill, trembled. But when her mind returned, her frenzy returned with it, and her tongue, striking the air, barely uttered these words:

9.585 "And I deserved it! Why was I so reckless as to reveal this wound? Why did I so quickly entrust words that should have been concealed to hastily written tablets? I ought first to have sounded out his feelings with ambiguous hints. To make sure the breeze would follow my course, I should have tested what kind of wind it was with part of the sail, and run along a safe sea. Instead I have filled my canvas with winds I had not explored. So I am carried onto the rocks, capsized and overwhelmed by the whole ocean, and my sails have no way back. And what of the fact that clear omens forbade me to indulge my love? When I told him to carry the letter, the wax slipped from my hand and made my hopes fall with it. 9.598 Shouldn't I have changed either the day or my whole intention—or rather the day? The god himself was warning me and giving clear signs, if I had not been out of my mind. And yet I ought to have spoken myself, instead of entrusting myself to wax. I ought to have revealed my frenzy face to face (he would have seen my tears, he would have seen the face of one in love!). I could have said more than the tablets held. I could have thrown my arms around his unwilling neck. If I was rejected, I could have seemed on the point of death, and embraced his feet, and, lying at them, begged for my life. I would have done everything; and if each thing alone could not have bent his hard mind, all of them together could have. Perhaps the servant I sent is also

somewhat to blame. He did not approach skillfully, nor, I think, choose the right moment, nor look for an hour when his mind was free. 9.613 That is what harmed me. For he was not born of a tigress. He does not carry hard flint or solid iron or adamant in his breast, nor did he drink a lioness's milk. He will be conquered! I must try him again, and I will never weary of what I have begun while this breath remains in me. For the best course, if I could undo what I have done, would have been never to begin; the next best is to fight through to victory what I have begun. Besides, even if I gave up my desires now, he could never forget what I dared. If I stop, I will seem to have wanted it only lightly, or even to have been testing him and laying a trap for him. Or at least I will be thought to have been overcome not by the god who presses and burns my heart so fiercely, but by lust. 9.626 In short, I can no longer be innocent of every wrong. I have written and I have asked; my will is already stained. Even if I add nothing more, I cannot be called innocent. What remains adds much to my hopes, little to my guilt." So she said. Though she regretted having tried, she wanted to try again (so great is the conflict in a divided mind). She passed all bounds and, unhappy girl, exposed herself to rejection again and again. Soon, when there was no end to it, he fled his country and the crime, and founded new walls in a foreign land. Then indeed, they say, the grieving daughter of Miletus lost her mind entirely. Then indeed she tore the dress from her breast and in her frenzy beat her arms.

9.638 And now she was openly mad and admitted her forbidden hope of love, for she left her country and her hated home and followed the trail of her fugitive brother. The Ismarian Bacchants, roused by your thyrsus, son of Semele, celebrate your festival that returns every third year; just so the women of Bubassus saw Byblis howling across the wide fields. Leaving them behind, she wandered through Caria, through the armed Leleges, and through Lycia. Now she had left behind Cragus and Limyre and the waters of the Xanthus. She had left the ridge where the Chimaera had fire in its middle parts, the chest and

face of a lioness, and the tail of a serpent. The woods were thinning out when you, Byblis, worn out by your pursuit, collapsed. With your hair spread on the hard ground you lay there, pressing the fallen leaves with your face.[24] 9.652 Often, too, the Lelegeian nymphs tried to lift her in their tender arms. Often they advised her how to cure her love and offered comfort to a mind that would not listen. Byblis lay silent, clutching the green grass with her nails and soaking the turf with a stream of tears. They say the Naiads placed beneath her a vein of water that could never run dry: what greater gift did they have to give? Drops of resin ooze from the cut bark of a pitch pine; sticky bitumen seeps from the heavy earth; water that has frozen in the cold softens in the sun when the gently breathing west wind arrives. Just so, at once, Byblis, Phoebus' descendant, consumed by her own tears, was turned into a spring. Even now in those valleys it bears its mistress's name and flows beneath a dark holm oak.

IPHIS AND IANTHE

A girl raised as a boy is betrothed to another girl, and Isis turns her into a man.

9.666 Rumor of this strange new wonder might perhaps have filled the hundred cities of Crete, if Crete had not recently produced a marvel closer to home in the transformation of Iphis. For once the land of Phaestus, close to the kingdom of Cnossos, gave birth to a man named Ligdus. He was of no renown, a freeborn man of the common people. His wealth was no greater than his rank, but his life and his good faith were beyond reproach. When his wife was pregnant and her time was near, he warned her with these words: "There are two things I pray for: that you are delivered with the least pain, and that you bear a male. The other lot is more burdensome, and fortune has denied us the means. So—and I dread to say it—if by chance your labor brings

24 Ismarus is a mountain in Thrace; the thyrsus is the ivy-tipped wand carried by Bacchus and his followers.

forth a female (I order this unwillingly: Devotion, forgive me!), let her be killed."

9.680 He had spoken, and the faces of both were bathed in streaming tears, his who gave the order and hers who received it. Still Telethusa kept begging her husband, in vain, not to confine their hopes so narrowly. Ligdus' mind was made up. And now she could barely carry her womb, heavy with its ripened weight. Then, in the middle of the night, in the form of a dream, Inachus' daughter stood—or seemed to stand—before her bed, attended by her procession of sacred followers. On her brow were the horns of the moon, with ears of grain golden with gleaming gold, and a queen's splendor. With her were barking Anubis, holy Bubastis, Apis of mottled colors, and the god who holds back his voice and with a finger urges silence. There were sistrums, and Osiris, never sought enough, and the foreign serpent full of sleep-bringing venom.[25] 9.695 Then, as Telethusa seemed to be roused from sleep and to see everything plainly, the goddess spoke to her: "Telethusa, one of my own, put aside your heavy cares and evade your husband's orders. When Lucina has delivered you, do not hesitate to raise the child, whatever it may be. I am a goddess who brings help; when I am entreated, I give aid. You will not complain that you worshipped an ungrateful divinity." She gave her warning and withdrew from the bedroom. Joyfully the Cretan woman rose from her bed and, lifting pure hands to the stars as a suppliant, prayed that her vision would come true. The pains grew stronger, and the burden itself pushed out into the air, and a girl was born without her father's knowledge. The mother had her reared, pretending she was a boy. The deception was believed, and no one shared the secret but the nurse.[26]

9.708 The father paid his vows and gave the child its grandfather's name: the grandfather had been called Iphis. The mother was glad of the name, because it was shared by both

25 Inachus' daughter is Io, whom Ovid identifies with the Egyptian goddess Isis; the sistrum was her sacred rattle.
26 Lucina is the goddess of childbirth.

sexes and she would deceive no one by it. From then on, the lies begun with a devoted deceit stayed hidden. The clothes were a boy's; and the face, whether you assigned it to a girl or a boy, would have been beautiful either way. Meanwhile the thirteenth year had come, when your father, Iphis, betrothed you to golden-haired Ianthe. She was the girl most praised among the women of Phaestus for the dowry of her beauty, the daughter of Telestes of Dicte. They were equal in age, equal in beauty, and they had received their first lessons, the elements suited to their age, from the same teachers.

9.720 From this, love touched the innocent hearts of both and dealt the same wound to each. But their confidence was not equal. Ianthe looked forward to marriage and the agreed time of the wedding torch, and believed that the one she took for a man would be her man. Iphis loved a girl she despaired of ever possessing, and this very thing fed her flames: a girl burned for a girl. Scarcely holding back her tears, she said, "What end awaits me? I am gripped by a passion no one has known, a monstrous passion for a new kind of love. If the gods wanted to spare me, they should at least have given me a natural ill, one in keeping with custom. Love for a cow does not burn a cow, nor love for mares the mares. The ram inflames the ewes, and his doe follows the stag. 9.733 So too the birds mate, and among all the animals there is not one female seized with desire for a female. I wish I were not one at all! Yet, so that Crete may bring forth every kind of monster, the daughter of the Sun loved a bull—a female, after all, loving a male. My love, if I admit the truth, is more frenzied than hers! For she still pursued a hope of love. She still, by trickery and in the likeness of a cow, submitted to the bull, and there was a male lover there to be deceived! Though all the ingenuity in the world should flow together here, though Daedalus himself should fly back on his waxen wings, what could he do? Could he make me a boy instead of a girl by his clever arts? Could he change you, Ianthe? Why not steady your mind, Iphis, pull yourself together, and shake off these foolish

fires that have no way out?[27] 9.747 Look at what you were born, unless you are deceiving yourself as well. Seek what is lawful, and love what a woman ought to love! It is hope that captures love, hope that feeds it—and the facts take that hope away from you. No guard keeps you from her dear embrace, no watchful husband's care, no harsh father; she does not refuse herself when you ask. And yet she cannot be yours. Even if everything should happen, even if gods and men should labor for it, you cannot be happy. Even now, no part of my prayers has gone unanswered. The gods have been kind to me and have given me all they could. What I want, my father wants, she herself wants, and so does my future father-in-law. 9.758 But Nature does not want it, and she is more powerful than all of them; she alone is against me. See, the longed-for time has come, the wedding day is here, and now Ianthe will be mine—and yet she will not be granted to me: we shall go thirsty in the midst of the waters. Why, Juno, patron of brides, why, Hymen, do you come to these rites, where there is no one to lead the bride, where both of us are brides?" With this she checked her voice. The other girl burned no less fiercely, and prayed that you would come quickly, Hymen. What Ianthe longed for, Telethusa feared. Now she put off the date, now she drew out the delay with a pretended illness, often pleading omens and visions. But by now she had used up every pretext; the postponed day of the wedding torch was upon them, and only one day remained. Then she took the ribbons from her daughter's head and her own, and with her hair loose, clasping the altar,

9.773 "Isis," she said, "who dwell in Paraetonium and the fields of Mareotis and Pharos, and in the Nile divided into seven horns: bring help, I pray, and heal our fear! You, goddess, you and these emblems of yours I once saw, and I recognized all of it, the sound and the attendant bronze of the sistrums. I took note of your commands with a mindful heart. That this girl sees the light of day, that I am not punished—look, this is your coun-

27 Pasiphae, daughter of the Sun and wife of Minos, hid inside a wooden cow built by Daedalus in order to mate with a bull, and bore the Minotaur.

sel and your gift. Pity the two of us and help us with your aid!" Tears followed her words. The goddess seemed to move her altar (and she had moved it). The temple doors shook, the horns gleamed like the moon, and the resonant sistrum rattled.[28]

9.785 Not free from anxiety, but glad at the favorable omen, the mother left the temple. Iphis walked beside her as she went, with a longer stride than usual. The fair complexion did not remain, the strength grew, and the features themselves were sharper. The uncombed hair was shorter, and there was more vigor than Iphis had as a woman. For you who were a woman a moment ago are a boy! Bring gifts to the temples, and rejoice with a faith that knows no fear! They brought gifts to the temples and added an inscription; the inscription bore a short verse: IPHIS PAID AS A BOY THE GIFTS VOWED AS A WOMAN. The next day's light had opened up the wide world with its rays, when Venus and Juno and Hymen gathered at the shared wedding fires, and the boy Iphis won his Ianthe.

28 Paraetonium, Mareotis and Pharos are places on the Egyptian coast near Alexandria; the Nile reaches the sea through seven mouths.

Book 10

The songs of Orpheus
Orpheus and Eurydice; Hyacinthus; Pygmalion; Myrrha;
Venus and Adonis; Atalanta.

ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE

Orpheus goes down to the underworld for his wife, but loses her when he looks back.

10.1 From there Hymen, veiled in his saffron cloak, passed through the boundless air and made for the shores of the Ciconians, and he was summoned by the voice of Orpheus, in vain. He came, it is true, but he brought neither the ritual words, nor happy faces, nor a lucky omen. Even the torch he held kept sputtering with tear-stinging smoke, and however it was waved, it found no flame. The outcome was worse than the omen. While the new bride was wandering through the grass with a band of Naiads around her, a serpent's fang struck her ankle, and she fell dead.[1]

10.11 When the bard of Rhodope had mourned her enough in the upper air, he resolved to try the shades as well. He dared to go down to the Styx through the Taenarian gate. Through the weightless throngs and the ghosts of those who had received burial, he approached Persephone and the lord of the shades, who rules that unlovely kingdom. Striking the strings to accompany his song, he spoke: "O divine powers of the world set beneath the earth, into which all of us fall back, whatever mor-

1 Hymen is the god of weddings. The Ciconians were a people of Thrace, home of the legendary singer Orpheus.

tal thing we are born! If it is allowed, and if you permit me to set aside the evasions of a lying tongue and speak the truth: I have not come down here to see dark Tartarus, nor to chain the three throats of the Medusan monster, shaggy with snakes. The reason for my journey is my wife. A viper she trod on poured its venom into her and robbed her of her growing years.[2] 10.25 I wanted to be able to bear it, and I will not deny that I tried: Love has won. This god is well known in the world above; whether he is here too, I am not sure. Yet I guess that he is here as well, and if the story of that abduction long ago is not a lie, Love joined you too. By these places full of fear, by this huge Chaos and the silence of this vast kingdom, I beg you: reweave Eurydice's hurried fate. All of us are owed to you, and after a short delay, sooner or later, we hasten to one home. Here we are all heading. This is our final home, and yours is the longest reign over the human race. She too, when she has ripened and lived out her rightful span of years, will come under your rule. I ask for her not as a gift but as a loan. But if the fates refuse this favor for my wife, I am determined not to return: rejoice in the death of two."[3]

10.40 As he said these things and moved the strings in time with his words, the bloodless spirits wept. Tantalus did not reach for the retreating water, Ixion's wheel stood still in wonder, the birds did not tear at the liver, the Belides rested from their urns, and you, Sisyphus, sat on your rock. Then for the first time, the story goes, the cheeks of the Eumenides, conquered by the song, were wet with tears. Neither the royal consort nor he who rules the depths could bear to refuse the suppliant, and they called Eurydice. She was among the newly arrived shades, and she came forward slowly, limping from her wound. Orpheus of Rhodope received her, and with her the condition that he must not turn his eyes back until he had left the valleys of Avernus. Otherwise the gift would be void. They climbed the uphill path

2 The Taenarian gate was a cave at Cape Taenarum in southern Greece, thought to lead to the underworld. The "Medusan monster" is Cerberus, the three-headed watchdog of the dead, snaky like Medusa.

3 The "abduction long ago" is Pluto's seizure of Proserpina, told in Book 5.

through the mute silence, steep and dark and thick with murky fog.[4]

10.55 They were not far from the edge of the upper earth when the lover turned his eyes back, afraid she might falter and eager to see her. At once she slipped back. Stretching out her arms, struggling to be held and to hold, the unhappy woman clutched nothing but the yielding air. Dying now a second time, she made no complaint against her husband, for what could she complain of, except that she was loved? She spoke a last "farewell," which he could barely catch, and fell back again to the same place. Orpheus was stunned by his wife's double death. He was like the man who in terror saw the dog's three necks, the middle one in chains, and whose fear did not leave him until his former nature did, as stone spread over his body. Or he was like Olenos, who drew the guilt onto himself and wanted to be thought the guilty one, and like you, unhappy Lethaea, too confident in your beauty: hearts once most closely joined, now stones on well-watered Ida.[5]

10.72 He begged to cross again and longed to, but the ferryman had driven him off. Still, for seven days he sat on the bank, unkempt, without the gift of Ceres. Care, grief of heart and tears were his food. Complaining that the gods of Erebus were cruel, he withdrew to high Rhodope and to Haemus, lashed by the north winds. Three times Titan had finished the year that closes with the watery Fishes, and Orpheus had shunned all love of women. Perhaps it had gone badly for him, or perhaps he had pledged his faith. Yet many women burned with desire to join themselves to the bard, and many grieved at being rejected. He was also the one who taught the peoples of Thrace to transfer their love to tender boys, and to pluck the brief springtime of life and its first flowers before manhood.

4 Tantalus, Ixion, Sisyphus, Tityos (whose liver birds devour) and the Belides (the Danaids, who must carry water in leaking jars) were sinners punished in the underworld. The Eumenides are the Furies.

5 The first man was turned to stone by fear when Hercules dragged Cerberus up from the underworld. Olenos took the blame for his wife Lethaea's boast about her beauty, and both became stones on Mount Ida.

THE TREES GATHER TO ORPHEUS

Orpheus sings, and trees of every kind gather to shade him.

10.86 There was a hill, and on the hill a stretch of perfectly level ground, made green with grassy turf. The place had no shade. But after the god-born bard sat down there and moved the sounding strings, shade came to the place. The Chaonian tree was there, and the grove of the Heliades, and the oak with its lofty foliage. There were the soft lindens, the beech and the unwed laurel, the brittle hazels and the ash that is good for spears. There were the knotless fir, the holm oak bowed with acorns, the festive plane tree and the maple of varied colors. With them came the willows that live by rivers and the water-loving lotus, the evergreen box and the slender tamarisks, the two-toned myrtle and the laurustinus with its dark-blue berries. You came too, ivies with your twining feet, and with you the leafy vines and the elms clothed in vines. There were the mountain ashes and the pitch pines, the arbutus laden with red fruit, and the pliant palms, the victor's prize. And there was the pine, with its foliage gathered up and bristling at the top, dear to the mother of the gods, since Cybele's Attis shed his human form for this tree and hardened in its trunk.[6]

CYPARISSUS

A boy kills his beloved pet stag by accident and is turned into the mourning cypress.

10.106 Among this crowd was the cypress, shaped like the turning post of a racecourse. It is a tree now, but it was once a boy, loved by the god who tunes the lyre with strings, and with strings the bow. For there was a huge stag, sacred to the nymphs who live in the fields of Carthaea, and with his wide-spreading antlers he

6 The "Chaonian tree" is the oak, sacred to Jupiter at Dodona, and the Heliades, Phaethon's sisters, had become poplars (Book 2). Attis, beloved of Cybele, the mother of the gods, was turned into a pine.

gave deep shade to his own head. His antlers gleamed with gold, and jeweled necklaces hung from his smooth neck down onto his shoulders. A silver boss, tied on with small thongs and as old as he was, swung above his forehead, and from both ears pearls gleamed around his hollow temples. He was free of fear. He had laid aside his natural timidity, and he used to visit people's houses and offer his neck to be stroked by any hand, however unfamiliar. But he was dearest of all to you, Cyparissus, most beautiful of the people of Ceos. You used to lead the stag to fresh pastures, you led him to the water of a clear spring. Sometimes you wove flowers of many kinds through his antlers. Sometimes you rode on his back like a horseman and, full of joy, guided his soft mouth this way and that with purple halters.[7]

10.126 It was the heat of midday, and the curving claws of the shore-dwelling Crab were blazing with the sun's fire. The weary stag had laid his body down on the grassy earth and was drawing in the coolness from the shade of a tree. The boy Cyparissus, without meaning to, pierced him with a sharp javelin, and when he saw him dying of the cruel wound, he resolved to die. What comforts Phoebus offered him! He urged him to grieve lightly, in proportion to the cause. Still the boy groaned, and asked the gods above for this as his last gift: that he might mourn for all time. And now, as his blood drained away in endless weeping, his limbs began to turn green. The hair that had just hung over his snowy brow became a bristling crest, and, stiffening, it looked up with slender tip at the starry sky. The god groaned and said sadly: "You will be mourned by me, you will mourn others, and you will stand beside those who grieve."[8]

7 Carthaea was a town on the Aegean island of Ceos.

8 The Crab is the constellation Cancer, which the sun enters at midsummer. The cypress was planted by tombs and used at Roman funerals.

THE SONG OF ORPHEUS: GANYMEDE

Orpheus begins his song with Jupiter, who as an eagle carries off the Trojan boy Ganymede.

10.143 Such was the grove the bard had drawn to him, and he sat in the middle of a gathering of wild beasts and a crowd of birds. When he had tested the strings enough with his thumb and felt that the different notes, though they sounded differently, made harmony, he raised his voice in this song: "From Jupiter, Muse, my mother, begin my songs, for all things yield to Jupiter's rule! I have often sung of Jupiter's power before. I sang of the Giants with a weightier plectrum, and of the victorious thunderbolts scattered over the Phlegraean fields. Now I need a lighter lyre. Let us sing of boys loved by the gods, and of girls who were struck by forbidden fires and deserved punishment for their lust. The king of the gods once burned with love for Phrygian Ganymede, and something was found that Jupiter would rather be than what he was. Yet he did not deign to be turned into any bird but the one that could carry his thunderbolts. Without delay he beat the air on false wings and snatched away the descendant of Ilus. Even now the boy mixes the cups and, against Juno's will, serves Jupiter his nectar.[9]

HYACINTHUS

Apollo accidentally kills his beloved Hyacinthus with a discus, and the boy becomes a flower.

10.162 You too, son of Amyclas, Phoebus would have set in the sky, if your grim fate had given him time to set you there. Still, as far as is allowed, you are eternal. As often as spring drives winter away and the Ram follows the watery Fish, so often you rise and bloom on the green turf. You, above all others, my father loved.

9 Orpheus' mother was the Muse Calliope, and at Phlegra the gods defeated the Giants. Ganymede, a Trojan prince descended from Ilus, was carried off by Jupiter in the form of an eagle.

Delphi, set at the center of the world, was left without its guardian while the god haunted the Eurotas and unwalled Sparta. Neither his lyre nor his arrows were held in honor. Forgetful of himself, he did not refuse to carry the nets, to hold the hounds, or to go as a companion over the ridges of the rough mountain, and by long familiarity he fed his flames.[10]

10.174 And now Titan was almost midway between the night to come and the night gone by, equally distant from both. They stripped their bodies of clothing, gleamed with the juice of rich olive oil, and began a contest with the broad discus. Phoebus first balanced it and sent it into the airy breezes, and its weight split the clouds in its path. After a long time the weight fell back to the solid earth, displaying skill joined with strength. At once, without a thought, driven by eagerness for the game, the Taenarian boy rushed to pick up the discus. But the hard earth bounced it back and drove it up into your face, Hyacinthus. The god turned as pale as the boy himself. He caught the collapsing limbs, and now he warmed you, now he staunched the grim wound, now he held back your fleeing life with healing herbs. His arts were no use: the wound was past healing. 10.190 It was as when someone breaks violets in a garden, or stiff poppies, or lilies bristling with yellow tongues: they droop at once, wilted, letting their withered heads hang. They cannot hold themselves up, and their tips gaze at the earth. So the dying face sank, and the neck, its strength gone, became a burden to itself and fell back on his shoulder. 'You are slipping away, son of Oebalus, cheated of your early youth,' said Phoebus, 'and I see your wound, my crime. You are my grief and my guilt. My right hand must be charged with your death! I am the cause of your death. Yet what is my fault? Unless playing can be called a fault, unless loving too can be called a fault. If only I could give up my life, as you deserve, along with you! But since we are bound by the law of fate, you will always be with me, and you will cling to my

10 Orpheus here calls Apollo his father. Amyclas, Hyacinthus' father, was king of Amyclae near Sparta, and Delphi, Apollo's chief shrine, was thought to lie at the center of the world.

remembering lips. 10.205 You will be the theme of the lyre struck by my hand, you the theme of my songs. And as a new flower you will imitate my laments in written letters. A time will come, too, when the bravest of heroes will join himself to this flower and be read on the same petal.' While Apollo's truthful lips were uttering these words, look: the blood that had poured onto the ground and stained the grass ceased to be blood. A flower more brilliant than Tyrian purple sprang up and took the shape of a lily, except that this one was purple and lilies are silver. That was not enough for Phoebus, for he was the author of the honor. He himself inscribed his laments on the petals, and the flower bears the inscription AI AI [Alas! Alas!], the mournful letters traced there. Nor is Sparta ashamed to have borne Hyacinthus, and his honor lasts to this day. Every year the Hyacinthia return, to be celebrated in the ancestral way with a procession leading the rites.[11]

THE CERASTAE AND THE PROPOETIDES

Venus turns the murderous Cerastae into bulls and the Propoetides into stone.

10.220 But if you should happen to ask Amathus, rich in metals, whether it would like to have borne the Propoetides, it would refuse. It would refuse just as firmly to own those whose brows were once rough with a pair of horns, from which they took the name Cerastae. Before their doors stood an altar of Jupiter, god of guests. If any stranger who did not know their crime had seen it stained with blood, he would have thought that suckling calves and Amathusian sheep had been sacrificed there. It was a guest who had been slaughtered. Offended by these unspeakable rites, kindly Venus herself was preparing to abandon her cities and the fields of Ophiusa. 'But what wrong have these places I love, what wrong have my cities done?' she said. 'What

11 The "bravest of heroes" is Ajax, whose blood would also produce a flower marked AI, the first letters of his Greek name, Aias (Book 13). AI is also the Greek cry of grief.

crime is in them?[12] 10.232 Let this impious people pay the penalty with exile instead, or with death, or with something halfway between death and exile. And what can that be, if not the punishment of a changed shape?' While she was unsure what to change them into, she turned her eyes to their horns and was reminded that these could be left to them. So she transformed their huge bodies into fierce bullocks. Yet the shameless Propoetides dared to deny that Venus was a goddess. For this, through the goddess's anger, they are said to have been the first to prostitute their bodies and their beauty. As their shame gave way and the blood in their faces hardened, they were turned, with little change, into hard flint.

PYGMALION

A sculptor falls in love with his ivory statue, and Venus brings her to life.

10.243 Pygmalion had seen these women living their lives in vice. Offended by the faults that nature has given so abundantly to the female mind, he lived single, without a wife, and for a long time had no partner to share his bed. Meanwhile, with wonderful skill and happy success, he carved snow-white ivory and gave it a beauty that no woman can be born with. And he fell in love with his own work. It had the face of a real girl, whom you would believe alive and, if modesty did not hold her back, wanting to move: so completely was art hidden by its own art. Pygmalion marveled, and drank into his heart the fires of love for the counterfeit body. Often he brought his hands to the work, testing whether it was a body or ivory, and still he would not admit that it was ivory. 10.256 He gave her kisses and thought they were returned. He spoke to her and held her. He believed his fingers sank into the limbs they touched, and he feared that bruises might appear where he pressed. Now he used flattering words, now he brought her gifts that girls love: shells and

12 Amathus was a town on Cyprus, Venus' island, also called Ophiusa. The name Cerastae comes from the Greek for "horn."

smooth pebbles, little birds and flowers of a thousand colors, lilies and painted balls, and the tears of the Heliades fallen from their tree. He dressed her limbs in clothes too, put rings on her fingers and long necklaces on her neck. Light pearls hung from her ears, ribbons from her breast. Everything suited her, but naked she seemed no less beautiful. He laid her on coverlets dyed with Sidonian shell and called her the partner of his bed. He rested her neck on soft feathers, as if she could feel them.[13]

10.270 The feast day of Venus had come, the most crowded festival in all Cyprus. Heifers, their curving horns covered with gold, had fallen, struck on their snowy necks, and incense was smoking. Having made his offering, Pygmalion stood at the altar and said timidly, 'If you gods can give all things, I pray that my wife may be'—he did not dare to say 'the ivory girl'—'one like my ivory girl.' Golden Venus, who was present at her own festival, understood what his prayer meant. As an omen of her friendly favor, the flame blazed up three times and sent its tip into the air. When he returned home, he went to the image of his girl, and leaning over the couch he kissed her. She seemed to be warm.

10.282 He brought his lips to hers again and touched her breast with his hands too. At his touch the ivory softened, lost its hardness, and yielded and gave way under his fingers. It was as Hymettian wax softens in the sun and, worked by the thumb, is shaped into many forms and is made useful by use itself. While he stood amazed, rejoicing but uncertain and afraid he was deceived, the lover touched the object of his prayers with his hand again and again. It was a body: the veins throbbed under his testing thumb. Then indeed the hero of Paphos poured out the fullest words of thanks to Venus. At last he pressed lips that were not false with his own. The girl felt the kisses he gave and blushed, and, raising her timid eyes to the light, she saw her lover and the sky together. The goddess was present at the marriage she had made. When the moon's horns had nine times

13 The "tears of the Heliades" are amber: Phaethon's sisters, turned into poplars, wept amber (Book 2). Sidonian shell is the murex, source of purple dye.

come together into a full circle, the girl bore Paphos, from whom the island takes its name.[14]

MYRRHA

Myrrha desires her father, Cinyras, sleeps with him in darkness, and becomes the myrrh tree.

10.298 Of her was born Cinyras, who, had he been childless, could have been counted among the happy. I will sing of dreadful things. Daughters, keep far away from here; keep far away, fathers! Or, if my songs charm your minds, refuse me belief in this part. Do not believe it happened, or, if you do believe it, believe also in its punishment. Yet if nature allows such a deed to be seen, I congratulate this land on lying far from those regions that bore so great a crime. Let the land of Panchaia be rich in amomum. Let it bear its cinnamon and costus, the incense that oozes from wood, and other flowers, so long as it bears myrrh too: the new tree was not worth the price.[15]

10.311 Cupid himself denies that his arrows harmed you, Myrrha, and clears his torches of that crime. It was one of the three sisters who breathed on you with a Stygian brand and swollen vipers. It is a crime to hate a parent, but this love is a greater crime than hatred. Chosen nobles from everywhere desire you, and young men from the whole East have come to compete for your bed. From them all, Myrrha, choose one man, so long as one man is not among them all. She did feel it, and fought against her foul love, and said to herself, 'Where is my mind carrying me? What am I plotting?'[16] 10.321 'Gods, I pray you, and Devotion, and the sacred rights of parents: prevent this sacrilege and resist my crime—if it really is a crime. But Devotion, they say, does not condemn this love, and the other animals mate without any wrong. It is not thought shameful for a heifer

14 Mount Hymettus near Athens was famous for its honey. Paphos, a city on Cyprus, was a major center of Venus' cult.
15 Panchaia was a fabulous spice-bearing land in Arabia. "This land" is Thrace, where Orpheus is singing.
16 The three sisters are the Furies, avengers of crimes against kin.

to carry her father on her back. A horse's own daughter becomes his mate, the goat mounts the flocks he fathered, and the bird conceives by the very one from whose seed she was conceived. Happy are those who are allowed such things! Human scruple has made spiteful laws, and what nature permits, jealous rules forbid. Yet there are said to be peoples among whom mother is joined with son and daughter with father, so that devotion grows with love doubled. 10.334 Poor me, that I did not happen to be born there! The accident of place is what wounds me.—Why do I keep turning these things over? Forbidden hopes, be gone! He deserves to be loved, but as a father.—So if I were not the daughter of great Cinyras, I could sleep with Cinyras. As it is, because he is already mine, he is not mine, and our very closeness is my ruin: as a stranger I would have more power. I want to go far from here and leave the borders of my country, if only I may escape this crime. But an evil passion holds me back in my love, so that I may be near Cinyras and gaze at him, touch him, talk to him and kiss him, if nothing more is granted. 10.345 But can you look for anything more, you impious girl? Do you see how many rights and names you are confounding? Will you be your mother's rival and your father's mistress? Will you be called your son's sister and your brother's mother? Will you not fear the sisters whose hair is black snakes, whom guilty hearts see thrusting cruel torches at their eyes and faces? But you, while you have not yet suffered the crime in your body, do not conceive it in your mind. Do not defile the covenant of mighty nature with a forbidden union. Suppose he were willing: the thing itself forbids it. He is dutiful and mindful of what is right—and oh, how I wish a like frenzy were in him!'

10.356 She had finished speaking. Cinyras, though, was unsure what to do, faced with such a wealth of worthy suitors. He named them and asked her which of them she wanted for a husband. At first she was silent. Then, her eyes fixed on her father's face, she burned with turmoil and her eyes filled with warm tears. Cinyras, believing this was a girl's shyness, told her not to cry, dried her cheeks and kissed her. Myrrha was too delighted

by the kisses he gave. When she was asked what sort of husband she wanted, she said, 'Someone like you.' But he praised the words without understanding them and said, 'Always be as devoted as this.' At the word 'devoted,' the girl, conscious of her crime, lowered her eyes.

10.368 It was the middle of the night, and sleep had loosened cares and bodies. But Cinyras' daughter lay wide awake, consumed by an untamable fire, going over her frenzied wishes again and again. Now she despaired, now she wanted to try; she was ashamed and she desired, and she could not find what to do. A huge tree trunk wounded by the ax, when only the final stroke remains, is uncertain which way it will fall and is feared on every side. In the same way her mind, weakened by wounds from this side and that, swayed lightly back and forth and took its impulse from either direction. She could find no limit or rest for her love except death. Death appealed to her. She got up and resolved to bind her throat in a noose. Fastening her girdle to the top of the doorpost, she said, 'Farewell, dear Cinyras, and understand the cause of my death!' and began fitting the cord to her pale neck.

10.382 They say the murmur of her words reached the faithful ears of her nurse, who was keeping watch at her foster child's threshold. The old woman got up and unbarred the door. Seeing the instruments of the death prepared, in the same instant she cried out, beat herself, tore the front of her dress, and snatched the cord from the girl's neck and ripped it to pieces. Only then did she have time to weep, to embrace her, and to ask the reason for the noose. The girl stayed silent, mute, staring motionless at the ground, grieving that her attempt at a death too slow had been discovered. The old woman pressed her. Baring her white hair and her empty breasts, she begged her by her cradle and her first nourishment to confide whatever was causing her grief. The girl turned away from her pleading and groaned. The nurse was determined to find out, and she pledged more than her silence: 'Tell me,' she said, 'and let me help you; my old age is not sluggish. 10.397 If it is madness, I know a woman who can heal

it with spells and herbs. If someone has harmed you, you will be purified with a magic rite. If it is the anger of the gods, anger can be appeased by sacrifice. What else should I suppose? Surely your fortune and your house are safe and prospering, and your mother and father are alive.' At the word 'father' Myrrha drew a sigh from deep in her breast. Even then the nurse did not conceive of any crime in her mind, yet she sensed there was some love. Holding to her purpose, she begged the girl to reveal it to her, whatever it was. She lifted the weeping girl onto her aged lap, and so, embracing her body in her feeble arms,

10.408 'I can tell,' she said, 'you are in love! But here too my devotion—put away your fear—will serve you, and your father will never know of this.' The girl leapt from her lap in a frenzy and, pressing her face into the bed, said, 'Go away, I beg you, and spare my wretched shame!' When the nurse kept on, she said, 'Go away, or stop asking what is wrong with me: what you are working so hard to learn is a crime.' The old woman shuddered. She stretched out her hands, trembling with age and fear, and fell at her foster child's feet as a suppliant. Now she coaxed her, now she frightened her if she would not share the secret. She threatened to reveal the noose and the attempted death, and she pledged her help to the love once it was confided.

10.419 The girl raised her head and filled the nurse's breast with welling tears. Again and again she tried to confess, again and again she checked her voice. Covering her blushing face with her clothes, she said, 'Oh, how happy my mother is in her husband!' That was all, and she groaned. A chill trembling pierced the nurse's limbs and bones, for she understood, and the white hair stood up stiff and bristling all over her head. She said many things to drive out that dreadful love, if she could. But the girl knew the warnings were not false, and yet was determined to die if she could not have her love. 'Live,' said the nurse, 'you shall have your—' and, not daring to say 'father,' she fell silent, and sealed her promise with an oath by the gods.

10.431 The married women were celebrating the annual festival of devoted Ceres. At this festival, their bodies veiled in snow-

white robes, they offer garlands of wheat ears as the first fruits of their crops, and for nine nights they count love and a man's touch among things forbidden. In that crowd was the king's wife, Cenchreis, attending the secret rites. So while the bed was empty of its lawful wife, the nurse, zealous in an evil cause, found Cinyras heavy with wine. Under a false name she told him of a real love and praised the girl's looks. When he asked the girl's age, she said, 'The same as Myrrha's.' After she was told to bring her, she went home and said, 'Rejoice, my child: we have won!' The unhappy girl did not feel joy with her whole heart, and her foreboding heart grieved; yet she rejoiced too, so great was the conflict in her mind.[17]

10.446 It was the hour when all things are silent, and Bootes, among the stars of the Bear, had turned his Wagon on its slanting pole. She came to her crime. The golden moon fled the sky, black clouds covered the hiding stars, and the night was without its fires. You, Icarus, were the first to hide your face, and you, Erigone, made sacred by your devoted love for your father. Three times she was called back by the omen of a stumbling foot; three times the funereal owl gave warning with its deadly song. Still she went on, and the darkness and the black night lessened her shame. With her left hand she held the nurse's hand; with the other she groped her way along the unseen path. Now she reached the threshold of the bedroom, now the doors were opened, now she was led inside. But her knees trembled as her legs gave way beneath her, color and blood fled from her, and her courage left her as she went.[18] 10.460 The nearer she came to her crime, the more she shuddered. She regretted her daring and wished she could turn back unrecognized. As she hesitated, the old woman led her by the hand, brought her to the high bed, and, handing her over, said, 'Take her, Cinyras; she is yours,' and joined their accursed bodies. The father received his own flesh

17 A women's festival of Ceres that required nine nights of chastity, much like the Greek Thesmophoria.

18 Ovid's "Icarus" here is Icarius, an Athenian killed by drunken shepherds; his daughter Erigone hanged herself in grief, and both were set among the stars.

in that obscene bed, eased her girlish fears, and encouraged her as she trembled. Perhaps, because of her age as well, he called her 'daughter,' and she called him 'father,' so that the crime should not lack its names. She left her father's bedroom full, carrying his impious seed in her dreadful womb, bearing the crime she had conceived.

10.471 The next night doubled the crime, and that was not the end. At last Cinyras, eager to know his lover after so many nights together, brought in a lamp and saw both the crime and his daughter. His words choked back by grief, he snatched his gleaming sword from the scabbard hanging nearby. Myrrha fled, and by the gift of darkness and blind night she was rescued from death. Wandering through wide fields, she left behind the palm-bearing Arabs and the lands of Panchaea. She roamed while the horns of the returning moon came round nine times, until at last, exhausted, she rested in the land of Saba. She could barely carry the burden of her womb. Then, not knowing what to wish for, caught between fear of death and weariness of life, she framed this prayer: 'O gods, if any of you are open to those who confess, I have deserved it, and I do not refuse a harsh punishment. But so that I do not defile the living by surviving, or the dead by dying, drive me out of both realms: change me, and deny me both life and death.'[19]

10.488 Some divine power is open to those who confess: at any rate, her last prayer found its gods. For as she spoke, earth came up over her legs, and a root pushed out slantwise through her splitting toenails, the support of a tall trunk. Her bones turned to hard wood, and while the marrow stayed in the middle, her blood turned to sap, her arms to large branches, her fingers to small ones, and her skin hardened into bark. Now the growing tree had bound tight her heavy womb, had buried her breast, and was getting ready to cover her neck. She could not bear the delay: sinking down to meet the advancing wood, she plunged her face into the bark. Though she lost her old feelings along

19 Panchaea, a fabled land of incense, and Saba (Sheba) in southern Arabia were both famous for their spices.

with her body, she weeps still, and warm drops ooze from the tree. Even her tears have their honor: the myrrh that drips from the trunk keeps its mistress's name, and no age will ever leave it unspoken.

THE BIRTH OF ADONIS

Adonis, child of Myrrha's crime, is born from the myrrh tree.

10.503 But the child, wickedly conceived, had grown under the wood and was seeking a way to leave his mother and come out. The pregnant belly swelled in the middle of the tree. The burden strained the mother, but her pains had no words of their own, and she could not call on Lucina with the voice of a woman in labor. Yet the tree looked like one straining to give birth; bending, it gave frequent groans and was wet with falling tears. Kindly Lucina stood by the suffering branches, laid her hands on them, and spoke the words of childbirth. The tree split open, and through the cracked bark it gave up its living burden, and the boy wailed. The Naiads laid him on soft grass and anointed him with his mother's tears. Even Envy would have praised his looks, for he was just like the bodies of the naked Loves painted on panels. But so that dress should make no difference, either give him a light quiver or take theirs away.[20]

VENUS AND ADONIS

Venus falls in love with Adonis and warns him to avoid dangerous beasts.

10.519 Time glides by unnoticed and deceives us as it flies, and nothing is swifter than the years. That boy, son of his sister and his grandfather, who had lately been shut inside a tree, had lately been born, was just now a most beautiful baby; now he was a youth, now a man, now more beautiful than himself. Now he even pleased Venus, and avenged his mother's passion. For while the boy with the quiver was kissing his mother, he

20 Lucina was the goddess of childbirth, a title of Juno (and sometimes Diana).

unknowingly grazed her breast with a projecting arrow. The wounded goddess pushed her son away with her hand, but the wound had gone deeper than it seemed, and at first it deceived even her. Captivated by the young man's beauty, she no longer cared for the shores of Cythera. She did not revisit Paphos, ringed by the deep sea, or Cnidus rich in fish, or Amathus heavy with ore. She stayed away even from heaven: Adonis was preferred to heaven.[21]

10.533 She held fast to him; she was his companion. Though she had always been used to taking her ease in the shade and enhancing her beauty by tending it, she roamed over ridges, through woods, over rocks overgrown with brush, her dress belted up to the knee in the manner of Diana, and she urged on the hounds. She hunted animals that are safe prey—hares racing headlong, or the stag crowned high with antlers, or deer. From strong boars she kept away, and she avoided ravening wolves, bears armed with claws, and lions glutted with the slaughter of cattle. You too, Adonis, she warned to fear them, if warning could do any good. 'Be brave,' she said, 'against creatures that flee; against the bold, boldness is not safe. 10.545 Do not be reckless, young man, at my risk, and do not provoke the beasts to whom nature has given weapons, or your glory may cost me dear. Youth and beauty and the things that moved Venus do not move lions or bristling boars, or the eyes and hearts of wild beasts. Fierce boars have lightning in their curving tusks; tawny lions have fury in their charge and boundless anger, and they are a breed I hate.' When he asked the reason, she said, 'I will tell you, and you will marvel at the monstrous outcome of an old offense. But this unaccustomed toil has tired me out, and look, a poplar invites us with its welcome shade, and the turf offers a couch. I would like to rest here with you'—and she rested—'on the ground.' She pressed down both the grass and him, and lying back with her head in the young man's lap, she spoke as follows, scattering kisses among her words:

21 Cythera, Paphos, Cnidus and Amathus were famous centers of the cult of Venus.

ATALANTA AND HIPPOMENES

Venus tells how Hippomenes won the swift Atalanta with golden apples, and both became lions.

10.560 'Perhaps you have heard of a girl who outran swift men in a footrace. That story was no fiction: she did outrun them. And you could not have said whether she was more outstanding for the glory of her feet or the gift of her beauty. When she asked the god about a husband, the god said, "You have no need of a husband, Atalanta: flee the use of a husband! And yet you will not escape it, and, still living, you will lose yourself." Terrified by the god's oracle, she lived unmarried in the shadowy woods, and she drove off the insistent crowd of suitors with a harsh condition. "I am not to be won," she said, "unless I am first beaten in a race. Compete with me on foot. The swift will have a wife and a marriage bed as the prize; the slow will pay with death. Let that be the law of the contest."[22] 10.573 She was pitiless indeed, but—so great is the power of beauty—a reckless crowd of suitors came to accept this law. Hippomenes had taken his seat to watch the unfair race. "Would anyone seek a wife at such great risk?" he had said, and had condemned the young men's excessive love. But when he saw her face and her body with its covering laid aside—a body like mine, or like yours if you were to become a woman—he was astounded. Raising his hands, he said, "Forgive me, you whom I just blamed. I did not yet know the prize you were seeking." Even as he praised her, he caught fire. He hoped that none of the young men would run faster, and out of jealousy he was afraid. "But why should I leave the fortune of this contest untried?" he said.

10.586 "God himself helps the bold." While Hippomenes was weighing such thoughts, the girl flew by on winged feet. Though to the Aonian youth she seemed to go no less swiftly than a Scythian arrow, it was her beauty he admired more, and the running itself made her beautiful. The breeze blew back the rib-

22 Atalanta, daughter of Schoeneus of Boeotia, was a famous swift-footed huntress.

bons from her swift ankles, her hair streamed over her ivory back, and so did the bands with embroidered borders below her knees; and over her girlish whiteness her body had taken on a blush, just as when a purple awning over a white atrium stains it with a semblance of shade. While the stranger noted all this, the last stretch was run, and Atalanta, victorious, was crowned with a festive garland. The defeated groaned and paid the penalty as agreed.[23]

10.600 Yet the young man was not deterred by what had happened to them. He stood in the middle of the course, fixed his eyes on the girl, and said, "Why seek an easy title by beating sluggards? Match yourself with me! If fortune makes me the stronger, you will not be ashamed to be beaten by so great a man. For my father is Megareus of Onchestus, his grandfather is Neptune, and so I am the great-grandson of the king of the waters, and my courage does not fall short of my birth. Or if I am beaten, you will have a great and memorable name for defeating Hippomenes." As he spoke, the daughter of Schoeneus looked at him with a softened face, and wondered whether she would rather be beaten or win.

10.611 And she said, "Which god, hostile to the beautiful, wants to destroy this one, and bids him seek this marriage at the risk of his dear life? In my own judgment I am not worth so much.—It is not his beauty that touches me, though I could be touched by that too, but that he is still a boy: it is not he himself who moves me, but his youth. What of the courage in him, and a mind unafraid of death? What of his being fourth in descent from the sea god? What of his loving me, and valuing marriage with me so highly that he would die if harsh fortune denied me to him? While you still can, stranger, go away and leave this bloodstained bridal bed: marriage with me is cruel. No girl would refuse to marry you, and a sensible girl could choose you.—Yet why do I care about you, when so many have already been killed before you? 10.624 Let him see to it! Let him die, since the slaughter of so many suitors has not warned him and he is

23 Aonian means Boeotian; Hippomenes came from Onchestus in Boeotia.

driven to be weary of life.—So he will die, then, because he wanted to live with me, and suffer an undeserved death as the price of love? My victory will bring me unbearable resentment. But it is not my fault. If only you would give up, or, since you are mad, if only you were faster! Ah, how girlish the look of that boyish face! Ah, poor Hippomenes, I wish you had never seen me! You deserved to live. If I were luckier, and the unkind fates did not deny me marriage, you would be the only one I would want to share my bed with." She had spoken. Inexperienced, touched by Cupid for the first time, not knowing what she was doing, she loved and did not recognize it as love.

10.638 Now the people and her father were demanding the usual race, when Hippomenes, Neptune's descendant, called on me in an anxious voice: "Cytherea," he said, "I pray you, stand by my daring and help the fire you have given me." A breeze, not grudging, carried his coaxing prayer down to me, and I was moved, I confess. Nor was help long delayed. There is a field the natives call the field of Tamasus, the best part of the land of Cyprus, which elders of old consecrated to me and ordered to be added to my temples as an endowment. In the middle of the field gleams a tree, its leaves tawny, its branches rustling with tawny gold. As it happened, I was coming from there, carrying in my hand three golden apples I had picked. Visible to no one but him, I went up to Hippomenes and taught him how to use them.[24]

10.652 The trumpets had given the signal when both of them, bent low, shot out from the starting gate and skimmed the top of the sand with swift feet. You would think they could graze the sea with dry steps and run over the standing ears of a field of white grain. The young man's spirits were lifted by the shouts and the cheers and the words of the crowd: "Now, now is the time to push on! Hurry, Hippomenes! Now use all your strength! No delay—you will win!" It is hard to say whether the son of Megareus or the daughter of Schoeneus was more glad at these words. Oh, how often, when she could have passed him, she

24 Tamasus was a town in central Cyprus.

slowed down, and after gazing long at his face, left it behind unwillingly! Dry gasps came from his tired mouth, and the turning post was far away. Then at last Neptune's descendant threw one of the three fruits of the tree. 10.666 The girl was astonished, and, longing for the shining apple, she swerved from her course and picked up the rolling gold. Hippomenes passed her! The stands rang with applause. With a burst of speed she made up for the delay and the lost time, and once more left the young man behind her. Again she was held up by the throw of the second apple; again she caught up with the man and passed him. The last part of the course remained. "Now," he said, "be with me, goddess, giver of the gift!" And to the side of the field, so that she would take longer coming back, he threw the shining gold slantwise with all his young strength. The girl seemed to hesitate whether to go after it. I made her pick it up, and once she had it I added weight to the apple, and hindered her equally with the heaviness of the load and with the delay. And so that my story should not be longer than the race itself: the girl was passed, and the winner led away his prize.

10.681 Did I not deserve, Adonis, that he should give me thanks and bring me the honor of incense? But he forgot: he gave me neither thanks nor incense. I was turned to sudden anger, and, stung by the slight, I took care that I should not be scorned in future by making an example of them, and I spurred myself on against them both. They were passing a temple, hidden deep in the woods, which famous Echion had once built for the Mother of the Gods in fulfillment of a vow, and the long journey persuaded them to rest. There an untimely desire to lie together seized Hippomenes, roused by my divine power. Near the temple was a dimly lit recess like a cave, roofed with natural pumice, sacred through ancient religion, where a priest had gathered many wooden images of the old gods.[25]

10.695 He went in and defiled the sanctuary with a forbidden act. The sacred images turned away their eyes, and the turret-

25 The Mother of the Gods is Cybele; Echion was one of the warriors sprung from the dragon's teeth at Thebes.

crowned Mother hesitated whether to plunge the guilty pair into the waters of the Styx. That punishment seemed too light. So tawny manes covered their necks, smooth only a moment before; their fingers curved into claws; their shoulders became forelegs; all their weight shifted into their chests; their tails swept the surface of the sand. Their faces held anger; instead of words they gave growls; instead of bedrooms they haunted the woods. Lions, dreadful to others, they champ with tamed teeth on Cybele's bit. These, my dear, and with them every kind of wild beast that offers not its back for flight but its breast for battle—flee them, so that your courage does not ruin us both.'[26]

THE DEATH OF ADONIS

A boar kills Adonis, and Venus turns his blood into the anemone.

10.708 So she warned him, and, harnessing her swans, she made her way through the air; but his courage stood against her warnings. As it happened, his hounds, following a sure trail, roused a boar from its lair, and as it was getting ready to leave the woods, the son of Cinyras pierced it with a slanting throw. At once the fierce boar shook off with its curved snout the hunting spear stained with its own blood, and chased him as he ran in fear, seeking safety. It buried its tusks deep in his groin and stretched him out, dying, on the tawny sand. Cytherea, borne in her light chariot through the middle of the air on her swans' wings, had not yet reached Cyprus. She recognized from afar the groans of the dying youth and turned her white birds toward him. And when from high in the sky she saw him lifeless, his body writhing in his own blood, she leapt down and tore both her dress and her hair, and beat her breast with hands that did not deserve it.

10.724 Reproaching the fates, she said, 'But not everything will be under your rule. Memorials of my grief, Adonis, will remain forever, and each year the image of your death, enacted again,

26 Cybele was shown wearing a turreted crown and riding in a chariot drawn by lions.

will reproduce my mourning. And your blood will be changed into a flower. Or were you once allowed, Persephone, to turn a woman's limbs into fragrant mint, while I am to be begrudged the transformation of Cinyras' heroic son?' So saying, she sprinkled his blood with fragrant nectar. At its touch the blood swelled, as a clear bubble rises from yellow mud. No more than a full hour passed before a flower sprang from the blood, of the same color, like the bloom of pomegranates, which hide their seeds under a tough rind. But its enjoyment is brief: it clings weakly and falls easily from too much lightness, shaken off by the very winds that give it its name."[27]

27 The flower is the anemone, from Greek *anemos*, "wind"; the yearly mourning is the festival of the Adonia. Persephone turned the nymph Minthe into mint.

Book 11

Orpheus' death; Midas; Ceyx and Alcyone
Orpheus is killed; Midas' golden touch; Peleus and Thetis;
Ceyx and Alcyone.

THE DEATH OF ORPHEUS

The Thracian women kill Orpheus; his head and lyre float down the Hebrus, and he rejoins Eurydice.

11.1 While the Thracian bard, with songs like these, was leading the woods, the hearts of wild beasts and the stones that followed him, look: the young women of the Ciconians, their frenzied breasts covered in the skins of animals, caught sight from the top of a hill of Orpheus, fitting his songs to the strings he struck. One of them, tossing her hair through the light air, cried, "Look, look, here is the man who scorns us!" She flung her spear at the singing mouth of Apollo's bard, but its tip was wrapped in leaves, and it left a mark without a wound. Another woman's weapon was a stone. As it flew, it was conquered in mid-air by the harmony of voice and lyre, and it fell at his feet like a suppliant begging pardon for so frenzied an outrage. But now the reckless warfare grew, all restraint was gone, and a mad Fury reigned. Every weapon would have been softened by his song, but a huge clamor drowned the sound of the lyre: the Berecyntian pipe with its curved horn, drums, clapping and Bacchic howling. Then at last the stones grew red with the blood of the bard, no longer heard.[1]

11.20 First the Maenads seized the countless birds, still spellbound by the singer's voice, along with the snakes and the troop

of wild beasts that were the glory of Orpheus' audience. Then they turned on Orpheus with bloodied hands and flocked together, like birds that have spotted the bird of night straying in daylight. They went for the bard as hounds go for a stag doomed to die on the sand of the amphitheater in the morning games. They hurled their thyrsi, green with leaves, which were not made for such a task. Some threw clods, others branches torn from trees, some flints. And so that their frenzy should not lack weapons, oxen happened to be working the soil under the pressed plowshare. Not far away, brawny farmers were digging the hard fields, readying their harvest with much sweat. At the sight of the horde they fled and left behind the tools of their work, and hoes, heavy rakes and long mattocks lay scattered over the empty fields.

11.37 The savage women snatched these up and tore apart the oxen, for all their threatening horns, and then they ran back to finish the bard. He stretched out his hands, and for the first time his words were in vain and his voice moved nothing; and the sacrilegious women killed him. Through that mouth—O Jupiter! —which stones had listened to and the senses of wild beasts had understood, his breath was breathed out and passed away into the winds. For you, Orpheus, the grieving birds wept; for you the crowd of beasts, for you the hard flints, for you the woods that had so often followed your songs. The tree shed its leaves and mourned you with its locks shorn. They say the rivers too swelled with their own tears, and the Naiads and Dryads wore linen dyed dark and let their hair hang loose. His limbs lay scattered in different places. His head and lyre, Hebrus, you received, and (a wonder!) as they floated down midstream, the lyre made some mournful lament, the lifeless tongue murmured mournfully, and mournfully the banks replied.[2]

11.54 Carried out to sea, they now left their native river and reached the shore of Methymna on Lesbos. Here a fierce serpent went for the head, which lay exposed on foreign sands, and for

1 The Ciconians were a people of Thrace, Orpheus' homeland.
2 The Hebrus is the chief river of Thrace.

the hair, still sprinkled with dripping spray. At last Phoebus came. As the serpent prepared to bite, he warded it off, froze its open jaws into stone and hardened its gaping mouth just as it was. The shade passed beneath the earth and recognized all the places it had seen before. Searching through the fields of the righteous, it found Eurydice and clasped her in eager arms. Here they strolled together, side by side; now he followed as she went ahead, now he went in front, and Orpheus, safe at last, looked back at his Eurydice.

11.67 Yet Lyaeus did not let this crime go unpunished. Grieving at the loss of the bard of his rites, he at once bound fast in the woods, with twisted roots, all the Edonian women who had witnessed the outrage. A bird that has caught its leg in snares a cunning fowler has hidden feels itself held, beats its wings, and tightens the bonds by its fluttering. In the same way each of these women, as she stuck fast, fixed in the ground, tried in terror to flee, in vain. The tough root held her and checked her leaping. While she looked for where her toes were, where her foot was, and her nails, she saw wood creeping up her smooth calves. When she tried to beat her thigh with a grieving hand, she struck oak. Her breast too became oak, her shoulders were oak, and you would think her outstretched arms real branches, and you would not be deceived in thinking so.

MIDAS AND THE GOLDEN TOUCH

Midas returns Silenus to Bacchus and asks that everything he touches turn to gold.

11.85 Nor was this enough for Bacchus. He left those very fields as well and, with a better band of followers, made for the vineyards of his own Tmolus and for the Pactolus, though at that time the river was not golden, nor envied for its precious sands. His usual retinue of satyrs and bacchantes thronged around him, but Silenus was missing. Phrygian country folk had caught him as he staggered with years and wine, bound him with garlands, and led him to King Midas, to whom Thracian Orpheus,

together with Cecropian Eumolpus, had handed down the rites. As soon as Midas recognized a fellow worshiper and companion in the rites, he held a joyful feast for his guest's arrival over twice five days and the nights that followed them in turn. And now the eleventh Morning Star had driven off the lofty column of stars when the king came gladly to the fields of Lydia and returned Silenus to his young foster-son.[3]

11.100 The god, glad to have his foster-father back, gave Midas the choice of a reward, welcome but useless. Midas, who would make bad use of the gift, said, "Make whatever I touch with my body turn into yellow gold." Liber granted his wish and gave him the gift that would harm him, sorry that he had not asked for something better. The Berecyntian hero went off happy, rejoicing in his misfortune, and tested the promise by touching things one by one. Scarcely believing it himself, he pulled a twig, green with leaves, from a low holm-oak: the twig turned to gold. He picked up a stone from the ground: the stone too grew pale with gold. He touched a clod as well: at that potent touch the clod became a nugget. He plucked dry ears of Ceres' grain: the harvest was golden. He held an apple picked from a tree: you would think the Hesperides had given it. If he put his fingers to the tall doorposts, the doorposts seemed to gleam.[4]

11.116 Even when he washed his hands in clear water, the water flowing from his hands could have fooled Danae. He himself could hardly take in his hopes as he imagined everything turned to gold. As he rejoiced, his servants set before him tables piled with dishes and not lacking bread. But then, whenever he touched the gifts of Ceres with his right hand, the gifts of Ceres grew stiff. Whenever he went to tear into the food with greedy teeth, a sheet of yellow metal encased the food as his teeth came near. He had mixed the giver of his gift with pure water, and you could have seen molten gold streaming through his jaws.

3 Silenus, an old satyr, was the foster-father and tutor of Bacchus. Eumolpus, a legendary Athenian ("Cecropian," after Cecrops, first king of Athens), founded the Eleusinian Mysteries.

4 Midas was said to be the son of Cybele, the Berecyntian goddess.

Stunned by this strange misfortune, rich and wretched, he longed to escape his wealth and hated what he had just prayed for. No abundance relieved his hunger; parching thirst burned his throat, and he was tormented, as he deserved, by the hateful gold. Raising his hands and his gleaming arms to the sky,[5]

11.132 he said, "Forgive me, father Lenaeus! I have done wrong. But have pity, I beg you, and rescue me from this glittering ruin." The gods' power is gentle. When Midas confessed his wrong, Bacchus restored him and, true to his word, undid the gift he had given. "So that you do not stay coated with the gold you so foolishly wished for," he said, "go to the river that runs near great Sardis. Make your way along the ridge of its bank, against the flowing waters, until you come to the river's source. There, at the foaming spring where it gushes out most fully, plunge your head and body in together, and together wash away your offense." The king went into the waters as he was told. The golden power tinged the river and passed from his human body into the stream. Even now the fields, having taken in the seed of that ancient vein, are hard with gold, and their soaked clods gleam pale.[6]

MIDAS' EARS

Midas prefers Pan's piping to Apollo's lyre, and Apollo gives him a donkey's ears.

11.146 Midas, now hating wealth, dwelt among the woods and fields and worshiped Pan, who always lives in mountain caves. But his wits stayed dull, and once again the heart of his foolish mind was to harm its owner, as before. Tmolus rises steep and rigid in a lofty climb, looking out far over the sea. Stretching down on either slope, it ends on one side at Sardis and on the other at little Hypaepa. There Pan was boasting of his songs to

5 Jupiter came to Danae as a shower of gold. "The giver of his gift" is Bacchus, that is, wine.

6 The river is the Pactolus, famous for its gold-bearing sands; Sardis was the capital of Lydia.

the tender nymphs and playing a light tune on his reeds joined with wax. He dared to scorn Apollo's songs beside his own and came to an unequal contest, with Tmolus as judge. The old judge sat down on his own mountain and freed his ears of trees. Only his dark hair was wreathed with oak, and acorns hung around his hollow temples. Looking at the god of the flock, he said, "On your judge's part[7]

11.161 there is no delay." Pan played on his rustic reeds, and his foreign song charmed Midas, who happened to be there as he played. After him, sacred Tmolus turned his face toward the face of Phoebus, and his forest turned with him. Phoebus, his golden head crowned with Parnassian laurel, swept the ground with a robe steeped in Tyrian purple. In his left hand he held a lyre inlaid with gems and Indian ivory, and his other hand held the plectrum. His very pose was an artist's. Then he plucked the strings with a practiced thumb, and Tmolus, captivated by their sweetness, ordered Pan to lower his reeds before the lyre. The judgment, the verdict of the holy mountain, pleased everyone, yet the voice of Midas alone challenged it and called it unjust. The Delian would not let such stupid ears keep their human shape. He drew them out in length, filled them with grayish-white hair, made them unsteady at the base and gave them the power to move. The rest was human: Midas was punished in one part only, and put on the ears of a slow-plodding donkey.

11.180 Midas, of course, wanted to hide it, and in his shame and disgrace he tried to cover his temples with a purple turban. But the servant who used to trim his long hair with steel had seen it. He did not dare reveal the shame he had seen, though he longed to let it out into the air, and yet he could not keep quiet. So he went off and dug a hole in the ground. In a low voice he told what kind of ears he had seen on his master, murmuring it into the scooped-out earth. Then he buried the evidence of his voice by putting back the soil, and once the pit was covered he went away in silence. A thick clump of trembling reeds began to spring up there. As soon as it had ripened, after a full year, it

7 Tmolus is a mountain in Lydia; here its god acts as judge.

betrayed the man who had sown it: stirred by the gentle south wind, it repeated the buried words and exposed his master's ears.

LAOMEDON AND THE WALLS OF TROY

Apollo and Neptune build Troy's walls for Laomedon, who refuses to pay them.

11.194 His revenge complete, Latona's son left Tmolus and was carried through the clear air. On this side of the narrow strait of Helle, Nephele's daughter, he came to rest in the lands of Laomedon. To the right of Sigeum and the left of the deep waters of Rhoeteum there is an ancient altar dedicated to the Panomphaean Thunderer. From there he saw Laomedon beginning to build the walls of new Troy, a great undertaking that grew only with hard labor and demanded no small resources. So, together with the trident-bearing father of the swelling deep, he put on mortal form and built walls for the Phrygian ruler, having agreed on gold as payment for the ramparts. The work stood finished. The king refused the payment and, to crown his treachery, added perjury to his lies.[8]

11.207 "You will not get away with this," said the ruler of the sea. He tipped all his waters toward the shores of greedy Troy and flooded the land until it looked like the sea, sweeping away the farmers' wealth and burying the fields under the waves. Nor was this punishment enough: a sea-monster demanded the king's daughter as well. She was chained to the hard rocks, and Alcides rescued her. He claimed the promised reward, the horses he had been pledged, and when payment for so great a labor was refused, he captured the twice-perjured walls of conquered Troy. Nor did you, Telamon, his partner in the campaign, leave without honor: you were given Hesione and made her yours. Peleus was not given her, for he was already famous for his goddess wife. He was no prouder of his grandfather's name than of

8 Helle fell from a golden ram into this strait, which was named the Hellespont after her. "Panomphaean" ("of all oracular voices") is a title of Jupiter.

his father-in-law's, since more than one man has had the luck to be Jupiter's grandson, but only one to have a goddess as his wife.[9]

PELEUS AND THETIS

Warned that Thetis' son will surpass his father, Jupiter gives her to Peleus, who wins her by force.

11.221 For old Proteus had said to Thetis, "Goddess of the waves, conceive: you will be the mother of a young man who in the strength of his years will surpass his father's deeds and be called greater than he." The world must hold nothing greater than Jupiter. So Jupiter, although he had felt fires in his heart that were far from lukewarm, shunned marriage with Thetis of the sea. He ordered his grandson, the son of Aeacus, to take his place in his desires and go to the embraces of the sea-maiden. There is a bay in Haemonia curved into a sickle-shaped arc. Its arms run out, and if the water were deeper it would be a harbor (the sea only just covers the surface of the sands). Its shore is firm: it keeps no footprints, does not slow one's step, and is not covered with seaweed.[10]

11.234 Nearby lies a myrtle grove, thick with two-colored berries, and in its middle a cave. Whether it was made by nature or by art is uncertain, but more likely by art. You, Thetis, often used to come there naked, riding a bridled dolphin. There Peleus seized you as you lay bound in sleep. When his entreaties failed and you resisted, he prepared to use force, wrapping both his arms around your neck. Had you not turned to your usual arts and changed your shape again and again, he would have achieved what he dared. But now you were a bird (yet he held the bird), now a heavy tree (Peleus clung to the tree). Your third form was a spotted tigress, and that frightened the son of Aeacus

9 Hesione was Laomedon's daughter. Telamon and Peleus were brothers, sons of Aeacus and so grandsons of Jupiter.

10 Proteus is the shape-shifting, prophetic old man of the sea. Haemonia is Thessaly.

into releasing his arms from your body. He worshiped the gods of the sea, pouring wine over the waters and offering the entrails of sheep and the smoke of incense, until the Carpathian prophet, from the middle of the deep,[11] 11.250 said, "Son of Aeacus, you will win the marriage you seek! Only, when she lies asleep in her rocky cave, bind her with snares and tight bonds while she is unaware. Do not let her fool you by feigning a hundred shapes. Hold her tight, whatever she becomes, until she takes back the form she had before." When he had said this, Proteus hid his face in the sea and let his waves close over his final words. Titan was sinking, his chariot-pole tilted downward over the western sea, when the beautiful Nereid returned to the rock and entered her familiar bed. Peleus had scarcely seized her virgin limbs when she began changing her forms. She went on until she felt her limbs held fast and her arms stretched in opposite directions. Then at last she groaned and said, "Not without a god's help do you win," and showed herself as Thetis. Once she had yielded, the hero embraced her, had what he had prayed for, and made her pregnant with mighty Achilles.

PELEUS AND CEYX

Peleus, exiled for killing his brother, takes refuge with Ceyx, king of Trachis.

11.266 Happy in his son, happy in his wife was Peleus, a man to whom everything had been granted, if you leave out the crime of murdering Phocus. Guilty of his brother's blood and driven from his father's house, he was taken in by the land of Trachis. Ceyx ruled the kingdom here without force and without bloodshed. He was the son of the Morning Star and bore his father's brightness in his face, but at that time, sorrowful and unlike himself, he was mourning the brother he had lost.[12]

11.274 The son of Aeacus arrived there, worn out by worry and travel, and entered the city with a few companions. The flocks of

11 The Carpathian prophet is Proteus, named after the Carpathian Sea between Crete and Rhodes.

sheep and herds of cattle he had brought with him he left in a shady valley not far from the walls. As soon as he had his first chance to approach the ruler, he held out wool-wreathed branches in a suppliant's hand and told him who he was and whose son. He concealed only his crime, and lied about the reason for his flight. He asked for help, either a city or land. The Trachinian answered him with a gentle face in these words: "Our bounty is open even to ordinary people, Peleus, and the kingdom I rule is not inhospitable. To this disposition you add powerful claims: a famous name, and Jupiter for a grandfather. Do not waste time pleading! Everything you ask you will have. Call all this partly your own, whatever you see! If only you saw something better!" And he wept. Peleus and his companions asked what cause stirred such grief. He spoke to them:

DAEDALION

Ceyx tells how his brother Daedalion, grieving for his daughter Chione, became a hawk.

11.291 "Perhaps you think that this bird, which lives by plunder and terrifies every bird, always had feathers. He was spirited, fierce in war and ready for violence, and his name was Daedalion. We were both sons of the one who summons the dawn and is the last to leave the sky. Peace is what I care for, and my care was for keeping the peace and for my marriage; my brother delighted in savage wars. His courage subdued kings and nations, and now, changed, it harries the doves of Thisbe. He had a daughter, Chione. She was richly endowed with beauty, and at twice seven years, when she was ready to marry, she had a thousand suitors. By chance Phoebus and Maia's son were returning, the one from his Delphi, the other from the summit of Cyllene. They saw her at the same moment, and at the same moment caught fire.[13]

11.306 Apollo put off his hope of love until nighttime. The other would not bear delay and touched the girl's face with his sleep-

12 Phocus was Peleus' half-brother, son of Aeacus by the sea-nymph Psamathe.

inducing wand. At that potent touch she lay still and was raped by the god. Night had sprinkled the sky with stars. Then Phoebus took the shape of an old woman and seized the pleasure another had snatched before him. When her ripening womb had completed its time, a crafty offspring of the wing-footed god was born: Autolycus, ingenious at every kind of theft, who could make white out of black and black out of white, a true heir to his father's art. From Phoebus was born (for she bore twins) Philammon, famous for his tuneful song and his lyre.[14]

11.318 What good did it do her to have borne two sons, to have pleased two gods, to be the daughter of a brave father and descended from the Thunderer? Or is glory a harm as well? It has harmed many, and certainly her! She dared to set herself above Diana and found fault with the goddess's beauty. But the goddess was stirred to fierce anger and said, 'My deeds, then, will win your approval.' Without delay she bent her bow, sent an arrow from the string, and pierced with its shaft the tongue that had earned it. The tongue fell silent; neither voice nor the words she tried to say followed, and as she struggled to speak, life left her with her blood. How wretched I was as I held her then, feeling a father's grief in my heart and speaking words of comfort to my loving brother! Her father took them in no differently than a cliff takes the murmurs of the sea, and he kept lamenting the daughter taken from him.

11.332 When he saw her burning, four times he tried to rush into the middle of the pyre, and four times he was driven back. Then he turned his frantic limbs to flight, and, like a young bull with hornets' stings driven into its neck, he charged where there was no path. Even then he seemed to me to run faster than a man, and you would have thought his feet had grown wings. So he escaped us all and, swift with the desire for death, reached the summit of Parnassus. Apollo took pity on him. When Daedalion threw himself from a high rock, the god made him a

13 Thisbe was a town in Boeotia famous for its doves.
14 Autolycus, a master thief like his father Mercury, was the grandfather of Ulysses.

bird and lifted him on sudden wings as he hung in the air. He gave him a hooked beak, gave him curved hooks for nails, his old courage, and strength greater than his body. And now, as a hawk, kind to no one, he rages against all birds and, grieving himself, becomes a cause of grief to others."

THE WOLF

A wolf sent by Psamathe ravages Peleus' cattle until it is turned to marble.

11.346 While the son of the Morning Star was telling these wonders about his brother, Onetor the Phocian, the herdsman of the cattle, came running up in a hurry, panting. "Peleus, Peleus!" he cried. "I come to you with news of a great disaster." Peleus told him to say whatever it was, and the Trachinian himself hung in fear on the man's trembling lips. He told them: "I had driven the weary bullocks down to the curving shore at the hour when the Sun, at his highest in the middle of his circuit, could look back on as much of his course as he saw still remaining. Some of the cattle had bent their knees on the yellow sand and lay gazing out over the plains of the wide water. Some wandered here and there with slow steps, and others were swimming, their necks held high above the waves. Near the sea stands a temple, not bright with marble or gold, but shaded by dense timbers and an ancient grove. The Nereids and Nereus own it: a sailor drying his nets on the shore told us they were its gods.

11.363 Next to it is a marsh, thick with willows, which the backwater of the sea has turned into a marsh. From there came a heavy crashing, and a huge beast terrified the places nearby with its din. It was a wolf! It came out of the wet marshes, its jaws smeared with foam and spattered with blood, swift as lightning, its eyes suffused with red flame. It raged with madness and hunger alike, but the madness was fiercer. It did not care to end its fast and its dreadful hunger by killing the cattle; it wounded the whole herd and laid the whole herd low, like an enemy. Some of us too were wounded by its deadly bite as we

tried to defend them, and were killed. The shore and the edge of the water were red with blood, and the marshes rang with lowing—but delay is costly, and the situation leaves no room for hesitation. While something is still left, let us all gather and take up arms, arms, and bring our weapons together!"

11.379 The countryman had spoken. The losses did not move Peleus. Remembering what he had done, he realized that the bereaved Nereid was sending these losses of his as funeral offerings to the dead Phocus. The Oetaean king ordered his men to put on their armor and take up violent weapons, and he himself was preparing to go with them. But his wife Alcyone, roused by the commotion, rushed out with her hair not yet fully arranged, and she tore loose even what had been done. Throwing her arms around her husband's neck, she begged him with words and tears to send help without going himself, and so to save two lives in one. The son of Aeacus said to her: "Put aside your fine and loving fears, my queen! Your offer has earned my full gratitude. I do not want arms taken up against these strange monsters: the divine power of the sea must be worshiped." There was a lofty tower with a beacon fire at the top of the citadel, a place welcome to weary ships.[15]

11.394 They climbed up there and, groaning, saw the bulls strewn on the shore and the ravager with his bloody jaws, his long shaggy coat stained with blood. Then Peleus stretched out his hands toward the shores of the open sea and prayed to sea-blue Psamathe to end her anger and bring help. But the pleas of the son of Aeacus did not sway her; it was Thetis, begging on her husband's behalf, who won his pardon. Even when called off from its fierce slaughter, the wolf kept on, savage with the sweetness of blood, until, as it clung to the neck of a mangled heifer, she changed it into marble. The body kept everything but its color, and the color of the stone shows that it is no longer a wolf and need no longer be feared. Yet the Fates did not let the fugitive Peleus settle in this land. A wandering exile, he went to the

15 The bereaved Nereid is Psamathe, mother of Phocus. Oeta is a mountain near Trachis.

Magnesians and there received purification for the killing from Haemonian Acastus.[16]

CEYX AND ALCYONE

Ceyx sets sail against Alcyone's pleas and drowns in a storm.

11.410 Meanwhile Ceyx was troubled at heart by his brother's fate and by the portents that had followed it. He prepared to go to the Clarian god to consult the sacred oracles, which bring comfort to mankind, for the impious Phorbas and his Phlegyans had made the temple at Delphi impossible to reach. But first he told you his plan, Alcyone, most faithful wife. At once a chill went deep into her bones, a pallor very like boxwood spread over her face, and her cheeks were wet with streaming tears. Three times she tried to speak, and three times she wet her face with weeping. Then, with sobs breaking into her loving complaints, she said, "What fault of mine, dearest, has changed your mind? Where is the care for me that used to come first? Can you now go away untroubled and leave Alcyone behind?[17]

11.424 Is a long journey what you want now? Am I dearer to you now when you are away? But, I suppose, your road lies over land, and I shall only grieve, not fear as well, and my worries will be free of terror. It is the sea that frightens me, and the grim face of the deep. Only lately I saw broken planks on the shore, and I have often read names on tombs that hold no bodies. And do not let false confidence touch your mind because your father-in-law is the son of Hippotes, who keeps the mighty winds in prison and calms the seas when he wishes! Once the winds have been let loose and have taken hold of the sea, nothing is forbidden them, and every land and every sea is left without protection. They harass even the clouds of the sky, and in their savage collisions they strike out red flashes of fire.[18] 11.437 The better I

16 Acastus was king of Iolcus in Magnesia, a region of Haemonia (Thessaly).
17 The Clarian god is Apollo, whose oracle stood at Claros in Asia Minor. Phorbas led the Phlegyans, a lawless people who attacked Delphi.
18 The son of Hippotes is Aeolus, keeper of the winds and Alcyone's father.

know them, the more I think they are to be feared, and I do know them, for as a little girl I often saw them in my father's house. But if no prayers can bend your purpose, dear husband, and you are too set on going, take me with you too. At least we shall be tossed about together, and I shall fear nothing but what I actually suffer. Together we shall bear whatever comes; together we shall be borne over the wide sea." Her starry husband was moved by these words and tears from Aeolus' daughter, for the fire in him burned no less. But he would neither give up the voyage he had planned nor let Alcyone share the danger, and he gave her many answers to soothe her fearful heart.[19]

11.449 Still, he did not win her over to his cause, so he added this further comfort, the only one that swayed her loving heart: "Any delay, it is true, seems long to us both. But I swear to you by my father's fires that, if only the fates let me return, I shall be back before the moon has twice filled her circle." When these promises had given her hope of his return, he at once ordered a pine ship to be drawn out of the dockyard, launched on the sea, and fitted with its gear. At the sight of it, as if she foresaw what was to come, Alcyone shuddered again and let her welling tears fall. She embraced him, and at last, in utter misery, with a sorrowful face, she said "Farewell," and her whole body collapsed.

11.461 While Ceyx was still looking for reasons to linger, the young men drew the oars back to their strong chests in double rows and cut the water with even strokes. She lifted her wet eyes, and, left behind, she was the first to see her husband standing on the high stern and waving his hand as a signal to her, and she returned his signs. When the land had drawn farther away and her eyes could no longer make out his face, she followed the departing ship with her gaze as long as she could. When the ship too, carried into the distance, could no longer be seen, she still watched the sails fluttering at the top of the mast. When she could not see even the sails, she went in anguish to her empty bed and lay down on it. The bed and the room renewed Alcyone's tears and reminded her which part of

19 Ceyx was the son of Lucifer, the Morning Star; hence "starry husband."

her was missing. They had left the harbor, and a breeze had stirred the rigging. The sailors turned the hanging oars in against the ship's sides, set the yards high on the mast, let all the canvas down from it, and caught the coming breezes.

11.478 The ship had cut through less than half the sea, or certainly no more, and both shores were far away, when toward nightfall the sea began to whiten with swelling waves and Eurus began to blow hard and headlong. "Lower the high yards at once," the helmsman shouted, "and furl the whole sail to the yardarms!" So he ordered, but the gales blowing against them hindered his orders, and the roar of the sea let no voice be heard. Still, of their own accord, some hurried to draw in the oars, some to shore up the sides, some to deny the sails to the winds. One bailed out the waves and poured sea back into sea, another seized the yards. While all this was done without order, the storm grew harsher, and from every side the fierce winds waged war and churned up the indignant waters.

11.492 The helmsman himself was afraid, and he himself admitted that he did not know the state of the ship, or what to order or want, so great was the mass of the disaster and so much stronger than his skill. The men resounded with shouting, the rigging with creaking, the heavy sea with the onrush of waves, the sky with thunder. The sea heaved up in waves and seemed to reach the sky and touch the low clouds with its spray. At one moment, when it churned up tawny sand from the bottom, it took on the sand's color; at another it was blacker than the waters of the Styx; at times it lay flat and whitened with roaring foam. The Trachinian ship too was driven by these changes. Now, lifted high, it seemed to look down as if from a mountaintop into the valleys and to deepest Acheron; now, when it had sunk and the curving sea stood all around it, it seemed to look up from the bottom of an underworld abyss at the height of heaven.[20]

11.507 Often its side, struck by a wave, gave a huge crash and rang under the blows as loudly as a citadel does when an iron ram or a catapult batters its broken walls. And as fierce lions,

20 Acheron is a river of the underworld.

gathering strength from their charge, often hurl their chests against weapons and leveled spears, so the wave, whenever it had given itself up to the rising winds, went against the ship's defenses and towered far above them. Now the wedges began to give way, and a seam, stripped of its covering of wax, gaped open and let in the deadly waters. Look! Heavy rains fell from the loosened clouds. You would think the whole sky was coming down into the sea, and the swollen sea climbing up into the regions of the sky. The sails were drenched with downpours, and the waters of the sea mingled with the waters of heaven. The sky had lost its fires, and the blind night was weighed down by darkness, the storm's and its own. Yet flashing lightning broke through the darkness and gave light, and fires blazed up in the fires of the lightning.

11.524 Now the waves were even leaping into the hollow frame of the hull. A soldier who outshines all the rest, after many assaults on the walls of a defended city, at last achieves his hope, and, fired with love of glory, he alone among a thousand men seizes the wall. In the same way, when the waves had beaten nine times on the ship's high sides, the onslaught of the tenth wave rose more hugely than the rest and rushed in. It did not stop attacking the weary ship until it came down, as it were, over the walls of the captured vessel. So part of the sea was still trying to invade the ship, and part was already inside. All of them were in a panic, no less than a city panics when some of the enemy are digging under its wall outside and others already hold the wall within.

11.537 Skill failed and courage sank. As many deaths seemed to rush and burst upon them as there were waves coming in. One could not hold back his tears, one was stunned, one called those blessed who had funerals awaiting them. One worshiped the god with vows and, raising his arms in vain to a sky he could not see, begged for help. One thought of his brother and his father, another of his home and children and whatever he had left behind. Alcyone was in Ceyx's mind; on Ceyx's lips there was no one but Alcyone, and though she was the only one he longed for,

he was glad all the same that she was not there. He would have liked, too, to look back toward the shores of his homeland and turn his last gaze toward his home, but he did not know where it was. The sea was boiling in such a whirl, the whole sky was hidden by the shadow drawn across it from pitch-black clouds, and the face of night was doubled.

11.551 The mast was broken by the onrush of a rain-laden whirlwind, and the rudder was broken too. Then a wave, proud and towering over its spoils like a victor, arched up and looked down on the other waves. With no less force than if someone had torn Athos or Pindus whole from their foundations and toppled them into the open sea, it plunged down and, with its weight and its blow together, sank the ship to the bottom. With it a large part of the crew, pressed down by the heavy flood and never given back to the air, met their fate. Others clung to pieces and broken limbs of the hull. Ceyx himself, with the hand that used to hold the scepter, held on to fragments of the ship and called on his father-in-law and his father, alas, in vain. But most of all, as he swam, his wife Alcyone was on his lips. He remembered her and repeated her name, and he prayed that the waves would carry his body before her eyes and that, once dead, he might be buried by loving hands. 11.566 As he swam, as often as the waves let him open his mouth, he named the absent Alcyone and murmured her name into the very waves. Look! Over the middle of the waves a black arch of water broke, and the shattered wave buried his head beneath it. Lucifer was dim that dawn, so that you could not have recognized him, and since he was not allowed to leave the sky, he hid his face in thick clouds. Meanwhile Aeolus' daughter, knowing nothing of such great disasters, counted off the nights. She hurried to make ready the clothes he would wear, and now the ones she herself would wear when he came, and promised herself a return that would never come.

11.577 To all the gods above she brought devout offerings of incense, but above them all she honored the temple of Juno. She came to the altars for a husband who was no more, praying that her husband would be safe, that he would return, and that he

would prefer no other woman to her. Of all those prayers, this last was the only one that could be granted. The goddess could not bear to be entreated any longer for one who was already dead. To keep hands touched by death away from her altars, she said, "Iris, most faithful messenger of my words, go quickly to the sleep-bringing hall of Sleep, and tell him to send dreams to Alcyone in the likeness of dead Ceyx, to tell her what truly happened." So she spoke. Iris put on her veil of a thousand colors and, marking the sky with her curving bow, made for the dwelling of the king she had been sent to, hidden beneath a cloud.

THE HOUSE OF SLEEP

Iris visits Sleep's cave, and Morpheus appears to Alcyone as her drowned husband.

11.592 Near the Cimmerians there is a cave with a deep recess, a hollow mountain, the home and inner sanctum of lazy Sleep. Phoebus can never reach it with his rays, whether rising, at midday, or setting. Mists mixed with darkness rise from the ground, and the twilight of uncertain light. No wakeful bird with crested head calls forth the dawn there with its song. No watchful dogs break the silence with their voices, nor geese, keener than dogs. No wild beasts, no cattle, no branches stirred by the breeze, no clamor of human tongues give back a sound: mute rest dwells there. Yet from the bottom of the rock flows a stream of Lethe's water, and its current, gliding with a murmur over crackling pebbles, invites sleep. Before the doors of the cave fertile poppies bloom, and countless herbs, from whose milky juice dewy night gathers sleep and scatters it over the darkened lands.[21] 11.608 No door creaks there on a turning hinge; there is no doorkeeper in the whole house, no guard on the threshold. But in the middle of the cave stands a high couch of ebony, soft with down, all of one color, covered with a dark coverlet, and on it lies the god

21 The Cimmerians were a legendary people said to live in perpetual mist and darkness at the edge of the world.

himself, his limbs loosened in languor. All around him lie empty dreams that imitate every kind of shape, as many as the ears of grain at harvest, the leaves a forest bears, the grains of sand the shore casts up. As soon as the girl entered and brushed aside with her hands the dreams in her way, the sacred house shone with the brightness of her robe. The god, barely lifting his eyes heavy with sluggish weight, sinking back again and again, his nodding chin striking the top of his chest, at last shook himself free of himself. Raising himself on his elbow, he asked her why she had come, for he recognized her. And she said:

11.623 "Sleep, rest of all things, Sleep, gentlest of the gods, peace of the mind, from whom care flees, who soothe bodies worn out by hard toil and restore them for their labor: command dreams that match true forms in their imitation to go to Alcyone in Herculean Trachis in the likeness of the king, and to fashion the image of a shipwrecked man. Juno orders this." When she had delivered her message, Iris left, for she could no longer bear the force of sleep. When she felt drowsiness gliding into her limbs, she fled and went back along the bow by which she had just come. Then the father, from the crowd of his thousand sons, roused Morpheus, a craftsman and imitator of shapes. No one else there reproduces more skillfully a person's walk, face, and manner of speaking.[22]

11.637 He adds the clothing too, and the words each person uses most. But he imitates only human beings. Another becomes a beast, becomes a bird, becomes a long-bodied snake: the gods call him Icelos, the race of mortals Phobetor. There is also a third, with a different art, Phantasos. He passes deceptively into earth and rock and water and timber and everything that has no life. These show their faces by night to kings and generals; others roam among the peoples and the common folk. Old Sleep passed these by, and from all the brothers he chose Morpheus alone to carry out the instructions of Thaumas' daughter. Then,

22 Trachis, Ceyx's city, was where Hercules had lived for a time.

loosened once more in soft languor, he laid down his head and buried it deep in the bedding.[23]

11.650 On wings that made no sound Morpheus flew through the darkness, and in a short time he reached the Haemonian city. There he laid aside the wings from his body and took on the face of Ceyx. In that form, wan, like a dead man, without any clothing, he stood before the bed of the unhappy wife. The man's beard seemed wet, and water seemed to stream heavily from his soaking hair. Then, leaning over the bed, his face streaming with tears, he said: "Do you recognize Ceyx, most wretched wife? Or has my face been changed? Look at me! You will know me, and in place of your husband you will find your husband's ghost. Your prayers, Alcyone, have brought us no help. We have perished! Stop promising yourself my return; it is a false hope!

11.663 The cloudy south wind caught our ship on the Aegean Sea, tossed it with its huge blasts, and broke it apart, and the waves filled my mouth as it called your name in vain. It is no uncertain messenger who brings you this news; you are not hearing it from wandering rumors. I myself, shipwrecked, present before you, tell you my fate. Get up, then, weep for me, put on mourning, and do not send me unlamented to empty Tartarus." To these words Morpheus added a voice she would believe was her husband's. He seemed also to be shedding real tears, and his hands had Ceyx's gestures. Alcyone groaned; her tears flowed and her arms moved in her sleep. Reaching for his body, she embraced the air, and cried out, "Wait! Where are you rushing off to? We will go together!"

11.677 Startled by her own voice and by the vision of her husband, she shook off sleep. First she looked around to see whether he was there, the one she had just seen, for the servants, roused by her voice, had brought in a light. When she could not find him anywhere, she struck her face with her hand, tore her clothes from her breast, and beat her breast itself. She did not bother to loosen her hair but tore it, and when her nurse

23 Morpheus' name recalls Greek morphē, "form"; Icelos means "Like," Phobetor "Terrifier," and Phantasos suggests "apparition." Thaumas' daughter is Iris.

asked the reason for her grief, she said, "Alcyone is no more, no more! She has died together with her Ceyx! Away with your words of comfort! He was shipwrecked and is dead! I saw him and I knew him, and as he went away I stretched out my hands to him, longing to hold him back. It was a ghost, but even so a ghost clearly seen, and truly my husband's! He did not, if you ask, have his usual looks, nor was his face as radiant as before. I saw him pale and naked, his hair still wet, wretched woman that I am. Look, here, in this very spot, he stood, pitiful!" And she searched for any footprints that might remain. 11.694 "This was it, this was what my prophetic heart feared, and I begged you not to leave me and follow the winds. But at least, since you were going away to die, I wish you had taken me with you too! It would have been far better for me to go with you, for then I would have spent no part of my life apart from you, nor would our deaths have been divided. Now I have died far away from you; far away, I too am tossed on the waves, and without me the sea holds me. My mind would be crueler than the sea itself if I tried to drag out my life any longer and struggled to outlive so great a grief. But I will not struggle, nor will I abandon you, my poor husband. Now at least I will come as your companion, and in the tomb, if not an urn, then at least an inscription will join us. If I cannot touch your bones with my bones, I shall touch your name with my name."

11.708 Grief kept her from saying more; wailing broke in on every word, and groans were drawn from her stunned heart. It was morning. She went out of the house to the shore and sadly returned to the place from which she had watched him leave. While she lingered there, saying, "Here he cast off the moorings; on this shore he kissed me as he left," she looked out to sea. Far off on the water she saw something, she could not tell what, like a body. At first it was unclear what it was. After the waves had carried it in a little, though it was still far away, it was clear that it was a body. Not knowing who it was, she was moved by the omen, because it was a shipwrecked man, and as though she were shedding a tear for a stranger, she said, "Ah, poor man,"

11.721 "whoever you are, and poor wife of yours, if you have one!" Driven by the waves, the body came closer, and the more she looked at it, the less and less she was in her right mind. Now it had been brought close to land, and now she saw what she could recognize: it was her husband. "It is he!" she cried, and at once she tore her face, her hair, her clothes, and stretching out her trembling hands to Ceyx, she said, "Is this how, dearest husband, is this how you come back to me, my poor love?" Next to the water there is a breakwater built by hand, which breaks the first waves of the sea and wears out the onrush of the waters before they reach the shore. She leaped onto it, and it was a marvel that she could. She was flying, and beating the light air with newly grown wings, a pitiful bird, she skimmed the surface of the waves. As she flew, her mouth, chattering with a slender beak, gave out a sound like one of mourning and full of lament.

11.736 But when she touched the mute and bloodless body, she embraced the beloved limbs with her new wings and gave him cold kisses, in vain, with her hard beak. Whether Ceyx felt this, or only seemed to lift his face with the movement of the waves, the people could not tell. But he had felt it, and at last, through the pity of the gods, both were changed into birds. Their love, subject to the same fate, remained even then, and their marriage bond was not dissolved when they became birds. They mate and become parents, and for seven calm days in the winter season Alcyone broods on her nest as it floats on the sea. Then the sea's waves lie still: Aeolus guards the winds, keeps them from going out, and offers his grandchildren a calm sea.[24]

AESACUS

An old man tells how Priam's son Aesacus, mourning Hesperie, became a diving bird.

11.749 Some old man watched them flying together over the wide waters and praised their love, kept to the end. The man next to

24 Alcyone became the kingfisher (Greek halcyon); these seven calm winter days are the "halcyon days."

him, or perhaps the same one, as chance had it, said, "This one too, whom you see skimming the sea with his legs drawn up," and he pointed to a long-throated diver, "is of royal descent. If you want to trace his line down to him in unbroken order, his ancestors are Ilus and Assaracus and Ganymede, carried off for Jupiter, and old Laomedon and Priam, whose lot was the last days of Troy. That bird was Hector's brother. If he had not met his strange fate in early youth, he might perhaps have had a name no lesser than Hector's, even though Hector was born to the daughter of Dymas, while Aesacus, it is said, was born in secret under shady Ida to Alexirhoe, daughter of two-horned Granicus.[25]

11.764 Aesacus hated cities. Far from the glittering palace, he haunted the lonely mountains and the unambitious countryside, and rarely went to gatherings at Ilium. Yet his heart was not rustic or proof against love. He had often pursued Hesperie, Cebren's daughter, through all the woods, and now he saw her on her father's bank, drying in the sun the hair spread over her shoulders. Seen, the nymph fled, like a deer terrified by a tawny wolf, or a river duck caught far from the pool it has left by a hawk. The Trojan hero chased her, and swift with love he pressed her, swift with fear. Look! A snake hidden in the grass grazed the foot of the fleeing girl with its curved fang and left its venom in her body; her flight ended together with her life. Out of his mind, he embraced her lifeless body and cried, 'I regret it, I regret that I chased you! But I did not fear this, and winning was not worth such a price to me. 11.780 We two have destroyed you, poor girl: the snake gave the wound, I gave the cause. I am guiltier than the snake, and I shall send you my death as consolation for yours.' He spoke, and from a cliff that the hoarse waves had eaten away beneath, he plunged into the sea. Tethys, pitying him as he fell, caught him gently, covered him with feathers as he swam through the water, and he was not granted the death he longed for. The lover was indignant at being forced to live

25 The daughter of Dymas is Hecuba, Priam's queen. Granicus is a river god, pictured with horns like other rivers.

against his will, and that his soul should be prevented from leaving its wretched home when it wished to go. As soon as he had taken new wings on his shoulders, he flew up and again hurled his body down on the sea. His feathers softened the fall. Aesacus raged, dove headfirst into the depths, and tried the road to death again and again, without end. Love made him lean: the joints of his legs are long, his neck remains long, his head is far from his body. He loves the sea, and he keeps the name of diver because he dives."[26]

26 Tethys is a sea goddess, wife of Ocean.

Book 12

The Trojan War
The Greeks at Aulis; the House of Rumor; Cycnus; Nestor tells of Caeneus and the Centaurs; Achilles dies.

THE GREEKS AT AULIS

The Greek fleet gathers at Aulis, and Iphigenia is offered to Diana.

12.1 Father Priam, not knowing that Aesacus had taken on wings and was alive, mourned him; Hector and his brothers had even offered funeral rites at an empty tomb that bore his name. Only Paris was absent from that sad duty—Paris, who soon afterward brought a long war upon his country along with the wife he had stolen. After him came a thousand ships, sworn together, and with them the united force of the whole Pelasgian nation. Vengeance would not have been delayed, had savage winds not made the seas impassable, and had the land of Boeotia not held the ships ready to sail at Aulis, rich in fish. Here, when they had prepared a sacrifice to Jupiter in their fathers' fashion, and the ancient altar glowed with kindled fires, the Danaans saw a sea-blue serpent crawl up into a plane tree that stood right beside the rites they had begun.[1]

12.15 At the top of the tree was a nest of twice four birds. The serpent seized them, together with their mother as she flew around her lost brood, and buried them in its greedy mouth. Everyone was astounded. But the augur, the son of Thestor, who foresaw the truth, said: "We will win—rejoice, Pelasgians! Troy

1 Paris carried off Helen, wife of Menelaus of Sparta, and so caused the Trojan War. Aulis, on the coast of Boeotia, was where the Greek fleet gathered.

will fall, but our labor will be long drawn out." And he read the nine birds as the years of the war. The serpent, coiled just as it was around the green branches of the tree, turned to stone, and the rock kept the serpent's likeness. But Nereus stayed violent in the Aonian waters and would not carry the war across; and there are those who believe that Neptune was sparing Troy, because he had built the city's walls.[2]

12.27 But the son of Thestor did not think so: he knew, and did not keep silent, that the anger of the virgin goddess had to be appeased with a virgin's blood. When the public cause had overcome devotion, and the king had overcome the father, and Iphigenia stood before the altar, ready to give her chaste blood, while the attendants wept, the goddess was won over. She cast a cloud before their eyes, and amid the ritual and the bustle of the sacrifice and the voices of those praying, she is said to have put a doe in place of the Mycenaean girl. So when Diana had been soothed by the slaughter fitting for her, and the anger of Phoebe and the anger of the sea subsided together, the thousand ships took the winds at their sterns and, after enduring much, reached the Phrygian sand.[3]

THE HOUSE OF RUMOR

Rumor's bronze house, open on every side, repeats all that is said in the world.

12.39 There is a place in the middle of the world, between the lands and the sea and the regions of the sky, where the threefold universe meets. From there whatever exists anywhere, however far away, can be seen, and every voice reaches its hollow ears. Rumor holds it, and has chosen her home on its highest summit. She has given the house countless entrances and a thousand openings, and has closed its thresholds with no doors: it stands open night and day. It is made entirely of resounding bronze; all

2 The son of Thestor is Calchas, the Greeks' seer.
3 Iphigenia was the daughter of Agamemnon, king of Mycenae and commander of the Greek fleet.

of it hums, gives back voices, and repeats what it hears. There is no rest inside, no silence anywhere; and yet there is no shouting, only the murmur of low voices, like the sound of the sea's waves when you hear them from far off, or like the sound the last rolls of thunder make when Jupiter has set the dark clouds crashing.[4] 12.53 Crowds fill the halls: a fickle throng comes and goes, and thousands of rumors, fictions mixed with truths, wander everywhere and roll confused words about. Of these, some fill idle ears with talk, others carry what they have been told elsewhere; the fiction grows in size, and each new teller adds something to what he has heard. Credulity is there, and rash Error, and empty Joy, and panic-stricken Fears, and sudden Sedition, and Whispers of doubtful origin. Rumor herself sees whatever is happening in heaven, on the sea, and on earth, and searches out the whole world.

ACHILLES AND CYCNUS

Achilles fights Cycnus, who cannot be wounded, strangles him, and sees him become a swan.

12.64 She had made it known that Greek ships were approaching with a brave army, and so the enemy did not arrive in arms unexpected. The Trojans barred the landing and guarded the shore, and you, Protesilaus, were the first to fall, as fate decreed, by Hector's spear. The battles, once joined, cost the Danaans dear, and Hector made his name by killing a brave man. Nor did the Phrygians learn at small cost in blood what an Achaean right hand could do. Already the Sigean shore was red; already Cycnus, Neptune's son, had given a thousand men to death; already Achilles was pressing on in his chariot and laying low whole columns with the stroke of his spear from Pelion. Seeking either Cycnus or Hector through the battle lines, he met Cycnus (Hector had been put off until the tenth year). Then, urging on his horses, their white necks pressed by the yoke, he steered his

4 The House of Rumor: Ovid's personified Fama, goddess of report and gossip, in her echoing bronze palace.

chariot at the enemy, and brandishing his quivering spears in his arms, he said: "Whoever you are, young man, take this as comfort in death: that you were slain by Haemonian Achilles."[5]

12.82 So spoke the grandson of Aeacus; his heavy spear followed his words. But although there was no error in that sure spear, the point of the iron he threw achieved nothing; it only bruised the chest, as if with a blunt blow. "Son of a goddess—for we have known you by fame beforehand," said the other, "why are you amazed that I am unwounded?" (for Achilles was amazed). "This helmet you see, tawny with its horsehair crest, and this hollow shield, the burden of my left arm—these are no help to me: I wear them for show. Mars too takes up arms for this reason! Strip away all the protection armor gives, and still I will come away unscratched. It is something to be born not of a Nereid, but of the one who rules Nereus and his daughters and the whole sea."[6]

12.95 He spoke, and hurled at the grandson of Aeacus a spear that lodged in the curve of his shield: it broke through the bronze and the next nine layers of oxhide, but stopped at the tenth circle. The hero shook it out and again, with his strong hand, hurled quivering spears: again the body was unwounded and whole! Nor could a third spear-point graze Cycnus, though he stood exposed and offered himself to the blow. Achilles blazed up just like a bull in the open arena, when he charges with terrible horn at the purple cloths that provoke him and feels his blows eluded. He checked, though, whether the iron had fallen from his spear: it was still fixed to the shaft. "Is my hand weak, then," he said, "and has it poured out on one man all the strength it had before? 12.108 For surely it was strong when I was first to throw down the walls of Lyrnesus, and when I filled Tenedos and Eetion's Thebes with their own blood, and when the Caicus flowed purple with the slaughter of its people, and Telephus twice felt the work of my spear. Here too, with so many

5 Protesilaus was the first Greek to leap ashore at Troy and the first to die.
6 Achilles' mother was the sea-nymph Thetis, a daughter of Nereus; Cycnus' father was Neptune himself.

slain, whose heaps along the shore I both made and see, my right hand has been strong, and is strong." He spoke and, as though he distrusted what he had done before, threw his spear at Menoetes, one of the Lycian rank and file, who faced him, and broke through both his breastplate and the chest beneath. As the man beat the heavy earth with his dying breast, Achilles drew that same spear from the warm wound and said: "This is the hand, this the spear with which I have just conquered: I will use the same against this man; may the outcome, I pray, be the same!"[7]

12.122 So speaking, he went for Cycnus again. The ash spear did not miss: unavoided, it rang on his left shoulder, then rebounded as if from a wall or a solid cliff. Yet where Cycnus had been struck, Achilles had seen him marked with blood and had rejoiced—in vain: there was no wound; that blood was Menoetes'! Then indeed, roaring, he leaped headlong from his high chariot and attacked his unconcerned enemy at close quarters with his gleaming sword. He saw that shield and helmet were pierced by the blade—but that on the hard body the iron itself was damaged too!

12.132 He could bear it no longer. Drawing back his shield, he struck the man's face with it three, four times, and his hollow temples with the hilt of his sword; as Cycnus gave way, he followed and pressed him, confused him, rushed at him, and gave the stunned man no rest. Terror seized Cycnus, darkness swam before his eyes, and as he stepped backward, a stone in the middle of the field blocked his way. Driven back against it, Cycnus fell backward, and Achilles twisted him over with great force and dashed him to the ground. Then, pressing down on his chest with his shield and his hard knees, he dragged at the straps of his helmet; drawn tight beneath the chin, they crushed his throat and robbed his life of both passages of breath. Achilles was preparing to strip the man he had conquered: he

7 Telephus, king of Mysia on the river Caicus, was wounded by Achilles' spear and later healed by it.

saw the armor left empty. The god of the sea had changed the body into the white bird whose name it had just borne.[8]

NESTOR'S TALE: CAENEUS

At a feast, Nestor tells of Caeneus, born a woman and made an invulnerable man.

12.146 This labor, this fight, brought a rest of many days, and both sides laid down their arms and halted. And while watchful guards kept the Phrygian walls, and watchful guards kept the Argive trenches, a festal day came, on which Achilles, Cycnus' conqueror, appeased Pallas with the blood of a slaughtered heifer. When he had laid its cut entrails on the hot altars, and the savor, pleasing to the gods, had risen into the upper air, the rites took their share, and the rest was given to the tables. The chiefs reclined on couches, filled their bodies with roasted meat, and with wine relieved both their cares and their thirst. 12.157 No lyres delighted them, no songs of voices, no long pipe of many-holed boxwood; instead they drew out the night in talk, and valor was the matter of their speaking. They recounted battles, the enemy's and their own, and took turns, with pleasure, recalling dangers often faced and come through—for what would Achilles talk about, or what would they rather talk about in the presence of great Achilles? The recent victory, the conquest of Cycnus, was above all the subject of conversation. It seemed a marvel to everyone that the young man's body could be pierced by no weapon, could not be overcome by wounds, and wore down iron.

12.168 The grandson of Aeacus himself marveled at this, the Achaeans marveled at this, when Nestor spoke: "In your generation Cycnus was the only one to scorn iron, to be pierced by no blow. But I myself once saw Caeneus of Perrhaebia endure a thousand wounds with his body unharmed—Caeneus of Perrhaebia, famous for his deeds, who lived on Othrys. And what made it still more marvelous in him: he had been born a

8 Cycnus (Latin cycnus or cygnus) means "swan."

woman." Everyone present was carried away by the strangeness of the wonder, and they asked him to tell the story. Among them Achilles said: "Come, tell us! For all of us have the same wish to hear, eloquent old man, wisdom of our age: who Caeneus was, why he was changed into the opposite sex, in what campaign and in what contest of battle you came to know him, by whom he was conquered, if he was conquered by anyone."[9]

12.182 Then the old man said: "Although slow old age hinders me, and much that I saw in my early years escapes me, still I remember more. And among so many deeds of war and peace there is nothing that clings more firmly to my heart. If long old age could make anyone a witness of many deeds, I have lived two hundred years; now I am living my third century. Caenis, daughter of Elatus, was famous for her beauty, the loveliest girl in Thessaly. Throughout the neighboring cities, and throughout your own cities (for she was your countrywoman, Achilles), she was sought, in vain, in the prayers of many suitors. Peleus too might perhaps have tried for that marriage, but he had already won your mother as his bride, or she had been promised to him. Caenis would not marry into any bridal chamber; and while she was walking along a lonely shore she was raped by the god of the sea (so rumor reported). And when Neptune had taken his pleasure in this new love,

12.199 he said: 'You may pray without fear of refusal: choose what you wish!' (the same rumor reported this too). 'This wrong,' said Caenis, 'makes my wish a great one: to be able to suffer nothing like this ever again. Grant that I may not be a woman, and you will have given me everything.' She spoke the last words in a deeper tone, and that voice could seem to be a man's—as indeed it was. For the god of the deep sea had already granted the prayer, and had given besides that he could never be wounded by any blow or fall by the sword. Glad of the gift, the man of Atrax went away, spent his life in manly pursuits, and roamed the fields of the Peneus.

9 Nestor, the aged king of Pylos, was said to have lived through three generations of men.

THE BATTLE OF THE LAPITHS AND THE CENTAURS

Drunken Centaurs try to carry off the bride at Pirithous' wedding, and a battle follows.

12.210 The son of bold Ixion had married Hippodame, and had invited the fierce cloud-born Centaurs to recline at tables set out in rows in a cave screened by trees. The Haemonian chiefs were there, I was there myself, and the festive palace resounded with the mingled crowd. Then they sang the wedding hymn, the halls were smoky with fires, and the bride arrived, surrounded by a band of matrons and young wives, outstanding in her beauty. We called Pirithous fortunate in that bride—an omen we very nearly made false. For your heart, Eurytus, most savage of the savage Centaurs, burned as much at the sight of the girl as with wine, and drunkenness, doubled by lust, took control. At once the tables were overturned and the banquet thrown into chaos, and the new bride was seized by the hair and dragged off by force. Eurytus carried off Hippodame, the others whichever woman each fancied or could get, and it was the very image of a captured city. The house rang with women's screams. We all rose quickly, and Theseus was the first: 'What madness[10]

12.228 drives you, Eurytus,' he said, 'to provoke Pirithous while I am alive, and, without knowing it, to wrong two men in one?' Eurytus made no reply (for he could not defend such deeds with words), but went for his challenger's face with insolent hands and struck his noble chest. By chance there was an ancient mixing bowl nearby, rough with figures in relief; vast as it was, the son of Aegeus, vaster still, lifted it and hurled it straight into the Centaur's face. Spewing clots of blood, and brains and wine together, from the wound and from his mouth, he lay on his back on the soaked sand, kicking. His two-formed brothers flared up at his death, and all of them, vying with one another, cried with one voice: 'Arms, arms!' Wine gave them courage, and

10 The Centaurs, half man and half horse, were born of Ixion and a cloud; Pirithous, king of the Lapiths, was Ixion's son by a mortal mother.

in the first fighting cups flew through the air, and fragile jars and rounded cauldrons—things once suited to feasting, now to war and slaughter.

12.245 Amycus, son of Ophion, was the first who did not shrink from stripping the inner shrine of its gifts. He was first to snatch from the sanctuary a chandelier crowded with flashing lamps; lifting it high, like a man who strives to break a bull's white neck with the sacrificial ax, he smashed it against the forehead of Celadon the Lapith, and left the bones crushed together in a face no one could recognize. His eyes leaped out, the bones of his face were shattered, and his nose was driven back and fixed in the middle of his palate. Pelates of Pella, with a leg wrenched from a maple table, laid Amycus on the ground, his chin forced down onto his chest; and as he spat out teeth mixed with dark blood, Pelates struck him a second time and sent him to the shades of Tartarus.

12.258 Gryneus, who was standing nearest, gazed with a terrible face at the smoking altars and said, 'Why don't we use these?' Then he lifted the huge altar, fire and all, hurled it into the middle of the Lapith ranks, and crushed two men, Broteas and Orius. Orius' mother was Mycale, who, it was well known, had often drawn down with her chants the horns of the resisting moon. 'You won't get away with this, if only I can lay my hands on a weapon!' Exadius had said—and he found something like a weapon: the antlers of a stag, hung up as an offering on a tall pine. With their double branch Gryneus was pierced in the eyes, and his eyes were gouged out: part of them stuck to the antlers, part ran down into his beard and hung there, clotted with blood.

12.271 Then Rhoetus snatched from the middle of the altars a blazing brand of plum wood and, from the right side, grazed the temples of Charaxus, covered with tawny hair. Caught by the swift flame, his hair blazed like a dry field of grain, and the blood seared in the wound gave a terrible hissing sound—like the sound that iron red-hot from the fire usually makes, when the smith has drawn it out with his curved tongs and plunges it into the trough: it hisses and whistles as it sinks into the warm-

ing water. Wounded, Charaxus shook the greedy fire from his shaggy hair, and lifted onto his shoulders a threshold stone torn from the ground, a wagon's load—so heavy that its very weight kept him from hurling it at the enemy. The stone mass crushed his comrade Cometes, who was standing closer to him. Rhoetus did not hold back his joy: 'So, I pray,' he said, 'may the rest of your camp's crowd be just as brave!' 12.287 and with the half-burned brand he struck again and reopened the wound; three, four times he broke the joints of the skull with heavy blows, and the bones sank into the liquid brain. The victor moved on to Euagrus, Corythus and Dryas. When Corythus, the first of these, his cheeks covered with youth's first down, fell, Euagrus said: 'What glory have you won by felling a boy?' Rhoetus would not let him say more, but savagely thrust the red flames into the speaking man's open mouth, and through the mouth into his chest. You too, savage Dryas, he pursued, whirling the fire around his head; but with you the outcome was not the same. As he exulted in his success and his ceaseless slaughter, you pierced him with a fire-hardened stake where the neck joins the shoulder. Rhoetus groaned, barely wrenched the stake from the hard bone, and fled, drenched in his own blood.

12.302 Orneus fled too, and Lycabas, and Medon, wounded in his right shoulder, and Thaumas with Pisenor, and Mermeros, who had lately beaten everyone in the footrace (now, wounded, he ran more slowly!), and Pholus, and Melaneus, and Abas the boar-hunter, and the augur Astylos, who had tried in vain to dissuade his people from the war. He even said to Nessus, who was afraid of being wounded: 'Don't run! You are being saved for the bow of Hercules.' But Eurynomus and Lycidas and Areos and Imbreus did not escape death: the right hand of Dryas struck them all down from the front. You too, Crenaeus, took a wound in front, although you had turned your back in flight: for as you looked back, you received the heavy iron between your two eyes, where the nose meets the base of the forehead.[11]

12.316 Amid all this uproar Aphidas lay drowsing, every vein lulled without end, and never woke. In his slack hand he still held a cup of mixed wine, and he sprawled on the shaggy hide of a bear from Ossa. When Phorbas saw him from far off, raising no weapon and of no use to anyone, he slipped his fingers into the throwing-thong and said, 'You will drink your wine mixed with the Styx!' Delaying no longer, he hurled his javelin at the young man. The iron-tipped ash was driven into his neck as he happened to lie on his back. His death came without feeling. From his full throat dark blood flowed onto the couches and into the cup itself.

12.327 I saw Petraeus trying to tear an acorn-bearing oak out of the ground. While he wrapped it in his arms, shook it this way and that and rocked the loosened timber, Pirithous' lance was hurled into Petraeus' ribs and pinned his chest to the hard oak he was wrestling. By Pirithous' valor, they said, Lycus fell; by Pirithous' valor, Chromis. But both brought the victor less renown than Dictys and Helops did. Helops was pierced by a javelin that made a passage through his temples: thrown from the right, it drove through to his left ear. Dictys was fleeing in panic from Ixion's son, who pressed hard on him, when he slipped from the sheer edge of a mountain ridge. He fell headlong, and the weight of his body broke a huge ash tree, and he spitted his own belly on its broken trunk.

12.341 Aphareus came on in triumph and tried to hurl a rock torn from the mountain. As he hurled it, the son of Aegeus struck first with an oak club and broke the huge bones of his elbow. He had neither time nor interest to go further and put the useless body to death. Instead he leaped onto the back of tall Bienor, who was used to carrying no one but himself. He set his knee against his ribs, held the hair he had grabbed in his left hand, and with the knotty oak smashed his face, his threatening mouth and his very hard temples. With that oak he laid low Nedymnus and Lycopes the javelin-thrower; Hippasus, whose chest was shielded by his flowing beard; Ripheus, who towered

11 Nessus would later die by Hercules' poisoned arrow, as told in Book 9.

above the tops of the forests; and Thereus, who used to catch bears in the mountains of Haemonia and carry them home alive and raging.[12]

12.355 Demoleon could not bear to see Theseus press his success in the fight any further. With a mighty effort he tried to tear an aged pine from its dense thicket. When he could not, he broke it off and hurled it at his enemy. But Theseus drew back well away from the oncoming missile at Pallas' warning—or so he himself wanted people to believe. Still, the tree did not fall harmlessly: it sheared from tall Crantor's throat his chest and his left shoulder. He had been your father's armor-bearer, Achilles. Amyntor, ruler of the Dolopians, defeated in war, had given him to the son of Aeacus as a pledge and guarantee of peace.[13]

12.366 When Peleus saw him from a distance, torn apart by that hideous wound, he said, 'Take this, at least, as an offering at your grave, Crantor, dearest of young men!' With his powerful arm, and with all the strength of his spirit as well, he hurled an ash-wood spear at Demoleon. It burst through the lattice of his ribs and, lodged in the bones, quivered there. Demoleon pulled out the shaft with his hand, but without its point (even the shaft barely came), and the point stayed caught in his lung. Pain itself gave strength to his spirit: wounded as he was, he reared up against his enemy and trampled the man under his horse's hooves. Peleus took the blows on his helmet and ringing shield, guarded his shoulders, held his weapons out before him, and with a single thrust through the forequarters pierced both his chests.

12.378 Before this, though, Demoleon had sent Phlegraeus and Hyles to their deaths at long range, and Iphinous and Clanis in close combat. To these was added Dorylas, who wore a wolf's pelt covering his temples and, in place of a cruel weapon, a pair of curving bull's horns reddened with much blood. I said to him (for my spirit gave me strength), 'Look how far your horns fall

12 The son of Aegeus is Theseus, the Athenian hero and Pirithous' close friend.
13 Nestor is telling this story to Achilles at Troy; Achilles' father is Peleus, son of Aeacus.

short of my iron!' and I hurled my javelin. Since he could not dodge it, he raised his right hand before his forehead, which was about to take the wound: his hand was pinned to his forehead. A shout went up. But Peleus, who was standing closer, struck him, stuck fast and overcome by that bitter wound, with his sword in the middle of the belly. He leaped forward and fiercely dragged his own entrails along the ground, and trampled what he dragged, and burst what he trampled, and tangled his legs in them too, and collapsed with his belly emptied.

CYLLARUS AND HYLONOME

The Centaur Cyllarus is killed, and his mate Hylonome dies on the same weapon.

12.393 Nor did your beauty save you in the fight, Cyllarus—if indeed we grant beauty to a nature like his. His beard was just beginning, a golden beard, and golden hair hung from his shoulders halfway down his forequarters. There was a pleasing vigor in his face. His neck, shoulders, hands and chest came close to the much-praised statues of the sculptors, and so did every part of him that was man. Nor was the horse's form beneath the man flawed or inferior to him: give it a neck and head, and it would be worthy of Castor, so fit for a rider was its back, so high its chest with muscle. All of him was blacker than black pitch, but his tail was white, and his legs were white as well.[14]

12.404 Many females of his own kind sought him, but Hylonome alone won him—no female more graceful lived among the half-beasts in the high woods. She alone held Cyllarus, by coaxing, by loving, and by owning that she loved him; by her grooming too, as far as there can be grooming in such limbs. She would smooth her hair with a comb; she would twine herself now with rosemary, now with violets or roses, and sometimes wear white lilies. Twice a day she washed her face in springs that flowed down from the heights of the Pagasaean forest, twice a day she

14 Castor, twin brother of Pollux, was famous as a tamer and rider of horses.

dipped her body in the river, and over her shoulder or her left side she draped only becoming pelts from choice wild beasts. 12.416 Their love was equal. Together they roamed the mountains, together they went into caves; and that day too they had entered the Lapiths' palace side by side, and side by side they were waging the fierce war. Who threw it is unknown: a javelin came from the left and pierced you, Cyllarus, just below where the chest meets the neck. Your heart, hurt by a small wound, grew cold, along with your whole body, once the weapon was pulled out. At once Hylonome took his dying limbs in her arms, laid her hand on the wound to soothe it, put her lips to his lips and tried to hold back the fleeing soul. When she saw him dead, she spoke words that the uproar kept from reaching my ears, threw herself on the weapon that had pierced him, and, dying, embraced her husband.

12.429 Before my eyes, too, stands Phaeocomes, who had bound six lion pelts together with knotted ties, protecting man and horse alike. He hurled a log that two teams of oxen could hardly have moved and smashed Tectaphos, son of Olenus, from the crown of his head down. But as he was getting ready to strip the fallen man of his armor (your father knows this), I drove my sword deep into the spoiler's groin. Chthonius and Teleboas also lie dead by my sword. The first had carried a forked branch, the second a javelin, and with that javelin he wounded me: you can see the marks! The old scar still shows there. 12.445 That was when I ought to have been sent to capture Pergama; then I could, if not have overcome, at least have held back great Hector's arms with mine! But at that time Hector was nobody, or a boy, and now my age fails me. Why should I tell you of Periphas, victor over the double-formed Pyraethus? Why tell of Ampyx, who drove a pointless cornel-wood shaft into the face of four-footed Echeclus as he charged? Macareus drove a crowbar into the chest of Erigdupus of Pelethronium and laid him low. I remember, too, a hunting spear hurled by Nessus' hands and buried in Cymelus' groin. And you should not think that Mopsus, son of Ampyx, only sang of things to come: struck by Mopsus' javelin, the two-

formed Hodites sank down and tried in vain to speak, his tongue pinned to his chin and his chin to his throat.[15]

THE END OF CAENEUS

The Centaurs bury Caeneus under a forest of trees, and a tawny bird flies out.

12.459 Caeneus had sent five to their deaths: Styphelus and Bromus, Antimachus and Elymus, and Pyraechmes the ax-bearer. I do not remember their wounds; the number and the names I noted. Out rushed Latreus, huge of limb and body, armed with the spoils of Halesus of Emathia, whom he had killed. His age was between youth and old age: his strength was a young man's, but gray flecked his temples. Conspicuous with his shield, his sword and his Macedonian pike, he turned his face toward each army in turn, clashed his weapons, rode round in a fixed circle, and boldly poured out these many words into the empty air:[16]

12.470 'And must I put up with you too, Caenis? For to me you will always be a woman, to me you will be Caenis. Has your birth not reminded you? Does it not cross your mind by what deed you won your reward, and at what price you got that false appearance of a man? Consider what you were born as, or what you suffered, and go, take up the distaff along with your wool baskets and twist the threads with your thumb: leave wars to men.' As he boasted like this, Caeneus hurled his spear and tore open his flank, stretched out in the gallop, where man was joined to horse. Latreus raged with pain and struck the young man of Phyllus in his bare face with his pike. It bounced off no differently than hail from a rooftop, or as when someone strikes a hollow drum with a small stone. He attacked at close quarters and struggled to bury his sword in that hard flank, but there was no way in for the sword. 12.484 'Still, you will not escape! Since the point is blunt, you will have your throat cut with the middle of

15 Pergama was the citadel of Troy, often standing for the city itself.
16 Caeneus had been born a girl, Caenis; after Neptune raped her, he granted her wish to become a man who could not be wounded.

the blade,' he said. He angled the sword at his side and swept it round, his long right arm encircling his loins. The stroke rang as if it had struck a body of marble, and the blade broke and its pieces flew apart off that hardened skin. When Caeneus had shown his unharmed limbs long enough to the astonished Centaur, he said, 'Now come, let us test your bodies with my steel!' He drove his deadly sword up to the hilt into his forequarters, moved it blindly through his vitals, twisted it with his hand, and made a wound within the wound. And now the frenzied two-formed creatures rushed at him with a huge shout, and all of them hurled and thrust their weapons at this one man. The weapons fell blunted: Caeneus, son of Elatus, remained unpierced and unbloodied by every blow.

12.498 The unheard-of thing had stunned them. 'Oh, what a huge disgrace!' cried Monychus. 'We, a whole people, are beaten by one, and barely a man at that! Though he is a man, and we, by our sluggish deeds, are what he once was. What good are our huge limbs? What good our double strength, and the fact that a twofold nature has joined in us the strongest creatures in the world? I do not believe we are the sons of a goddess mother, or of Ixion, who was so great that he set his hopes on lofty Juno: we are beaten by a half-male enemy! Roll rocks and beams and whole mountains on top of him, and crush the stubborn life out of him by hurling forests! Let a forest press on his throat, and weight will do the work of a wound.'[17]

12.510 He said, and, happening to find a tree trunk thrown down by the mad force of the south wind, he hurled it at his powerful enemy. He set the example, and in a short time Othrys was bare of trees and Pelion had no shade. Buried under the huge mound, Caeneus heaved beneath the weight of trees and bore the piled oaks on his hard shoulders. But once the load had grown over his face and head and his breath had no air to draw, he sometimes weakened, sometimes tried in vain to lift himself into the open air and roll off the forests thrown on him, and at times he

17 Ixion tried to seduce Juno; Jupiter deceived him with a cloud in her likeness, and from it the Centaurs were born.

moved them—just as if lofty Ida, which we see there, look, were shaken by an earthquake. 12.522 His end is uncertain. Some said that his body was thrust down to empty Tartarus by the weight of the forests. The son of Ampyx denied it: he saw a bird with tawny wings rise from the middle of the heap into the clear air. I saw it then for the first time, and for the last. When Mopsus saw it circling its own camp in gentle flight, filling the air all around with loud cries, he followed it with his mind and his eyes alike and said, 'Hail, glory of the Lapith race, once the greatest of men, but now a bird unique, Caeneus!' The thing was believed on the word of the one who told it. Grief added anger, and we were outraged that one man had been crushed by so many enemies. Nor did we stop venting our grief with the sword until some of them were given to death, and flight and night removed the rest."

PERICLYMENUS

Nestor tells Tlepolemus how Hercules killed Periclymenus, who had taken the form of an eagle.

12.536 While the Pylian was telling of these battles between the Lapiths and the half-human Centaurs, Tlepolemus could not bear in silence the pain of Alcides being passed over, and said: "It is strange that you have forgotten the glories of Hercules, old sir! Surely my father often used to tell me that the cloud-born had been tamed by him." To this the Pylian answered sadly: "Why do you force me to remember wrongs, to tear open griefs long closed over and hidden from view, and to confess my hatred of your father and my grievances against him? He did deeds beyond belief—by the gods!—and filled the world with his merits, which I would rather be able to deny. But we do not praise Deiphobus, or Polydamas, or Hector himself—for who would praise an enemy?[18] 12.549 That father of yours once leveled the walls of Messene, destroyed the guiltless cities of Elis and

18 Tlepolemus, a son of Hercules, led the contingent from Rhodes at Troy; Deiphobus and Polydamas were Trojan warriors.

Pylos, and brought sword and fire into my own home. To say nothing of the others he killed, we were twice six sons of Neleus, a splendid band of young men; twice six fell by Hercules' strength, all but one—me. That the others could be beaten must be borne. But strange was the death of Periclymenus, to whom Neptune, the founder of Neleus' line, had given the power to take whatever shapes he wished and to lay aside again the shapes he had taken. When he had changed into every form in vain, he turned into the likeness of the bird that carries thunderbolts in its curved talons, dearest to the king of the gods. Using a bird's strength, with wings and hooked beak and barbed talons, he had torn the hero's face: 12.564 the Tirynthian aimed his all-too-unerring bow at him, and as he carried his body high among the clouds and hovered there, he struck him where the wing joins the side. The wound was not serious, but the sinews it cut failed and denied him movement and the strength to fly. He fell to earth, his weakened wings no longer catching the air, and the light arrow, where it had stuck in his wing, was forced in by the weight of the body it pierced, and driven through the top of his side and out at the left of his throat. Now, most handsome commander of the Rhodian fleet, do you think I owe praises to the deeds of your Hercules? Still, I avenge my brothers no further than by keeping silent about his brave deeds: my friendship with you is sound." When Neleus' son had said all this in his sweet voice, and the gift of Bacchus had gone round again after the old man's talk, they rose from their couches; the rest of the night was given to sleep.[19]

THE DEATH OF ACHILLES

Neptune asks Apollo to guide Paris' arrow, and Achilles is killed.

12.580 But the god who governs the waves of the sea with his trident grieved, with a father's heart, for his son's body turned into Phaethon's bird. Hating savage Achilles, he nursed a vengeful

19 Hercules is called "the Tirynthian" from Tiryns in the Argolid, where he was raised.

anger far beyond civil bounds. And now, when the war had dragged on for nearly twice five years, he addressed long-haired Smintheus with these words: "O dearest to me by far of my brother's sons, you who built with me the walls of Troy in vain, do you groan at all when you see these citadels about to fall at any moment? Do you grieve at all for so many thousands slain defending the walls? Do you—not to go through them all—think of the shade of Hector, dragged around his own Pergama? And yet that fierce Achilles, bloodier than war itself, still lives, the destroyer of our work. Let him face me! I would make him feel what my triple spear can do. But since I am not allowed to meet the enemy hand to hand, destroy him unawares with a hidden arrow!"[20]

12.597 The Delian nodded and, indulging his uncle's wishes and his own alike, came veiled in a cloud to the Trojan line. In the midst of the slaughter he saw Paris shooting an occasional arrow at nameless Achaeans. Revealing himself as a god, he said, "Why waste your arrows on the blood of the rank and file? If you care at all for your people, turn on Aeacus' grandson and avenge your slain brothers!" He said, and pointing to Peleus' son, who was laying low Trojan bodies with his sword, he turned Paris' bow toward him and guided the sure arrows with his deadly hand. This was the one thing old Priam could rejoice at after Hector. So you, Achilles, conqueror of so many, were conquered by the timid abductor of a Greek wife! But if you had to fall to a woman's kind of warfare, you would rather have fallen to the double ax of Thermodon![21]

12.612 Now that terror of the Phrygians, glory and bulwark of the Pelasgian name, Aeacus' grandson, a head unconquerable in war, had burned: the same god who had armed him was burning him. Now he is ash, and of Achilles, so great, there remains some little something that would hardly fill a small urn. But his

20 Neptune's son Cycnus, killed by Achilles, became a swan, the bird of Phaethon's kinsman, the earlier Cycnus of Book 2; Smintheus is a title of Apollo, who with Neptune built Troy's walls.

21 The river Thermodon was the home of the Amazons, the warrior women whose queen Penthesilea Achilles had killed.

glory lives, enough to fill the whole world! This is the measure that matches the man; in this the son of Peleus is equal to himself and knows nothing of empty Tartarus. Even his shield—so that you could tell whose it had been—stirs up war, and arms are taken up over arms. Tydeus' son did not dare to claim them, nor Ajax son of Oileus, nor the younger son of Atreus, nor the elder, greater in war and in years, nor any others: only Telamon's son and Laertes' son had the confidence to seek such glory. The descendant of Tantalus shifted the burden and the resentment away from himself: he ordered the Argive leaders to sit in the middle of the camp and passed the judgment of the dispute on to them all.[22]

22 The god is Vulcan, maker of Achilles' armor and lord of fire. Tydeus' son is Diomedes, Atreus' sons Menelaus and Agamemnon (the descendant of Tantalus), Telamon's son Ajax, and Laertes' son Ulysses.

Book 13

The arms of Achilles; after Troy
Ajax and Ulysses dispute the arms; Troy falls; Hecuba; Aeneas sets out; Galatea and Polyphemus.

THE CONTEST FOR THE ARMS: AJAX

Ajax claims Achilles' arms before the Greek leaders, citing his deeds and his birth.

13.1 The leaders took their seats, and with the common soldiers standing around them in a ring, Ajax, master of the sevenfold shield, rose to face them. Impatient in his anger as always, he glared back at the Sigean shore and at the fleet on the shore, stretched out his hands, and said, "By Jupiter! We are pleading our case in front of the ships, and Ulysses is matched against me! Yet he did not hesitate to give way before Hector's flames, which I withstood, which I drove from this fleet. It is safer, then, to fight with made-up words than with your hands! But speaking does not come readily to me, nor doing to him. As much as I am worth in fierce war and the battle line, so much is he worth in talk.[1]

13.13 Still, Pelasgians, I do not think my deeds need recounting to you, for you saw them. Let Ulysses tell of his own, done without a witness, known only to the night. I seek a great prize, I admit, but my rival robs it of its honor. It is nothing for Ajax to be proud of, to have won anything, however huge, that Ulysses has hoped for. He has already carried off his reward for this con-

1 Sigeum was the headland near Troy where the Greek ships lay beached. Ajax, son of Telamon, was famed for his huge shield of seven layers of oxhide.

test, since, when he is beaten, it will be said that he competed with me. And if my courage were open to doubt, I would still be strong in noble birth, a son of Telamon, who took the walls of Troy under brave Hercules and entered the shores of Colchis in the ship from Pagasae. His father is Aeacus, who gives judgment to the silent dead in the place where the heavy rock weighs down Sisyphus, son of Aeolus.[2]

13.27 Supreme Jupiter acknowledges Aeacus and owns him as his son: so Ajax is third in descent from Jupiter. And yet, Achaeans, let this lineage not help my case unless I share it with great Achilles. He was my cousin: it is my cousin's arms I seek! Why do you, sprung from the blood of Sisyphus and just like him in theft and deceit, foist the names of a foreign family on the house of Aeacus? Or are arms to be denied me because I came to arms first, with no informer to drive me, and will he be thought the better man who took them up last and dodged service by faking madness, until the son of Nauplius, cleverer than he but less wise for his own good, unraveled the schemes of his cowardly mind and dragged him to the arms he had avoided? Is he to take the best arms because he was unwilling to take up any, while I go unhonored and robbed of my cousin's gifts because I offered myself to the first dangers?[3]

13.43 I wish that madness of his had been real, or had been believed, and that this companion, this instigator of crimes, had never come to the Phrygian citadels! Then Lemnos would not hold you, son of Poeas, marooned there to our shame! You who now, they say, hidden in woodland caves, move the very rocks with your groans and call down on Laertes' son what he deserves—and if there are gods, you do not call it down in vain! And now he who swore with us to the same war, one of our leaders—alas!—he whom the arrows of Hercules have as their heir, broken by sickness and hunger, is clothed and fed by birds,

2 Telamon sacked Troy with Hercules a generation earlier and sailed with Jason on the Argo, built at Pagasae. His father Aeacus became one of the judges of the dead.
3 A slanderous story made Ulysses the son of the trickster Sisyphus rather than of Laertes. Palamedes, son of Nauplius, exposed Ulysses' feigned madness and was later destroyed by him.

and spends in hunting winged creatures the shafts that are owed to the fate of Troy. Yet he lives, because he did not keep company with Ulysses. Unhappy Palamedes, too, would rather have been left behind: he would be alive, or at least he would have had a death without the stain of a crime![4] 13.58 For this fellow, remembering all too well the madness that had been so damagingly exposed, pretended that Palamedes was betraying the Danaan cause; he proved the charge he had invented, and displayed the gold he had buried in advance. So he has drained the Achaeans of strength, by exile or by death: this is how Ulysses fights, this is why Ulysses is to be feared. Though he may outdo even loyal Nestor in eloquence, he will never bring me to think that deserting Nestor was no crime. When Nestor, slowed by his horse's wound and worn out by his years, begged Ulysses for help, he was betrayed by his comrade. That I am not inventing these charges Tydeus' son knows well: he called him again and again by name, rebuked him, and reproached his frightened friend for running away. The gods above look on mortal affairs with just eyes![5]

13.71 Look: the man who gave no help now needs help, and as he had abandoned another, so he deserved to be abandoned. He had laid down the law for himself. He shouts for his comrades. I am there, and I see him trembling, pale with fear, dreading the death to come. I set the bulk of my shield in front of him, covered him where he lay, and saved his worthless life—there is very little glory in that. If you insist on competing, let us go back to that place: bring back the enemy, your wound and your usual fear, hide behind my shield, and compete with me under it! But once I had rescued him, the man whose wounds had left him no strength to stand ran off, slowed by no wound at all. Hector is here, leading the gods with him into battle, and wherever he charges, it is not only you who are terrified, Ulysses, but the

4 Philoctetes, son of Poeas, inherited Hercules' bow and arrows; when a snakebite left him with a festering wound, the Greeks abandoned him on the island of Lemnos on Ulysses' advice.

5 In the *Iliad* Diomedes rescues the old king Nestor when Ulysses ignores his call.

brave as well, such is the terror he brings in his wake. 13.85 Him, as he exulted in the success of his bloody slaughter, I laid flat on his back from a distance with a huge weight. Him, when he demanded someone to fight, I alone withstood; and you, Achaeans, prayed for my lot to come out, and your prayers were answered! If you ask how this fight turned out, I was not beaten by him. Look, the Trojans are bringing sword and fire and Jupiter against the Danaan fleet: where now is eloquent Ulysses? I, surely, shielded a thousand ships with my own breast, the hope of your return: give me the arms in return for all those ships! And if I may speak the truth, more honor is being sought for these arms than for me; our glory is joined together, and Ajax is being sought for the arms, not the arms for Ajax.[6]

13.98 Let the Ithacan set against these Rhesus, and unwarlike Dolon, and Priam's son Helenus, taken captive along with the stolen Pallas: nothing was done by daylight, nothing without Diomedes. If you are going to give these arms for such paltry services, divide them, and let Diomedes have the larger share! But what use are they to the Ithacan, who does his work in secret, always unarmed, and tricks an unwary enemy by stealth? The very gleam of the helmet, shining with bright gold, will betray his ambushes and expose him where he hides. Nor will the Dulichian's head bear the great weight of Achilles' helmet; the spear from Pelion cannot help being heavy and burdensome to unwarlike arms; nor will the shield, embossed with an image of the vast world, suit a cowardly left hand born for theft. Why, you shameless man, do you seek a gift that will only weaken you?[7] 13.113 If a mistake of the Achaean people should give it to you, it will be a reason for the enemy to strip you, not to fear you, and running away—the one thing, you most cowardly of men, in which you outdo everyone—will be slow for you as you drag such a load. Besides, that shield of yours, which has so

6 In *Iliad* 7 Ajax, chosen by lot, fought Hector in single combat and felled him with a huge stone; the duel ended undecided.

7 Ulysses and Diomedes killed the Thracian king Rhesus and the Trojan spy Dolon in a night raid, captured the seer Helenus, and stole the Palladium, Troy's protecting image of Pallas.

rarely faced battle, is intact; mine, gaping with a thousand gashes from taking blows, needs a new successor. In short—what need is there for words?—let us be judged by what we do! Let the brave man's arms be thrown into the midst of the enemy; order them to be fetched from there, and adorn the man who brings them back with what he has brought!"

THE SPEECH OF ULYSSES

Ulysses answers that intelligence and counsel have served the Greeks better than strength.

13.123 The son of Telamon had finished, and a murmur from the crowd had followed his last words, when the hero, son of Laertes, stood up, kept his eyes on the ground for a moment, then raised them to the chiefs and opened his lips to the speech they were waiting for; nor did his eloquent words lack grace. "If my prayers and yours had been answered, Pelasgians, the heir to this great contest would not be in doubt, and you would still have your arms, Achilles, and we would still have you. But since unjust fate has denied him to me and to you"—and at the same time he wiped his eyes with his hand, as if they were wet with tears—"who has a better right to succeed great Achilles than the man through whom great Achilles joined the Danaans? Only let it not help Ajax that he seems dull, as indeed he is, nor harm me, Achaeans, that my intelligence has always helped you. And let this eloquence of mine, if I have any, which now speaks for its master and has often spoken for you, be free from ill will, and let no one disown his own gifts.

13.140 For birth and ancestors and things we did not do ourselves I scarcely call our own. But since Ajax has declared that he is Jupiter's great-grandson, Jupiter is the founder of my blood too, and I stand just as many steps away from him. Laertes is my father, Arcesius his, Jupiter his, and none of them was ever condemned and exiled. Through my mother, too, the Cyllenian adds a second nobility: there is a god on both sides of my family. But it is not because I am better born on my mother's side, nor

because my father is innocent of a brother's blood, that I seek the arms set before us. Weigh the case on merit—provided that the fact that Telamon and Peleus were brothers is not counted to Ajax's credit, and that in these spoils it is not the order of blood that is sought but the honor due to courage![8] 13.154 Or if nearness of kin and the first heir are what count, Achilles has a father, Peleus, and a son, Pyrrhus. What place is there for Ajax? Let the arms be carried to Phthia or to Scyros! And Teucer is no less Achilles' cousin than Ajax is: does he claim them, though? And if he did, would he carry them off? So, since this is a bare contest of deeds, I have done more, indeed, than I could easily put into words; still, I will follow the order of events. His mother, the Nereid, foreseeing his coming death, disguised her son in women's dress, and the trick of the clothes he wore fooled everyone, Ajax among them. I slipped arms, which would stir a man's spirit, among the women's wares; and the hero had not yet thrown off his girl's clothing when, as he held the shield and spear,[9]

13.168 'Son of a goddess,' I said, 'Pergama, doomed to fall, is saving itself for you! Why do you hesitate to overthrow mighty Troy?' I laid my hand on him and sent the brave man to brave deeds. So his deeds are mine. It was I who subdued Telephus with the spear as he fought, I who healed him when, defeated, he begged. That Thebes fell is my doing. Believe that it was I who took Lesbos, I who took Tenedos and Chryse and Cilla, Apollo's cities, and Scyros; consider that it was my right hand that shook the walls of Lyrnesus and laid them flat on the ground. And, to say nothing of others, it was I, of course, who provided the man who could destroy savage Hector: thanks to me famous Hector lies dead. With those arms by which Achilles was discovered, I seek these arms. I gave them to him alive; now that he is dead, I ask for them back.[10]

8 Telamon and Peleus were exiled for killing their half-brother Phocus. Ulysses' mother descended from Mercury, the Cyllenian, through her father Autolycus.
9 Achilles' mother Thetis hid him on Scyros dressed as a girl to keep him from the war; there he fathered Pyrrhus. Teucer was Ajax's half-brother.
10 This Thebes was a town near Troy, the home of Andromache.

13.181 When the grief of one man reached all the Danaans and a thousand ships filled Aulis, facing Euboea, the winds, long awaited, either did not blow or blew against the fleet, and harsh oracles ordered Agamemnon to sacrifice his innocent daughter to cruel Diana. Her father refuses, and is angry with the gods themselves: even in the king he is still a father. It was I who, with my words, turned the parent's gentle nature toward the public good. Now, indeed—I confess it, and may Atreus' son forgive the confession—I argued a difficult case before a biased judge. Yet the good of the people moved him, and his brother, and the supreme power of the scepter entrusted to him, to weigh glory against blood.[11] 13.193 I am sent, too, to the mother, who could not be persuaded but had to be tricked by cunning. Had Telamon's son gone to her, our sails would still be waiting for their winds. I am sent, too, as a bold envoy to the citadel of Ilium. I saw and entered the senate house of lofty Troy, still full of men in those days, and fearlessly pleaded the cause that all Greece had entrusted to me. I accuse Paris, demand back the plunder and Helen, and move Priam, and Antenor along with Priam. But Paris and his brothers and those who had joined him in the abduction could barely keep their wicked hands off me (you know this, Menelaus), and that day was the first of the dangers I shared with you.[12]

13.205 It would take too long to recount all the useful things I did by counsel and by hand over the long course of the war. After the first battles the enemy shut themselves inside the city walls for a long time, and there was no chance for open warfare: only in the tenth year did we fight. What were you doing meanwhile, you who know nothing but battles? What use were you? For if you ask about my deeds: I laid ambushes for the enemy, I ringed our trenches with fortifications, I comforted our comrades so that they could bear the weariness of a long war with

11 The grief was Menelaus', whose wife Helen had been carried off by Paris. Agamemnon's daughter was Iphigenia.

12 Ulysses lured Clytemnestra into sending Iphigenia to Aulis by pretending she was to marry Achilles.

calm minds, I showed how we should be fed and armed, I was sent wherever need required.

13.216 Then, at Jupiter's prompting, deceived by an image in a dream, the king orders us to abandon the war we had begun. He can defend his word by naming its author. Let Ajax refuse to allow this, let him demand that Pergama be destroyed, and let him fight—that much he can do! Why does he not hold back those about to leave? Why does he not take up arms? Let him give the drifting crowd something to follow! This was not too much to ask of a man who never says anything but big things. And what of the fact that he himself fled? I saw it, and was ashamed to see it, when you were turning your back and readying your shameful sails. At once I said, 'What are you doing? What madness, comrades, is driving you? Let Troy go, then, when it is as good as taken! And what are you carrying home in the tenth year but disgrace?'[13] 13.228 With these words and others, in which indignation itself had made me eloquent, I turned them around and brought them back from the fleeing fleet. Even then the son of Telamon did not dare to utter a sound—yet even Thersites had dared to attack the kings with words, and thanks to me he did not get away with his insolence! I rise and urge my frightened fellow citizens against the enemy, and with my voice I call back their lost courage. From that moment on, whatever that man can be thought to have done bravely is mine, since it was I who dragged him back when he turned his back. Finally, which of the Danaans praises you or seeks your company? But Tydeus' son shares his exploits with me, values me, and always trusts in Ulysses as his comrade.[14]

13.241 It is something to be the one man chosen by Diomedes out of so many thousands of Greeks (and no lot ordered me to go!). And yet, scorning the dangers of night and of the enemy, I also kill Dolon, of the Phrygian race, who had dared the very

13 In the *Iliad* Jupiter sends Agamemnon a deceptive dream; when the king tests the army by proposing retreat, the men rush for the ships.

14 Thersites, a common soldier who railed at the kings, was beaten into silence by Ulysses in *Iliad* 2.

same as we had—but not before I had forced him to betray everything and learned what treacherous Troy was planning. I had found out everything, had nothing left to spy on, and could already have returned with the praise we had been promised. Not content with that, I made for the tents of Rhesus and killed him in his own camp, together with his companions; and so, victorious, my prayers fulfilled, I ride back in a captured chariot, like a joyful triumph. Deny me the arms of the man whose horses the enemy had demanded as payment for his night's work—and let Ajax prove the more generous![15]

13.255 Why should I tell of the ranks of Lycian Sarpedon laid waste by my sword? With much bloodshed I struck down Coeranus son of Iphitus, and Alastor and Chromius, Alcander and Halius, Noemon and Prytanis; I put to death Thoon along with Chersidamas, and Charops, and Ennomus, driven on by pitiless fate, and others less famous who fell by my hand beneath the walls of the city. I too have wounds, fellow citizens, beautiful because of where they are. And do not trust empty words: look, here!" With his hand he pulled down his garment and said, "Here is a breast that has always labored in your service. But in all these years Telamon's son has spent no blood for his comrades, and his body has not a wound on it!

13.268 But what does it count for, if he recounts how he bore arms for the Pelasgian fleet against the Trojans and Jupiter? I admit he did—it is not my way to belittle good deeds out of spite—but let him not claim for himself alone what was shared by all, and let him give some honor to you as well. It was Actor's grandson who, safe under the likeness of Achilles, drove the Trojans back from the ships, which were about to burn, and from their defender. He thinks, too, that he alone dared to face Hector's weapons, forgetting the king and the leaders and me: he was only the ninth to volunteer, and was preferred by the favor of

15 Dolon had been promised Achilles' horses as his reward for spying on the Greek camp.

the lot. And yet, bravest of men, what was the outcome of your fight? Hector walked away without a single wound![16]

13.280 Poor me, with what grief I am forced to remember the day when Achilles, the wall of the Greeks, fell! Neither tears nor mourning nor fear kept me from lifting his body high from the ground and carrying it back. On these shoulders—on these shoulders, I say—I carried the body of Achilles, and his arms along with it, the arms I am striving to carry now as well! I have strength enough for such weights; I have, surely, a mind that will appreciate the honor you give. Was it for this, then, that his sea-blue mother was so ambitious for her son—so that heavenly gifts, the work of such great art, should be worn by a crude soldier with no understanding? For he knows nothing of the scenes engraved on the shield: Ocean and the lands, and the stars with the high heavens, the Pleiades and the Hyades, the Bear that never touches the sea, the different cities, and the gleaming sword of Orion.[17]

13.296 What of his charge that I tried to escape the duties of harsh war and came late to the task already begun? Does he not see that he is slandering great-hearted Achilles? If you call pretending a crime, we both pretended; if delay counts as guilt, I came sooner than he did. A devoted wife held me back, a devoted mother held Achilles; the first part of our time was given to them, the rest to you. Even if I could not refute it, I do not fear a charge that I share with so great a man. Yet he was found out by Ulysses' cleverness, and Ulysses was not found out by Ajax's! And we should not be surprised that he pours out the abuse of his foolish tongue on me: he charges you too with things that ought to shame you. Is it disgraceful for me to have accused Palamedes on a false charge, and honorable for you to have condemned him?

13.310 But the son of Nauplius could not defend a crime so great and so obvious, and you did not merely hear the charges against

16 Actor's grandson is Patroclus, who went into battle wearing Achilles' armor and was killed by Hector.

him: you saw them, and the bribe laid them bare. Nor have I deserved to stand trial because Vulcan's Lemnos holds the son of Poeas: defend your own act, for you agreed to it. I will not deny that I advised him to withdraw from the hardships of war and travel and to try to end his savage pains with rest. He obeyed—and he is alive! This advice was not only loyal but lucky, though it is enough to be loyal. Since the prophets demand him for the destruction of Pergama, do not send me: the son of Telamon will do better to go. With his eloquence he will soothe the man raging with sickness and anger, or cunningly draw him out by some trick.[18]

13.324 The Simois will flow backward, Ida will stand without leaves, and Achaea will promise help to Troy, before—if my heart should stop working for your cause—the shrewdness of stupid Ajax is of any use to the Danaans! Though you may be hostile to your comrades, to the king and to me, harsh Philoctetes, though you curse me and call down endless ruin on my head, and long, in your pain, for me to fall somehow into your hands so that you may drain my blood, still I will approach you and strive to bring you back with me. And I will get hold of your arrows (may Fortune favor me!) just as I got hold of the Dardanian prophet whom I captured, just as I uncovered the answers of the gods and the fates of Troy, just as I snatched the image of Phrygian Minerva from her inner shrine in the midst of the enemy. And Ajax compares himself with me?[19]

13.339 Of course: the Fates forbade Troy to be taken without it. Where is brave Ajax then? Where are the great man's mighty words? Why are you afraid here? Why does Ulysses dare to go through the sentries and entrust himself to the night, and pass through savage swords to enter not only the walls of the Trojans but even the topmost citadel, to snatch the goddess from her temple and carry her off through the enemy? Had I not done

17 Achilles' mother, the sea nymph Thetis, had Vulcan forge his armor, including a shield engraved with the whole world.

18 Prophets declared that Troy could not fall without the arrows of Philoctetes.

19 The prophet is Helenus, Priam's son, who revealed the conditions for Troy's fall, among them the theft of the Palladium, Minerva's image guarding the city.

these things, the son of Telamon would have carried seven bulls' hides on his left arm for nothing. That night I won the victory over Troy; I conquered Pergama then, when I made it possible for it to be conquered! Stop pointing out the son of Tydeus, my comrade, to us with your looks and your muttering: he has his own share of the praise in that. And you were not alone when you held your shield over the allied fleet: you had a crowd beside you; I had only one.

13.354 If he did not know that the fighter is less than the wise man, and that the prize is not owed to an untamed right hand, he too would claim these arms; so would the more restrained Ajax, and fierce Eurypylus, and the son of famous Andraemon, and no less Idomeneus and Meriones, born in the same land; so would the brother of the elder son of Atreus. For they, strong in action and not second to you in war, have yielded to my counsels. Your right hand is useful in war, but your mind is what needs my guidance. You have strength without intelligence; I have care for the future. You can fight; it is with me that the son of Atreus chooses the times for fighting. You serve only with your body, I with my mind; and as much as the one who steers a ship outranks the work of the rower, as much as the general is greater than the soldier, so far do I surpass you. In our bodies, too, the mind is worth more than the hand: all our strength lies there.[20]

13.370 But you, leaders, give the prize to your watchman, and in return for the cares of so many years that I have spent in anxiety, grant this honor as payment for my services. Now the work is at its end: I have removed the fates that stood in the way, and by making it possible for high Pergama to be taken, I have taken it. Now, by our shared hopes and by the Trojans' walls that are about to fall, by the gods I lately took from the enemy, by anything that still remains to be done with wisdom, by anything still to be won through daring and danger, remember me! Or, if

20 The "more restrained Ajax" is Ajax son of Oileus; the brother of Agamemnon is Menelaus.

you do not give the arms to me, give them to her!"—and he pointed to Minerva's fateful image.

THE DEATH OF AJAX

The arms go to Ulysses; Ajax kills himself, and a flower springs from his blood.

13.382 The band of leaders was moved, and the outcome showed what eloquence could do: the man of words carried off the brave man's arms. He who alone had so often withstood Hector, and sword and fire and Jupiter, could not withstand one thing, his anger; and grief conquered the unconquered man. He seized his sword. "This at least is mine!" he said. "Or does Ulysses claim this for himself too? This I must use against myself; the blade that has so often been wet with Phrygian blood will now be wet with its master's death, so that no one can overcome Ajax but Ajax." He spoke, and into his breast, which then for the first time suffered a wound, where it lay open to the steel, he buried the deadly sword. His hands could not draw out the embedded blade: the blood itself drove it out. And the earth, reddened with his blood, brought forth from the green turf a purple flower, the same that had first been born from the Oebalian wound; letters shared by the boy and the man are written in the middle of its petals, for the one a name, for the other a lament.[21]

THE FALL OF TROY

Troy falls, and the Trojan women, Hecuba among them, are carried off as captives.

13.399 The victor set sail for the homeland of Hypsipyle and famous Thoas, the land infamous for the slaughter of its men long ago, to bring back the weapons of the Tirynthian hero, his arrows. When he had brought them back to the Greeks, with

21 The Spartan (Oebalian) boy is Hyacinthus, loved by Apollo; the markings on the hyacinth were read as AI, both a cry of grief and the start of Ajax's Greek name, Aias.

their owner coming too, and the final hand had at last been put to the savage war, Ilium was burning, and the fire had not yet died down. Jupiter's altar had drunk up old Priam's scanty blood, and Phoebus' priestess, dragged by her hair, was stretching to the sky hands that would do no good. The Dardanian mothers, embracing the images of their ancestral gods while they still could and clinging to the burning temples, were dragged away by the victorious Greeks, prizes that would stir up hatred. Astyanax was hurled from those towers from which, as his mother pointed him out, he used to watch his father fighting for him and defending the kingdom of his forefathers.[22]

13.418 And now Boreas urged them on their way, the sails flapped loudly in the following breeze, and the sailor ordered them to use the winds. "Farewell, Troy! We are being carried off!" cried the Trojan women; they kissed the earth and left the smoking roofs of their homeland. The last to board the fleet (a pitiful sight!) was Hecuba, found among the tombs of her sons: as she clutched at the graves and kissed the bones, Dulichian hands dragged her away. Yet she scooped up the ashes of one, Hector, and carried them off with her in her bosom; and on Hector's tomb she left white hair from her head, a poor offering to the dead—her hair and her tears.[23]

13.429 Opposite Phrygia, where Troy once stood, there is a land inhabited by Bistonian men. There stood the rich palace of Polymestor, to whom your father secretly entrusted you to be raised, Polydorus, removing you from the Phrygian war—a wise plan, had he not added great wealth, a prize for crime and a provocation to a greedy mind. When the fortune of the Phrygians fell, the impious king of the Thracians took his sword and plunged it into the throat of his ward, and, as if the crime could be done away with along with the body, he threw the lifeless boy from a cliff into the waves below.

22 The women of Lemnos killed all their men except King Thoas, whom his daughter Hypsipyle secretly saved. The Tirynthian hero is Hercules, whose arrows Philoctetes inherited.

23 Dulichium was an island in Ulysses' kingdom; the hands are those of his men, to whom Hecuba fell as captive.

POLYXENA

Achilles' ghost demands a sacrifice, and Polyxena dies bravely at his tomb.

13.439 The son of Atreus had moored his fleet on the Thracian shore until the sea should be calm, until the wind should be friendlier. Here suddenly Achilles, as large as he used to be when he was alive, came out of the ground, which split wide open, and, like a man threatening, he wore the face he had worn at that moment when he fiercely went for unjust Agamemnon with his sword. "Are you leaving, Achaeans," he said, "forgetful of me? Has gratitude for my valor been buried with me? Do not do it! So that my tomb may not be without honor, let Polyxena be sacrificed to appease the shade of Achilles!" He spoke, and as his comrades obeyed the cruel ghost, the girl was torn from the arms of her mother, whom she was now almost alone in comforting; brave and unhappy and more than a woman, she was led to the tomb and became a victim for the dreadful grave. True to herself, when she had been brought to the cruel altar and realized that the savage rite was being prepared for her, and when she saw Neoptolemus standing there holding the sword, and saw him fix his eyes on her face, "Make use of my noble blood at once!" she said.[24]

13.458 "There is nothing to hold you back: bury your weapon in my throat or in my breast!" (And at once she bared both throat and breast.) "I only wish that my death could escape my mother's notice! My mother stands in the way and lessens my joy in dying, though it is not my death she ought to mourn, but her own life. Only, so that I may not go to the Stygian shades unfree, stand far off, if what I ask is just, and keep your men's hands from touching a virgin! More acceptable to him, whoever he is whom you are preparing to appease by killing me, will be free blood. Yet if the last words from my mouth move any of you (it is the daughter of King Priam who asks you, now a captive),

24 Neoptolemus was the son of Achilles.

give my body back to my mother without ransom, and let her buy the sad right of burial not with gold but with tears! In the past, when she could, she paid with gold as well."

13.474 She had finished; but the people did not hold back the tears that she held back. Even the priest himself, weeping and unwilling, drove in his blade and broke open the breast she offered. Her knees gave way and she sank to the ground, keeping a fearless face to the very end. Even then, as she fell, she took care to cover what should be covered and to preserve the grace of chaste modesty. The Trojan women took her up and counted over the children of Priam they had mourned and all the blood one house had given; and they lamented you, maiden, and you, lately called a royal wife, called a royal mother, the image of flourishing Asia, now a poor lot even as spoils, whom victorious Ulysses would not want as his own, except that you had brought Hector into the world: Hector barely found a master for his mother! 13.488 Embracing the body, empty now of so brave a spirit, she gave it too the tears she had so often given to her country, her sons and her husband. She poured tears into the wounds, covered the lips with kisses, beat the breast long used to beating, and, sweeping her white hair through the clotted blood, she said many things, and this among them, as she tore at her breast: "Daughter, your mother's last grief—for what else is left?—daughter, you lie dead, and I see your wound, my own wound. So that I should lose none of my children without bloodshed, you too have a wound! But I thought that you, being a woman, were safe from the sword: yet you, a woman, have fallen by the sword; and the same man who destroyed so many of your brothers has destroyed you—Achilles, the ruin of Troy, who robbed me of my children. But after he fell by the arrows of Paris and Phoebus,

13.502 'Now surely,' I said, 'Achilles is not to be feared.' Even now I had to fear him: the very ashes of the buried man rage against this family; even in his tomb we have felt our enemy. It was for the grandson of Aeacus that I was fertile! Mighty Ilium lies low, and the public disaster has ended in a grievous outcome—but it

has ended. For me alone Pergama still stands, and my grief is still running its course. Just now the greatest of all, powerful in so many sons-in-law and sons, daughters-in-law and husband, I am now dragged off an exile, destitute, torn from the tombs of my family, a gift for Penelope; and as I spin out my allotted wool, she will point me out to the mothers of Ithaca and say, 'This is that famous mother of Hector, this is the wife of Priam!' And now, after the loss of so many, you, who alone relieved your mother's grief, have been made an offering at an enemy's tomb! I have given birth to funeral offerings for an enemy! What am I left for, I who am made of iron? 13.517 Or why do I linger? What are you saving me for, long-lived old age? What for, cruel gods, unless to see new deaths, do you prolong the life of a hardy old woman? Who would think that Priam could be called happy after Pergama was destroyed? He is happy in his death: he does not see you, my daughter, slain, and he left his life and his kingdom at the same time. But, I suppose, you will be given funeral rites for a dowry, royal maiden, and your body will be laid in the tombs of your ancestors! That is not the fortune of our house: your mother's tears will be your funeral gifts, and a handful of foreign sand! We have lost everything; there remains one reason for me to bear living a little while longer: the child dearest to his mother, now the only one, once the youngest of the male line, Polydorus, sent to the Ismarian king on these shores. Why do I delay meanwhile to wash her cruel wounds with water, and her face spattered with pitiless blood?"

HECUBA'S REVENGE

Hecuba finds her murdered son Polydorus, blinds Polymestor, and is turned into a dog.

13.533 She spoke, and went down to the shore with an old woman's step, tearing her white hair. "Give me an urn, Trojan women," the unhappy woman had said, to draw clear water; and she saw the body of Polydorus cast up on the shore, and the huge wounds made by Thracian weapons! The Trojan women cried

out; she was struck speechless with grief, and grief itself devoured both her voice and the tears that welled up within her. Like a hard rock, she stood numb, now fixing her eyes on the ground before her, now lifting her grim face to the sky, now gazing at the face of her son as he lay, now at his wounds—his wounds above all—and she armed herself and marshaled her anger.

13.545 As soon as she blazed up with it, as though she were still a queen, she resolved to take revenge and was wholly absorbed in imagining the punishment. As a lioness rages when robbed of her suckling cub and, finding its tracks, follows the enemy she cannot see, so Hecuba, after she had mingled anger with grief, forgetting not her spirit but her years, went to Polymestor, the author of the dreadful murder, and asked to speak with him: she said she wanted to show him gold that had been left in hiding, for him to pass on to her son.

13.554 The Odrysian believed her and, with his habitual love of plunder, came to a secret place. Then, cunning and smooth-tongued, he said, "No more delay, Hecuba: give me the gifts for your son! All that you give will be his, and all that you gave before—I swear it by the gods above." She glared savagely at him as he spoke and swore falsely, and seethed with swelling anger. Then, seizing him, she called the band of captive mothers to her and drove her fingers into his treacherous eyes; she forced the eyeballs from their sockets (anger made her dangerous), plunged her hands in, and, stained with his guilty blood, dug out not his eyes (for none were left) but the places where his eyes had been.

13.565 Enraged by the disaster of their tyrant, the Thracian people began to attack the Trojan woman with a shower of weapons and stones. But she, with a hoarse growl, chased a thrown stone with her bites, and when she opened her jaws ready for words, she barked as she tried to speak. The place still exists and takes its name from the event; and she, long remembering her old sufferings, even then howled mournfully through the Sithonian fields. Her fortune had moved her own Trojans

and her Pelasgian enemies; her fortune had moved all the gods as well—so much so that even Jupiter's wife and sister herself denied that Hecuba had deserved such an end.[25]

MEMNON

Aurora mourns her son Memnon, and birds rise from the ashes of his pyre.

13.576 Aurora, though she had favored the same side, had no time to be moved by the disasters and fall of Troy and Hecuba. A nearer care and a grief within her own house tormented the goddess—the loss of Memnon, whom his saffron-robed mother had seen dying on the Phrygian plains by the spear of Achilles. She saw it, and that blush with which the hours of morning redden turned pale, and the sky hid itself in clouds. But his mother could not bear to watch his limbs laid on the final fire; with her hair unbound, just as she was, she did not scorn to fall at the knees of great Jupiter and to add these words to her tears:[26]

13.587 "Though I am the lowest of all the goddesses whom the golden heavens hold (for I have very few temples anywhere in the world), still I have come as a goddess—not for you to grant me shrines and days of sacrifice and altars to grow hot with fires. Yet if you were to consider how much I, a woman, do for you, when with new light I guard the borders of the night, you might think I ought to be rewarded. But that is not my concern, nor is Aurora now in a state to ask for the honors she has earned. I come bereft of my Memnon, who bore brave arms in vain for his uncle and in his early years fell to brave Achilles—so you gods willed it. Grant him, I beg you, some honor as a comfort for his death, highest ruler of the gods, and soothe a mother's wounds."

13.600 Jupiter had nodded his assent when Memnon's towering pyre collapsed in high flames, and the rolling coils of black

25 The place is Cynossema, "the Dog's Tomb," on the Thracian coast of the Hellespont.

smoke darkened the day (as when rivers breathe out the mists born from them, and the sun is not let in below). The black ash flew up and, gathering together, thickened into a single body; it took on a shape and drew heat and life from the fire (its own lightness gave it wings). At first like a bird, then soon a true bird, it whirred with its wings; at the same moment countless sisters whirred too, who shared the same birth. Three times they circled the pyre, and three times their cry, sounding in unison, rose into the air; on the fourth flight they parted into two camps. 13.612 Then the two fierce peoples, from opposite sides, waged war, venting their anger with beaks and hooked claws, beating their wings and breast against breast; and their bodies, kin to the buried ashes, fell as offerings to the dead, remembering that they had been born from a brave man. Their founder gave a name to the sudden birds: after him they were called Memnonides; and when the sun has run through the twelve signs, they renew their war, ready to die, with a cry of mourning for their father. So, while to others it seemed pitiful that the daughter of Dymas had barked, Aurora was intent on her own grief; and even now she sheds devoted tears and sprinkles dew over the whole world.[27]

AENEAS AND ANIUS

Aeneas reaches Delos, where King Anius tells how his daughters became doves.

13.623 Yet the fates did not allow hope, too, to be overthrown along with the walls of Troy. The hero son of Cytherea carried on his shoulders the sacred objects and, a second sacred thing, his father, a burden worthy of reverence. Out of so much wealth, devoted son that he was, he chose that as his plunder, and his Ascanius. With a fleet of exiles he was carried over the seas from

26 Memnon, son of Aurora and Tithonus, came to fight for his uncle Priam and was killed by Achilles.

27 The Memnonides were birds said to return each year to fight and die over Memnon's tomb.

Antandros. He left behind the accursed threshold of the Thracians and the land dripping with Polydorus' blood, and with favoring winds and a following tide he entered Apollo's city, his companions with him. Anius, under whom as king men were governed and as priest Phoebus was duly worshiped, received him in temple and in home. He showed him the city, the famous shrines, and the two tree-trunks Latona once clung to as she gave birth. Incense was given to the flames and wine poured over the incense, and the entrails of slaughtered cattle were burned in the customary way. Then they made for the royal palace and, reclining on high-piled coverlets, took the gifts of Ceres together with flowing Bacchus.[28]

13.640 Then devoted Anchises said: "O chosen priest of Phoebus, am I mistaken, or, when I first saw these walls, did you have a son and twice two daughters, as far as I remember?" Anius shook his head, its temples bound with snowy fillets, and answered him sadly: "You are not mistaken, greatest of heroes. You saw the father of five children, and now (such is the fickleness of things that tosses human beings about!) you see him almost childless. For what help to me is my absent son? The land called Andros after his name holds him, and he rules its territory and kingdom in his father's place.

13.650 The Delian god gave him the gift of augury. To my female offspring Liber gave other gifts, greater than anyone could wish or believe, for at my daughters' touch everything was transformed into grain and streams of unmixed wine and the oil of gray-green Minerva, and they were a rich source of profit. When the son of Atreus, Troy's destroyer, learned of this (so you will not think that we, too, had no share at all in the storm that struck you), he used force of arms to drag them, unwilling, from their father's lap, and ordered them to feed the Argive fleet with their heavenly gift. They fled, each wherever she could. Two of them made for Euboea, and as many for their brother's Andros. The soldiers arrived and threatened war unless the girls were

28 Aeneas is the son of Venus (Cytherea). Apollo's city is Delos, his birthplace, where Latona clung to a palm and an olive while giving birth to him and Diana.

surrendered.[29] 13.663 Devotion was conquered by fear. He surrendered his sisters' bodies to punishment (and you could forgive a frightened brother: there was no Aeneas here, no Hector to defend Andros, Hector, through whom you held out into the tenth year). Already chains were being readied for their captive arms. Raising to heaven arms that were still free, they cried, 'Father Bacchus, help us!' And the giver of their gift did help them, if destroying them in a wondrous way can be called help. By what means they lost their shape I could not discover, nor can I tell you now. The sum of the disaster is known: they took on feathers and turned into your consort's birds, snow-white doves."

13.675 They filled the banquet with these words and others. Then the tables were removed and they sought sleep. They rose with the day and went to the oracle of Phoebus, which told them to seek their ancient mother and the shores of their kin. The king escorted them and gave gifts to the departing: to Anchises a scepter, to his grandson a cloak and a quiver, to Aeneas a mixing bowl that his guest-friend Therses of Ismenus had once brought him from the Aonian shores. Therses had sent it to him. Alcon of Hyle had made it and engraved it with a long story. There was a city, and you could point out its seven gates: these served as its name and told which city it was.[30]

13.687 Before the city, funerals, tombs, fires and pyres, and mothers with loosened hair and bared breasts signify mourning. The nymphs, too, seem to weep and lament their dried-up springs. The tree stands stiff and bare, without leaves, and goats gnaw the parched rocks. See, in the middle of Thebes he shows the daughters of Orion, a band of women, offering their breasts with throats laid bare. He shows them, the blade driven home through unwarlike wounds, fallen for their people, borne through the city in a splendid funeral and burned in a crowded place. Then from the maidens' ashes two youths come forth, so

29 The Delian god is Apollo; Liber is Bacchus; the son of Atreus is Agamemnon, leader of the Greeks at Troy.
30 Aonia is Boeotia, and the city with seven gates is Thebes.

that their line may not perish. Report names them the Coroni, and they lead the procession for their mothers' ashes. So far the figures gleaming on the ancient bronze. The rim of the bowl was rough with gilded acanthus.[31]

13.702 The Trojans sent back gifts no less valuable than those they had received. They gave the priest a box for keeping incense, and a libation dish, and a crown bright with gold and gems. Then, remembering that the Teucrians took their origin from the blood of Teucer, they made for Crete. But they could not long endure Jupiter's sky there, and, leaving its hundred cities behind, they longed to reach the harbors of Ausonia. A storm raged and tossed the men, and when they had been received in the treacherous harbors of the Strophades, the winged Aello terrified them. Soon they had sailed past the ports of Dulichium, past Ithaca and Samos and the homes of Neritos, the kingdom of deceitful Ulysses. They saw Ambracia, once fought over in a lawsuit of the gods, and the rock in the likeness of the judge who was turned to stone, a place now famous for Actian Apollo. They saw the land of Dodona, whose oak speaks, and the Chaonian bays, where the sons of the Molossian king escaped unholy flames on wings that sprang beneath them.[32]

13.719 Next they reached the land of the Phaeacians, planted with fruitful orchards. After that they landed in Epirus and at Buthrotos, ruled by the Phrygian seer, with its imitation Troy. Then, sure of the future, all of which Priam's son Helenus had foretold in his faithful counsel, they entered Sicania. It runs out into the sea in three headlands. Of these, Pachynos faces the rain-bringing south winds, Lilybaeon is exposed to the gentle west winds, and Peloros looks toward the north wind and the Bears, which never touch the sea. Here the Teucrians came in,

31 Orion's daughters gave their lives to end a plague; the two youths who rose from their ashes were called the Coroni ("Crowns").

32 Aello is one of the Harpies. Actium, near Ambracia, was the site of Augustus' naval victory in 31 BC, which he celebrated with a temple of Apollo.

and, with oars and a following tide, at nightfall the fleet reached the sand of Zancle.[33]

SCYLLA

Scylla, a maiden courted by many suitors, keeps company with the sea nymphs.

13.730 Scylla besets the right side, restless Charybdis the left. Charybdis swallows ships she has seized and vomits them back up. Scylla has her black belly girded with savage dogs, though she bears a maiden's face, and, unless all that the bards have handed down is fiction, she was once a maiden, too. Many suitors sought her. She rejected them and would go to the sea nymphs, being dearest of all to the sea nymphs, and tell them of the young men's loves she had eluded.[34]

GALATEA, ACIS AND POLYPHEMUS

Galatea tells how the Cyclops Polyphemus wooed her and crushed her lover Acis.

13.738 Once, while Galatea was offering her hair to be combed, she sighed and addressed Scylla with these words: "You, at least, maiden, are courted by a race of men that is not cruel, and you can refuse them, as you do, without harm. But I, whose father is Nereus, whom sea-blue Doris bore, who am protected by a whole crowd of sisters, too, could escape the Cyclops' love only through grief." Tears stopped her voice as she spoke. When the maiden had wiped them away with her marble-white thumb and comforted the goddess, she said, "Tell me, dearest, and do not hide the cause of your sorrow (you can trust me that

33 Helenus, a son of Priam and a prophet, ruled Buthrotum in Epirus and built a small copy of Troy there. Sicania is Sicily; Zancle is modern Messina.
34 Scylla and Charybdis were the monsters of the Strait of Messina, between Sicily and Italy.

much)!" The Nereid answered the daughter of Crataeis with these words:[35]

13.750 "Acis was the son of Faunus and a nymph, a daughter of the Symaethus. He was a great joy to his father and his mother, but a greater one to me, for he had bound himself to me alone. He was handsome, and, with twice eight birthdays past, he had marked his tender cheeks with the first uncertain down. I pursued him, and the Cyclops pursued me without end. If you asked whether my hatred of the Cyclops or my love of Acis was stronger in me, I would tell you: both were equal. Oh, how great is the power of your kingdom, kindly Venus! Why, that savage, dreadful even to the forests themselves, whom no stranger ever saw without coming to harm, who scorned great Olympus and its gods, felt what love is. Seized by powerful desire, he burned, forgetting his flocks and his caves.[36] 13.764 Now you care about your looks, Polyphemus, now you care about pleasing. Now you comb your stiff hair with rakes, now you like to trim your shaggy beard with a sickle and gaze at your savage face in the water and compose it. Your love of slaughter, your ferocity, and your boundless thirst for blood are gone, and ships come and go in safety. Meanwhile Telemus, carried to Sicilian Etna, Telemus son of Eurymus, whom no bird had ever deceived, approached the terrible Polyphemus and said, 'The single eye you wear in the middle of your forehead, Ulysses will snatch it from you!' He laughed. 'O stupidest of prophets, you are wrong,' he said,[37]

13.775 'another, a woman, has already snatched it!' So he spurned the man who warned him of the truth in vain, and either weighed down the shore, walking with enormous strides, or went back, weary, into his shadowy caves. A wedge-shaped hill juts out into the sea in a long point, and the sea's waves wash around both its sides. The savage Cyclops climbed up here and sat down in the middle, and his woolly flocks followed with no

35 Galatea is a sea nymph, daughter of Nereus and Doris; Crataeis is Scylla's mother.
36 Faunus is a Roman woodland god; the Symaethus is a river of Sicily near Etna.
37 Polyphemus is the Cyclops whom Ulysses later blinds, as Homer tells in the *Odyssey*.

one leading them. He laid at his feet the pine that served him as a staff, fit to carry a ship's yards, and took up his pipe, made of a hundred reeds joined together. All the mountains felt the shepherd's piping, and the waves felt it. I was hiding behind a rock, resting in the lap of my Acis, and from far off I drank in these words with my ears and noted what I heard:

13.789 'Whiter than the leaf of the snowy privet, Galatea, more blooming than the meadows, taller than the tall alder, brighter than glass, more playful than a tender kid, smoother than shells worn by the ceaseless sea, more welcome than winter sun or summer shade, nobler than fruit, more striking than the tall plane tree, clearer than ice, sweeter than ripe grapes, softer than swan's down and curdled milk! Yet you, the same Galatea, are wilder than untamed heifers, harder than an aged oak, more deceptive than the waves, tougher than willow switches and white vines, more immovable than these crags, more violent than a river, prouder than a peacock that is praised, fiercer than fire, pricklier than thorns, more savage than a bear with cubs, deafer than the seas, more pitiless than a trodden snake, and (what most of all I would like to take from you, if I could) 13.806 swifter in flight not only than a deer driven by loud barking, but even than the winds and the fleeting breeze! But if you knew me well, you would regret having fled, you would condemn your own delays and strive to keep me. I have caves, part of the mountain itself, hollowed under the living rock, where neither the sun is felt in midsummer heat nor winter. I have fruit weighing down the branches. I have grapes like gold on the long vines, and purple ones too, and I am keeping both kinds for you. With your own hands you will pick soft strawberries grown in the woodland shade, autumn cornels, too, and plums, not only those dark with black juice, but also choice ones like fresh wax. 13.819 With me as your husband you will lack neither chestnuts nor the fruit of the arbutus: every tree will serve you. This whole flock is mine. Many more wander in the valleys, many are hidden by the woods, many are penned in caves. If you asked me, I could not tell you how many there are: counting your flock is for

poor men! Do not take my word for their merits: come and see for yourself how they can barely straddle their swollen udders. In warm folds there are lambs, the younger brood, and in other folds there are kids, too, of the same age. I always have snow-white milk. Part of it is kept for drinking, and the rest is curdled with rennet and hardened. 13.831 And not only easy delights and common gifts will come your way, does and hares and a goat, or a pair of doves, or a nest taken from a treetop. I have found twins that could play with you, so alike you could hardly tell them apart, the cubs of a shaggy bear, up on the mountaintops. I found them and said, "We'll keep these for our mistress!" Now just lift your shining head out of the sea-blue water, now, Galatea, come, and do not scorn my gifts. I certainly know what I look like: I saw myself just lately reflected in clear water, and my looks pleased me when I saw them. Look how big I am! Jupiter in the sky is not bigger than this body (for you people like to say that some Jupiter or other is king). Abundant hair hangs over my grim face and shades my shoulders like a grove. 13.846 And do not think it ugly that my body bristles with dense, stiff hair. A tree without leaves is ugly, and ugly is a horse unless a golden mane veils its neck. A beard and bristling hair on the body suit a man. I have only one eye in the middle of my forehead, but it is the size of a huge shield. What of it? Does the great Sun not see all these things from the sky? Yet the Sun has only one orb! Besides, my father reigns in your sea: I give him to you as your father-in-law. Only pity me and hear the prayers of a suppliant! For to you alone do I yield. 13.857 I, who scorn Jupiter and heaven and the piercing thunderbolt, revere you, Nereid: your anger is fiercer than the thunderbolt. And I would bear this contempt more patiently if you fled from everyone. But why do you reject the Cyclops and love Acis, why prefer Acis to my embraces? Still, let him please himself, and let him please you, Galatea, though I would not wish it. Only give me the chance, and he will find that I have strength to match so great a body! I will tear out his living guts and scatter his torn limbs over the fields and through your waters: so may he mingle with you! For I am burning, and the

fire, wounded, seethes more fiercely; I seem to carry Etna in my breast, transplanted there with all its force. And you, Galatea, are not moved.'

13.870 Having uttered these complaints in vain (for I saw everything), he rose. Like a bull raging when its heifer has been taken away, he could not stand still, but wandered through the forest and the familiar glades. Then the savage creature saw me and Acis, unaware and fearing nothing of the kind, and shouted, 'I see you, and I will make this the last union of your love!' That voice was as loud as the voice of an angry Cyclops ought to be: Etna shuddered at the shout. But I, terrified, plunged beneath the nearby sea. The Symaethian hero had turned his back in flight and cried, 'Help me, Galatea, I beg you! Help me, parents, and admit me, about to die, into your realms!'

13.882 The Cyclops pursued him and hurled a part torn from the mountain, and though only its very edge reached him, that corner of the mass buried Acis entirely. But we did the only thing the fates allowed: we made Acis take on the powers of his grandfather. Crimson blood was flowing from the mass, and within a short time the redness began to fade. It became the color of a river muddied by the first rain, and gradually cleared. Then the mass, touched by us, split open, and a tall, living reed rose through the cracks, and the hollow mouth of the rock resounded with leaping waters. And, a wondrous thing, suddenly a youth emerged, as far as his waist, his new horns wreathed with bending rushes. Except that he was bigger, and sea-blue all over his face, he was Acis. And even so, he was still Acis, turned into a river, and the waters kept his old name."[38]

GLAUCUS

The sea god Glaucus woos Scylla and tells how eating a magic herb changed him.

13.898 Galatea had stopped speaking. The gathering broke up, and the Nereids departed, swimming through the calm waves. Scylla

38 The Acis is a small river at the foot of Etna.

returned (for she did not dare trust herself to the open sea) and either wandered naked on the thirsty sand or, when she was tired, found a secluded hollow of the water and cooled her limbs in its enclosed waves. Look: cutting through the sea came a new inhabitant of the deep, his limbs lately changed at Euboean Anthedon. It was Glaucus. At the sight of the maiden he stopped, caught by desire, and spoke whatever words he thought might delay her flight. She fled all the same and, swift with fear, reached the top of a mountain that stood near the shore.[39]

13.910 Facing the sea there is a huge peak, gathered into a single point, its long summit curving out, beneath its trees, over the water. Here she stopped, and, safe in that place, not knowing whether he was a monster or a god, she wondered at his color, at the hair that covered his shoulders and the back beneath, and at the way a twisting fish took over below his groin. He noticed, and, leaning on the nearest rock, said, "I am no monster, maiden, and no wild beast, but a god of the water. Proteus has no greater power in the sea, nor does Triton, nor Palaemon, son of Athamas. Yet before this I was a mortal, though, naturally, I was devoted to the deep sea and worked only on it. Now I would draw nets that drew in fish, now, sitting on a rock, I would guide my line with a rod.

13.924 There is a shore bordering a green meadow, one side of which is bounded by the waves, the other by grass. Horned heifers have never harmed it with their bite, nor have you cropped it, peaceful sheep or shaggy goats. No bee has carried away flowers gathered there, no festive garlands from it have ever been given to anyone's head, and no hands bearing scythes have ever cut it. I was the first to sit on that turf, while I dried my dripping lines. To count my captive fish in order, I laid out on top of it the ones that chance had driven into my nets or their own credulity onto my curved hooks. It sounds like a fiction (but what would I gain by fiction?): as soon as it touched the grass, my catch began to move, to flip from side to side and to strive on

39 Glaucus was a fisherman of Anthedon, a Boeotian town facing the island of Euboea.

land as if in the sea. While I hesitated and wondered, the whole crowd fled into their own waters, leaving their new master and the shore behind. 13.940 I was stunned and long in doubt, and searched for the cause: had some god done this, or the juice of the grass? 'But what grass has such powers?' I said, and I plucked the grass with my hand and, once plucked, bit it with my teeth. My throat had scarcely swallowed the unknown juices when suddenly I felt my heart trembling within me and my breast swept away by love of another nature. I could not resist for long. 'Farewell, land, never to be sought again!' I said, and plunged my body beneath the waters. The gods of the sea received me and deemed me worthy of the honor of their company, and asked Oceanus and Tethys to take away whatever mortal nature I bore. I was purified by them. A spell to purge sacrilege was chanted over me nine times, and I was told to put my breast beneath a hundred rivers. At once streams came gliding from every direction, and whole waters poured over my head. 13.956 This far I can tell you things worth recording; this far I remember, and my mind perceived nothing more. When it returned, I found myself different in my whole body from what I had been before, and not the same in mind. Then for the first time I saw this beard, green with a dark rust color, and the hair that I sweep through the long seas, my huge shoulders and sea-blue arms, and my legs curving at their end into a finned fish. Yet what good is this appearance, what good is it to have pleased the gods of the sea, what good is it to be a god, if you are not moved by these things?" As he was saying this, and about to say more, Scylla left the god. He raged, and, stung by her rejection, made for the wonder-filled halls of Circe, the Titan's daughter.[40]

40 Circe, daughter of the Sun (the Titan), is a sorceress famous from Homer's *Odyssey*.

Book 14

Aeneas in Italy
Scylla and Circe; the Sibyl; Picus and Canens; Aeneas made a god; Pomona and Vertumnus; Romulus.

GLAUCUS, SCYLLA AND CIRCE

Circe, rejected by Glaucus, poisons Scylla's pool and turns her into a monster.

14.1 Glaucus, the Euboean who dwells in the swelling waters, had now left behind Etna, heaped on the Giant's jaws, and the fields of the Cyclopes, which know nothing of the hoe or the use of the plow and owe nothing to yoked oxen. He had left behind Zancle too, and the walls of Rhegium opposite, and the ship-wrecking strait that, hemmed in by twin shores, marks the border between the Ausonian and the Sicilian lands. From there, sweeping through the Tyrrhenian waters with his great hands, Glaucus came to the grassy hills and to the halls of Circe, daughter of the Sun, which were full of beasts of every kind. As soon as he saw her, and greetings had been given and returned: "Goddess, pity a god, I beg you! You alone can relieve this god," he said, "if only I seem worthy![1]

14.14 No one knows better than I, daughter of Titan, how great the power of herbs is, for I was changed by them. And so that the cause of my frenzy is not unknown to you: on the Italian shore, opposite the walls of Messana, I saw Scylla. I am ashamed to recount my promises and my prayers, my coaxing, and how

1 Rhegium (Reggio) faces Zancle across the strait. The Giant buried under Etna is Typhoeus.

my words were scorned. But you—if there is any sovereignty in spells, move your sacred lips in a spell; or if a herb has greater power to conquer, use the proven strength of a potent herb. I do not ask you to cure me and heal these wounds; there is no need for them to end. Let her bear a share of the heat."

14.25 But Circe—for no one has a nature more prone to such flames, whether the cause lies in herself or Venus makes it so, offended by her father's informing—replied with these words: "You would do better to pursue one who is willing, who longs for the same thing and is caught by an equal desire. You deserved to be wooed unasked—and you certainly could have been—and if you give any hope, believe me, you will be wooed unasked. Do not doubt, and have confidence in your looks: see, I, though a goddess, though the daughter of the shining Sun, though I can do so much with herbs and so much with spells, pray that I may be yours. Scorn her who scorns you; repay her who pursues you in kind, and with a single act take revenge for two!" As she tempted him with such words, Glaucus said, "Sooner will leaves grow in the sea and seaweed on the mountaintops than my love will change while Scylla lives!"[2]

14.40 The goddess was indignant. Since she could not harm Glaucus himself (nor, loving him, would she have wished to), she turned her anger on the girl who had been preferred to her. Stung by the rejection of her love, she at once ground up notorious herbs with horrible juices and, as she ground them, mixed in Hecate's spells. She put on a dark-blue cloak and passed out of the middle of her hall through the troop of fawning beasts. Making for Rhegium, opposite the rocks of Zancle, she stepped onto the waves that seethe with surging tides, setting her feet on them as if on solid ground, and ran across the surface of the sea with dry feet. There was a small pool, curving into a bow-shaped bay, Scylla's favorite place of rest. She would retreat there from the heat of both sea and sky, when the sun stood at its strongest in mid-heaven and from its height had made the shadows

2 The Sun had revealed Venus' affair with Mars to her husband Vulcan (Book 4), and Venus took revenge on his children.

shortest. This pool the goddess fouled in advance and polluted with monster-making poisons. Over it she sprinkled liquids pressed from a harmful root, and three times nine times she murmured with her magic lips a dark spell, a maze of strange words.

14.59 Scylla came and had waded in as far as her waist when she saw her loins disfigured by barking monsters. At first, not believing they were parts of her own body, she fled from them, drove them off, and shrank in fear from the savage mouths of the dogs; but what she fled she dragged along with her. Looking for her body—thighs, legs, and feet—she found in place of those parts the gaping jaws of Cerberus. She stood on a mass of raging dogs, and with her truncated loins and her belly rising above them, she held in check the backs of the beasts beneath her. Glaucus, who loved her, wept, and fled from union with Circe, who had used the power of her herbs too cruelly. Scylla stayed in that place, and as soon as she had the chance, out of hatred for Circe she robbed Ulysses of his companions. Later she would have sunk the Trojan ships too, had she not first been turned into a rock, which even now juts out in stone; that rock, too, sailors shun.

AENEAS AND DIDO

Aeneas is driven to Carthage, where Dido kills herself when he leaves.

14.75 When the Trojan ships had got past this rock and greedy Charybdis with their oars, and were already near the Ausonian shore, the wind carried them back to the coast of Libya. There the Sidonian queen welcomed Aeneas into her heart and her home—she who would not bear well the parting from her Phrygian husband. On a pyre built under the pretense of a sacrifice she fell upon a sword, and, deceived herself, deceived everyone. Fleeing again the new walls of that sandy land, and carried back to the seat of Eryx and faithful Acestes, Aeneas sacrificed and honored his father's tomb. He unmoored the ships that Juno's Iris had almost burned, and left behind the realm of Hip-

potes' son, the lands smoking with hot sulfur, and the rocks of the Sirens, daughters of Achelous. His ship, robbed of its pilot, coasted past Inarime, Prochyte, and the Pithecusae, set on a barren hill and named after their inhabitants.[3]

14.91 For the father of the gods, who once loathed the deceit and perjuries of the Cercopes and the crimes of that treacherous race, changed the men into an ugly animal, so that they could seem at once unlike a human being and like one. He shrank their limbs, flattened their noses so that they turned up from the forehead, and furrowed their faces with an old woman's wrinkles. Then he sent them, their whole bodies covered in yellowish hair, to dwell in this place. But first he took away their use of words and of the tongue that had been born for dreadful perjury. He left them only the power to complain in hoarse screeching.[4]

THE SIBYL OF CUMAE

The Sibyl guides Aeneas through the underworld and tells how Apollo granted her long life.

14.101 When he had passed these islands and left the walls of Parthenope on his right, he came on his left to the tomb of the tuneful son of Aeolus, and to the shores of Cumae, a place teeming with marshy waters. He entered the cave of the long-lived Sibyl and begged that he might go through Avernus to his father's shade. For a long time she kept her face fixed on the ground; then at last she raised it, and, frenzied as the god entered her, said, "You ask great things, man greatest in deeds, whose right hand has been proved by the sword and whose devotion has been proved by fire. But put aside your fear, Trojan: you shall have what you seek. With me as your guide you will come to know the Elysian homes, the last kingdom of the

3 The Sidonian queen is Dido of Carthage, whose story Virgil tells in *Aeneid* 4. The lost pilot is Palinurus.

4 The Cercopes were a mythical race of tricksters. The name Pithecusae comes from Greek *pithekos* ("ape").

world, and the dear image of your father. To courage no way is impassable!" She spoke, and in the forest of Avernian Juno she showed him a bough shining with gold and told him to tear it from its trunk.[5]

14.116 Aeneas obeyed. He saw the riches of dreaded Orcus, his ancestors, and the aged shade of great-hearted Anchises; he learned too the laws of those regions, and what dangers he would have to face in new wars. Then, as he climbed back with weary steps along the uphill path, he lightened the toil by talking with his Cumaean guide. As he made his way along the fearsome road through the shadowy twilight, he said, "Whether you are a goddess in person or a woman most beloved by the gods, to me you will always be like a divinity, and I will confess that I owe myself to your gift. For you willed that I should enter the places of death, and escape the places of death once seen. For this kindness, when I have risen to the open air, I will build you a temple and grant you the honors of incense."

14.129 The prophetess looked back at him and, drawing a deep sigh, said, "I am no goddess; do not think a human head worthy of the honor of sacred incense. And so that you do not go wrong through ignorance: light everlasting, without end, was offered to me, if I had yielded my virginity to Phoebus, who loved me. While he hoped for it, while he longed to corrupt me beforehand with gifts, he said, 'Maiden of Cumae, choose what you wish: you shall have your wish.' I pointed to a heap of dust I had gathered up and, foolish girl, asked to be granted as many birthdays as the dust had grains. It slipped my mind to ask that the years should also be young ones. 14.140 Yet he was offering me those too, and eternal youth, if I would submit to his love. I scorned Phoebus' gift, and I remain unwed. But now the happier time of my life has turned its back, and sickly old age has come with trembling step, and I must endure it long. For as you see, I have already lived seven centuries; to match the number of the grains of dust, it remains for me to see three hundred harvests,

5 Parthenope is Naples, and the son of Aeolus is Misenus, Aeneas' trumpeter. "Avernian Juno" is Proserpina, queen of the underworld.

three hundred vintages. A time will come when the long days will make me small out of so large a body, and my limbs, consumed by age, will be reduced to the slightest weight. I will not seem to have been loved, or to have pleased a god; perhaps Phoebus himself will either not recognize me or will deny that he loved me. So changed will I be said to be. Though no one will see me, I will still be known by my voice: my voice the Fates will leave me."

ACHAEMENIDES

Achaemenides, rescued from the Cyclops, tells his story to Ulysses' comrade Macareus.

14.154 As the Sibyl told these things along the steep path, Trojan Aeneas emerged from the Stygian realm into the Euboean city, and, having offered sacrifice in the customary way, he went to the shore that did not yet bear his nurse's name. Here too Neritian Macareus, companion of much-tried Ulysses, had stopped, worn out by the long weariness of his hardships. He recognized Achaemenides, who had once been abandoned among the crags of Etna, and, amazed to find him unexpectedly alive, said, "What chance or what god keeps you safe, Achaemenides? Why does a foreign ship carry a Greek? What land is your ship making for?" To these questions Achaemenides—no longer shaggy in his clothing, now himself again, his covering no longer stitched together with thorns—replied: "May I see Polyphemus again, and those jaws streaming with human blood, if my home and the Ithacan's ship are dearer to me than this ship, if I revere Aeneas less than my father. Never can I be grateful enough, even if I were to give everything.[6]

14.172 That I speak and breathe and look up at the sky and the shining of the sun—could I be ungrateful and undutiful for that? It is his gift that this life of mine did not pass into the Cyclops'

6 The Euboean city is Cumae; the shore was later named Caieta (Gaeta) after Aeneas' nurse, who was buried there. Achaemenides, one of Ulysses' men left behind among the Cyclopes, was rescued by Aeneas in Virgil's *Aeneid* 3.

mouth; and if I were to leave the light of life even now, I would be buried in a tomb, or at least not in that belly. What did I feel then (unless fear took away all sense and feeling), when, left behind, I saw you making for the open sea? I wanted to shout to you, but I was afraid of betraying myself to the enemy: even Ulysses' shout nearly ruined your ship. I saw him when he tore an enormous rock from the mountain and hurled it into the midst of the waves. I saw him again hurling huge stones with his giant arm, as if driven by the force of a catapult, and I was terrified that the waves or the wind would sink the ship, forgetting that I was no longer on board.

14.187 But when flight had carried you away from certain death, he went groaning all around Etna, groping through the forests with his hands; robbed of his eye, he stumbled against the rocks. Stretching out his arms, fouled with gore, toward the sea, he cursed the Achaean race and said, 'Oh, if only some chance would bring Ulysses back to me, or one of his companions, on whom my anger could vent itself—whose guts I could eat, whose living limbs I could tear apart with my right hand, whose blood could flood my throat, whose crushed limbs could quiver between my teeth! How slight, or how nothing, would be the loss of the light that was taken from me!'

14.198 This and more he raved in his savagery. Pale horror seized me as I looked at his face, still dripping with slaughter, his cruel hands, the empty socket of his eye, his limbs, and his beard matted with human blood. Death was before my eyes, yet death itself was the least of my pain. I thought that at any moment he would seize me, at any moment bury my flesh in his own; and the image clung in my mind of that time when I saw him take two of my companions and dash their bodies three, four times against the ground, while he himself, crouching over them like a shaggy lion, stowed in his greedy belly their guts and flesh, their bones with the white marrow, and their half-living limbs. 14.210 Trembling took hold of me; I stood bloodless and wretched. Seeing him chew, spit the bloody feast out of his mouth, and vomit lumps clotted with wine, I imagined that such

a fate was being prepared for wretched me. For many days I hid, trembling at every sound, afraid of death and yet longing to die, keeping off hunger with acorns and with grass mixed with leaves. Alone, helpless, hopeless, abandoned to death and punishment, after a long time I saw this ship far off, begged by signs to be rescued, ran to the shore—and moved them. A Trojan ship took in a Greek! You too, dearest of companions, tell your fortunes, and those of our leader and of the crew that entrusted itself to the sea with you."

ULYSSES AND CIRCE

Macareus tells of Aeolus, the Laestrygonians, and Circe turning Ulysses' men into pigs.

14.223 Macareus told how Aeolus reigns over the Tuscan deep—Aeolus, son of Hippotes, who confines the winds in a prison. He told how the Dulichian leader received the winds shut up in an ox hide, a memorable gift, and with a favoring breeze sailed for nine days and sighted the land he was seeking; how, when dawn was stirring on the day after the ninth, his companions, overcome by envy and greed for plunder and thinking it was gold, untied the fastenings that held the winds; and how with those winds the ship went back through the waters it had just crossed and returned to the harbor of the Aeolian king. "From there," he said, "we came to the ancient city of Lamus the Laestrygonian. Antiphates was king in that land.[7]

14.235 I was sent to him with two companions, and by flight my companion and I barely found safety; the third of us stained the impious mouth of the Laestrygonian with his blood. As we fled, Antiphates pursued us and roused his people. They gathered and hurled rocks and beams, sinking men and sinking ships. One ship, however, the one that carried us and Ulysses himself, escaped. Grieving for the companions we had lost, with many laments, we drifted to that land which you see far off from here

7 The Dulichian leader is Ulysses. The Laestrygonians were a race of man-eating giants.

—believe me, that island should be seen only from far off; I have seen it! And you, most just of the Trojans, son of a goddess—for now that the war is over you must no longer be called an enemy, Aeneas—I warn you: shun the shores of Circe.

14.248 We too moored our ship on Circe's shore, but remembering Antiphates and the savage Cyclops, we refused to go on or to enter an unknown house. We were chosen by lot: the lot sent me, faithful Polites, Eurylochus, Elpenor, too fond of wine, and twice nine companions to Circe's walls. As soon as we reached them and stood at the threshold of the house, a thousand wolves, and bears and lionesses mixed with the wolves, frightened us by running to meet us. But none of them was to be feared; none was going to wound our bodies. In fact they waved their tails gently in the air and, fawning, followed our steps, until serving women received us and led us through marble-clad halls to their mistress. She sat in a lovely alcove on a ceremonial throne, wearing a gleaming robe, and over it she was wrapped in a golden mantle.

14.264 Nereids and nymphs were with her, who draw out no fleece with nimble fingers and spin no following thread. Instead they sort herbs, and separate into baskets flowers scattered in disorder and plants of varied colors. She herself oversees the work they do; she herself knows what use there is in each leaf and what harmony there is in their mixing, and she attentively examines the herbs once they are weighed. When she saw us, and greetings had been given and returned, her face brightened and she answered our good wishes with words of good omen. At once she ordered a mixture of barley from toasted grain, honey, strong wine, and curds with raisin wine, and she added juices to lurk secretly beneath this sweetness. We took the cups handed to us by her sacred right hand.

14.277 As soon as we had thirstily drained them with parched mouths, and the dread goddess had touched the tips of our hair with her wand—I am ashamed, but I will tell it—I began to bristle with stiff hairs. I could no longer speak; instead of words I let out a hoarse grunt, and I bent toward the ground with my

whole face. I felt my mouth harden into an upturned snout and my neck swell with muscles, and with the hands that had just taken the cup I made footprints. Along with the others who had suffered the same—so great is the power of drugs!—I was shut in a sty. We saw that Eurylochus alone had escaped the shape of a pig: he alone had refused the cup he was offered. Had he not avoided it, I would still be one of the bristly herd even now, and Ulysses would not have learned of our great disaster from him and come to Circe as our avenger.

14.291 The Cyllenian, bringer of peace, had given him a white flower. The gods call it moly, and it is held by a black root. Protected by it, and by heavenly advice as well, he entered Circe's house. When he was invited to the treacherous cups and she tried to stroke his hair with her wand, he pushed her back and, with drawn sword, frightened her off in terror. Then pledges were exchanged and right hands given. Received into her bedroom, he demanded his comrades' bodies as the dowry for their union. We were sprinkled with the kinder juices of some unknown herb and struck on the head with a blow of the reversed wand, and words were spoken that undid the words spoken before. The more she chanted, the more we were lifted from the ground and stood upright. The bristles fell away, the cleft left our split hooves, our shoulders came back, and forearms were set beneath our upper arms. Weeping, we embraced our weeping leader and clung to his neck, and the first words we spoke were words that bore witness to our gratitude.

14.308 A year's delay kept us there. In so long a time I saw many things with my own eyes and took in many with my ears. Among them was this, which one of the four handmaids assigned to such rites told me in secret. While Circe was spending time alone with my leader, the handmaid showed me a statue of a young man made of snow-white marble, with a woodpecker on its head, set up in a sacred shrine and decked with many garlands. I asked who he was, why he was worshiped in a sacred shrine and why he carried this bird, for I wanted to

know. 'Listen, Macareus,' she said, 'and learn from this too what power my mistress has. Pay close attention to what I tell you!

PICUS AND CANENS

Circe changes King Picus into a woodpecker, and his wife Canens wastes away.

14.320 Picus, offspring of Saturn, was a king in the lands of Ausonia, devoted to horses that serve in war. He had the looks you see here: you may view his beauty for yourself and judge the real one from the sculpted likeness. His spirit matched his looks, and he could not yet have seen four times the contest held every fifth year in Greek Elis. He had drawn the eyes of the Dryads born in the mountains of Latium. The goddesses of springs sought him too: the Naiads borne by the Albula, by the waters of the Numicius and the Anio, by the Almo, shortest in its course, by the headlong Nar and by the Farfarus of deep shade, and those who dwell by the woodland pool of Scythian Diana and the neighboring lakes. Yet he scorned them all and cherished one nymph, whom Venilia is said once to have borne to Ionian Janus on the Palatine hill.[8] 14.335 When she first came of age for marriage, she was given to Laurentine Picus, who was preferred above all others. She was rare in beauty but rarer in the art of singing, and so she was called Canens. With her voice she used to move woods and rocks, soothe wild beasts, hold back long rivers and stop wandering birds. While she was singing her songs in her woman's voice, Picus had gone out from his house into the Laurentine fields to spear the native boars. He sat astride a spirited horse, carried two spears in his left hand, and wore a crimson cloak fastened with tawny gold.[9]

14.346 The daughter of the Sun had also come into those same woods. To gather fresh herbs on the fertile hills, she had left the

8 Picus is the Latin for "woodpecker." The contest at Elis is the Olympic Games, held every four years ("every fifth year" by Roman counting), so he was not yet twenty.

9 Canens means "singing" in Latin.

fields called Circaean after her own name. Hidden in the thickets, she saw the young man and was stunned. The herbs she had gathered fell from her hand, and a flame seemed to wander through all her marrow. As soon as she had collected her wits from that fierce heat, she was about to confess what she desired, but the speed of his horse and the attendants crowding around him kept her from approaching. "You will not escape," she said, "even if the wind should carry you off, if only I know myself, if all the power of herbs has not vanished and my spells do not fail me."

14.358 So she said, and she fashioned the phantom of a sham boar with no body. She ordered it to run past the king's eyes and to seem to plunge into a grove dense with trees, where the woods are thickest and no horse can pass. Without delay Picus, unaware, at once went after the shadow of prey. He swiftly left his horse's foaming back and, following an empty hope, wandered on foot in the deep wood. She framed prayers and spoke words of entreaty, and she worshiped unknown gods with an unknown chant. It was the chant she used to cloud the face of the snow-white Moon and to draw thirsty clouds across her father's head. Then too, at the chanting of the spell, the sky thickened and the ground breathed out mists. His companions wandered on blind paths, and the king was left without his guard. Having found her place and time, she said, "By your eyes," 14.373 "which have captured mine, and by this beauty, most handsome one, which makes me, a goddess, your suppliant: have regard for my flames, accept the all-seeing Sun as your father-in-law, and do not harshly scorn Circe, the Titan's daughter!" She had spoken. Fiercely he rejected both her and her prayers. "Whoever you are," he said, "I am not yours. Another has captured me and holds me, and may she hold me, I pray, for a long age to come! I will not wound the bonds of marriage with a stranger's love while the fates keep Canens, Janus' daughter, for me!" She renewed her prayers again and again in vain. Then the Titan's daughter said, "You will not get away with this, nor will

you be given back to Canens. You will learn what a woman wronged, a woman in love, a woman, can do."

14.386 Then twice she turned to the west and twice to the east. Three times she touched the young man with her staff, and three spells she chanted. He fled, but he was amazed to find himself running faster than usual. He saw feathers on his body. Outraged to be suddenly added to the woods of Latium as a new bird, he struck the wild oaks with his hard beak and in anger dealt wounds to their long branches. His feathers took on the crimson of his cloak. What had been a brooch, the gold that had bitten into his garment, became plumage, and his neck was ringed with tawny gold. Nothing of the old Picus remained except his name.

14.397 Meanwhile his companions called Picus again and again through the fields, in vain, and found him nowhere. Then they came upon Circe, for she had now thinned the air and let the winds and the sun open up the mists. They pressed her with true accusations, demanded their king back, used force, and got ready to attack her with savage weapons. Guilty as she was, she sprinkled poisons and venomous juices. She called together Night and the gods of night from Erebus and Chaos, and prayed to Hecate with long howls. The woods leaped from their places (wonderful to tell), the ground groaned, and the nearby trees went pale. The grass she had sprinkled grew wet with drops of blood. Stones seemed to utter hoarse bellows, and dogs seemed to bark, the earth to bristle with black snakes, and thin ghosts to flit about.

14.412 The crowd, stunned by these portents, was terrified. She touched their terrified, wondering faces with her poisoned wand, and at its touch the monstrous shapes of various wild beasts came over the young men. None kept his own likeness. Phoebus, setting, had sprinkled the shores of Tartessus with his light, and Canens had waited for her husband in vain with her eyes and her heart. Servants and townspeople ran through all the woods carrying torches to meet him. Nor was it enough for the nymph to weep, tear her hair and beat her breast, though

she did all these things. She rushed out and wandered frantic through the fields of Latium. Six nights and as many returns of the sun's light saw her going over ridges and through valleys, wherever chance led, without sleep or food.[10]

14.426 The Tiber was the last to see her, worn out with grief and travel, laying her body down on its long bank. There, weeping and grieving, she poured out words in a faint voice, tuned to her very sorrow, as a swan sometimes sings its own funeral song as it dies. Her tender marrow melted by this final grief, she wasted away and little by little vanished into thin air. Yet her fame was stamped upon the place, which the ancient Camenae fittingly named Canens, after the nymph.' Many such things I was told, and saw, through that long year. Sluggish and slow from lack of practice, we were ordered to go to sea again and set sail again. The Titan's daughter had told us of perilous routes and a vast journey, and of the dangers of the savage sea still awaiting us. I was terrified, I admit, and when I reached this shore I clung to it."[11]

THE COMPANIONS OF DIOMEDES

Diomedes refuses Turnus his help and tells how his comrades were turned into birds.

14.441 Macareus had finished. Aeneas' nurse, buried in an urn in a marble tomb, bore a short inscription: HERE MY FOSTER-SON, OF FAMOUS DEVOTION, BURNED ME, CAIETA, RESCUED FROM THE ARGIVE FIRE, WITH THE FIRE THAT WAS MY DUE. The cable tied to the grassy bank was cast off. They left far behind the treachery and the house of the infamous goddess and made for the groves where the Tiber, darkened by shade, bursts into the sea with its yellow sand. Aeneas won the house and the daughter of Latinus, son of Faunus, though not without war. War was taken up against a fierce people, and Turnus raged for the bride he had been promised. All Tyrrhenia clashed with Latium,

10 Tartessus, in southern Spain, stands for the far west.
11 The Camenae were Italian goddesses of springs, identified with the Muses.

and for a long time hard-won victory was sought with anxious arms.

14.454 Each side increased its strength with foreign forces. Many defended the Rutulians, and many the Trojan camp. Aeneas had not gone to Evander's walls in vain, but Venulus had gone in vain to the city of the exiled Diomedes. Diomedes had founded a very great city under Iapygian Daunus and held lands that had come to him as a dowry. When Venulus had delivered Turnus' message and asked for help, the Aetolian hero excused himself from sending troops. He was unwilling to commit his father-in-law's people to battle, and he had none of his own race to arm. "So that you will not think this an invention, I will bear to tell it, though the reminder renews bitter grief. Lofty Ilium was burned, and Pergama fed the Danaan flames. The Narycian hero tore a virgin from the Virgin and spread among us all the punishment he alone deserved. After that we were scattered. Swept by winds over hostile seas, we Danaans endured lightning, darkness, rain, the anger of sky and sea, and Caphereus, the crown of our disasters.[12] 14.473 I will not delay you by telling our sad misfortunes in order. At that time Greece could have seemed worth weeping for even to Priam. Yet the care of Minerva, bearer of arms, saved me and snatched me from the waves. But again I was driven from my native fields, and kindly Venus, remembering an old wound, exacted punishment. I endured such great hardships on the deep sea, and such great hardships in wars on land, that I often called those men fortunate whom the storm we all shared and cruel Caphereus drowned in the waters, and I wished I had been one of them.[13]

14.483 My companions had now suffered the worst in war and at sea. They were losing heart and begging for an end to our wandering. But Acmon, hot-tempered by nature and then made fierce by disaster as well, said, 'What is left, men, that our

12 The Narycian hero is Ajax son of Oileus, who dragged Cassandra from Minerva's altar. Caphereus is the headland on Euboea where the Greek fleet was wrecked on its way home.

13 At Troy Diomedes wounded Venus in the hand as she tried to rescue Aeneas (*Iliad* 5).

endurance could now refuse to bear? What more can Cytherea do to us, supposing she wants to? For while worse is feared, there is room for a wound. But when your lot is the worst of all, fear lies underfoot and the height of misfortune is free from care. Let her hear me herself, and let her hate all the men under Diomedes, as she does. All of us scorn her hatred: her great power has cost us a great price!' With such words Acmon of Pleuron goaded Venus, who was already angry, and with his goading roused her anger anew.

14.496 His words pleased few. The greater number of us, his friends, rebuked Acmon. As he tried to reply, his voice and the passage of his voice both grew thin. His hair turned into feathers, and feathers covered his new neck, his chest and his back. His arms took on larger plumes, and his elbows curved into light wings. Toes took up the greater part of his foot, and his mouth, hardened with horn, stiffened and ended in a point. At him Lycus marveled, at him Idas and Nycteus with Rhexenor, at him Abas. While they marveled, they took on the same appearance, and the greater part of our company flew up and circled the oars on beating wings. If you ask what these uncertain birds looked like: though they were not swans, they were very like white swans. As Daunus' son-in-law, I barely hold these dwellings and the dry fields of Iapygian Daunus, with the smallest remnant of my men."

THE APULIAN SHEPHERD

An Apulian shepherd who mocked the nymphs is turned into a wild olive tree.

14.512 Thus far the son of Oeneus. Venulus left the Calydonian kingdom, the Peucetian bays and the Messapian fields. In that country he saw caves, dim with thick woods and trickling with water among light reeds. Half-goat Pan holds them now, but once nymphs held them. In that region an Apulian shepherd frightened the nymphs and drove them off, at first unsettling them with sudden fear. Soon their wits came back, and they

scorned their pursuer and began their dances, moving their feet in rhythm. The shepherd mocked them, imitating them with a clumsy country leap, and to obscene words he added rustic abuse. His mouth did not fall silent until a tree enclosed his throat. For you can tell his character from the tree and its sap. The wild olive displays the mark of his tongue in its bitter berries: the harshness of his words passed into them.

THE SHIPS OF AENEAS

Cybele saves Aeneas' burning ships by turning them into sea nymphs.

14.527 The envoys returned from there, reporting that Aetolian arms had been refused them. The Rutulians then fought the war they had prepared without those forces, and much blood was shed on both sides. And look: Turnus brought greedy torches against the ships of pine, and those whom the waves had spared feared fire. Already Mulciber was burning the pitch, the wax and the other food of flame, and climbing the tall mast to the sails, and the thwarts of the curved hulls were smoking. Then the holy mother of the gods remembered that these pines had been felled on the summit of Ida. She filled the air with the ringing of struck bronze and the drone of blown boxwood pipes, and, riding through the light air behind tamed lions, she said, "In vain, Turnus, do you hurl these fires with your sacrilegious hand! I will snatch them away. I will not let devouring fire burn parts and limbs of my woods." As the goddess spoke, it thundered. After the thunder heavy storm clouds fell with leaping hail, and the brothers born of Astraeus threw the air and the swelling sea into turmoil with sudden onsets and went into battle.[14]

14.546 Using the strength of one of them, the kindly mother broke the hempen cables of the Phrygian fleet, carried the ships off headlong, and sank them in mid-sea. Their timber softened, and their wood turned into bodies. The curved sterns changed

14 The holy mother of the gods is Cybele, from whose sacred Mount Ida the Trojans cut the timber for their ships. The sons of Astraeus are the winds.

into the shapes of heads, and the oars became fingers and swimming legs. What had been a side stayed a side, and the keel set beneath the middle of each vessel changed to serve as a spine. The rigging became soft hair, and the yardarms became arms. Their color stayed sea-blue, as it had been. In the waves they once feared, they now played girlish games as Naiads of the sea. Though born on hard mountains, they thronged the soft sea, and their origin did not trouble them. Yet they did not forget how many dangers they had so often endured at sea, and they often put their hands beneath storm-tossed ships, unless a ship was carrying Achaeans. Still remembering the Phrygian disaster, they hated the Pelasgians. With glad faces they saw the wreckage of the Neritian ship, and with glad faces they saw Alcinous' ship stiffen and stone grow over its wood.[15]

14.566 There was hope that, now that the fleet had come to life as sea nymphs, the Rutulian might give up the war in fear of the portent. He persisted. Each side had gods and, what is as good as gods, courage. They no longer sought a kingdom as dowry, nor a father-in-law's scepter, nor you, Lavinia, still unwed. They sought victory, and they kept up the war from shame at laying it down. At last Venus saw her son's arms victorious. Turnus fell, and Ardea fell, which had been called mighty while Turnus lived. The foreign sword destroyed it, and its roofs lay buried in warm ash. Then from the middle of the heap a bird, seen then for the first time, flew up and beat the ashes with flapping wings. Its cry, its leanness, its pallor, everything that befits a captured city, and the city's name as well, remained in it. And Ardea herself is mourned with the beating of her own wings.[16]

15 The Neritian ship is Ulysses' (Neritos is a mountain on Ithaca). The Phaeacian ship of King Alcinous that carried him home was turned to stone.
16 Ardea was the Rutulians' city; ardea is also the Latin word for "heron."

AENEAS MADE A GOD

Venus asks Jupiter to make Aeneas a god, and his mortal part is washed away.

14.581 By now Aeneas' courage had forced all the gods, and Juno herself, to end their old anger. The fortunes of the growing Iulus were firmly founded, and the hero son of Cytherea was ripe for heaven. Venus had canvassed the gods above, and, throwing her arms around her father's neck, she had said: "Father, you have never at any time been harsh to me; now, I pray, be at your gentlest. To my Aeneas, who through our blood has made you a grandfather, grant some divine power, best of fathers, however small, so long as you grant him some. It is enough to have looked once on the unlovely kingdom, and to have crossed the Stygian rivers once." The gods agreed. Nor did the royal consort keep her face unmoved; she nodded, her expression appeased. Then the father said: "You are worthy of a heavenly godhead, both you who ask and he for whom you ask. Take what you wish for, daughter!"

14.596 He had spoken. She rejoiced and thanked her father, and, carried through the light air by her yoked doves, she came to the Laurentine shore, where the Numicius, screened by reeds, winds its river waters into the sea close by. She ordered him to wash away from Aeneas whatever was subject to death and carry it down beneath the sea in his silent course. The horned god carried out Venus' commands: whatever in Aeneas had been mortal he purged away and washed with his waters, and his best part remained. His mother anointed the cleansed body with divine perfume, touched his lips with ambrosia mixed with sweet nectar, and made him a god, whom the people of Quirinus call Indiges and have welcomed with a temple and altars.[17]

17 Aeneas was worshiped as Pater (or Jupiter) Indiges at a shrine by the river Numicius near Lavinium.

THE KINGS OF ALBA

The kings of Alba Longa follow Aeneas' son Ascanius down to Proca.

14.609 Next, Alba and the Latin state came under the rule of Ascanius, the man of two names. Silvius succeeded him. His son Latinus held, along with the scepter, the revived name of the old king. The famous Alba followed Latinus. Epytus came after him; then Capetus and Capys, though Capys came first. Tiberinus took the kingdom from them, and, drowning in the waters of the Tuscan river, gave his name to its stream. His sons were Remulus and fierce Acrota. Remulus, the elder, who imitated the thunderbolt, perished by a thunderbolt's stroke. Acrota, more restrained than his brother, handed the scepter to brave Aventinus, who lies buried on the very hill where he had reigned and gave the hill its name. And now Proca held sway over the Palatine people.[18]

POMONA AND VERTUMNUS

Vertumnus, disguised as an old woman, woos the garden nymph Pomona.

14.623 Under this king lived Pomona. No Hamadryad among the Latins tended gardens more skillfully, and none was more devoted to the fruit of trees. From this she took her name. She loved neither woods nor rivers, but the countryside and branches bearing rich fruit. Her right hand was weighted not with a javelin but with a curved pruning hook, with which she would now check excess growth and rein in branches straying everywhere, now split the bark and graft in a shoot, giving sap to a foster-child not its own. Nor did she let them feel thirst; she watered the curling fibers of the thirsty roots with running

18 Ascanius, Aeneas' son, was also called Iulus. These are the legendary kings of Alba Longa, bridging the centuries from Aeneas to Romulus.

streams. This was her love, this her passion; for sex she had no desire at all.[19]

14.635 Yet, fearing violence from country folk, she walled her orchards in, barred all approach, and fled from men. What did the satyrs not try—a youthful crowd made for dancing—and the Pans, their horns wreathed with pine, and Silenus, always younger than his years, and the god who frightens thieves with his sickle or his groin, to possess her? But Vertumnus outdid even these in loving, and was no luckier than they. Oh, how often, dressed as a rough reaper, he carried ears of grain in a basket and was the very image of a real reaper! Often, his temples bound with fresh hay, he could seem to have just been turning the mown grass. Often he carried an ox-goad in his hard hand, so that you would have sworn he had just unyoked his weary bullocks.[20] 14.649 Given a pruning hook, he was a leaf-trimmer and a pruner of vines; he had shouldered a ladder, and you would think he was going to pick fruit. With a sword he was a soldier, a fisherman once he took up a rod. In short, through many shapes he often found a way to get near her, to win the joy of gazing at her beauty. He even bound his temples with an embroidered headscarf, leaned on a stick, arranged gray hair around his temples, and passed himself off as an old woman. He entered the well-kept gardens and, admiring the fruit, the old woman said, "But you are so much finer!" and gave the girl she praised a few kisses such as no real old woman would ever have given. Then she sat down, bent over, on the turf, gazing up at the branches bowed with autumn's weight.

14.661 Opposite stood an elm, handsome with gleaming grapes. When she had praised it, and the vine that was its partner along with it, she said: "But if that trunk stood there unwed, without the vine, it would have nothing but leaves to make anyone seek it out. And this vine too, which is joined to it, rests upon it; if it

19 Pomona's name comes from *poma*, "fruit."
20 The god with the sickle is Priapus, whose phallic statues guarded gardens. Vertumnus was an Italian god of the changing seasons, his name linked to *vertere*, "to turn."

were not married, it would lie sprawled on the ground. Yet you are not moved by this tree's example: you shun the marriage bed and have no wish to be joined to anyone. If only you were willing! Helen would not have been courted by more suitors, nor she who stirred up the Lapiths' war, nor the wife of Ulysses, who was so slow to return. Even now, though you flee and turn away from those who seek you, a thousand men desire you, demigods and gods, and all the divine powers that dwell in the Alban hills.[21] 14.675 But you, if you are wise, if you want to make a good match and listen to this old woman, who loves you more than all of them, more than you believe, reject commonplace marriages and choose Vertumnus to share your bed! You have me as guarantor for him, since he does not know himself better than I know him. He does not roam aimlessly over the whole world; he dwells in these broad lands. Nor does he, like most of your suitors, fall in love with every woman he has just seen. You will be his first flame and his last, and to you alone he will devote his years. Add that he is young, that nature has given him the gift of beauty, that he can shape himself to fit any form, and that whatever he is told to become he will become, even if you demand everything. 14.687 And what of the fact that you both love the same things? That he is the first to have the fruit you tend, and holds your gifts in his glad right hand? But now he no longer longs for fruit picked from the tree, nor for the herbs with mellow juices that your garden grows, nor for anything but you. Pity his burning, and believe that he himself is here in person, begging through my lips for what he seeks. Fear the avenging gods, and the Idalian goddess, who loathes hard hearts, and the unforgetting anger of the Rhamnusian! And to make you fear them more (for great age has taught me many things), I will tell you a story known all over Cyprus, by which you may easily be swayed and softened.[22]

21 The bride who caused the Lapiths' war is Hippodamia, whose wedding ended in the battle with the Centaurs (Book 12). Ulysses' wife is Penelope, besieged by suitors in his absence.

22 The Idalian goddess is Venus, worshiped at Idalium on Cyprus; the Rhamnusian is Nemesis, goddess of retribution, whose shrine was at Rhamnus in Attica.

IPHIS AND ANAXARETE

Vertumnus tells how proud Anaxarete was turned to stone after her lover hanged himself.

14.698 Iphis, a man of humble birth, had seen Anaxarete, nobly descended from the blood of ancient Teucer. He had seen her, and felt the fire through all his bones. He struggled long, and when he could not conquer his frenzy by reason, he came as a suppliant to her door. Now he confessed his wretched love to her nurse and begged her, by her hopes for her foster-child, not to be hard on him; now he flattered each of her many servants and, in an anxious voice, asked for their kind support. Often he gave them his words to carry on coaxing tablets; sometimes he hung garlands wet with the dew of his tears on her doorposts, laid his soft body on the hard threshold, and hurled reproaches at the grim bolt. She, crueler than the sea that rises when the Kids are setting, harder than iron refined in Noric fires, and than rock still held alive by its root, scorned and mocked him. Proud and fierce, she added arrogant words to her pitiless deeds, and cheated her lover even of hope.[23]

14.716 Iphis could not endure the torment of his long pain, and before her door he spoke these last words: 'You win, Anaxarete, and at last you will not have to put up with the weariness of me any longer. Prepare your joyful triumphs, raise the victory hymn, and wreathe yourself in shining laurel! For you win, and I die gladly: come, woman of iron, rejoice! Surely you will be forced to praise something in my love. Yet remember that I did not stop caring for you before I stopped living, and that I must lose my two lights together. No rumor will come to you as the messenger of my death: I myself, do not doubt it, will be there, seen in person, so that you may feast your cruel eyes on my lifeless body. Yet if you, gods above, see what mortals do, remember me (my tongue can bear to pray no further), make my story

23 Teucer, Ajax's half-brother, founded Salamis on Cyprus after the Trojan War. The setting of the Kids, a pair of stars, was thought to bring storms.

told through long ages, and give to my fame the time you have taken from my life!'

14.733 He spoke, and lifting his wet eyes and pale arms toward the doorposts he had so often decked with garlands, he tied the cord of a noose to the top of the door and said, 'Do these garlands please you, cruel, heartless woman?' He put his head in, still turned toward her even then, and hung there, a pitiful weight, his throat crushed. The door, struck by the kicking of his feet, swung open and revealed the deed. The servants cried out, lifted him down in vain, and carried him (for his father had died) to his mother's door. She took him in her lap and embraced her son's cold limbs; and after she had spoken the words of grieving parents and performed the rites of grieving mothers, she led his funeral in tears through the middle of the city, carrying his livid body on the bier on which it would be burned.

14.748 As it happened, a house stood near the street along which the mournful procession was passing, and the sound of the lamentation reached the ears of hard Anaxarete, whom an avenging god was already driving on. Stirred, she said, 'Still, let us see this pitiful funeral,' and went up to a high room with wide windows. She had scarcely caught sight of Iphis laid out on the bier when her eyes stiffened, and the warm blood fled from her body as pallor spread over it. She tried to step back and stuck fast; she tried to turn her face away, and could not do even this; and little by little the stone that had long been in her hard heart took over her limbs. 14.759 And in case you think this is made up, Salamis still keeps a statue in the lady's likeness, and it also has a temple called that of Venus Prospiciens. Remember these things, my dear, and put aside, I beg you, your stubborn pride, and give yourself to your lover, nymph. Then may no spring frost blight your budding fruit, and no rushing winds shake down its blossoms!" When the god, so apt in an old woman's form, had said all this in vain, he turned back into a young man, stripped off the old woman's trappings, and appeared to her just as the sun's most dazzling image looks when it has overcome the clouds in

its way and shines out again with nothing to block it. He was ready to use force; but there was no need for force, and the nymph, captivated by the god's beauty, felt a wound of love in return.[24]

ROMULUS AND HERSILIA

Rome is founded, the Sabines attack, and Romulus and his wife Hersilia become gods.

14.772 Next, the armed men of the unjust Amulius ruled the wealth of Ausonia, and old Numitor recovered his lost kingdom through his grandson's gift. On the festal day of the Palilia the walls of the city were founded. Tatius and the Sabine elders waged war, and Tarpeia, who opened the way to the citadel, gave up her life—the punishment it deserved—beneath the heaped-up arms. Then the men born at Cures, like silent wolves, stifled their voices, fell upon bodies overcome by sleep, and made for the gates that Ilia's son had shut with a firm bar. But one of them Saturn's daughter herself opened, and the hinge made no sound as it turned.[25]

14.783 Only Venus sensed that the gate's bars had fallen, and she would have closed it, except that gods may never undo what gods have done. Next to Janus the Ausonian Naiads had a place, wet with a cold spring. Venus asked them for help, and the nymphs could not refuse the goddess's just request: they drew out the channels and streams of their spring. Yet the mouth of open Janus was not yet impassable, nor had the water blocked the way. So they set yellow sulfur beneath the abundant spring and kindled its hollow channels with smoking pitch. By these and other forces the heat reached the depths of the spring, and you waters, which just now dared to rival Alpine cold, now yield not even to fire itself![26] 14.796 The twin doorposts smoked with the

24 *Prospiciens* means "looking out," a play on Anaxarete gazing from her window.
25 The Palilia, a shepherds' festival on April 21, was celebrated as Rome's birthday. Tarpeia betrayed the citadel to the Sabines and was crushed beneath their shields.
26 The shrine of Janus near the Forum had doors that stood open in time of war.

fiery spray, and the gate, promised in vain to the stern Sabines, was blocked by the new spring until the soldiers of Mars could put on their armor. Romulus then took the offensive, and the Roman earth was strewn with Sabine bodies and strewn with its own, and the impious sword mingled the blood of son-in-law with the blood of father-in-law. Even so, they resolved to end the war in peace rather than fight it out to the last, and agreed that Tatius should share the throne. Tatius had died, and you, Romulus, were giving laws to the two peoples alike, when Mars took off his helmet and addressed the father of gods and men with these words: "The time has come, father, since the Roman state stands strong on a great foundation and rests on a single ruler, to pay the reward promised to me and to your worthy grandson: to take him from the earth and set him in heaven. Once, in the presence of the council of the gods, you said to me (for I remember, and with a remembering mind I marked your kindly words):[27]

14.814 'There will be one whom you will raise to the blue of heaven.' Let the full sum of your words be fulfilled!" The almighty one nodded, hid the air in dark clouds, and terrified the world with thunder and lightning. Gradivus knew these for the sure signs of the abduction promised him. Leaning on his spear, he fearlessly mounted behind his horses as they strained beneath the bloodstained pole, cracked the lash, and, swooping headlong through the air, came to rest on the summit of the wooded Palatine hill. There he carried off Ilia's son as he was giving his Quirites laws that were not a tyrant's. His mortal body melted away as it passed through the thin air, as a lead bullet flung from a broad sling dissolves in mid-sky. A beautiful face took its place, worthier of the high couches of the gods, such as the form of Quirinus in his robe of state.[28]

14.829 His wife was weeping for him as lost, when royal Juno ordered Iris to go down along her curving path to Hersilia and

27 The Romans had seized Sabine women as wives, so the two sides were now bound by marriage.

give the bereaved woman this message: "Lady, foremost glory of Latium and of the Sabine people alike, most worthy to have been the wife of so great a man before and now to be the wife of Quirinus, stop your weeping, and, if you long to see your husband, follow me to the grove that grows green on Quirinus' hill and shades the temple of the Roman king." Iris obeyed, and, gliding down to earth along her painted bow, spoke to Hersilia the words she had been ordered to say. Hersilia, scarcely lifting her eyes, her face modest,[29]

14.841 said: "O goddess—for though I cannot easily say which goddess you are, it is plain that you are a goddess—lead me, oh lead me, and show me my husband's face. If only the Fates allow me to see him just once, I will confess that I have gained heaven." Without delay she went with the virgin daughter of Thaumas up onto the hills of Romulus. There a star fell from the upper air down to earth, and Hersilia, her hair set ablaze by its light, rose with the star into the air. The founder of the city of Rome received her in his familiar arms, and changed her old name along with her body, calling her Hora, who is now a goddess joined to Quirinus.[30]

28 Gradivus is a title of Mars. Romulus became the god Quirinus, shown wearing the trabea, a striped ceremonial robe; the Roman citizens were called Quirites.
29 Hersilia, a Sabine woman, was the wife of Romulus. Quirinus' hill is the Quirinal.
30 Iris was the daughter of Thaumas. Hora was an old Roman goddess worshiped as the consort of Quirinus.

Book 15

Pythagoras and Rome
Numa; the teaching of Pythagoras; Hippolytus; Aesculapius comes to Rome; Caesar made a god; epilogue.

NUMA; MYSCELUS AND CROTON

Numa travels to Croton and hears how Myscelus founded the city at Hercules' command.

15.1 Meanwhile the question was who could bear the weight of so great a burden and succeed so great a king. Rumor, the herald of truth, marked out the illustrious Numa for the throne. It was not enough for him to have learned the rites of the Sabine people: his capacious mind conceived greater things, and he inquired into the nature of the universe. His love of this study made him leave his homeland and Cures and journey to the city of Hercules' host. When he asked what founder had set Greek walls on Italian shores, one of the native elders, who knew the old times well, told him this:[1]

15.12 "Jupiter's son, rich with the Iberian cattle, is said to have reached the Lacinian shore after a fortunate journey from Ocean. While his herd wandered over the tender grass, he entered the home of great Croton, a roof that did not turn him away, and relieved his long labor with rest. As he left, he said: 'In the age of your descendants this place will be a city'; and the promise came true. For there was a certain Myscelus, son of the Argive Alemon, the man most pleasing to the gods in that age.

1 Numa Pompilius, the legendary second king of Rome, was a Sabine from the town of Cures.

As he lay weighed down by heavy sleep, the club-bearer bent over him and spoke: 'Go, make for the stony waters of the far-off Aesar! Come, leave your ancestral home!' And he threatened many fearful things if Myscelus did not obey. Then sleep and the god departed together.[2]

15.26 Alemon's son rose and turned the fresh vision over in his silent mind, and his judgment fought long against itself: the god ordered him to go, the laws forbade him to leave, and death was the penalty fixed for anyone who wished to change his homeland. The shining Sun had hidden his bright head in Ocean, and thickest Night had raised her starry head: the same god seemed to stand beside him, give the same warnings, and threaten more and heavier punishments if he did not obey. He was terrified, and he was preparing at once to move his ancestral household shrine to a new home. A murmur arose in the city, and he was put on trial for scorning the laws. When the prosecution had finished its case and the crime, plain to see, had been proved without witnesses, the accused, unkempt, lifted his face and hands to the gods above and said: 'O you whose twice six labors won you the right to heaven, bring me help, I pray! For you are the cause of my crime.'

15.41 It was an ancient custom to use white and black pebbles, condemning defendants with the black and acquitting them with the white. This time, too, the grim verdict was cast this way, and every pebble dropped into the pitiless urn was black. But as soon as the urn was turned over and poured out the pebbles to be counted, every one of them changed color from black to white, and the verdict, made white by Hercules' divine power, set Alemon's son free. He gave thanks to Amphitryon's son as to a father, and with favoring winds he sailed the Ionian Sea, passing Sallentine Neretum, Sybaris, Crimisa and the fields of Iapyx. He had barely finished wandering past the lands that face those shores when he found the fated mouth of the river Aesar, and not far from it the mound under which the earth

2 Hercules was driving home the cattle of Geryon, taken in Spain; his host Croton gave his name to the Greek city of Croton in southern Italy.

covered the hallowed bones of Croton. There, in the land he had been commanded to seek, he founded his walls, and he gave the city the name of the man buried there." Such, by well-established tradition, were the beginnings of the place and of the city founded within the borders of Italy.[3]

THE TEACHING OF PYTHAGORAS

Pythagoras urges people not to eat meat and teaches that everything changes.

15.60 There was a man here, a Samian by birth, but he had fled both Samos and its masters, and out of hatred for tyranny he lived in voluntary exile. Though the gods were far off in the region of the sky, he approached them with his mind, and what nature denied to human sight he drank in with the eyes of his heart. When he had surveyed everything with his intellect and watchful care, he offered it openly for others to learn. To gatherings that listened in silence and marveled at his words, he taught the beginnings of the great universe, the causes of things, what nature is and what god is, where snow comes from, what the origin of lightning is, whether it is Jupiter or the winds that thunder when a cloud bursts apart, what shakes the earth, by what law the stars move—and whatever else lies hidden. He was the first to condemn putting animals on our tables; he was the first, too, to open his lips—learned lips, but not believed—in words like these:[4]

15.75 "Mortals, stop defiling your bodies with sinful feasts! There are crops; there are apples bending the branches with their weight, and grapes swelling on the vines; there are sweet herbs, and others that fire can soften and make tender. You are not robbed of flowing milk, or of honey fragrant with the flower of thyme. The lavish earth supplies its riches and gentle foods,

3 Neretum, Sybaris, Crimisa and Iapygia lie along the coast of southern Italy; the Aesar flows past Croton.

4 The unnamed sage is Pythagoras of Samos (6th century BC), who settled at Croton; he taught the transmigration of souls and abstinence from meat.

and offers banquets without slaughter and blood. Wild beasts satisfy their hunger with flesh—yet not all of them: the horse, the sheep and the cattle live on grass. But those whose nature is savage and fierce—Armenian tigers, raging lions, bears and wolves—delight in feasts with blood. 15.88 Ah, what a crime it is to bury flesh in flesh, for a greedy body to grow fat on another body crammed inside it, for one living creature to live by another living creature's death! So amid all the wealth that earth, the best of mothers, brings forth, nothing pleases you but to chew piteous wounds with savage teeth and revive the ways of the Cyclopes? Can you not appease the hunger of your greedy, ill-mannered belly unless you have destroyed another? But that ancient age, which we have named golden, was blessed with the fruit of trees and the plants the soil brings forth, and it did not pollute its lips with blood.

15.99 Then birds moved their wings safely through the air, the hare wandered unafraid in the middle of the fields, and no fish had been hung on a hook by its own trustfulness. Everything was free of ambush, feared no treachery, and was full of peace. But after someone—whoever he was, an innovator who did no good—envied the diet of the gods and plunged fleshly feasts into his greedy belly, he opened the road to crime. Perhaps the steel first grew warm and stained with blood from the killing of wild beasts (and that should have been enough); bodies that seek our death may be put to death, we admit, without offense to piety. But, fit as they were to be killed, they were not fit to be eaten.

15.111 From there the sin spread further. The pig is thought to have been the first victim to deserve death, because it had rooted up the seeds with its upturned snout and cut off the hope of the year. The goat, for gnawing a vine, is said to have been slaughtered at the altars of Bacchus the avenger: both were ruined by their own guilt! But what did you deserve, you sheep, a peaceful flock born to serve humankind, you who carry nectar in your full udders, who give us your wool for soft clothing and help us more by your life than by your death? What did the oxen deserve, a creature without fraud or guile, harmless, simple,

born to endure toil? Ungrateful indeed, and unworthy of the gift of grain, is the man who could slaughter his fellow laborer the moment the weight of the curved plow was lifted from him, who could strike with an ax that neck worn by toil, the neck with which he had so often renewed the hard field, and which had given him so many harvests.

15.127 Nor is it enough that such a crime is committed: they have written the gods themselves into the crime, and they believe that the power above rejoices in the slaughter of the hardworking bullock. A victim without blemish and of the finest form (for to have pleased is its ruin), decked out with ribbons and gold, is set before the altar. Uncomprehending, it hears the priest praying, and sees the grain it labored to grow sprinkled on its brow between its horns; struck down, it stains with its blood the knives it perhaps saw beforehand reflected in the clear water. At once they tear the entrails from its still-living breast, inspect them, and search out in them the minds of the gods. And from such a source—so great is humankind's hunger for forbidden food!—you dare to feed, you mortal race? Do not do it, I beg you, and turn your minds to my warnings! When you put the limbs of slaughtered oxen to your palate, know and feel that you are chewing your own farmhands.

15.143 And since a god moves my lips, I will duly follow the god who moves my lips; I will open my Delphi and the very heavens, and unlock the oracles of an august mind. I will sing of great things never explored by the minds of earlier men, things long hidden. It is a joy to travel among the lofty stars, a joy to leave the earth and its sluggish seat, to ride on a cloud and stand on the shoulders of mighty Atlas, to look down from afar on people wandering here and there, lacking reason, and so to exhort them in their anxiety and fear of death, and unroll the chain of fate: O race stunned by the terror of icy death, why do you fear the Styx, why the shades and empty names—the stuff of poets—and the perils of a world that does not exist? Your bodies, whether the pyre has consumed them with flame or time with decay, cannot suffer any harm: do not think it!

15.158 Souls are free from death. Always, leaving their former home, they live on in new dwellings that receive them. I myself (for I remember it) was Euphorbus, son of Panthous, at the time of the Trojan War, and once the heavy spear of the younger son of Atreus lodged full in my breast. Not long ago I recognized the shield my left arm used to carry in Juno's temple at Argos, city of Abas. Everything changes; nothing perishes. The spirit wanders, comes from there to here and from here to there, takes over whatever limbs it pleases, passes from beasts into human bodies and from us into beasts, and is never destroyed in all of time. As pliant wax is stamped with new designs, does not stay as it was or keep the same forms, and yet is still the same wax, so, I teach, the soul is always the same but migrates into different shapes.[5]

15.173 Therefore, so that piety may not be conquered by the craving of the belly, stop—I prophesy it—driving out kindred souls by abominable slaughter, and let blood not be nourished by blood! And since I am carried over a great sea and have spread full sails to the winds: there is nothing in the whole world that endures. Everything flows, and every image takes shape as a passing thing. Time itself, too, glides on in constant motion, just like a river; for neither a river nor the fleeting hour can stand still. As wave is driven on by wave, and each, pressed by the one coming after, presses the one before, so the moments flee and follow alike, and are always new. For what was before is left behind, what had not been comes to be, and every moment is made new.

15.186 You see, too, how spent nights stretch toward the light, and how this shining radiance takes the place of black night. Nor is the color of the sky the same when all things lie weary in rest at midnight and when the bright Morning Star rides out on his white horse; and it is different again when Pallas' daughter, going ahead of the light, tints the world she will hand over to Phoebus. The god's shield itself is red in the morning, when it rises from beneath the earth, and red when it sinks beneath the

5 Euphorbus was a Trojan killed by Menelaus, the younger son of Atreus, in the *Iliad*; Pythagoras claimed to have been him in an earlier life.

earth; at its height it is white, because the nature of the upper air is purer there and escapes far from the contamination of earth. Nor can the form of nocturnal Diana ever be equal or the same: always tonight's is smaller than the next if she is waxing, and larger if she is shrinking her disk.[6]

15.199 What? Do you not see the year passing through four seasons, imitating the course of our own life? In early spring it is tender and suckling, very like a child in age: then the grass, shining and without strength, swells and is soft and delights the farmers with hope. Then everything blooms, the nourishing field plays with the colors of flowers, and there is no strength yet in the leaves. After spring the year grows sturdier, passes into summer, and becomes a strong young man; for no age is sturdier, none more fruitful, none burns more fiercely. Autumn follows, its youthful fervor laid aside, ripe and mellow, midway in temper between the young man and the old, its temples sprinkled with gray. Then comes aged winter, shivering, with trembling step, either stripped of its hair or white with what it still has.

15.214 Our own bodies, too, are always changing, without any rest, and what we were or are, we shall not be tomorrow. There was a day when we lived, mere seeds and the first hope of human beings, in our mother's womb. Nature applied her skillful hands; she did not want our bodies to be cramped, shut up in the vitals of a mother stretched taut, and she sent us out of that home into the empty air. Brought forth into the light, the infant lay without strength; soon, on all fours, he moved his limbs about like a beast, and little by little, trembling and with knees not yet firm, he stood up, his sinews helped by some effort. Then he was strong and swift, passed through the span of youth, and, when the years of middle life too had been served out, slid down the sloping road of declining old age. 15.228 Old age undermines and demolishes the strength of earlier years. Milo, grown old, weeps when he sees his arms hanging empty and flabby—arms that in their mass of solid muscle had been like Hercules'!

6 Pallas' daughter is Aurora, the Dawn; the god's shield is the disk of the Sun.

Tyndareus' daughter weeps too when she sees an old woman's wrinkles in her mirror, and asks herself why she was twice carried off. Time, devourer of things, and you, envious age, destroy everything; you spoil all things with the teeth of the years and consume them little by little in a slow death. Even what we call the elements does not endure. What changes they go through—pay attention!—I will teach you. The eternal universe contains four generative bodies. Two of them, earth and water, are heavy and are carried downward by their own weight; as many are weightless and, with nothing pressing on them, seek the heights —air, and fire, purer than air.[7]

15.244 Though they are set apart in space, all things are made from them and fall back into them. Earth, dissolving, thins out into liquid water; moisture, rarefied, passes into breezes and air; and air, its weight removed once more, at its thinnest flashes up into the fires above. From there they come back again, and the same sequence is unwoven: fire, condensing, passes into dense air, air into water, and earth is compacted from water massed together. Nothing keeps its own appearance; nature, the renewer of things, makes some shapes out of others. Nothing in the whole universe perishes, believe me; it varies and renews its appearance. What we call being born is beginning to be something other than what one was before, and dying is ceasing to be that same thing. Though perhaps these things are moved there and those here, yet in sum everything remains constant.

15.259 For my part, I would not believe that anything lasts long under the same likeness: so you, ages, have come from gold to iron; so has the fortune of places so often been reversed. I have seen what was once the most solid land become sea; I have seen land made out of the waters. Seashells have lain far from the ocean, and an old anchor has been found on mountaintops. What was a plain has been made a valley by rushing waters, and floods have carried a mountain down into the sea. Ground that was marshy is parched with dry sand, and places that had

7 Milo of Croton was a famous wrestler of the 6th century BC; Tyndareus' daughter is Helen, abducted first by Theseus and later by Paris.

endured thirst are wet with standing marshes. Here nature has released new springs, there she has shut them off; and in the ancient tremors of the earth so many rivers leap forth or, choked, sink back again.

15.273 So too, when the Lycus has been swallowed by a gaping chasm in the earth, it comes out far from there and is born again from another mouth. So the great Erasinus is now drunk down, and now, having slipped along a hidden channel, is given back in the Argive fields. They say the Mysian Caicus regretted its source and its former banks, and now runs a different course. The Amenanus too, rolling Sicilian sands, now flows, and now at times runs dry when its springs are choked. The Anigrus was once drunk from; now it pours out waters you would not want to touch, ever since (unless the bards are to be denied all belief) the two-formed Centaurs washed there the wounds that the bow of club-bearing Hercules had dealt. What? Does not the Hypanis too, which rises in the Scythian mountains and was once sweet, become spoiled with bitter salts? Antissa and Pharos and Phoenician Tyre were once surrounded by waves; none of them is an island now. 15.289 The early settlers had Leucas joined to the mainland; now the sea flows around it. Zancle too is said to have been joined to Italy, until the sea took away the land between them and drove the shore back with water in the middle. If you look for Helice and Buris, cities of Achaea, you will find them under the water, and sailors still point out the tilted towns with their sunken walls. Near Troezen, city of Pittheus, there is a mound, steep and without any trees, once a perfectly level stretch of plain, now a mound. For (a thing dreadful to tell!) the fierce force of the winds, shut up in blind caverns, longed to breathe out somewhere and struggled in vain to enjoy a freer sky. Since there was no crack anywhere in its prison, and none open to its blasts, it swelled the outstretched ground, just as the breath of the mouth will blow up a bladder, or the hide stripped from a

two-horned goat. That swelling of the place has remained, has the look of a high hill, and has hardened over long ages.[8]

15.307 Though a great many things I have heard and learned come to mind, I will tell only a few more. What? Does not water too give and take on new forms? Your stream, horned Ammon, is cold at midday and grows warm at sunrise and sunset. The Athamanians, it is said, set wood alight by putting water to it, when the moon has waned to its smallest disk. The Cicones have a river which, when drunk, turns the innards to stone and lays a coat of marble over anything it touches. The Crathis, and the Sybaris that borders it on our shores, make hair like amber and gold. And what is more wonderful still, there are waters that can change not only bodies but minds as well. Who has not heard of Salmacis with its ill-famed waters, and of the Ethiopian lakes? Whoever drinks them down either goes mad or falls into a sleep of wondrous heaviness.[9]

15.322 Whoever has quenched his thirst at the spring of Clitor shuns wine and, abstaining, delights in plain water. Either the water has a power opposed to warming wine, or, as the locals tell it, the son of Amythaon, after rescuing the frenzied daughters of Proetus from their madness by spells and herbs, cast the purgings of their minds into those waters, and the hatred of wine has stayed in the stream. Unlike it in its effect flows the river of Lyncestis: whoever drinks of it with too little restraint staggers just as if he had drunk unmixed wine. There is a place in Arcadia (earlier generations called it Pheneus) suspect for its treacherous waters. Fear them at night: drunk at night they do harm; by daylight they are drunk without harm.[10]

15.335 So lakes and rivers take on now one power, now another. There was a time when Ortygia floated on the waves; now it stands fixed. The Argo feared the Symplegades, drenched in

8 Helice and Buris, towns on the Gulf of Corinth, were destroyed by an earthquake and flood in 373 BC.

9 Salmacis is the pool in Caria whose nymph fused with Hermaphroditus into one body (Book 4).

10 Amythaon's son is the seer Melampus, who cured the daughters of Proetus, king of Tiryns, of their madness.

spray as the waves clashed and were crushed between them; now they stand unmoving and withstand the winds. Nor will Etna, which burns with sulfurous furnaces, always be fiery; for it was not always fiery. If the earth is a living creature, alive and with breathing-holes that exhale flame in many places, it can change its paths of breathing, and whenever it moves, close these caverns and open others; or if light winds are shut up in the deepest caves and hurl rock against rock, and against matter that holds the seeds of flame, so that it catches fire from the blows, then the caves will be left cold when the winds die down;[11] 15.350 or if powers of bitumen catch fire, or yellow sulfur burns with faint fumes, surely, when the earth no longer gives food and rich nourishment to the flame, its strength used up over long ages, and its devouring nature lacks its own sustenance, it will not endure hunger, and the fire will desert what has deserted it. There is a story that in Hyperborean Pallene there are men who cover their bodies with light feathers once they have plunged nine times into the Tritonian marsh. I for my part do not believe it; and the women of Scythia too, sprinkling their limbs with potions, are said to practice the same arts. But if any belief is to be given to things that have been tested, do you not see that whatever bodies rot away through time or melting heat are turned into small creatures?

15.364 Or go, slaughter chosen bulls and bury them: it is a thing known by experience that from the rotting innards, here and there, flower-gathering bees are born, which in their parents' way work the fields, love toil, and labor for the future. A warhorse buried in the ground is the origin of the hornet. If you take away the hollow claws of a shore crab and put the rest under the earth, from the buried part a scorpion will come out and threaten with its hooked tail. And the caterpillars of the countryside that weave leaves together with white threads (a thing farmers have observed) change their shape into the funereal butterfly. Mud holds seeds that produce green frogs; it pro-

11 Ortygia here is Delos, the floating island that became fixed when Latona gave birth there to Apollo and Diana.

duces them without feet, then gives them legs fit for swimming, and so that the same legs may be fit for long leaps, the hind ones outgrow the front ones in length.[12] 15.379 What a she-bear has just brought forth is not a cub but flesh barely alive; by licking it the mother shapes it into limbs and molds it into a form like the one she has herself. Do you not see that the young of the honey-making bees, covered by the six-sided wax, are born as bodies without limbs, and only later take on feet and later wings? Juno's bird, which carries stars in its tail, and Jupiter's armor-bearer, and the doves of Cytherea, and the whole race of birds—who would think they could be born from the inside of an egg, if he did not know it happens? There are those who believe that when the spine has rotted in the closed tomb, the human marrow is changed into a snake.

15.391 Yet these creatures draw the beginnings of their kind from others. There is one bird that renews itself and sows itself again: the Assyrians call it the phoenix. It lives not on grain or herbs but on tears of incense and the juice of amomum. When it has completed five centuries of its life, it builds itself a nest with its talons and its clean beak in the branches of a holm oak and the top of a swaying palm. As soon as it has lined this with cassia and ears of soft nard, and crushed cinnamon with yellow myrrh, it lays itself on top and ends its life amid the fragrance. Then, they say, from the father's body a little phoenix is born again, destined to live the same number of years. 15.403 When age has given it strength and it can bear a load, it frees the branches of the tall tree from the weight of the nest and dutifully carries off both its own cradle and its father's tomb; and having reached the city of Hyperion through the light air, it lays it down before the sacred doors in Hyperion's temple. But if there is anything of wondrous novelty in these things, let us wonder that the hyena changes its role, and that she who just now, as a female, took a male upon her back is now a male. Let us wonder too at that creature which feeds on the winds and the air and at once takes

12 The belief that bees are born from a slaughtered bullock's carcass is told at length in Virgil's *Georgics* 4.

on whatever colors it has touched. Conquered India gave lynxes to Bacchus, bearer of the grape clusters; whatever their bladder releases, they say, turns to stone and hardens at the touch of air. So too coral hardens the moment it first meets the air; under the waves it was a soft plant.[13]

15.418 Day will end and Phoebus will dip his panting horses in the deep sea before I could cover in words all the things that have passed into new forms. So we see the times change, and these nations gain strength while those fall. So Troy was great in wealth and men, and for ten years could give so much blood; now, brought low, she shows only her ancient ruins, and in place of riches, the tombs of her ancestors. Now too, the story goes, Dardanian Rome is rising, which beside the waters of the Tiber, born in the Apennines, is laying the foundations of her power with an immense effort. She too, then, changes her form by growing, and one day will be the head of the boundless world. So, they say, the prophets declare, and the oracles that tell the fates; and, as far as I remember, Helenus, son of Priam, had said this to Aeneas when the fortunes of Troy were tottering, as he wept, uncertain of survival:

15.439 'Son of the goddess, if you know well enough the foreknowledge of my mind, Troy will not wholly fall while you are safe! Fire and sword will give you a way through. You will go, and carry Pergama, snatched away, with you, until a foreign field, kinder to Troy and to you than your fathers' land, becomes yours. I see a city too, owed to the descendants of the Phrygians, so great as none is, none will be, none was seen in years gone by. Other leaders through long ages will make it powerful, but one born of the blood of Iulus will make it mistress of the world. When the earth has had the use of him, the heavenly seats will have the enjoyment of him, and heaven will be his end.'[14]

15.450 That Helenus sang this to Aeneas, bearer of the household gods, I recall with a mindful heart and relate; and I rejoice

13 The city of Hyperion, that is, of the Sun, is Heliopolis in Egypt.
14 The descendant of Iulus, Aeneas' son, is Augustus, adopted heir of Julius Caesar, whose family claimed descent from Iulus.

that kindred walls are rising, and that the Pelasgians' victory turned out to the Phrygians' benefit. But so that we do not stray far off course, with horses that have forgotten to head for the turning post: the sky and whatever is beneath it change their forms, and so does the earth and whatever is in it. We too are part of the world, and since we are not only bodies but also winged souls, and can pass into the homes of wild beasts and be lodged in the bodies of cattle, let us allow those bodies, which may have held the souls of our parents or brothers or of those joined to us by some bond, or at least of human beings, to be safe and respected, and let us not stuff our bellies with banquets like Thyestes'![15]

15.463 How badly he trains himself, how impiously he readies himself for human blood, the man who cuts a calf's throat with the knife and turns deaf ears to its lowing, or who can slaughter a kid that utters cries like a child's, or eat a bird he has fed with his own hand! How much is lacking in these deeds to complete the crime? To what is the way being paved from there? Let the ox plow, or owe its death to old age; let the sheep provide armor against the shuddering north wind; let the well-fed she-goats offer their udders for hands to press! Away with nets and traps and snares and crafty arts! Do not cheat the bird with the limed twig, nor hem in the deer with the dreaded feathers, nor hide barbed hooks in deceitful bait! Destroy what does harm, but even these you should only destroy: let mouths go without such feasts and take gentle nourishment!"

NUMA AND EGERIA

Numa dies, and his grieving wife Egeria is comforted by Hippolytus, who tells his story.

15.479 With these and other words in his heart, they say, Numa returned to his homeland and, invited without his seeking it,

15 Pythagoras claimed to have been the Trojan Euphorbus in an earlier life, hence the "kindred" walls. Thyestes was tricked by his brother Atreus into eating the flesh of his own sons.

took up the reins of the Latin people. Happy in his nymph wife and guided by the Camenae, he taught them the rites of sacrifice and led a people used to fierce war over to the arts of peace. When, grown old, he had come to the end of his reign and his life, the young wives of Latium, the people, and the senators wept for Numa's death. For his wife left the city and hid herself away in the dense woods of the valley of Aricia, disturbing the rites of Orestean Diana with her groans and laments. Ah, how often the nymphs of the grove and the lake urged her not to, and spoke words of comfort! How often, as she wept, the hero son of Theseus said: "Set a limit! Your fortune is not the only one to lament. Look at the like misfortunes of others, and you will bear yours more gently. I wish it were not my own example that could relieve you in your grief! But mine can too.[16]

HIPPOLYTUS

Hippolytus tells how he was dragged to death by his horses and brought back to life.

15.497 Some Hippolytus, I suppose, has reached your ears in story, who met his death through his father's credulity and the treachery of a wicked stepmother. You will be amazed, and I can hardly prove it, but I am he. Pasiphae's daughter once tried in vain to make me defile my father's bed; then, turning the charge around, she accused me of wanting what she herself had wanted (was it more from fear of being exposed, or from anger at her rejection?), unhappy woman. My father drove me, though I had done nothing to deserve it, from the city, and as I went he called down a curse on my head with a hostile prayer. I was making for Troezen, city of Pittheus, in my chariot of exile, and was already skirting the shore of the Corinthian sea, when the sea rose up, and a vast heap of water seemed to arch into the shape of a mountain, to swell, to bellow, and to split at its topmost peak. Out of it a horned bull was driven through the broken waves,

16 Numa was Rome's second king; his wife was the nymph Egeria. Orestes was said to have brought Diana's cult image from the land of the Taurians to Aricia.

and rearing up to its chest into the soft air, spewed out part of the sea from its nostrils and wide mouth.[17] 15.514 My companions' hearts were afraid. My mind remained undaunted, content with its own exile. But the fierce horses turned their necks toward the sea, pricked up their ears and shuddered, and, thrown into confusion by fear of the monster, dragged the chariot headlong down the high cliffs. I struggled to control with my hand the useless bridle, smeared with whitening foam, and leaning backward pulled the pliant reins taut. And yet the horses' frenzy would not have overcome my strength, had not the wheel, where it turns about the endless axle, struck a stump and been broken and shattered. I was flung from the chariot; and with the reins entangling my limbs, you could have seen my living flesh dragged along, my sinews caught on the stump, my limbs partly torn away, partly held fast and left behind, my broken bones giving a heavy crack, my exhausted breath being breathed away, and no part of my body that you could recognize: it was all one wound. 15.530 Can you, or dare you, compare your loss with my disaster, nymph? I also saw the kingdoms that lack light, and bathed my torn body in the waters of Phlegethon; and my life would not have been given back but for the potent medicine of Apollo's son. After I had recovered it through powerful herbs and Paeonian aid, though Dis resented it, Cynthia cast thick clouds around me, so that my presence should not increase the resentment at this gift; and so that I might be safe and could be seen without danger, she added years to me and left me a face that could not be recognized. For a long time she hesitated whether to give me Crete or Delos to live in. Passing over Delos and Crete, she set me here, and at the same time told me to put away my name, which might remind people of horses, and said: 'You who were Hippolytus, now be Virbius, the same man!'[18] 15.545 From that time I have dwelt in this grove, and, one of the lesser gods, I lie hidden under the divine power of my mistress and am

17 Pasiphae's daughter is Phaedra, wife of Theseus and stepmother of Hippolytus.
18 Apollo's son is Aesculapius, god of medicine; "Paeonian" refers to Paean, the healer god. The Greek name Hippolytus suggests "loosed by horses."

numbered among her attendants." Yet the sorrows of others could not ease Egeria's grief. Lying at the very foot of the mountain, she melted into tears, until Phoebus' sister, moved by the devotion of the mourner, made a cool spring from her body and thinned her limbs into everlasting waters.

TAGES AND CIPUS

Tages rises from a furrow, and Cipus finds horns on his head and refuses to be king.

15.552 The strange event touched the nymphs, and the son of the Amazon was struck with amazement, just as when the Tyrrhenian plowman saw a fateful clod in the middle of his fields first move of its own accord, with no one stirring it, then take on human form and lose the form of earth, and open its newly made mouth to the fates to come (the natives called him Tages, and he was the first to teach the Etruscan people how to reveal future events); or as when Romulus once saw his spear, fixed in the Palatine hill, suddenly put forth leaves, standing now by a new root, not by its driven iron point, and, no longer a weapon but a tree of pliant wood, giving unexpected shade to those who marveled at it; or as when Cipus saw his own horns in the river water (for he did see them) and, believing the reflection played him false, raised his fingers to his brow again and again and touched what he had seen. No longer blaming his eyes, he halted, as he was returning victorious from the conquered enemy, and raising his hands and his eyes to the sky,[19] 15.571 "Whatever is foretold by this portent, gods above," he said, "if it is happy, let it be happy for my country and the people of Quirinus; if it is threatening, let it fall on me!" Then he appeased grassy altars made of green turf with fragrant fires, offered wine from bowls, and consulted the quivering entrails of slaughtered sheep as to what they meant for him. As soon as the soothsayer of the Tyrrhenian race looked at them, he saw in them great undertak-

19 Tages, a child who sprang from a plowed furrow, was said to have taught the Etruscans the art of divination.

ings, though not clear ones. But when he raised his keen gaze from the beast's organs to the horns of Cipus, he said: "Hail, king! For to you, Cipus, to you and to your horns this place and the citadels of Latium will submit. Only break off delay and hurry to enter the open gates! So the fates command. Once received in the city, you will be king, and safely hold a lasting scepter."

15.586 He drew back his foot and turned his grim face away from the city walls. "Far, oh far away," he said, "may the gods drive such omens! It would be much more just for me to live out my life in exile than for the Capitol to see me king!" He said this, and at once he called together the people and the solemn senate, though first he veiled his horns with the laurel of peace. Then he stood on a mound built by his brave soldiers and, after praying to the ancient gods in the customary way, he said: "There is one man here who will be king unless you drive him from the city. I will tell you who he is by a sign, not by his name: he wears horns on his brow. The augur tells you that if this man enters Rome, he will lay on you the laws of slaves.

15.598 He could indeed have burst through the open gates, but I stood in his way, though no one is closer to me than he is. Citizens of Rome, keep this man out of the city, or, if he deserves it, bind him in heavy chains, or end your fear with the death of the fated tyrant!" The murmur that rises in tall, trim pinewoods when the fierce east wind hisses through them, or the sound the sea's waves make when someone hears them from far off: such was the sound the people made. But through the confused words of the clamoring crowd one cry stood out: "Who is he?" They looked at each other's foreheads and searched for the horns he had spoken of.

15.609 Cipus spoke to them again. "The man you demand," he said, "you have." The people tried to stop him, but he took the garland from his head and showed them his temples, marked out by their two horns. All of them lowered their eyes and groaned, and, though they did not want to (who could believe it?), they looked at that head made famous by its services. They

would not let it go without its honor any longer, and they placed the festive garland back on it. But the city's leaders, Cipus, since you were forbidden to enter the walls, gave you, as a mark of honor, as much land as you could encircle with oxen yoked to a deep-pressed plow from sunrise to the end of day. On the bronze doorposts of the gate they carved horns that copied that wondrous shape, to remain there through long ages.

AESCULAPIUS COMES TO ROME

Plague strikes Rome, and Aesculapius comes from Epidaurus as a serpent.

15.622 Reveal now, Muses, you divine powers who stand by bards (for you know, and the long reach of the past does not deceive you), how the island that the deep Tiber flows around brought Coronis' son into the sacred rites of Romulus' city. Once a dreadful plague had tainted the air of Latium, and pale bodies lay wasting with a bloodless disease. Worn out by funerals, the people saw that human efforts could do nothing, and nothing could the arts of physicians. So they sought help from heaven. They went to Delphi, which holds the center of the world, the oracle of Phoebus, and begged him to come to the aid of their wretched state with a saving response and to end the sufferings of so great a city. The place, the laurel, and the quiver the god himself carries all trembled at once, and from the depths of the sanctuary the tripod gave back this answer, which shook their terrified hearts:[20]

15.637 "What you seek here, Roman, you should have sought from a nearer place, and now seek it from a nearer place! You do not need Apollo to lessen your grief, but Apollo's son. Go with good omens, and summon my offspring!" When the wise senate had received the god's commands, they found out which city the young son of Phoebus lived in, and sent men to sail for the shores of Epidaurus. As soon as the envoys had touched those

20 Coronis' son is Aesculapius, god of healing and son of Apollo; his cult was brought to Rome in 292 BC and given a temple on the island in the Tiber.

shores in their curved ship, they went before the council and the Greek elders. They begged them to give them the god whose presence would end the deaths among the Ausonian people, for so, they said, the unerring oracle had declared.[21]

15.648 Opinion was divided and kept shifting. Some thought help should not be refused; many urged them to keep the source of aid that was theirs, not to send it away or hand over their god. While they hesitated, twilight had driven out the last of the daylight, and the earth's shadow had brought darkness over the world, when the helping god seemed in your dreams, Roman, to stand before your bed. He looked as he usually does in his temple: he held a rustic staff in his left hand, stroked his long beard with his right, and uttered these words from his tranquil breast: "Put away your fears! I will come, and I will leave my statues behind. Only look closely at this serpent, which winds its coils around my staff, and mark it well with your eyes so that you will recognize it! I will turn into this, but I will be larger, and I will appear as great as heavenly bodies ought to be when they are transformed."

15.663 At once the god was gone with his voice, and with his voice and the god went sleep, and kindly daylight followed the flight of sleep. The next dawn had put the starry fires to flight. Unsure what to do, the leaders gathered at the richly built temple of the god they sought, and begged him to show by heavenly signs where he himself wished to make his home. They had barely finished when the god, golden in the form of a high-crested serpent, sent out hisses to announce his coming. At his arrival the statue, the altars, the doors, the marble floor and the golden roof all shook. Rising as high as his breast, he stood tall in the middle of the temple and turned his eyes, flashing fire, all around. The crowd shrank back in terror. The priest, his chaste hair bound with a white fillet, recognized the divine power. "Look, the god! It is the god! Keep holy silence in heart and tongue, all who are here!" he said. "Most beautiful one, may

21 Epidaurus, in the Peloponnese of Greece, was home to the chief sanctuary of Aesculapius.

your appearing bring us good, and may you help the peoples who honor your rites!"

15.680 All who were there worshiped the divine power they saw. All of them repeated the priest's words twice over, and the descendants of Aeneas offered their reverence in both mind and voice. The god nodded to them, stirred his crest as a sure pledge, and hissed again and again with flickering tongue. Then he glided down the gleaming steps, turned his head back, and, about to depart, looked back at his ancient altars and bade farewell to the home he was used to and the temple he had lived in. From there, huge as he was, he slithered over ground strewn with flowers, winding his coils, and made his way through the middle of the city to the harbor protected by its curving mole. There he stopped, and with a calm face he seemed to dismiss his escort, the dutiful crowd that followed him. Then he laid his body in the Ausonian ship. The ship felt the burden of the godhead, and its keel was weighed down by the god's weight. The descendants of Aeneas rejoiced; they sacrificed a bull on the shore and loosed the twisted cables of their garlanded ship.

15.697 A light breeze had driven the ship forward. The god rose up high and, resting his neck heavily on the curved stern, gazed down on the blue waters. With gentle west winds he crossed the Ionian Sea, and when Pallas' daughter, the Dawn, rose for the sixth time, he reached Italy. He was carried past Lacinium, famed for the goddess's temple, and the shores of Scylaceum. He left Iapygia behind; to the left of his oars he fled the Amphrisian rocks, to the right the cliffs of Celennia. He skirted Romethium and Caulon and Narycia, won his way across the sea and through the narrows of Sicilian Pelorus, past the home of the king who was Hippotes' son and the mines of Temesa, and made for Leucosia and the rose gardens of warm Paestum. From there he coasted past Capreae and Minerva's promontory and the hills rich in Surrentine vines, past Hercules' city and Stabiae and Parthenope, born for leisure, and after it the temple of the Cumaean Sibyl.[22] 15.713 Next the ship reached the warm springs,

22 "Hercules' city" is Herculaneum.

and Liternum with its mastic trees, and the Volturnus, which drags heavy sand beneath its eddies, and Sinuessa, thronged with snow-white doves, and unhealthy Minturnae, and the town of the woman whom her foster son laid in her tomb, and the home of Antiphates, and Trachas, hemmed in by its marsh, and Circe's land, and Antium with its firm-packed shore. When the sailors turned their ship under sail in here (for the sea was now rough), the god uncoiled himself and, gliding in winding curves and great coils, entered his father's temple, which borders the golden shore. When the sea had calmed, the Epidaurian god left his father's altars and, having enjoyed the hospitality of his kindred god, furrowed the sand of the shore with the trail of his rasping scales. Leaning on the ship's rudder, he laid his head on the high stern, until he came to Castrum and the sacred home of Lavinium and the mouth of the Tiber.[23]

15.729 Here the whole crowd of the people came rushing from every side to meet him, mothers and fathers, and the women who keep your fires, Trojan Vesta, and they greeted the god with joyful shouts. Wherever the swift ship was towed upstream against the current, incense crackled on altars set in rows along both banks and scented the air with its smoke, and the victims, struck down, warmed the knives plunged into them. And now he had entered the city of Rome, capital of the world. The serpent raised himself up, swayed his neck as it rested against the top of the mast, and looked around for a dwelling that would suit him. The river that flows around it divides into two branches (the place is called the Island), and on either side it stretches out equal arms, with land in the middle. Here the serpent son of Phoebus left the Latin ship, took back his heavenly form, put an end to the people's grief, and came to the city as the bringer of health.

23 The town is Caieta, named for Aeneas' nurse; Antiphates was king of the cannibal Laestrygonians, placed at Formiae.

JULIUS CAESAR MADE A GOD

Julius Caesar is murdered, and Venus carries his soul to the stars.

15.745 Yet this god came to our shrines from abroad; Caesar is a god in his own city. He was outstanding in war and in peace, but it was not so much his wars ended in triumphs, nor his achievements at home, nor his swiftly won glory that turned him into a new star, a comet with flowing hair, as his own offspring. For of all Caesar's deeds none is greater than this: that he became this man's father. Is it, after all, a greater thing to have conquered the sea-bound Britons, to have led his victorious fleets up the seven streams of the papyrus-bearing Nile, to have added to the people of Quirinus the rebel Numidians and Cinyphian Juba and Pontus, swollen with the name of Mithridates, to have earned many triumphs and celebrated some, than to have fathered so great a man? With him presiding over the world, gods above, you have shown the human race abundant favor![24]

15.760 So that this man, then, should not be born of mortal seed, that one had to be made a god. When the golden mother of Aeneas saw this, and saw too that a grim death was being prepared for the high priest and that conspirators were taking up arms, she turned pale. To all the gods, to each one as she met them, she said: "Look at the massive treachery being prepared against me, and with what deceit they are aiming at the one life left to me from Dardanian Iulus! Am I always to be the only one harassed by anxieties, and justified ones? Once the Calydonian spear of Tydeus' son wounded me; then the walls of ill-defended Troy brought me to ruin; I saw my son driven on long wanderings, tossed on the sea, entering the home of the silent dead, and waging war with Turnus, or, if I am to tell the truth, rather with Juno. But why do I now recall the old losses of my line? This present fear does not let me remember earlier ones. Look, do

24 Julius Caesar, murdered in 44 BC, was declared a god, and a comet seen that year was taken to be his soul; "this man" is his adoptive son Augustus.

you see the wicked swords being sharpened?[25] 15.777 Stop them, I beg you, drive back this crime, and do not let the fires of Vesta be quenched by the slaughter of her priest!" Such were the words that anxious Venus flung, in vain, all through the heavens. She moved the gods above, and though they could not break the iron decrees of the ancient sisters, they still gave signs, all too clear, of the grief to come. They say that arms clashing among black clouds, fearsome trumpets and horns heard in the sky gave warning of the crime. The sun's face, too, was sad and gave only a lurid light to the anxious earth. Often torches were seen burning among the stars; often drops of blood fell amid the rain clouds. Lucifer, the morning star, was dark, his face spattered with black rust, and the Moon's chariot was spattered with blood.

15.791 In a thousand places the Stygian owl gave gloomy omens; in a thousand places ivory wept; and chants and threatening words are said to have been heard in the sacred groves. No victim gave favorable signs. The entrails warned that great upheavals were at hand, and the head of the liver was found cut away among the innards. In the forum, and around houses and the temples of the gods, they say, dogs howled by night, the shades of the silent dead wandered, and the city was shaken by earthquakes. Yet the gods' warnings could not overcome the plot and the coming fate. Drawn swords were carried into a hallowed place, for no place in the city would do for the crime and the dreadful murder but the senate house. Then indeed Cytherea struck her breast with both hands and tried to hide Aeneas' descendant in the cloud in which Paris had once been snatched away from hostile Atreus' son, and in which Aeneas had escaped the sword of Diomedes.

15.807 Her father answered her with these words: "Do you, my daughter, mean to move unconquerable fate on your own? You may enter the house of the three sisters yourself. There you will see the records of the world, a vast structure of bronze and solid

25 Caesar was pontifex maximus, Rome's chief priest, and his family claimed descent from Aeneas' son Iulus.

iron. They fear neither the shaking of the sky, nor the thunderbolt's anger, nor any destruction, for they are safe and everlasting. There you will find the fates of your descendants carved in eternal adamant. I have read them myself and marked them in my mind, and I will tell them to you, so that you may no longer be ignorant of the future. This man for whom you are troubling yourself, Cytherea, has completed his time, fulfilling the years he owed to the earth. That he may enter heaven as a god and be worshiped in temples is something you will bring about, you and his son. As heir to his name, his son will carry alone the burden laid on him, and as the bravest avenger of his murdered father he will have us as allies in his wars. 15.822 Under his command the walls of besieged Mutina, conquered, will sue for peace; Pharsalia will feel his power; Emathian Philippi will be drenched with slaughter a second time; a great name will be overcome in Sicilian waters; and the Egyptian wife of a Roman general, who trusted her marriage to her cost, will fall, and in vain will she have threatened that our Capitol would be a slave to her Canopus. Why should I list for you the foreign peoples and the nations that lie on either shore of Ocean? Whatever habitable land the earth holds will be his; the sea too will serve him! When he has given peace to the lands, he will turn his mind to civil law and, a most just lawgiver, will bring in laws. He will guide morals by his own example, and, looking ahead to future time and to the generations of descendants still to come, he will bid the son born of his chaste wife bear both his name and his cares. Not until he is old and has matched the years of the old man of Pylos will he reach his home in the heavens and his kindred stars.[26] 15.840 Meanwhile, snatch this soul from the murdered body and make it a star, so that the deified Julius may always look out from his lofty temple on our Capitol and forum." He had scarcely finished speaking when kindly Venus, seen by

26 These are Octavian's civil wars, from Mutina (43 BC) and Philippi (42 BC) to the defeats of Sextus Pompey, son of Pompey "the Great," off Sicily (36 BC) and of Cleopatra, wife of Mark Antony (31–30 BC); the son is Tiberius, child of Augustus' wife Livia, and the old man of Pylos is Nestor.

no one, took her stand in the middle of the senate house. She snatched the newly freed soul of her Caesar from his body and, not letting it dissolve into the air, carried it up to the stars of heaven. As she carried it, she felt it take light and catch fire, and she released it from her breast. It flies up higher than the moon and, trailing its fiery hair along a wide path, shines as a star. Seeing his son's good deeds, he admits that they are greater than his own, and rejoices to be surpassed by him.

15.852 Though the son forbids his own deeds to be ranked above his father's, fame, which is free and obeys no one's orders, ranks him higher against his will, and in this one thing defies him. So Atreus yields to the titles of great Agamemnon; so Theseus surpasses Aegeus, and Achilles Peleus; finally, to use examples equal to the men themselves, so too Saturn is less than Jupiter. Jupiter governs the heights of heaven and the kingdoms of the threefold world; the earth is under Augustus. Each is father and ruler. Gods, I pray: companions of Aeneas, before whom sword and fire gave way; native gods, the Indigetes; Quirinus, father of the city; Gradivus, father of unconquered Quirinus; Vesta, made sacred among Caesar's household gods; you, Phoebus of the household, together with Caesar's Vesta; you, Jupiter, who hold the Tarpeian citadel on high; and all the others whom a bard may rightly and reverently call upon: slow may that day come, and later than my own lifetime, when Augustus, that august head, leaves the world he governs, ascends to heaven, and from afar favors those who pray to him![27]

EPILOGUE

Ovid declares that his poem will outlast fire, sword and time, and that he will live.

15.871 And now I have completed a work that neither Jupiter's anger nor fire nor sword nor devouring time will be able to destroy. Let that day, which has no power over anything but this

27 Mars was the father of Romulus, who was deified as Quirinus; Augustus housed shrines of Apollo and Vesta beside his home on the Palatine.

body, end the span of my uncertain life whenever it wishes. Yet in the better part of me I shall be carried, everlasting, above the high stars, and my name will never be erased. Wherever Roman power extends over conquered lands, I shall be read on the lips of the people, and through all the ages, in fame, if the prophecies of bards hold any truth, I shall live.