

## ARGONAUTICA

### II

Here were the stables and the smallholding  
Of Amycos, the Bebrycians' arrogant king,  
Whom the Bithynian nymph named Melie  
Had to Poseidon borne - indeed she lay  
With him, who was the most presumptuous  
Of men for a decree contemptuous  
For even strangers, who could not depart  
Till they have tried the pugilistic art  
Against him. Many locals had he slain.  
He now approached the ship but did not deign 10  
To ask who they were or what was their quest;  
Instead immediately he thus addressed  
Them all: "Give heed to what you all must know,  
Seafarers. A newcomer may not go  
From here until he's tried his hand with me  
In boxing, so pick from your company  
Your finest man and put him to the test.  
If you refuse, trampling on my behest,  
It shall go hard with you." Thus haughtily  
He spoke; wild anger seized the company. 20  
Now this struck Polydeuces most of all  
And, standing forth, he said: "Contain your gall,  
Whoever you are; your rules we will obey,  
For I propose myself for this affray."  
Bluntly he spoke; the other, glowering,  
Rolled up his eyes just as, when in a ring  
The hunters hem him, a struck lion glares –  
Though circled, for the crowd he has no cares  
But on the man who, though he did not slay  
But wounded him, fixates. Then straightaway 30  
The son of Tyndareus his mantle doffed,  
A closely-woven cloak and very soft,  
Which, as a pledge of hospitality,  
A maid from the Lemnos community  
Had given him. The king threw down his dark  
And closely-buckled mantle and the stark  
Staff that he bore, cut from the olive-tree  
And mountain-grown. On the locality  
They looked and chose a satisfying space,  
Then bade their comrades all take up their place 40  
Apart from them and sit upon the shore.  
In form and stature they could not be more

Dissimilar. Of baleful Typhoeus  
 One seemed to be the child prodigious  
 And of Gaia herself, such as in spleen  
 At Zeus she bore before; one had the sheen  
 Of heavenly stars whose brightest beams appear  
 At night-time just as eventide is near.  
 So, with his downy cheeks and glittering eyes,  
 Appeared the son of Zeus, yet still the size 50  
 Of his strength was a beast's: he verified  
 His hands could, as before, be well applied  
 To boxing, not heavy from handling  
 The oars. Amycus, though, did no such thing.  
 Silent, he stood apart and fixed his eyes  
 Upon his foe; he felt his spirit rise  
 While hungering to scatter from his frame  
 His life's blood. In between them then there came  
 His servant Lycoreus who placed beside  
 Them both four thongs of dry, raw leather-hide. 60  
 And then the king addressed them haughtily:  
 "If these you want, I'll give them willingly  
 Lest you should blame me. Place them both about  
 Your hands so you may say without a doubt  
 To others how adept I am at slashing  
 The desiccated ox-hides and at splashing  
 Men's cheeks with blood." He spoke; no barbed reply  
 Was made, just a swift smile; with what lay by  
 His feet he clothed himself quite silently.  
 Great Talaus, Bias's progeny, 70  
 And Castor quickly came to fasten tight  
 The thongs while urging him to show his might.  
 Aretus and Oryntus did likewise  
 And bound the king but did not realize,  
 Poor fools, that they would never do this more.  
 Standing apart, equipped, they held before  
 Themselves their heavy hands and set to fight  
 Each other: as a violent billow might  
 Attack a swift ship, though for a little she  
 Escapes it through pilot ability, 80  
 While it spurts up the sides, thus did the king  
 Go after Polydeuces, essaying  
 To daunt him and not give him any rest,  
 But he, with not a scratch and being blessed  
 With skill, fought off his charge. The brutal sweep  
 Of fists he noted so that he might keep  
 An eye on where he showed his skills and where  
 His weaknesses, so, ever standing there,

He parried blow for blow. As woodsmen strike  
 A vessel's beams that they may meet each spike, 90  
 Each blow resounding, cheeks and jawbones clashed  
 On either side, and noisily teeth gnashed,  
 Nor did they cease till laboured gasps won out.  
 Standing apart a little, every gout  
 Of ample sweat they wiped away as they  
 Tried hard to catch their breath. Then straightaway  
 They re-engaged, as bulls in rivalry  
 Fight wildly for a heifer. Suddenly  
 Amycus, stretching himself, rose on tiptoe,  
 As one who slays an ox, and on his foe 100  
 Brought down his heavy hands. He turned his head  
 And took the blow on his shoulders instead,  
 A minor one; he then advanced his knee  
 Beyond that of the king and fleetingly  
 Smote him above the ear, thus shattering  
 The bones, and he fell to his knees. A ring  
 Of cheers went up among the *Argo's* men.  
 His life's blood issued from him there and then.  
 His folk did not neglect him as they caught  
 Up in their hands rough clubs and spears and sought 110  
 Polydeuces. His companions went up to  
 These men as they their pointed daggers drew.  
 One of them Castor struck upon the head  
 As he approached him and it plummeted  
 To earth each side of him, for it was slashed  
 In two. Huge Itymoneus and Minas crashed  
 In the dust – one Polydeuces speedily  
 Kicked in the chest, the other one, while he  
 Was running straight at him, with his right hand  
 Struck his left eyebrow, took the lid off and 120  
 Exposed the eyeball. Now the insolent  
 Oreides, the king's henchman, made a rent  
 In Bias' son Talaus' side, although  
 He was not slain but merely grazed below  
 The belt – the bronze did not disturb his skin.  
 Then with his seasoned club there waded in  
 Arktos, beating the brave progeny  
 Of Eurytos, Iphitos, his destiny  
 Of death still unfulfilled - soon Klytius  
 Would pierce him with his sword. Bold Ankaius, 130  
 Lycourgos' son, large, dark axe in one hand,  
 A bear's hide in the other, took a stand  
 Against the foe and leapt into the fray  
 Impatiently with, joining the *melée*,

The Aeacidae and, starting out as well,  
 The warlike Jason. As grey wolves, pell-mell,  
 On winter days rush down and terrorize  
 A flock of countless sheep, beyond the eyes  
 Of the keen-scented hounds and those who keep  
 An eye on them, determining which sheep 140  
 To take first, often glancing all around;  
 The huddles sheep are falling on the ground  
 Over each other; thus the violent  
 Heroes now terrorized the insolent  
 Bebrycians and, just as those men who tend  
 A flock and those who keep a hive will send  
 Thick smoke into a rock, thus dislodging  
 A bee-swarm, still with buzz-like murmuring  
 Packed tightly – they at last, quite stupefied  
 By all that smoke, unable to abide 150  
 For longer, flee the rock – thus, staying there  
 No longer, through Bebrycia everywhere,  
 Announcing their king's death. They did not know,  
 Poor fools, that there was further unseen woe:  
 For Lycus and the Mariandyni  
 Were ravaging the whole vicinity –  
 Each vineyard and each village – now the king  
 Was gone, for there was constant squabbling  
 I that iron-bearing land, so now these men  
 Destroyed each farm and stable while, again, 160  
 Hither and yon the heroes drove away  
 Their countless sheep. One to his friends would say:  
 “Pray tell me, what would these faint-hearted men  
 Have done if a god had brought to us again  
 Our Heracles? With him here, I suppose,  
 There would have been no test of trading blows  
 With fists. No, when he came to us to tell  
 His rules, those rules and his *hauteur* as well  
 Would quite have fled his mind when Heracles  
 Had plied his club. Instead we sailed the seas 170  
 And left him callously. We all shall see  
 Our fatal folly now he's gone.” Thus he  
 Addressed them. But by Zeus' will everything  
 Was fulfilled. They remained that night to bring  
 Assistance to the wounded. Then they made  
 Their sacrifices to the gods and laid  
 A goodly spread. No slumber overcame  
 One man beside the sacrificial flame  
 And bowl. They interwove their golden hair  
 With laurel growing on the shoreline, where 180

Their hawsers had been bound; melodiously  
 They sweetly Sang a hymn in harmony  
 With Orpheus's lute, the windless shore  
 Enchanted by their singing, which was for  
 Polydeuces. Now the sun from far away  
 Shone on the dewy hills; to greet the day  
 It roused the shepherds, and they now unmoored  
 Their cables from the bay tree while on board  
 They stored essentials. Now they steered straight through  
 The eddying Bosphorus while fair winds blew. 190  
 And then a breaker they could see appear  
 Assailant-like before them, mountain-sheer,  
 Ever upheaved above the clouds. You'd say  
 That death was certain, for it hung midway  
 Above the ship, cloud-like and angrily,  
 And yet it settles in tranquillity  
 When meeting a good helmsman. They were taken  
 From harm by Tiphys' skill, rescued but shaken..  
 Next day they roped their hawsers in the land  
 Of Bithynia, where Phineus lived, on the strand, 200  
 Agenor's son, who in his misery  
 Bore more woes, for the gift of prophecy  
 From Phoebus, than did other men. He cared  
 For Zeus himself no whit, for he declared  
 His holy will to all unerringly.  
 So Zeus a long-drawn-out senility  
 Afforded him and took the pleasing light  
 From his eyes and wouldn't let him take delight  
 In boundless food the neighbours, as they sought  
 Predictions, brought to them, for Harpies caught 210  
 It in their jaws and wrenched it all away  
 Out of his hands and mouth, so quickly they  
 Rushed at him through the clouds – now not a thing,  
 No just a scrap so that his suffering  
 Might carry on, they left him – and they spewed  
 A loathsome stench. None dared to bring him food  
 Or even stand far off, so foul a smell  
 Those kitchen-scrapes gave off. But he knew well  
 The voices and the tramping of the crew  
 Who would ensure his feasting would ensue 220  
 (So Zeus allowed): he rose from where he lay,  
 Just like a lifeless dream, and made his way  
 Towards the door on withered feet while bent  
 Over his staff and feeling, as he went,  
 The walls; his body trembled, frail and old;  
 His skin, quite parched with dirt, was, truth be told,

The only thing that held his bones. He left  
 The house and on the threshold sat, bereft  
 Of vigour. A dark stupor wrapped around  
 Him and it seemed to him the very ground 230  
 Wavered beneath him. Speechless, there he lay,  
 Both weak and in a coma, and, when they  
 Saw him, they gathered round, amazed. But he  
 With laboured breath pronounced this prophecy:  
 "Hear, mighty Greeks, if it be truly you,  
 Whom by a ruthless king's decree pursue,  
 Upon the *Argo* under Jason's sway,  
 The fleece. It's you indeed. My mind still may  
 Know every prophecy. I thank you, king,  
 Son of Leto, though plunged in suffering. 240  
 Zeus, god of suppliants, to sinful folk  
 The sternest punisher, you I invoke  
 For Phoebus and for Hera, through whose aid  
 Especially you come; help me evade  
 This torment in my misery. Don't go  
 And mercilessly leave me full of woe  
 Like this. Upon my eyes a Fury set  
 Her foot that I might pay an endless debt  
 Through many weary years; not only thus:  
 There hangs above the most onerous 250  
 Of woes: the Harpies snatch my food from me  
 As, from some fatal place no-one can see,  
 They swoop down. I am helpless. With more ease  
 Might I escape my very thoughts than these,  
 When I crave sustenance, so rapidly  
 They fly, and if they have some scraps for me,  
 The mouldy smell is just too great to bear:  
 Though adamantine-hearted, none would dare  
 Come close. Force, sharp and hard to tolerate,  
 However, makes me stay and satiate 260  
 My wretched belly. They, the gods decree,  
 Shall be restricted by the progeny  
 Of Boreas. No foreign aid are these  
 If I am Phineus, once in prophecies  
 And riches famed, Agenor's son; when Thrace  
 Was in my governance, I brought, to grace  
 My home, their sister Cleopatra." So  
 Spoke out Agenor's son, and each hero  
 Was filled with formidable misery,  
 The sons of Boreas especially. 270  
 Them when they had their tears all brushed aside,  
 They came to him and now Zetes replied,

Taking the wretched old man's hand in his:  
 "Unhappy one, I do not think there is  
 A man more cursed. Why is such misery  
 Laid on you? Did some fell insanity  
 Within you cause you, by your readiness  
 In everything prophetic, to transgress  
 Against the gods? Did this stir their great spleen?  
 Our hearts, though, are dismayed, though we are keen 280  
 To aid you, if a god to both of us  
 Indeed bestows this due, for obvious  
 To men are their reproofs. For you we care,  
 But we won't stop the Harpies till you swear  
 The pantheon of the gods won't take away  
 Their favour. " That is what he had to say.  
 The old man opened eyes that could not see  
 And raised them, saying, "Silence. Child, let be  
 Such thoughts. Let Phoebus, who in kindness  
 Taught me to prophesy, be my witness; 290  
 Be witness, also, the portentous doom  
 That holds me in its grip, the murky gloom  
 About my eyes, the gods below – may I  
 Receive their curse if I should perjured die –  
 No anger from the gods shall come to you  
 Because you aid me." With their oath those two  
 Now yearned to give him help. The younger men  
 Made ready for the old man there and then  
 A dinner, for the Harpies a last prey.  
 Close by they stood that with their swords they may 300  
 Pierce them in flight. The old man touched the fare  
 And instantly the Harpies through the air  
 Came flying, like harsh squalls or lightning,  
 And through the clouds with sudden clamouring  
 They yelled their lust for food. When they'd been spied,  
 The heroes shouted loud on every side;  
 But, gulping all, the Harpies crossed the sea  
 In flight, but an oppressive pungency  
 Remained. The Boreads, with daggers drawn,  
 Pursued them: Zeus had given quenchless brawn 310  
 To them, for they could not have held their quest  
 Without Zeus, for in swiftness they could best  
 The West Wind's squalls whenever they came or went.  
 Like hounds that are proficient in the scent  
 In wooded valleys or sniff out the deer  
 Or horned goats as onward they career  
 And, straining from behind a little way,  
 They gnash their teeth in irritation, they,

Zetes and Calaïs, so close behind,  
 In vain their fingertips they'd always find 320  
 Just scraping at the Harpies, who'd have rent  
 Them quite apart against the gods' consent  
 When on the Floating Isles they met, had there  
 Not been swift Iris watching: through the air  
 She sped from heaven, checking them. Thus she  
 Spoke up: "O Boreads, illicitly  
 You chase with swords the Harpies, ofr they are  
 Great Zeus's hounds. I'll give you oaths to bar  
 Them from your path," and, saying this, she swore  
 By Styx's waters – there is nothing more 330  
 Awful and dread to all the gods – that they  
 To Phineus' house would never make their way  
 Again (thus Fate decreed), and to this oath  
 They yielded, turning from the ships, the both  
 Of them. Therefore this place has come to be  
 'The Turning Isles', though mortals previously  
 Called them 'The Floating Isles'. The Harpies and  
 Iris then parted: in the Cretan land  
 They entered their den; to Olympus she  
 Went flying up with great velocity. 340  
 The chiefs then washed the old man's squalid flesh  
 So thoroughly that it now shone afresh,  
 Then sacrificing sheep which carefully  
 They chose and was the looted property  
 Of Amycus. They cooked a mammoth feast  
 Within the hall, then dined; not with the least  
 Gusto did Phineus eat; his heart was glad  
 As in a dream. When everyone had had  
 Sufficient food and drink, they watched all night  
 For both the Boreads. By firelight 350  
 The old man sat among them, telling how  
 Their quest would be concluded. "Listen now:  
 You may not know all things undoubtedly,  
 But what the gods allow you'll hear from me.  
 From first to last I foretold Zeus's mind –  
 A foolish act, for he would give mankind  
 Unfinished details, that they still will need  
 Some knowledge of his will. You first will heed  
 The twin Cyanean Rocks upon the sea  
 Once you have left me on your odyssey: 360  
 No-one has ever made escape betwixt  
 Those two, for they are not rootedly fixed  
 But at one point they clatter constantly  
 Together while, above them violently,



Salt-water spumes and on the rigid beach  
 Comes crashing down. Attend to what I teach  
 If you respect the gods and wisely go  
 Your way nor bring about your overthrow  
 Through foolishness and hold no certainty  
 In youth's advice. When you are back at sea, 370  
 Firstly release a dove, and should it dart  
 Safe through those rocks, then afterwards depart  
 No longer from your path; row sturdily  
 And with your oars drive through the narrow sea,  
 For safety's light is not so much in prayer  
 As in your strength, and therefore have no care  
 For aught but labouring with might and main.  
 Till then, however, I will not restrain  
 Your prayers. But if in flight between those two  
 She dies, then turn around – much better you 380  
 Yield to the gods. Those two rocks would entail  
 Your doom though flint the ship in which you sail.  
 Unlucky ones, my warnings do not dare  
 Transgress, even though you think the gods might bear  
 A thricefold hatred to me, or yet more  
 Than that. Don't dare to sail beyond the shore  
 In spite of my predictions. All shall be  
 As it shall be. Should you unscathedly  
 Avoid the clashing rocks and sail into  
 The Black Sea, then Bithynia see that you 390  
 Keep on your right until you skirt around  
 Swift Rhodas and the black beach, finding ground  
 In Thynias Island's port. Some little space  
 Sail back and moor your vessel where the race  
 Of Mariandyni abide. Close by  
 A way to Hades lies, while up on high  
 Acherusia's headland stretches. Far below  
 The waters of the eddying Acheron flow  
 Even through the headland through a huge ravine.  
 Nearby, as you sail on, there will be seen 400  
 The many Paphlagonian hills – their king  
 First was Enetian Pelops, from whom spring  
 Those folk, they boast, while opposite the bear  
 Called Helike there is a headland where  
 Approach is steep on every side. They call  
 It Karambis: there is a constant squall  
 Of north winds splitting round her head. Thus she  
 Looms high above and turns towards the sea.  
 Beyond lies broad Aigialus. Past here  
 Upon a jutting piece of coast appear 410

The streams of River Halys, on a shore  
 That bulges out, which, with a dreadful roar,  
 Spurts forth; then Iris, nearby rippling,  
 Though smaller, rolls to sea, white-eddying;  
 And them projecting forward from the land,  
 There stands a promontory, massive and grand;  
 The Thermodon into a quiet bay  
 At Themiscyra's headland makes its way  
 From thrusting through a sweeping countryside.  
 Here is Doias's plain; close by abide 420  
 The Amazons in their three conurbations,  
 And then the wretchedest of all the nations,  
 The Chalybes, who ply a rugged soil,  
 Unyielding, working iron with much toil.  
 The Tibareni, rich in flocks, dwell near  
 Beyond the Genetaean headland, dear  
 To Zeus the god of hospitality.  
 The next in order, the Mossynici,  
 Dwell in the forests and declivities –  
 Their homes they built from towers made of trees, 430  
 Which they call Mossyni: their soubriquet  
 Derives from them. When you have made your way  
 Beyond them, moor your ship on a smooth isle  
 When you have driven off, with endless guile,  
 The birds of prey, which are a multitude  
 And dwell upon this island solitude.  
 It's here Otrere and Antiope,  
 The Amazon queens, once built a sanctuary  
 Of stone to Ares when they marched away  
 To war. With kindly heart I bid you stay 440  
 Since you will win from the astringent sea  
 Unutterable aid. Why must I be  
 A sinner once again since I forecast  
 Your total venture? On the mainland past  
 This island and across from it reside  
 The Philyri; the Macrones abide  
 Above them, while, beyond, the massive race  
 Of Becheiri is found. The next in place  
 Are the Sapeiri, following hard fast  
 The Byzeres; beyond these tribes, at last 450  
 The warlike Colchi live. Your odyssey  
 Keep up until you reach the innermost sea.  
 There on the Cytaiian mainland, far away  
 From the mountains and the plateau of Circe  
 The eddyng Phasis casts its ample flow  
 Into the sea; into that river go:

Cytaiian Aeetes' towers you will see  
 And Ares' shady grove: on an oak-tree  
 And guarded by a snake, dire to the sight,  
 Eyes darting, is the spread-out fleece: nor night 460  
 Nor day does sleep his wicked eyelids quell."  
 He spoke, and fear upon his listeners fell.  
 For some time they were hit with speechlessness  
 But finally, dismayed by their distress,  
 The hero, son of Aeson, spoke: "You now  
 Have reached our journey's end and made your vow,  
 Old man, which we believe will take us through  
 The dreaded rocks to Pontus. But from you  
 I'd gladly learn if, having shunned them, we  
 May then return to Greece. How can it be, 470  
 How could I sail so far, unqualified,  
 My comrades likewise? On the utmost side  
 Of earth lies Aean Colchus." In reply  
 The old man said: "Child, when you have passed by  
 Those dreaded rocks, fear not. Another track  
 A god will show you. Thence you will not lack  
 For guides. Take thought, friends, of the cunning aid  
 Of Aphrodite. Your hopes must be laid  
 On her in your endeavours. Ask no more  
 Of me." thus spoke the son of Agenor. 480  
 The twins of Thracian Boreas through the air  
 Came darting down, their swift feet brought to bear  
 Upon the threshold. Then from every seat  
 Each hero, seeing them, got to his feet.  
 Zetes, still breathing hard from his travail,  
 Then told the eager throng how long a trail  
 They made to rout the Harpies far and wide,  
 How Iris banned their slaughter and supplied  
 Them, in her grace, with oaths, and how in fear  
 The Harpies crept away to disappear 490  
 Into their massive cave within the peak  
 Of Dicte. Then, when they had heard him speak  
 These words, the heroes all were jubilant,  
 And Phineus, too. Then a benevolent  
 Jason said: "Phineus, indubitably  
 A god grieved for your great adversity  
 And sent us from afar so that you might  
 Be helped by Boreas's sons. If sight  
 Were given you again, a joy so vast  
 As if I were returning home at last 500  
 Would girdle me." He spoke, but with an air  
 Of sadness, Phineus said: "It's past repair,

Jason; there'll be no cure. Deprived of sight,  
 My eyes are blasted. Would a god may smite  
 Me now instead with death that I may be  
 In perfect bliss." In suchlike colloquy  
 They traded words, and early morning light  
 Soon broke upon their converse, shining bright.  
 The neighbours, who beforehand had amassed  
 Each day to give a share of their repast 510  
 To Phineus, gathered now. To each one he,  
 Indifferent to any penury,  
 Gave forecasts freely, with each revelation  
 Releasing many from their tribulation:  
 For this they came to him and lavished care  
 Upon him. With them came a friend most rare  
 To him - Paraebius. He was delighted  
 To see them there, for long he had recited  
 The story of Greek heroic band 520  
 Destined to moor their ship in Thynian land  
 As they sailed on to reach Aeëtes' port,  
 Who by the will of Zeus would also thwart  
 The Harpies' rout. He sent upon their way  
 The rest with kind, wise words but urged to stay  
 Only Paraebius with those who led  
 The expedition. And to him he said  
 That he should bring to him immediately  
 The choicest sheep and then, as soon as he  
 Had left the hall, he graciously addressed  
 The gathered oarsmen: "It must be confessed, 530  
 My friends, not all men are imperious  
 Or lacking kindness. This man came to us,  
 Though loyal, keen to know his destiny:  
 Despite his constant toil, his penury  
 Chafed at him: more abject from day to day,  
 He saw no rest. But he was doomed to pay  
 The price of his own father's wicked deed:  
 Alone, while felling trees, he failed to heed  
 A hamadryad's plea. For clamorously,  
 In grief, she begged him not to fell a tree 540  
 Coeval with herself (a mighty span  
 Of years she had lived in it). Foolish man,  
 He cut it down with youthful loftiness.  
 The nymph ordained perpetual distress  
 Both to the man and to his progeny.  
 At his arrival, that iniquity  
 I recognized and bade him build to her  
 An altar and request that she defer

Forevermore his father's destiny.  
 Ever since he dodged this god-sent misery, 550  
 He's not forgotten me, for in regard  
 He holds me. Now it goes extremely hard  
 To send him off, unwilling, since he's so  
 Desirous to be with me in my woe."  
 Thus spoke Agenor's son. Immediately  
 His friend came back with two sheep from the lea.  
 The Boreads and Jason then arose  
 At the old man's command and, at the close  
 Of day, called on the god of divination,  
 Phoebus, and at the hearth made an oblation. 560  
 The young ones made a satisfying spread:  
 When it was eaten, some men made their bed  
 Alongside *Argo's* cables, others lay  
 Within the house in crowds. At break of day  
 Rushed periodic winds, over the land  
 Evenly blowing by Zeus's command.  
 Cyrene, it is said, would formerly  
 Tend to her sheep by the Peneian lea.  
 For maidenhood and an unspotted bed  
 Were dear to her. However, as she fed 570  
 Her flock beside the river, far away  
 From her Haimonia she was one day  
 Snatched by Phoebus Apollo and amid  
 The nymphs who haunt the earth deposited  
 (By high Myrtosius their habitation  
 They had established in the Libyan nation).  
 To Phoebus she bore Aristaeus there  
 (Although her corn-rich folk gave her a pair  
 Of names, Hunter and Shepherd: tenderness  
 Had caused Apollo to make timelessness 580  
 And hunting her especial care: He sent  
 The boy to Chiron's cave that time be spent  
 In nurturing his youth, and then when he  
 Was grown, the Muses taught him prophecy  
 And healing, giving him a bride, and made  
 Him keeper of the flocks of sheep that they'd  
 Been tending on Adamas's plateau  
 In Phthia round the Apidanus' flow,  
 That holy river, and the well-protected  
 Othys. Minos's islands were reflected 590  
 By Sirius and scorched – no remedy  
 Was there for those in the vicinity  
 Until, at last, at Hecate's command,  
 They called for him to banish from the land

This plague. His father bade him go away  
 From Phthia: in Ceos he made his stay  
 And gathered the Parrasians (of the strain  
 Of Lycaon), to Zeus the god of rain  
 Built a large altar and established rites  
 Of sacrifice to Sirius in the heights 600  
 As well as Zeus, who sent to cool the land  
 For his sake periodic winds which spanned  
 Twice twenty days. In Ceos now as well  
 Before the Dog-Star's rising, priests, they tell,  
 Make sacrifice. The chiefs were urged to stay:  
 The Thynians, sending great gifts every day,  
 Paid Phineus honour. To the twelve gods they made  
 An altar on the shore and on it laid  
 Their offerings. They embarked on swift *Argo*,  
 Remembering, as they set out to row, 610  
 A timid dove. It trembled with dismay  
 As Euphemus grasped it. The they made away,  
 Loosing the double hawsers, not unmarked  
 By Queen Athene, who with speed embarked  
 Upon an airy cloud, which rapidly,  
 Despite her strength, would carry her. For she  
 Sped seawards to the oarsmen's service. Just  
 As one leaves home, smitten with wanderlust,  
 As hardy souls as we roam far and near,  
 No land too far and every pathway clear, 620  
 He seems to see his home, his odyssey  
 Over both sea and land quite plain to see,  
 Ardently thinking, striving here and there  
 To find it, so, posthaste, upon the bare  
 And inhospitable Thynian strand,  
 The progeny of Zeus now came to land.  
 When they came to the narrow, winding sound,  
 Hemmed with harsh cliffs, there eddied all around  
 The ship a surge from underneath the sea  
 As they advanced with great anxiety, 630  
 The sound of clashing rocks a never-ending  
 Hubbub upon their ears, the sea-cliffs sending  
 Out roars, then Euphemus began to climb  
 The prow, grasping the dove; at the same time,  
 At Tiphys', son of Hagnias, decree,  
 They helped by rowing, in their certainty  
 Of their own strength, so they might drive straight past  
 The rocks. Then straightaway they saw at last  
 The rocks all gaping open after they  
 Had rowed around the winding passageway. 640

Their hearts melted; Euphemus sent the dove  
 A-winged; then all cast their eyes above,  
 Raising their heads, as through them all she soared:  
 The rocks, clashing together, loudly roared.  
 A deal of brine spumed up, just like a cloud,  
 The sea let forth a noise, dreadful and loud,  
 The mighty heavens crashed, within the spume  
 That surged beneath the harsh crags came a boom  
 From hollow caves, and in the air there hissed  
 Above the cliffs the bubbling wave's white mist. 650  
 Then round the ship the deluge pressed. Above  
 The rocks clipped the tail-feathers of the dove  
 As she flew back unscathed. A mighty shout  
 Came from the oarsmen. Tiphys now yelled out  
 For strenuous rowing, for the rocks again  
 Were opening. Now trembling racked the men  
 As on they rowed until the very tide,  
 Receding, raised them up and back inside  
 The rocks. Now all were struck with extreme fear:  
 Up high inexorable death was near. 660  
 The broad Black Sea was seen from left to right,  
 But unforeseen there rose up in their sight  
 A mighty curving wave resembling  
 A sheer hilltop, and when they saw this thing  
 They bowed their heads – it seemed about to flip  
 Upon them and spread over the whole ship.  
 But Tiphys swiftly slackened her as she  
 Was fretting in her oars, and utterly  
 It rolled beneath her keel: from stern to prow  
 It drew her up far from the rocks, and now 670  
 It bore her high. Through the entire crew  
 Euphemus went and yelled that they must do  
 Their utmost at the oars, so with a roar  
 They struck the waves. But what ground every oar  
 Achieved was in reversing halved. Each blade  
 Was bent just like a bow as each man made  
 Heroic effort. Then immediately  
 A vaulted wave surged at the ship, and she,  
 Cylinder-like, rode on that violent sweep  
 Rushed down and forward through the hollow deep. 680  
 She was contained in the Symplegades  
 By this vortex. They made a noise like bees  
 And shook. The *Argo*'s timbers had been jammed.  
 And then with her left hand Athene rammed  
 The stout rocks far apart and with her right  
 Pushed *Argo* through the middle. In her flight

She was a winged arrow. All the same,  
 The rocks, forever clashing as she came,  
 Grazed off the top of *Argo's* ornament.  
 Athene rose and to Olympus went, 690  
 Once they'd escaped unscathed. The rocks, however,  
 Were quickly rooted in one spot forever  
 By heavenly decree that, sailing by,  
 A man might live. At last they breathed a sigh,  
 No longer chilled with fear, as on the sea  
 And sky spread out in their immensity  
 They looked. They felt they had escaped from Hell.  
 Tiphys spoke first: "I hope this ugly spell  
 Is now behind us, ship and all. Alone  
 Athene, since her heavenly strength was blown 700  
 Upon our ship as Argos riveted her  
 With nails, must now be called our saviour.  
 She can't be caught. Jason, no longer dread  
 Your king's command - a holy one has led  
 Us through the rocks. Phineus said there's no doubt  
 That all our labours will from hereon out  
 Be easy." Thus he spoke and through the sea  
 Drove *Argo* past Bithynian land. But he  
 Heard Jason answer him with gentleness:  
 "Phineus, why comfort me in my distress? 710  
 I sinned and acted unforgivably.  
 I should, when Pelias gave me his decree,  
 Have flatly turned it down, though doomed to die  
 Deplorably, hacked limb fro limb. Here I,  
 Beset with worries too extreme to bear  
 And copious fears, hate each dread thoroughfare  
 We must endure on shipboard, dread, also,  
 The mainland, hostile everywhere you go.  
 I've suffered sleepless nights since, fo my sake,  
 You gathered for the first time, while I rake 720  
 Over everything. You speak with easiness,  
 Concerned for self alone, yet all my stress  
 Is for this man, that, you and all my men  
 Lest I do not deliver you again  
 To Greece." Thus did he test his chiefs, and they  
 Yelled cheerfully, succeeding to allay  
 His fears. He then addressed them openly:  
 "My friends, the courage that you show to me  
 Shall swell my confidence. Be I conveyed  
 To Hades' depths, I will not be afraid 730  
 Since, faced with dreadful terrors, you stay true  
 And steadfast. Since we now have sailed straight through



And circumvented the Symplegades,  
 I think no bogeyman will rival these  
 As long as attend the admonition  
 Of Phineus as upon our expedition  
 We go." He spoke, and they immediately  
 Broke off all talk, and constant industry  
 Was plied in rowing. Then they passed beside  
 Kolone's crag and the swift-flowing tide 740  
 Of Rhebas and then the Black Promontory  
 Nearby, when where the Phyllis meets the sea  
 And where into his dwelling Dipsacus  
 Received, when he had fled Orchomenus,  
 The son of Adamas who with his ram  
 Arrived; a meadow-nymph had been his dam.  
 Devoid of insolence, he willingly  
 Lived with his mother, feeding by the sea  
 His flock nearby his father's stream. They spied  
 His shrine while swiftly sailing alongside, 750  
 The broad shores of the river, and the plain,  
 And deep Calpe, but then with might and main  
 They laboured at their oars all day and night  
 When everything was calm. As oxen fight  
 To cleave the land while down their neck and sides  
 A constant source of perspiration slides,  
 And underneath the yoke they glance around,  
 Their fiery breath making a roaring sound  
 Nonstop, and with their hooves in weariness  
 They delve all day, the heroes did no less 760  
 Lean on their oars. Before the holy light  
 Yet when it was no longer wholly night,  
 Some little specks now flickering through the dark,  
 Which risers call the dawn, they moored their barque  
 On Thynia, an uninhabited  
 Island, and disembarked with heavy tread.  
 The son of Leto came I to their view,  
 Who'd come from Lycia and was passing through  
 En route to the great Hyperborean nation.  
 His clustered locks hung in proliferation 770  
 About his cheeks. He held in his left hand  
 A silver bow; meanwhile a quiver spanned  
 His back and shoulders. Underneath his feet  
 The island shook. The waves crashed as they beat  
 The shoreline. Nonplussed incredulity  
 Struck them and none had the temerity  
 To look him in the eye. They all stood there  
 With eyes cast down. But he flew through the air

Across the sea. Then Orpheus, when he'd gone,  
 Said to his chieftains: 'Let us, every one, 780  
 Give nomination to this holy isle  
 Of "Dawn's Apollo" since at Dawn's first smile  
 He showed himself to us. We'll do what we  
 Must do and build a shrine next to the sea.  
 But if at last we make a safe return  
 To our Haemonia, well surely burn  
 A sacrifice of goats. I advocate  
 That you with wine and meat propitiate  
 The god right now. Show your benignity,  
 O lord." He spoke, and they immediately 790  
 With pebbles built an altar. Then around  
 The isle they roamed to see if could be found  
 Some deer or else some goats which often feed  
 Deep in the wood, and then that very need  
 Was granted them by Leto's son. They cased  
 The thighs in fat and piously they placed  
 Them on the holy altar's holy flame  
 While calling out Apollo's holy name,  
 'Eoios'. Around the offering  
 They organized a spacious dancing-ring 800  
 And sang, "All praise, healing divinity."  
 Along with them a clear-toned melody  
 Was started up on the Bistonian lyre  
 By good Orpheus (Oiagrus was his sire) -  
 How once beneath Parnassus Mountain he  
 Slew with his bow the monster Delphyne  
 While yet a beardless youth and while his hair  
 Was still unshorn. O grant our fortune fair!  
 Be unshorn ever, lord! Lord, my you be  
 (For it is right) secure from injury! 810  
 Your tresses are by Leto's kindly hand  
 Alone caressed. The Corycaean band  
 Of nymphs, Pleistus's daughters, words of cheer  
 Addressed to you while shouting, "Healer, hear!"  
 Thus came this lovely Phoebus-hymn to be.  
 After this music and terpsichory,  
 They carried out an undefiled libation  
 And made a promise of cooperation  
 Between them for eternity, while they  
 All touched the sacrifice. Even today 820  
 There lies the shrine of joyful Harmony  
 Which they provided by their industry  
 For their great goddess. Then on the third day  
 They left the precipitous island, on their way

Under the strong west wind. Then on they sped  
 Beyond where the Sangarius River fed  
 Into the sea, beyond the fertile land  
 The Mariandyni inhabit, and  
 The Lycian streams, Anthemoseisis Lake...  
 They wind they sailed before made all thing shake - 830  
 The ropes, the tackle – then during the night  
 The wind calmed and, at dawn, with great delight  
 They reached the harbour set beneath the crest  
 Of Acherousia. She makes her nest  
 Amid steep slopes and looks upon the sea  
 Of Bithynia; sea-smoothed rocks appear to be  
 Deep-rooted there; the water round about  
 Rolls, loudly roaring; at the peak there sprout  
 Huge plane-trees, while from it, stretching away  
 Towards the mainland, deep-indented, lay 840  
 A hollow glen where, overarched with wood  
 And piles of rocks, a cave of Hades stood,  
 Whence chilly blasts of vapour endlessly  
 Would emanate from their foul cavity,  
 Congealing white frost which the noonday sun  
 Would melt away. The noise was never done  
 On this grim peak. Beneath the roaring sea  
 The groans continued, while the greenery  
 Shook from the blasts within. The Acheron  
 Emerged from them, disgorging straight upon 850  
 The Eastern sea down from the mountain's peak,  
 Within a hollow gorge. About to seek  
 A home among the Mariandynian nation,  
 The Megarans gave it the appellation,  
 Much later, "Sailor-Saver" - a bad squall  
 Had threatened them, and it had saved them all,  
 Their ships as well. The crew immediately  
 Went through the Acherousian promontory,  
 The wind now ceasing, as they reached the strand.  
 Unmarked by Lycus, ruler of that land 860  
 And the Mariandyni – they, who had slain  
 Amycus, as they'd heard, a dreadful stain –  
 They soon made out a compact for their sin,  
 As from all sides they came flocking in  
 They welcomed Polydeuces as though he  
 Had been a god – for an eternity  
 The proud Bebrycians and themselves had clashed;  
 That very day to Lycus they now dashed  
 And in the royal halls in amity  
 Prepared a banquet and with jollity 870

Conversed. The very names and families  
 Of all his comrades, Pelias' decrees,  
 The Lemnian women's entertainment and  
 What in Cyzicos, Dolionian land,  
 Had happened, how Mysia and Kios  
 They visited, the unintended loss  
 Of Heracles, left there, the divination  
 Of Glaucus and their own extermination  
 Of Amycus and the community  
 Of the Bebrycians, Phineus' prophecy 880  
 And woe, and how they managed to evade  
 The Clashing Rocks, how on the isle they made  
 Acquaintance with Apollo, he related.  
 At all these stories Lycus was elated,  
 Though grieved they had abandoned Heracles.  
 To all he said, "Friends, though to Aeëtes  
 You travel, from a great man's aid you've strayed.  
 For well I know I saw him when he stayed  
 As Dascylus my father's guest: he went  
 On foot straight through the Asian continent, 890  
 Holding the girdle of Hippolyte,  
 The lover of all war: he found in me  
 A downy-cheeked young lad. That hero, when  
 My brother Priolas was by the men  
 Of Mysia slaughtered (whom we even yet  
 Lament with mournful songs), in contest met  
 Great Titias, a man who quite transcended  
 All youths in beauty and in strength, and ended  
 His life, his teeth smashed out. My father held  
 Command when all the Phrygians were quelled 900  
 By Heracles and the Mysians, whose land  
 Is next to ours; of each Bithynian band  
 He gained possession with its property  
 As far as to the peak of Kolone  
 And Rhebas' mouth. The Paphlagonian men  
 Of Pelops yielded to them there and then,  
 Whom Billaius' dark water roars among.  
 But the Bebrycians and Amycus' wrong,  
 With Heracles far away, have cheated me.  
 For they've been chipping off my property 1000  
 For so long now that they can draw the line  
 At deep Hypius' meadows; yet the fine  
 They've paid is due to you; and that this day  
 He battled the Bebrycians, I must say,  
 Is with the gods' will – it's of him I tell,  
 Tyndareus, who sent that man to Hell.

What I can pay you in remuneration  
 I gladly shall pay. When cooperation  
 Begins from stronger men, it is the due  
 Of weaker ones. I urge that all of you 1010  
 Should take my son, Dascylus: if he goes,  
 You'll meet across the seaway only those  
 Who show true amity as far away  
 As Thermodon pours out into the bay.  
 And I shall raise to the Tyndaridae  
 A lofty altar reaching to the sky  
 Upon the Acherousian elevation  
 So that from far away propitiation  
 Is made by every sailor to the sea.  
 As for the gods, so for the community 1020  
 Upon the well-ploughed plain I will dispense  
 Rich fields. "All day they feasted well, but thence  
 At dawn sped to the ship, and with them went  
 Lycus with countless gifts; he also sent  
 His son out of the palace. Destiny  
 Then took a mna unmatched in prophecy,  
 Idmon, Abantius's son, whose skill  
 Did not avail him, for by heavenly will  
 He was destroyed. A white-toothed boar there lay,  
 Cooling his flanks and large gut in the clay, 1030  
 A dreadful monster (even the nymphs of the fen  
 Were greatly terrified), beyond the ken  
 Of every man, and here he fed alone.  
 Along this muddy river's banks Idmon  
 Was walking when out of the reeds this boar  
 With unexpected speed began to soar,  
 Then ran straight at him, fastening on the thigh,  
 Sinew and bone ripped through; with a sharp cry  
 He fell to earth. All yelled in unity  
 At this. Seeing the rabid animal flee, 1040  
 Peleus then launched a javelin, but then  
 The beast now turned around and charged again.  
 But Idas pierced it: with a roaring sound  
 It fell around the swift spear. On the ground  
 They left it. Then the men, in misery,  
 Conveyed him back towards the ship as he  
 Gasp'd out his last, and in their arms he died.  
 They then delayed departure as they cried  
 Their grief around his body. Three whole days  
 They mourned him, then upon the next, with praise 1050  
 Aplenty, they interred him. Everyone,  
 King Lycus too, mourned him in unison.

They slaughtered countless sheep, a ritual  
 Due to the dead, then a memorial  
 Was built for him in that locality,  
 That future generations all might see.  
 The trunk of an olive-tree, of which are made  
 Our ships, stands as a token in the shade  
 Of Acherousia's cliff and blossoming.  
 If at the Muses' bidding I must sing  
 Of this, Phoebus Apollo stringently 1060  
 To Boeotia and Nysus gave his decree  
 To worship Idmon and authenticate  
 Him as their guardian and to fabricate  
 The city round the trunk of this old tree,  
 Yet Agamestor is the honouree  
 Today, not that devout Aeolian.  
 Who was the next to die? Now they began  
 Again to build a tomb to glorify  
 A dead comrade: two tombs will meet your eye  
 Even yet. The son of Hagnias, it's said,  
 Tiphys, expired. Two heroes lay dead, 1070  
 Their sailing done. A short-lived malady  
 Now granted him ceaseless tranquillity,  
 After the crew had paid due accolade  
 To Idmon's corpse. This cruel grief dismayed  
 Them all with an insufferable pain.  
 Besides the seer, fulfilling once again  
 The funeral rites, they sagged down on the shore  
 In helplessness, with little longing for  
 Both food and drink, their spirits bleak and black,  
 Since there was now no hope of sailing back. 1080  
 They would have stayed there in their misery  
 Had Hera not imposed great bravery  
 Upon Ancaius (where the waters run  
 On Imbrasos was he, Poseidon's son,  
 Born to Astypalaia). Masterly  
 In steersmanship especially, eagerly  
 He spoke to Peleus: "Son of Aeacus,  
 How can it be appropriate for us  
 To give up toil amidst a foreign race?  
 Jason has not allotted me a space 1090  
 Upon the *Argo* the fleece to possess,  
 Far from Parthenia, for my skilfulness  
 In war but for my naval qualities.  
 So let there be no fear upon the seas.  
 The others are as will all men of skill  
 Not one of whom will cause us any ill,

Whoever guides us. Quickly tell them all  
 I've said and boldly urge them not to fall  
 From toil." Peleus's heart with gaiety  
 Was stirred at this, and he immediately 1100  
 Addressed the men: "What idle grief, my friends,  
 Is this which grips us? These two met the ends  
 Ordained for them, but here among the men  
 Are pilots, and a host of them. So then,  
 Let's not delay our task. Let misery  
 Be cast out, turn instead to industry."  
 Jason with helpless words replied: "So, these  
 Steersmen you speak about, Aeacides,  
 Where are they? Those in whom we would invest  
 Our trust in former days are more depressed 1110  
 Than I am now. So for them I foresee  
 The fate the dead were meted, if it be  
 Cruel Aeëtes' city is denied  
 To us or if beyond the rocks the tide  
 Won't take us back to Greece and in this place  
 A wretched fate will veil us in disgrace  
 As we grow old in idleness." He spoke;  
 Ankaïos eagerly put on the yoke  
 Of steering the swift ship – the impetus  
 Of Hera stirred him. Up leapt Erginus, 1120  
 Euphemos and Nauplios eagerly,  
 Agog to steer. Some of the company,  
 However, held them back, and of the crew  
 A number gave to Ancaïus the due  
 Of steering. When daybreak on the twelfth day  
 Arrived, they boarded ship to sail away –  
 A strong west wind was blowing. Hurriedly  
 They rowed through Acheron and now shook free  
 The sails, their confidence placed upon the breeze.  
 With sails spread wide, they ploughed on through the seas 1130  
 In tranquil weather. Soon they came upon  
 Callichorus's mouth, where Zeus's son,  
 Bacchus, they say, when he in Thebes once dwelled,  
 Leaving the Indian tribes, where he then held  
 Revels and dances near a cave where he  
 Spent holy, smileless nights: accordingly  
 The neighbours call the stream Callichorus,  
 The grotto Aulion. Then Sthenelus'  
 Barrow they saw, the son of Actor, who, 1140  
 Returning from the valorous set-to  
 Against the Amazons – for Heracles  
 Accompanied him in those hostilities –

Was wounded with an arrow, on the shore  
 To perish. They then stayed a little, for  
 Persephone had sent his soul, mush-rued,  
 To beg, even for a short-lived interlude,  
 Like-minded men to see him. Just as he  
 Was when he fought, to the periphery  
 Of his own tomb he climbed and looked upon  
 The ship. Around his head a fair helm shone, 1150  
 Four-peaked with blood-red crest. Then back he went  
 Into the giant gloom. Astonishment  
 Assailed them as they looked. But then the son  
 Of Ampykus, Mopsus, urged everyone,  
 In prophecy, to go ashore and then  
 Appease him with libations. So the men  
 Drew in the sail and cast the cables out  
 Upon the shore, and then they set about  
 The tomb; the water poured, they purified  
 Some sheep as sacrifices and, beside 1160  
 The water, to Phoebus, the island's aid,  
 They built an altar; in the fire they laid  
 The victim's thighs. Then Orpheus dedicated  
 His lyre – hence this place was designated  
 Lyra. They boarded ship immediately  
 Because the wind was blowing fervently.  
 The sail was now stretched to each corner tightly;  
 The ship was carried forward, yare and spritely.  
 Just as a swift hawk, airborne in the sky,  
 Entrusts his wings to breezes way up high, 1170  
 Not swerving in his flight but floating through  
 A clear sky on untroubled wings. Then too,  
 They passed Parthenius flowing to the sea,  
 The gentlest of streams – the progeny  
 Of Leto, when ascending through the air  
 After her hunting, cools her body there  
 In pleasant water. Then all through the night  
 They sped past Erythini, great in height,  
 As well as Sesamos, Krobali, 1180  
 Past Kromna, too, and wooded Cytos.  
 At rising of the sun they curved around  
 Carambis, then beyond Aegialus sound  
 All day and through the night. Immediately  
 The beached on Assyrian land, where Sinope,  
 Asopos' child, was granted maidenhead  
 And an abode by Zeus, who was misled  
 By his own oaths. For he had sorely needed  
 Her ardour and therefore he had acceded



To grant her anything she craved, so she,  
 In cunning, asked him for virginity. 1190  
 Apollo, too, she cozened just like this,  
 Who lusted after her by the Halys;  
 No man had ever in his fond embrace  
 Possessed her. There resided in that place  
 The three sons of Trikkon Deimachus -  
 That is Deileon, Autolykus  
 And Phlogius – ever since they strayed away  
 From Heracles. When they discerned that day  
 The crew, they made known their identity  
 When meeting them; they did not wish to be 1200  
 In that land any longer, so, when blew  
 The North-West wind, they went and joined the crew  
 On board. Together they left the Halys,  
 Borne on a swift breeze, left, too, the Iris  
 That flowed nearby, and then the delta-land  
 Of Assyria and then the far headland  
 Of the Amazons, that guards their port, that day  
 They rounded. Once, when going on her way,  
 Was Melanippe, Ares' daughter, caught  
 By Heracles. Hippolyte then brought 1210  
 To him her glittering girdle that would pay  
 To save her sister. He sent her away  
 And she returned unharmed. Then in the bay,  
 Where Thermodon pours out, they made their stay,  
 For as they came the sea was turbulent.  
 No river is like this: none yet has sent  
 Such mighty streams upon the land. If you  
 Should count them all, you'd lack but two times two  
 Out of a hundred. Yet there's *one* real spring.  
 It cascades to the flatland, tumbling 1220  
 From lofty mountain-peaks which, people say,  
 Are called the Amazons, then makes its way  
 Inland through higher country and from there,  
 This way and that, the streams flow anywhere  
 They may reach lower ground, an endless flow,  
 One far, one nearer. Many we do not know  
 By name, where they are drained off. With a few  
 Mixed in, however, one bursts out to spew  
 Its arching crest into the Pontic Sea,  
 Which hates all ships. In this vicinity 1230  
 They would have stayed to tangle in a fray  
 With the Amazons (for whom a bloodless day  
 Would not have passed) – they weren't a peaceful clan  
 But lawless, who on the Doeantian

Flatland resided; fierce pomposity  
 And war were all their care; their family tree  
 Grew from the nymph Harmonia and Ares,  
 Who, through the sexual intimacies  
 In Acmon's woods and valleys, bred a strain  
 Of warlike maids – except there came again 1240  
 From Zeus the North-West currents: with a breeze  
 Behind they left the rounded beach, where these  
 Themiscyrean Amazons prepared  
 For battle: for their dwelling was not shared  
 In just one town, but, scattered through the land,  
 They lived in three tribes: under the command  
 Of Hippolyte, the Themiskureans  
 Were one, another the Lycastrians,  
 Then the Chadesians, who plied the spear.  
 A day and night of rowing brought them near 1250  
 The Chalybes, who did not care to till  
 Their soil nor yet with honeyed fruit to fill  
 Their stores, no flocks of sheep are to be found  
 In dewy pastures; no, they cleave the ground  
 That's hard and iron-bearing, and their pay  
 They use to purchase victuals day by day;  
 No dawn appears without some dire distress;  
 Amid black smoke they bear great heaviness.  
 They soon arrived at Father Zeus's cape  
 And safely passed the Tibarenes' landscape. 1260  
 Whenever there's a woman of this clan  
 Who has produced a child, it is the man  
 Who lies in bed and groans, his head bound fast,  
 While it's his wife who brings him his repast  
 And gives him child-birth baths. Then next to see  
 Was the sacred mount where the Massynnoici  
 Reside in mountain-huts (they got their name  
 From μάσσον). Laws and customs aren't the same  
 As ours are here. Those things the laws permit  
 In public places, these they all commit 1270  
 Within their homes, while all the acts that we  
 Perform indoors they do quite openly  
 Out in the streets without reproof; the act  
 Of love they don't respect – not even racked  
 With shame at others' presence they, like swine  
 That feed in herds, will on the ground entwine  
 In intercourse. Above them all, their king  
 Dispenses upright judgments, wretched thing.  
 For if he errs in his decrees, that day  
 They lock him up and starve him. After they 1280

Had passed this place, their oars sliced through the seas  
 All day past Ares' isle, for the light breeze  
 Abandoned them at dusk. Then they perceived  
 At last a bird of Ares as it cleaved  
 The air in flight (they all frequent this isle).  
 It shook its wings upon the ship, meanwhile  
 Dropping a knife-sharp feather vertically;  
 It fell on pure Oileus' left shoulder: he  
 Then dropped his oar; then all were stupefied  
 At this plumed bolt. Then sitting by his side, 1290  
 Erybotes pulled out the thing to wrap  
 The wound up tight, having released the strap  
 Suspended from his scabbard. Now there flew  
 Another, swooping down above the crew:  
 Klytius, Eurytus' son, a champion,  
 Now took his curving bow, drawing upon  
 The bird: that winged arrow reached its mark,  
 Which whirled and fell beside the speedy bark.  
 Amphidamas, Aleus's progeny,  
 Now spoke: "We see in close proximity 1300  
 Ares' isle. You yourselves must know this, too,  
 Seeing these birds. But arrows will not do,  
 I think, to aid us here. We must explore  
 Some other method if to go ashore  
 Is your intent. Even Heracles, when he  
 Came to Arcadia, would fruitlessly  
 Aim at the birds that on Lake Stymphalis  
 Would swim. I was an eye-witness to this.  
 But, on the lofty hilltop brandishing  
 A rattle of bronze, he made the whole cliff ring. 1310  
 The birds fled far and screamed in frantic dread.  
 Likewise let's plan anew. What's in my head,  
 Once I have pondered, I will let you know.  
 Put on your high-plumed helmets: half then row  
 In turns, the others fence the ship about  
 With polished spears and shields; raise a loud shout  
 Together that the unaccustomed sound,  
 The nodding plumes, the high spears all around  
 May frighten them. If we should reach the land,  
 With vigour clash your shields." What he had planned 1320  
 Much pleased them. Their bronze helms that starkly glowed  
 They donned; the crimson crests shook. Then half rowed  
 By turns; with spears and shields the other men  
 Surrounded the whole vessel, just as when  
 A man may tile his roof to beautify  
 His house while from the rain he keeps it dry,

One tile into another dovetailing,  
 Just so about the ship they made a ring  
 Of shields. Just like the din of warrior-men  
 As they sweep on to meet in battle, then 1330  
 A din rose from the ship. As yet they spied  
 No birds, but after they came alongside  
 The isle and clashed their shields, into the air  
 There flew a giant flock: we may compare  
 A time when the son of Cronus had flung down  
 A massive storm of hail upon a town  
 And all its houses, while the folk below  
 Can hear the din upon their roofs, although  
 They sit in silence, since they are aware  
 Of rain-storm season and have taken care 1340  
 To fortify their homes, these birds then sent  
 Thick showers of feathers as in flight they went  
 To the opposing peaks across the sea.  
 What then did Phineus have in mind when he  
 Bade this heroic band to go ashore  
 Upon this isle? What help was there in store?  
 The sons of Phrixus were upon the seas  
 From Aea and Cytiaian Aieëtes,  
 En route to Orchomenos, under the mast  
 Of a Colchian ship, that they might take the vast 1350  
 Resources of their father who, when he  
 Was dying, urged them to this odyssey.  
 That ship was near the isle that day, but lo!  
 Zeus gave the North Wind strength that it might blow,  
 Marking with rain Arctourus' moistened way,  
 And shook the mountain-leaves throughout the day  
 And gently breathed on tree-tops. But at night  
 He rampaged seaward and, with all his might,  
 With screaming winds, he roused the surge. A mist  
 Of darkness screened the sky; no bright star kissed 1360  
 The heavens through the clouds, dark gloominess  
 Loomed all around. Grave apprehensiveness  
 Assailed the sons of Phrixus as the ship  
 Bore them, quite drenched. They saw the mainsail rip,  
 Snatched by the winds' great strength which cleft in two  
 The bark herself which shuddered through and through,  
 Smashed by the surge. These four the gods induced  
 To grab a huge beam (with the ship reduced  
 To smithereens such things lay all around,  
 Held by sharp bolts). Upon the isle they found 1370  
 Themselves, near-dead and in great misery,  
 Borne by the waves and wind. Immediately

A mighty rain burst from the skies to fall  
 Upon the sea, the isle, indeed on all  
 The land that lay across from it. the home  
 Of the scornful Massynoici. Swelling foam  
 Cast Phrixus' sons upon the island's shore  
 On that huge beam, in murky night. The store  
 Of endless water Zeus at the first trace  
 Of dawn left off. Soon after, face-to-face 1380  
 The two bands met. Argos spoke first: "Our plea,  
 By Watchful Zeus, whoever you may be,  
 Is that with grace you'll succour our distress.  
 Upon the sea, with dreadful fiendishness,  
 Cascaded tempests, scattering far and wide  
 The poor ship's boards, on which we had relied,  
 On business bound. Therefore, if you will heed  
 Our prayer, we beg that you will serve our need  
 For clothes and for our plight show clemency –  
 For you are all of the same age as we. 1390  
 Strangers and suppliants for Zeus's sake  
 (Who loves them both) you deference should take.  
 To Zeus belong them all and, I may guess,  
 He looks on us as well." With canniness  
 The son of Aeson questioned him, convinced  
 That Phineus' prophecies would be evinced:  
 "We'll gladly do all this immediately,  
 But tell me where you live and why the sea  
 Compelled you hither, your line of descent  
 And your great names." Then Argos, impotent 1400  
 In his distress, said: "You heard previously,  
 I'm sure, a certain Phrixus crossed the sea  
 From his Aeolia in Greece and beached  
 On Aea's mainland – Phrixus, who then reached  
 Aeëtes' town astride a ram of gold  
 (The work of Hermes). Still you may behold  
 Its fleece today. Then, by its own advice,  
 To Lord Zeus he made it a sacrifice –  
 To Zeus, the son of Cronus, above all  
 The god of fugitives. Into his hall 1410  
 Aeëtes welcomed him. Chalciope,  
 His daughter, he in magnanimity  
 Gave him in marriage, asking no payment.  
 From both of these we reckon our descent.  
 Within those halls, bowed with senility,  
 Phrixus now died, and, heeding his decree,  
 We promptly for Orchomenus set sail,  
 Of Athamas's assets to avail

Ourselves. If you would know our names, Argos  
 You may call me, this is Kytissorus, 1420  
 This Phrontis, this Melas. He spoke and they,  
 The chiefs, rejoiced at what he had to say.  
 Then Jason made rejoinder fittingly:  
 “You who would have us salve your misery  
 Are doubtless kin upon my father’s side.  
 Cretheus and Athamas were unified  
 In brotherhood and I am the grandson  
 Of Kretheus. These, my comrades every one,  
 And I have come from Greece upon our way  
 To Aeëtes’ city. But another day 1430  
 We’ll speak of this. But first put on some wear.  
 The gods, I think, gave you unto my care.  
 He spoke and gave them clothes for them to don  
 Out of the ship. Together they went on  
 To Ares’ shrine that they might sacrifice  
 Some sheep. Around the altar in a trice  
 They gathered – built of pebbles, close beside  
 The roofless temple, there it stood; inside  
 A massive, sacred stone had been made fast,  
 To which all Amazons had in the past 1440  
 Prayed. When they had arrived from opposite  
 This land, to offer ox or sheep to it  
 Was not allowed by law. Horses that they  
 Nurtured in great abundance they would slay.  
 The sacrificing and the feasting done,  
 There then began a speech by Aeson’s son:  
 “Zeus can see all: his gaze we cannot flee,  
 We honest men. As Zeus once chose to free  
 Your father from the sanguinary guile  
 Of a stepmother, vouchsafing, too, a pile 1450  
 Of treasure, so from that ferocious gale  
 He saved you, too. On *Argo* you may sail  
 Here, there, indeed wherever your intent –  
 To Aea or the sacred, opulent  
 Orchomenus. For it was on the tip  
 Of Pelion that through her craftsmanship  
 Athene with her bronze axe felled each tree  
 That built this ship, and Argos’ industry  
 Assisted her. But yours the vicious shocks  
 Of foam has crushed before you reached those rocks 1460  
 Which all day clash together in the sound.  
 But come and help our cause, for we are bound  
 To bring the golden fleece back to our nation;  
 Guide us for I intend an expiation

For Phrixus' plans for sacrifice (for these  
 Caused Zeus's wrath at the Aeolides)."  
 His words were soothing, yet a horror shook  
 The hearers for Aeëtes would not look  
 With kindness on them, they thought, if they  
 Intended to steal the ram's fleece away, 1470  
 So Argos, vexed at such a strategy,  
 Said: "Friends, what little strength we have will be  
 Forever yours in need. But Aeëtes  
 Is dread and ruthless; thus to sail these seas  
 I dread. He boasts that he's the progeny  
 Of Helios; in that vicinity  
 Dwell tribes of Colchians. His fierce war-shout  
 And massive strength would parallel, no doubt,  
 Those traits in Ares. It is no small chore  
 To take the fleece from him, and, what is more, 1480  
 A deathless, sleepless serpent guards it; Earth  
 Herself in the Caucasian vales gave birth  
 To it, by the rock of Typhaon: it's said  
 That beast by Zeus's bolt was buffeted  
 When he opposed him sturdily: there gushed  
 Hot lifeblood from his head, and thus he rushed  
 To the Nysaeon mountains and plateau,  
 Where still he lies beneath the water's flow  
 In the Serbonian lake." He spoke. There grew  
 On many cheeks a pallor now they knew 1490  
 The venture's aim. Peleus immediately  
 Encouraged him: "Do not excessively  
 Take fright, dear friend. We are not lacking might  
 So much that we can't match the man in fight.  
 We go there skilled, I think, in strategy.  
 If he won't give to us in amity  
 The golden fleece, the Colchians I doubt  
 Will be of use to him." Thus, turn about,  
 They spoke till, feasted, they took their repose.  
 At dawn a gentle breeze, as they arose, 1500  
 Was blowing, so they raised the sails which strained,  
 Stretched by its force, and, with the speed they gained,  
 Soon left that island, reaching, at nightfall,  
 The isle of Philyris, where the god of all  
 The Titans, Cronus, son of Ouranus,  
 Wooed Philyra, an act duplicitous  
 To Rhea, while, in a Cretan cave somewhere,  
 The Idaean Korymbes were taking care  
 Of infant Zeus. Then Rhea found those two  
 Entwined in dalliance, so Zeus then flew 1510

From bed, adopting the anatomy  
 Of a long-maned steed; the maid, the progeny  
 Of Ocean, left in shame and went to stay  
 In Pelasgia's long mountains where one day  
 She bore to Zeus huge Cheiron, half a horse,  
 Half god. From there they fetched up, in due course,  
 Near the Macrones and the boundless land  
 Of the Becheiri, then sailed beyond the strand  
 Of the proud Sapeires, then the Byzeres.  
 Forever moving on, they cleft the seas, 1520  
 Borne by the gentle breeze. As on they sailed  
 A nook appeared before them which availed  
 Them of the sight of steep crags rising high  
 Above the land of Caucasos. Nearby  
 Prometheus, to the harsh rocks tightly tied  
 With manacles forged out of bronze, supplied  
 With is own liver an eagle which, each day,  
 Came rushing back to reattack its prey.  
 At evening near the clouds they saw it fly,  
 Its wings a-whirring, high up in the sky, 1530  
 Yet with its wings, which made a buzzing sound,  
 Shaking their sails, though it did not, they found,  
 Look like a bird, its wings like polished oars  
 Poised in the air. They heard the dreadful roars,  
 The poor man's liver being torn away.  
 The air rang till that savage bird of prey  
 Was seen to leave the peak, its path of flight  
 The same as ever. Then, during the night,  
 They reached broad River Phasis, courtesy  
 Of Argos, and the sea's extremity. 1540  
 They let down sails and yard-arm and then packed  
 The mast and laid it flat, and then they hurled  
 The ship into that mighty stream, which swirled  
 While giving way. Steep Caucasus they spied,  
 Cytanian Aea also on that side;  
 Upon the other side from those there stood  
 The plain of Ares and his sacred wood:  
 Here was the fleece, hung on an oak's green bough,  
 By a serpent watched and closely guarded. Now 1550  
 From a gold cup pouring sweet wine, undiluted,  
 Into the stream, Jason thus executed  
 Libations to all the divinities  
 Near there, to Earth and to the essences  
 Of the dead heroes, offering up a plea  
 That they would give them help indulgently  
 And greet with grace the hawsers. This oration



Came from Ancaius: "We have reached the nation  
Of Colchis and Phasis. The time is nigh  
To hatch a plan of action: should we try  
Aeëtes with soft words or should there be  
A somewhat different approach? Thus he  
Spoke out. Then Jason bade them take away  
The ship to anchor in some secret bay,  
At Argus's advice. This was nearby  
Where they encamped all night; and the sunrise  
Soon showed itself to their expectant eyes.

1560