

ARGONAUTICA IV

Muse, goddess, daughter of Lord Zeus, now sing
Of Colchian Medea's suffering
And counsels. As I ponder her, my mind
Is wavering: for was it grief love-blind,
Or shameful flight that caused her to depart
From Colchis? With great anger in his heart
About the hateful contest, Aeëtes
Throughout the night with all his dignitaries
Within his halls devised sheer treachery
But thought without his daughters' knowledge he 10
Would not accomplish it. But Hera laid
Great fear upon the girl: she was afraid,
Just like a nimble deer spooked by the sounds,
Deep in a copse's thicket, of the hounds.
She was convinced her succour did not go
Unmarked by him and now her cup of woe
Would be filled up. The facts her handmaids shared
She feared as well. Her eyes with fire flared,
Her ears rang dreadfully and often she
Would clutch her throat and in deep misery 20
Would tear her tresses from their roots. The maid
Would have beguiled her destiny and paid
The final price, tasting the charms, and brought
The strategies of Hera all to nought
Had not that goddess forced her then to flee,
With Phrixus' sons, though with perplexity
She had been struck, and this consoled anew
Her fluttering soul. Then all her charms she threw
Into the casket; on the bed she placed
A kiss and on the double-doors which faced 30
Each other, stroked the walls, tore her long hair
And for her mother in the chamber there
Left it behind a maiden's memory.
Then in a tone of utter misery
She said: 'These lengthy tresses, mother dear,
I leave you as I go; as far from here
I sail, take this farewell; Chalciope,
Farewell, farewell, my home; would that the sea
Had crushed you, stranger, utterly before
You ventured here and reached the Colchian shore.'" 40
She spoke and wept huge tears. As from a house
Of wealth a slave-girl creeps just like a mouse,
New-disadvantaged of her home, unused
As yet to grievous toil nor yet abused

With woe, and fearing slavish drudgery,
 And suffered a harsh mistress, similarly
 The fair maid fled her home. The bolts gave way
 And at the magic strains of her swift lay
 Leapt back. Barefoot through narrow paths she sped,
 With her left hand her robe brought to her head 50
 To hide her lovely cheeks, while with her right
 She raised her tunic's hem, fleeing in fright
 Away from the wide town's fortifications
 Along the dark track; watchmen at their stations
 Missed her as on she hurried, out of view.
 She planned to reach the temple – well she knew
 The way, for she would many times there roam,
 Looking for corpses or some foul rhizome,
 As sorceresses do. Her heart with dread
 Was quivering. As she, distraught, now fled 60
 The Moon, the goddess of the Titans, marked
 The maid with fierce enjoyment and remarked
 To her own self: "I'm not the only one
 To burn with love for fair Endymion
 Or stray to the Latmian cave, often expelled
 By your sly spells, with thoughts of passion held,
 So that you may practise your darkest art
 At night, a practice pleasing to your heart.
 You too are going through a similar woe:
 Some god of torment makes you undergo 70
 Great pain by loving Jason. Go, and steel
 Yourself, though you are erudite, to feel
 A myriad of grief." When this was said,
 The maiden's feet conveyed her as she sped.
 With joy she reached the river-banks, in sight
 Of gleaming light beyond them, which all night
 The heroes burned, glad at the victory.
 Then, through the gloom, across the river she
 Called out to Frontis, Phrixus' youngest son,
 Who, both with Jason and with every one 80
 Of his brothers, knew her voice. Then silently
 His comrades wondered at her presence. She
 Called out three times, three times, urged by the men,
 He called back to her. All the heroes then
 Rowed swiftly out to find her. On that shore
 They had not yet tied off the ropes before,
 From high up on the scaffold, rapidly
 Had Jason leapt to land. Two progeny
 Of Phrixus, Phrontis and Argos, then leapt
 As well; she then addressed them while she kept 90

Her hands about their knees: "Friends, in my plight
 Save me, and save yourselves too, from the might
 Of Aeëtes – everything is evident,
 Nor is there remedy. It's time we went
 Back to the ship before he goes aboard
 His speedy chariot. I will afford
 You with the golden fleece once I to sleep
 Have lulled the guardian snake; of the vows you keep,
 However, stranger, now the gods must know
 From you, and do not, now that I must go 100
 Far from this place, apportion any blame
 To me for lack of kinsmen or bring shame
 Upon me." Thus she spoke in agony,
 But Jason's heart was blithe, and speedily
 He raised her up from clinging to his knees,
 Embraced her and then put her at her ease:
 "Let Zeus himself, and Hera, royal pair,
 Be witness to me, lady: hear I swear
 That I'll make you my wife when to the land
 Of Greece we make return." With this, his hand 110
 He placed in hers, commanding all the men
 To sail to the sacred grove nearby and then
 To seize and take the golden fleece, in spite
 Of King Aeëtes' preference, at night.
 The men in their impetuosity
 Made word and deed as one. Immediately,
 Once back on board, the heroes pushed from shore;
 There were great shouts as each man thrust his oar
 In haste. But, rushing back towards the land,
 Medea helplessly held out each hand. 120
 But Jason, speaking comfort, held her tight
 And curbed her grief. Now when the sleep that night
 Affords them huntsmen banish from their eyes
 (They always wake before the darkness dies,
 Trusting their hounds while shunning morning's light
 Lest it should with its radiant whiteness smite
 And thus erase the quarry's tracks and scent),
 The son of Aeson and the maiden went
 From *Argo* to a grassy spot whose name
 Is *Ram's Couch* (bending weary knees it came 130
 With Phrixus on its back). Near to this place
 There stood, all smeared with soot, the altar's base –
 Phrixus set up that all-gold prodigy
 And to Lord Zeus, the god of sanctuary,
 He sacrificed it at the wise behest
 Of Hermes, who had met him there. The rest

Of the heroes put the two of them on land,
 Who on the path went to the sacred stand
 Of trees in search of that immense oak-tree
 Where hung the fleece, whose luminosity 140
 Was like a cloud at sunset. But, with keen
 Unsleping eyes, that serpent now had seen
 Them coming, hissing loudly. All around
 The reptile could be heard, an echoing sound
 From the long banks and endless grove, which they
 Who lived in the land of Colchis far away
 From Aia heard (here Lycus meets the sea:
 With the Phasis its sacred tributary
 It blends when parting from the thundering
 Araxes, and, together tumbling, 150
 They pour into the Caspian Sea). In fright
 Young mothers wake, holding their young ones tight,
 Which howl and tremble at that hiss, and then
 Hold out their hands in agony. As when
 Above a smouldering woodpile there may whirl
 Large, sooty wreaths of smoke, a rising swirl,
 Which, one by one, ascend into the air
 In wavering loops, that monster then and there
 Rolled out his endless coils which were inlaid
 With hard and horny scales. Then came the maid 160
 Before his eyes, invoking mighty Sleep,
 The highest god, with honeyed voice to keep
 The monster charmed, and to the Queen of Night
 Beneath the earth cried out that now she might
 Grant her success. Then Jason, too, was there,
 Afraid: the serpent, though, by her sweet air
 Enraptured, was already loosening
 His huge spine's lengthy ridge and lengthening
 Those endless coils, as in a sluggish sea
 A dark and silent wave revolves. But he 170
 Still raised his grisly head and would have gripped
 Them in his fatal jaws, but now she dipped
 Pure charms from her concoction with a spray
 Of juniper, new-cut, and sang a lay
 While sprinkling his eyes. The potent scent
 Of the charm put him to sleep, and down he went,
 His jaw upon the ground, and far behind
 Through the dense wood those massive coils untwined.
 Then from the oak-tree, as the maiden bid,
 He seized the golden fleece and, as he did, 180
 She, standing firm, now rubbed the monster's crown
 With the charm till Jason bid her to go down

To *Argo*: Ares' dusky stand of trees
 She left. Just as a maiden, when she sees
 The glorious moon up in the sky, full-grown,
 Which in her lofty bedchamber is shown
 Upon her slender robe, and pure delight
 Invades her heart at this enchanting sight,
 So Jason swelled with happiness when he
 Raised up the fleece, and with the radiancy 190
 Of woolly flocks a redness like a flame
 Upon his auburn cheeks and visage came.
 The golden fleece upon its outward side
 Possessed the large dimensions of the hide
 Of a yearling ox or stag, which rustics call
 A brocket. It was thick with wool. And all
 Around him, as he walked, the ground would glow.
 From neck to foot at one time would it flow
 From his left shoulder, then again he'd take
 It in his hands, lest god or man should make 200
 A theft of it. Dawn spread across the land
 As they approached the crew of heroes, and
 The youths gasped at the mighty fleece which flashed
 Like Zeus's lightning: each of them now dashed
 To touch and hold it. Jason checked them all,
 However, and upon it cast a shawl,
 New-woven, took and led the maiden to
 The stern and seated her, then to the crew
 He said: "My friends, you must no more suspend
 Your going home. Our task has reached its end 210
 So lightly by the maiden's counselling –
 The task for which with grievous travelling
 We suffered misery. I'll take her back
 With me to be my wife (I do not lack
 Her sanction). Keep her safe – she has set free
 All Greece and you, for it's my theory
 The king will come downstream to try to block
 Our way. Then, side by side at each oarlock,
 Row on by turns while half of you hold out
 Your oxhide shields, which are a sure redoubt 220
 Against the weapons of an enemy,
 And guard our journey. In our hands have we
 Our children's and our aged parents' end.
 For all the Grecian citizens depend
 Upon our venture, should egregious fame
 Be that which we achieve or lasting shame."
 He spoke and donned his armour. Eagerly
 They shouted loudly. From its scabbard he

Drew out his sword and at the *Argo*'s stern
 He slashed the cables, then, armed, stood his turn 230
 By the side of Ancaeos, the helmsman, near
 The maid; the ship sped as they strove to clear
 The river ceaselessly. Medea's act
 And adoration were a well-known fact
 By now to Colchis and the lordly king.
 They thronged in armour to the gathering
 Like waves that rise up from a wintry sea
 Or leaves that drop in some dense forestry
 In autumn – who could count them all? – just thus
 They streamed nonstop with shouts, tumultuous, 240
 Along the banks, while over everything
 In his fine chariot shone out the king,
 His steeds a gift from Helios, so fast
 Each bore resemblance to a rapid blast
 Of wind, a curving shield in his left hand
 And in his right a huge pine-firebrand;
 Near, facing him his massive spear was set.
 Apsyrtus held the reins. The ship now met
 The waves, the sturdy oarsmen hastening
 Her on, the mighty river tumbling 250
 Along. The king, in grievous agony,
 Invoked both Zeus and Helios to see
 Such evil, holding up his hands, and tossed
 Foul threats at all his folk that at the cost
 Of their own lives his rage and vengeance they'd
 Find out if they did not arrest the maid
 On land or swelling sea and thus appease
 His eager soul. These things did Aeëtes
 Pronounce. That day the Colchians unmoored
 Their ships, got all their tackle safe aboard 260
 And that same day set sail. You'd not have said
 This was a mighty fleet of ships – instead
 It seemed that in great droves an endless host
 Of birds was screaming as it left the coast.
 A swift wind blew, as Hera always planned,
 So that Medea the Pelasgian land,
 A bane to Pelias' house, might reach. Daylight
 On the third day would see them binding tight
 The cables on the ship's stern to the beach
 Of Paphlagonia at the outreach 270
 Of River Halys. Now she bade them land
 And, once on shore, together form a band
 And in appeasement make to Hecate
 A sacrifice. But everything that she

Prepared for this no man may know, nor may
 My soul encourage me to sing a lay
 About it. Reverence bids me say no more.
 That altar that they built upon the shore
 Still stands for our descendants all to see.
 And once then Jason and his company 280
 Thought about Phineus who had said that they,
 When leaving there, would go a different way.
 This was so unexpected; Argos, though,
 Addressed that eager throng: "We must now go
 To Orchomenus, for he you met before,
 That faultless seer, foretold you of it. For
 There is another route which priests made known –
 The priests who from Tritonian Thebes were grown.
 All the stars that whirl round heaven were not set,
 Nor were the holy Danaids known yet. 290
 The Apidanean men of Arcady
 Were yet the only people known to be
 Living upon the earth – they lived, it's said,
 Even before the moon did, and they fed
 On acorns in the hills. The progeny
 Of Deucalion, that glorious family,
 Did not then rule Pelasgis, when the land
 Of Egypt, mother of a vigorous band
 Of ancestors, was called a flowering
 Land of the Morn, and the broad-rippling 300
 River Triton fed all of it. No rain
 From Zeus bedewed it. Many fields of grain
 Sprang up through flooding and, they say, from thence
 A king would travel, placing confidence
 In his own subjects' might and bravery,
 Through Europe and Asia; wherever he
 Would roam, so many cities he would raise,
 Some still extant, some not, for countless days
 Have passed since then. But Aia stands there yet –
 Her settlers' sons preserve their writings set 310
 On pillars – every road and boundary
 On sea and land are there for all to see.
 There is a river, Ocean's furthest strait,
 Which trading vessels may negotiate,
 Both wide and deep; it's marked as far away
 And labelled Ister, and it makes its way
 For just a while through boundless fields alone –
 One stream – its springs beyond the North Wind's moan
 Cascade out from the mountains of Rhipae
 And roar aloud. But when it comes nearby 320

The Scythian and the Thracian hills, it flows
 In part into the Ionian Sea but goes
 Through a deep bay in equal quantity
 Which here retracts into the Trinacrian Sea,
 The sea which lies along your native-land –
 That is, if we may truly understand
 The Achelous flows from thence.” Thus he
 Addressed them. Then a happy augury
 Was sent by Hera – that this was indeed
 The route. On hearing this, they all agreed 330
 With shouts. A heavenly shaft of light appeared
 And indicated where to pass. Thus cheered,
 They left the son of Lykos; after they
 Had spread their sails, they pulled out of the bay,
 The Paphlagonian hills within their sight.
 They did not round Carambis for the light
 Of fire from the sky and winds remained
 Until the mighty Ister they had gained.
 Some Colchians now were searching fruitlessly
 Past the Cyanean Rocks and Pontic Sea, 340
 While other went, under Apsyrtus’ sway,
 To the river, where their leader turned away
 And entered Fair Mouth and outstripped his foe
 By traversing a neck of land and so
 Came to the furthest gulf of the Pontic Sea.
 On Ister stood Pine Island, which had three
 Sides to it, with its base along the strand
 While sharply angled to a river and
 Two outfalls cleft in two; the one they call
Narex, the lower *Fair Mouth*. Through this all 350
 The Colchians and Apsyrtus sped. The crew,
 However, ventured far away, straight to
 The island’s top. In terror of the fleet,
 The rustic shepherds beat a swift retreat
 From all their pastured sheep, conjecturing
 They were sea-dwelling monsters surfacing.
 For they had not yet seen a ship before,
 Not those who dwelt beyond the Scythian shore
 Nor the Graucenians nor Sigynnians
 Nor Sindians, who now are Laurians 360
 And dwell upon the great desert flatland.
 When the Angouran mountains they had spanned
 And the Cauliacian rock-face far away,
 Round which the River Ister pours this way
 And that in two-fold streams into the sea
 And the Laurian plain, to stop the enemy

From slipping off, the Colchians then went
 Into the Cronian Sea thus to prevent
 Their passage, and then the heroic band
 Came from behind and passed by, close at hand, 370
 The twin islands of Brygia, the care
 Of Artemis - a sacred altar there
 Had been set up on one: the other, though,
 Was where they landed, bypassing the foe
 Led by Apsyrtus, for their adoration
 Of Zeus's child had caused the Colchian nation
 To leave these out of many just as they
 Then stood. The rest obstructed every way
 As far as the Salangon and the Nestian land.
 The Minyae, a few against a band 380
 Of many, would have yielded in grim fight
 But that they made a truce so that they might
 Avoid a mighty feud; it was agreed
 The golden fleece was theirs, as was decreed
 By Aeëtes should they in the affray
 Prevail, whether they carried it away
 By guile or openly and in despite
 Of Aeëtes, but that Medea might
 Be ward to Leto's child (for it was she
 Who caused the strife) far from the company 390
 Till a law-dispensing monarch may decide
 She should within her father's home abide
 Or with the chieftains sail to Greece. She weighed
 Up all of this while knife-like anguish swayed
 Her heart incessantly, then swiftly she
 Called Jason out of all his company
 To go alone with her, then, far apart
 From them, with sobs she poured out all her heart:
 "What are you planning, Jason, now for me?
 And was amnesia gained through victory? 400
 Do you think nothing of the things you said
 When up against it? Where have your oaths sped,
 The ones you swore by Zeus, your guarantee
 With honeyed words? Quite inappropriately
 I left my glorious home in shame, my land,
 My parents – all that's dearest to me – and
 Alone with mournful seabirds travel far
 Because of your afflictions and debar
 Your death and save you from that company
 Of Earthborns and those oxen. Finally 410
 It was my folly caused you then to win
 The fleece, once it was known of, and my sin

Is placing on all women foul disgrace.
 I go to Greece – I say this to your face –
 Your child, wife, sister. Stand by me in all,
 Don't leave me quite forgotten when you call
 Upon the kings. Save me, let honesty
 And justice triumph – thus did we agree –
 Or else pierce through my throat, thus rendering
 Me payment for my recklessness. Poor thing, 420
 If that crowned head with whom you both avow
 Your vicious covenant resolves that now
 I'll be owned by my brother! Will I face
 My father nobly? Due to all my base
 Actions, what woe shan't I in agony
 Endure, what heavy doom? Can you now see
 The safe return you long for? No! I pray
 That Hera, queen in whom you glory, may
 Not bring that day to pass. Remember me
 When you are wearied with calamity; 430
 And may the fleece just like a dream recede
 In vain to Hell, and may my Furies speed
 You from your land at once because of all
 Your cruelty brought me. These things must not fall
 To earth unsatisfied. A mighty vow
 You've broken ruthlessly. Not long from now
 You'll fail to mock me, sitting unconcerned,
 Despite your pacts." Her vicious anger burned
 Within her as she spoke. To set on fire
 The ship and shatter it was her desire, 440
 And then herself to sink and disappear
 Into the greedy flames. Then half in fear,
 Jason said gently: "Lady, pray you, cease:
 This does not please me either. No, a peace
 Is what we seek: for we, because of you,
 Are ringed by enemies. For all those who
 Live here would aid Apsyrtus so that they
 Could take you to your father, like some prey,
 Back to your home and, faced with hateful might,
 We'd perish, having closed in deadly fight. 450
 More bitter still the pain if thus we leave
 You as their booty. This pact, though, will weave
 A web of guile to break him. Nor will we
 Have hostile locals holding loyalty
 To the Colchians because of you – their prince,
 Your champion, and your brother too, has since
 Gone from them. To the Colchians I'll not yield:
 Should they prevent my journey, in the field

I'll meet them." Thus he spoke appeasingly.
 With deadly words she said: "Listen to me: 460
 Take heed. Base needs need base scenarios:
 My error pained me as I fulfilled those
 God-sent and vile desires. But you must
 Shield me from Colchian spears amid the dust
 Of battle. I will with duplicity
 Send him to you. In hospitality
 Receive him with fine gifts. If I should then
 Persuade his heralds that without his men
 He should arrive to heed my words, so long
 As you approve, kill him or rouse the throng 470
 Of Colchians to war – for I care not!"
 Thus they agreed to frame a mighty plot
 For Apsyrtus – they offer great largess,
 Hypsipyle's dark-purple sacred dress
 Included, which in sea-girt Dia was sewed
 For Bacchus by the Graces: he bestowed
 It later to Thoas, his son, and he
 Left it to her. With much more trumpery
 She gave this fine guest-gift to Aeson's son
 To drape his frame. You never would be done 480
 Gazing upon it or having your fill
 Of touching it. There lingered on it still
 A holy fragrance, since the Nysian king
 Lay on it, wine and nectar rendering
 Him tipsy, while the lovely progeny
 Of Minos he in sensuality
 Embraced and stroked her breast (her love had taken
 Her from Cnossos to Theseus who'd forsaken
 Her on the Isle of Dia). Then she made
 Progress upon the heralds to persuade 490
 Her brother to come and, as they had agreed,
 She reached the goddess' temple that a deed
 Of guile be planned (it now was darkest night)
 To take the mighty golden fleece in flight
 Back to Aeëtes – Phrixus' progeny
 Had given to the *Argo*'s company
 Medea by duress to take from there.
 With suchlike guile she scattered to the air
 Her witching charms, which, from a distant site,
 Would still have lured out of the mountain's height 500
 The savage beast. O ruthless Love, great woe,
 Great curse to man, what lamentations grow
 From you, what groans, what deadly strife! Much more
 Affliction troubles man out of your store

Of anguish! Arm yourself, o god, and rise
 Against your foe's issue in similar wise
 As in Medea a base infatuation
 You placed. For how in evil ruination,
 When he had come to her, did the maid slay
 Apsyrtus? That's the next song in my lay. 510
 When on the Isle of Artemis by pact
 They'd left the maid, each side's ensuing act
 Was mooring separately upon the land.
 To wait for Apsyrtus and then his band
 Of men was Jason's aim. But he, beguiled
 By dire promises, across the wild
 And swelling sea sailed on, in darkest night
 Reaching the sacred island that he might
 Approach his sister, whom he then assessed
 In chat, just as a tender child will test 520
 A raging torrent even burly men
 Cannot traverse, to see if she could then
 Plan for the strangers some devise. So they
 Agreed on everything. Then straightaway
 From the thick trap the son of Aeson leapt,
 Clutching his naked sword. Medea kept
 Her veil across her face and turned away
 Her eyes lest, when her lover came to slay
 Her brother, she'd not see the blood. Then he,
 Just like a butcher in his butchery
 Of a strong-horned bull, first picked him out, then slew
 The man hard by the temple which those who 530
 Lived on the facing mainland, the Brygi,
 Had built, and down he fell precipitately
 Upon his knees inside the porch. At last
 The hero, gasping out his life, now passed
 While holding up the black blood which was shed
 Out of the gaping wound and turning red
 His sister's silvery veil and robe as she
 Shrank back. The cruel and potent deity
 Of vengeance, swiftly sidelong-glancing, marked
 Their treacherous murder. Jason now embarked 540
 On cutting the dead man's extremities,
 The blood thrice licking, the impurities
 Between his teeth thrice spitting out (that way
 A treacherous killer recompense must pay).
 The clammy corpse he buried in the ground,
 Where even now the empty bones around
 The Apsyrtians lie. Seeing the torch's flame
 The maid had raised as signal when they came,

The heroes moored the *Argo* alongside
 The Colchian ship, committing homicide 550
 Upon the Colchian host, as hawks will slay
 A host of doves, as savage lions prey
 Upon a great encompassed flock of sheep
 And drive them close together as they leap
 Into the fold. None of them could eschew
 The slaughter, for upon the entire crew
 They rushed and, flame-like, slew them. Jason then
 Approached them, eager to assist his men,
 Who did not need assistance. But their care
 Was for their leader. Therefore then and there 560
 They held great counsel as to how they might
 Return to Greece. The maid into their sight
 Appeared as thus they pondered. Peleus, though,
 Was first to speak: "I order you to go
 Aboard while it's still night and row away
 From where the foe keeps guard. Once it is day
 They'll see their plight and nothing will prevail
 Upon them to pursue us: they'll turn tail
 And scatter in dissension grievously,
 Like folk who've lost their king." Then easily 570
 Shall we proceed." He spoke, and their consent
 The youths then gave to him. Swiftly they went
 Into their ship and rowed without a rest
 Till they had reached an island that was blessed,
 Electris, highest of them all, close to
 The Eridanus. When the Colchians knew
 Apsyrtos' death, the entire Cronian Sea
 They longed to troll to make discovery
 Of *Argo* and the Minyans. But they
 Were checked by Hera and the fearful ray 580
 Of her sky-lightnings. They came finally
 To hate their own Cytaean territory
 And trembled at Aeëtes' fearful rage,
 And so, when they had put in anchorage,
 They put down roots, dispersing here and there.
 Some settled on the very islands where
 The heroes had sojourned, taking their name
 From Apsyrtus, others to a deep, dark river came,
 The Illyrian, where they built a citadel
 (Harmonia's and Cadmos' tomb was there) and dwell 590
 Among the Echeleians, Others set
 Up home in Thunder Mountains, which all get
 Their name from when the bolts of Cronos' son,
 Lord Zeus, one time prevented anyone

From crossing to an island opposite.
 The heroes, when it seemed to them that it
 Was easy to return, went further and
 Tied off their hawsers on the Hylleans' land.
 For countless islands lay there, that could bring
 Great danger to a sailor travelling 600
 Between. The Hylleans, just as before,
 Bore them no grudge but furthered, furthermore,
 Their passage and were given, as their pay,
 A large tripod of Phoebus, who one day
 Have given Jason two tripods to take
 Upon the journey that he had to make,
 When he had gone to make enquiry
 Of holy Pytho for that odyssey.
 It was ordained, wherever they would stay,
 No foe should ravage them and to this day 610
 In pleasant Hyllus in that selfsame land
 It's buried deep that it may not be scanned
 By men. They did not find His Majesty
 Hyllus alive, whom lovely Melite
 Had borne to Heracles, Phaiacia's king.
 For he went to Nausithous' dwelling
 And Makris, Bacchus' nurse, in compensation
 For foul infanticide. But adoration
 Of the River Aigaeus' daughter, Melite,
 The naiad, caused his wooing victory 620
 Of her. The mighty Hyllus then she bore.
 But, grown, he would not stay there anymore
 Under Nausithous' rule. To the Cronian Sea
 With some Phaiacians then he went, for he
 Was aided by the king. He settled there.
 The Mentores, when he was taking care
 Of his oxen in the field, killed him. Now say,
 Goddesses, how clear songs even today
 Are sung of *Argo's* mighty tracks that spanned,
 Beyond this sea, both the Ausonian land 630
 And the Ligystian Isles, called Stoichades.
 What were the great constraints, what needfulness
 That took them such a distance? What winds blew
 Them on? Now Zeus's anger grew and grew
 At Apsyrtus' murder, so he then decreed,
 At Aiaian Circe's words, that they had need
 To wash away the fatal gore and stand
 Much woe before returning to their land.
 None of the chiefs knew this. But far they pressed
 From Hyllus as they left behind the rest 640

Of all the islands that had once been manned
 By Colchians – the whole Liburnian land,
 Issa, Dysceladus, the ravishing
 Pityeia. Next in their wandering
 They came to Corfu Island (it was there
 Poseidon settled her of the lovely hair,
 Asopus' child, Cercyra, far away
 From Phlius, for it was beneath love's sway
 He took her). Sailors, gazing from the sea
 At her black form, her gloomy forestry, 650
 Called it Black Cercyra. Then they went by
 Melite, which basked in warm winds, then the high
 And steep Cerossos and, some way away,
 Nymphaea, where Calypso made her stay,
 Atlas's child. Though they were dubious,
 They thought they might have seen the nebulous
 Mountains of Thunder. Hera then was keen
 To weigh the counsels and the mighty spleen
 Of Zeus about them. She contrived to end
 Their voyage and before their ship to send 660
 Storm-winds that forced the *Argo* to go back
 To rocky Electra. Then, while on this tack,
 There sounded from the beam of the *Argo*
 A human voice (Athena in the bow
 Had shaped it of Dodonan oak). A fear
 Most dreadful overwhelmed them all to hear
 It tell of Zeus's wrath and enmity.
 It said they'd not escape the angry sea
 Should holy compensation not be made
 By Circe for foul murder. Then it bade 670
 Both Polydeuces and Castor to pray
 That the immortals might show them a way
 Through the Ausonian Sea, where they should see
 Circe, Perses' and Helios' progeny.
 Such statements in that dark the *Argo* made.
 The brothers leapt up, arms outstretched, and prayed
 For every boon. The other heroes, though,
 Were sad. Now onward speeded the *Argo*.
 Deep in the Eridanus now she pressed,
 Where Phaëthon once was wounded in the breast, 680
 Struck by a fiery bolt, and, half-burned, sank
 In that deep lake, and even now the dank
 And heavy mists gush forth (Helios's car
 Had tipped him out). An eagle, spreading far
 His airy wings, would have no chance to fly
 Across that stream but it would surely die,

Aflutter in the flames. Long poplars hem
 Helios's daughters: pouring out of them
 Are pitiful groans; bright amber from their eyes
 Drops, which the sun upon the ground then dries, 690
 But when the waters of the dark lake splash
 Against the shore, wind-driven, then they clash,
 A mass of swelling tide, into the flow
 Of Eridanus' waters. The Celts, though,
 Have taken up the tale – that they indeed
 Are Phoebus' tears, borne onward by the speed
 Of eddies, which he shed abundantly
 Before, when he had reached the progeny
 Of sacred Hyperborea, exiting
 From shining heaven at the lecturing 700
 Of his father, angry at his son whom he
 On Holy Coronis begat, and she
 Gave birth to him at Amyrus' gateway
 In sunny Lacerea, so they say
 About these parts. The heroes did not yearn
 For food or drink, nor did their fancies turn
 To joy, fatigued to fainting all day long
 With the foul smell that stream poured out among
 Them all of burning Phaëthon, then they
 At night-time heard the shrill cries of dismay 710
 The Heliads gave. Their tears of sorrow swirled
 Like drops of oil, then after that they whirled
 Into the River Rhodanus which pours
 Into the Eridanus: mighty roars
 Accompany their mingling. From the far
 Extremes of earth arising, where there are
 The gates and homes of Night, it on one side
 Spews onto Ocean's strands, another tide
 Emitting into the Ionian Sea.
 Elsewhere again there flows a tributary 720
 Through seven mouths into the boundless bay
 Of the Sardinian Sea. It drives its way
 Through wintry lakes, which spread through endless ground
 In Celtic country. Here they would have found
 Shameful disaster. Into Ocean's bay
 A branch of the stream was taking them away
 (They weren't aware of this), and tribulation
 Would have engulfed them. But an ululation
 Rang out from Hera out of heaven, who leapt
 From the Hercynian Rock. A shudder swept 730
 Through all of them, however, one of fright,
 For dreadful was the noise in heaven's height.

She turned them back and then they all discerned
 Their homeward route. At last they were returned
 By Hera to the shore through raging seas,
 Past countless Celt and Ligyan territories,
 Unharm'd. She cast a dreadful mist all day
 As on they sailed, and so, out of harm's way,
 Through Zeus's progeny they came straight through
 The mid mouth of the three and so came to 740
 The Stoichades Isles, where many a liturgy
 And shrine was kept in perpetuity;
 These weren't the only sailors who obtained
 Their help – no, ships in later years attained
 Zeus' aid. Aethalia Island next was seen,
 Where wearily they wiped away the sheen
 Of sweat with pebbles strewn along the strand,
 Skin-coloured; there their wondrous armour and
 Their quoits are seen. That harbour gets its name –
 Argoan – from their ship. They quickly came 750
 Upon the swell to the Tyrrhenian coast
 Of Ausonia and then Aeaea's boast,
 Her port, casting their cables close to where
 They landed on the beach, and it was there
 That they found Circe washing with salt sea
 Her head, unsettled with anxiety
 About the visions of the night. It seemed
 Her chamber and the palace walls all streamed
 With blood, and all the charms consumed by flame,
 The charms she'd used on any man who came 760
 From foreign lands, and she with her own hand
 Suppressed the flame with murderous life-blood and
 Then drew it up and ceased her deadly fear.
 She roused herself just as the dawn drew near
 And washed her hair and garments. Wild beasts then,
 Unlike wild beasts yet not resembling men,
 With limbs all mingled, went in one great throng
 Like sheep that from the fold amble along
 Behind the shepherd. From primeval clay
 The earth produced them, limbs a mixed array, 770
 Before she'd been, beneath a rainless sky,
 Compressed or from the scorching sun on high
 Received a drop of moisture. But, combined
 And placed in ranks by time, they went behind
 Her, shapeless. Great amazement seized the crew:
 Each gazed upon her shape and stared into
 Her eyes and swiftly guessed the maid to be
 Aeëtes' sister. From her memory

Erasing fears of visions in the night,
 She bade them follow with a subtle sleight 780
 Of hand. At Jason's bidding, the whole crew
 Stood firm. The Colchian maid, though, Jason drew
 To him and on the self-same path they went
 Till reaching Circe's house. Bewilderment
 Seized her at their approach; to them she said
 To sit on the brightly-burnished seats. They sped
 Straight to the hearth and sat there quietly,
 The wont of wretched suppliants. Then she
 Over her countenance her two hands laid.
 But in the earth he fixed the mighty blade 790
 With which he slew Apsyrtus, while their eyes
 Weren't raised; Circe was swift to recognize
 The guilt of blood and doom of deportation:
 So, holding Zeus' decree in veneration
 (Though great in anger, he applies great might
 To ailing killers), she began the rite
 Of sacrifice which ruthless slayers make
 To wash away their guilt when they betake
 Them to the altar. First, as compensation
 That must be made for foul assassination, 800
 She held aloft the piglet of a sow
 Whose teats were swollen still from birthing; now
 She cut its neck and on their hands she sprayed
 Its blood, then more propitiation made
 With offerings of drink, then called on Lord
 Zeus, Cleanser and all suppliant slayers' Ward.
 Her naiad maids, who handled everything,
 Brought from the palace, each outscouring.
 The cakes and other offerings she'd burn
 In sober prayerfulness that she might turn 810
 The Erinyes' dreadful spleen away
 And that the both of them the Lord Zeus may
 Be kindly and propitious, should they be
 With foreign blood besmirched in infamy
 Or else, as kinsmen, crave his grace. But when
 All of the tasks were done, she raised the men
 And sat them on the polished seats, while she
 Sat just across from them. Immediately
 She asked about their needs and where they'd sailed
 In detail, and, before they had availed 820
 Themselves of her hearth as suppliants, what home
 Had they come from to reach across the foam
 Her land and palace. Some vile memory
 Of dreams assailed her in her reverie.

She longed to hear her kinswoman give sound
 To all her thoughts as soon as from the ground
 She raised her eyes. For all the Helian race
 Are recognizable, as from each face
 They flash afar a gleam of gold. Then she
 Replied to all her questions placidly 830
 And in the Colchian tongue, Medea who
 Was grim Aeëtes' daughter – where the crew
 Had travelled, how they'd toiled in each swift test,
 How through her sorrowing sister she'd transgressed,
 How with the sons of Phrixus she had fled
 Afar from him who'd caused appalling dread,
 Her father. But she shrank from telling, too,
 The murder of Apsyrtus. Circe knew,
 However, pitying the weeping maid
 Even so. She said: "Poor wretch, the plans you've laid 840
 Involve a journey terrible and base,
 For soon, I reckon, you will have to face
 Aeëtes' heavy wrath, for speedily,
 To gain, for murder of his progeny,
 Revenge, he'll go to Greece, for he can't bear
 The deeds that you have done. But since you share
 My blood and stand as suppliant to me.
 I'll not harm you. But in the company
 Of this stranger you've chosen in despite
 Of your father, quit my halls. Out of my sight! 850
 Do not beseech me – your base exodus
 And counsels I shall never favour." Thus
 She spoke. In boundless pain, her robe she cast
 About her eyes and groaned until at last
 The hero took her by the hand and led
 Her from the palace quivering with dread.
 And so they left. But they were not unmarked
 By Hera: Iris, as they had embarked
 Upon their exit, saw them and thus told
 That goddess, who had bid her to unfold 860
 To her when they should reach the ship. And so
 She urged her: "Flying on your light wings, go,
 Dear Iris (if you ever have complied
 With my behests), raise Thetis from the tide
 And bid her hither. I have need of her.
 Then to the beaches bid her to bestir
 Herself – Hephaestus' bronze anvils there stand,
 Beaten by sturdy hammers. Give command
 To him that he must subdue every blast
 Of fire till the *Argo* has gone past. 870

Call Aeolus, who holds the government
 Of the winds, born of a clear-blue firmament.
 Tell him my mind and bid him to frustrate
 All winds and let no breezes agitate
 The sea, and let the West Wind blow till they
 Have to the Phaeacian island made their way
 (Alcinous rules there).” That’s what she said.
 That minute Iris from Olympus sped,
 Leaping, light wings outspread, and cleft her way. 880
 She plunged in the Aegean Sea, whose sway
 Belonged to Nereus. First of all she went
 To Thetis, telling her Hera’s intent
 That she should go to her, then, secondly,
 On to Hephaestus whom she speedily
 Made cease his iron hammering. The blast
 The smoky bellows made was stopped. Then, last,
 She came to Aeolus, the famous son
 Of Hippotas; when her report was done,
 She rested her swift knees. Then from the sea
 Came Thetis, seeking out the company 890
 Of goddess Hera in Olympus, though
 Both Nereus and her sisters did not go
 With her. Queen Hera sat her by her side
 And said: “To what I’m eager to confide
 To you now listen, Lady Thetis. You
 Know how I honour Jason, honour, too,
 His helpers in the contests and how they
 Were saved by me as they sailed on their way
 Beside the Wandering Rocks, where cyclones crash
 With a most dreadful sound while rollers smash 900
 Around the rugged reefs. Their route they see
 Beyond Charybdis, belching horribly,
 And the great rock of Scylla. You, however,
 I reared from babyhood myself and ever
 Have loved beyond all others who abide
 In the salt sea because you have denied
 To share a bed with lusty Zeus. For he
 Has always cherished deeds like that – to be
 The lover of a goddess or a maid.
 But your respect and fear of me has stayed 1000
 Your going to him. Mightily he vowed
 Because of this that you’d not be allowed
 A husband from Olympus. Yet he still
 Spied on her, though it was against her will,
 Till Lady Thetis told him everything –
 That it had been foretold that you should bring

Into the world a greater man than he
 Who fathered him. Despite his lechery,
 Therefore, he let you go, fearing someone
 Would rival him and hold dominion 1010
 Over the gods, so that his power should rest
 Always with him. But I gave you the best
 Of all the husbands dwelling upon the earth,
 That wedded bliss would bring about the birth
 Of babes. The gods I summoned, one and all,
 To dinner, with the wedding-torch held tall
 Within my hand, for all the kindness you
 Have shown to me. I'll tell you something true:
 When your son comes to the Elysian plain, although
 At Chiron's house the Nereids help him grow, 1020
 Still needing mother's milk, it is his fate
 To have Aeëtes' daughter for his mate;
 So said your daughter-in-law, as you should do
 Since you're her mother-in-law; aid Peleus, too.
 Why this deep anger? Folly made him blind.
 Even the gods have folly. You will find,
 I think, Hephaestus will, at my behest,
 Temper his fury's might and let it rest,
 And Aeolus will check his swift winds' speed
 But keep the steady West Wind, which they need, 1030
 Until they reach Pheaecia's port. Devise
 A carefree voyage home. The mighty rise
 Of waves, the rocks are now my only fear,
 From which with all your sisters you may steer
 Them safely. Let them not haplessly fall
 Into Charybdis lest she gulp them all,
 Nor travel in the foul vicinity
 Of cruel Scylla, she whom Hecate,
 Night-wanderer, whom they Crataïs name,
 To Phorcys bore, lest those of chiefest fame 1040
 Among the crew she swoops upon to kill
 With her abhorrent jaws. But keep them still
 Upon their course that they may just squeak through."
 She spoke and Thetis answered: "If it's true
 The ravening flame and vicious storms will end,
 I shall, I guarantee, the ship defend
 From crashing waves, while the West Wind blows clear.
 It's time my long and measureless path from here
 Should start. I'll see my sisters who'll provide
 Support, then go to where the ship is tied 1050
 That they may plan their journey at first light."
 She spoke and, dashing on her airy flight,

Fell on the dark-blue eddies of the sea,
 Then to her sister Nereids made a plea
 For help and, hearing her, they congregated.
 Then Hera's bidding was communicated
 By Thetis, when immediately she sent
 Them to the Ausonian Sea before she went,
 More swiftly than the flashing of an eye
 Or the sun's shafts when he uprises high 1060
 Above a distant land, across the sea
 Until Tyrrhenian nationality
 Was reached upon the Aeaean sea-strand.
 At archery and quoits she found them and,
 Approaching close, she reached out to extend
 Her hand that she might brush the fingers' end
 Of Peleus, son of Aeacus, for she
 Belonged to him by marriage. None could see
 Her plain – to him alone she was descried.
 She said: "On the Tyrrhenian shore abide 1070
 No longer: loose your swift ship at daybreak;
 Trust in your helper Hera: for her sake
 The Nereids have met to pull away
 The *Argo*, now lashed to the Rocks That Stray.
 That is your destined path. Do not show me
 To any while I'm in their company,
 But keep it secret lest you vex me more
 Than recklessly you vexed me once before."
 She spoke and vanished in the depths of the sea,
 But great pain struck the man, for previously 1080
 He'd never seen her come to him from when
 She left her bed and chamber, angry then
 Because of great Achilles, still a tot.
 For nightly she encompassed him with hot
 Flame, while his tender flesh she would by day
 Anoint to keep repugnant age away,
 Thus making him immortal. Peleus leapt,
 However, from his bed as fire crept
 About his precious son who panted so,
 And, seeing this, he vented all his woe 1090
 With a cry, the fool. She snatched the child and threw
 Him to the ground, then, like a breeze, withdrew,
 Dreamlike, and quickly left the palace, then
 Plunged hotly in the sea. Never again
 Did she return. Then he with helplessness
 Was seized; he told his comrades, nonetheless,
 All Thetis' bidding. Then they broke away
 And swiftly terminated all their play

To make their beds and cook their food, then, fed,
 They, as beforehand, slept the sleep of the dead. 1100
 The dawn on heaven's edge now cast her glare
 And when the West Wind fluttered through the air,
 They sought their benches, then the anchor drew
 With joy out of the deep, in order due
 Preparing all the tackle, spreading taut
 The yardarm's sails; the *Argo* now was caught
 Beneath a gentle breeze. Then suddenly
 Fair Anthemoesse Island could they see,
 Where Achelous' daughters would ensnare
 Whatever sailor dropped his anchor there 1110
 With honeyed songs and kill them viciously.
 These clear-voiced Sirens fair Terpsichore,
 One of the Nine, to Achelous bore.
 Demeter's noble daughter once before
 They'd tended while she her virginity
 Still kept, and sang to her in harmony,
 Sometimes like birds, sometimes like maids, yet they
 Were ever watchful from their lovely bay
 And often robbed folk of a sweet return,
 Consuming many with the wasting burn 1120
 Of yearning. Then they sent, out of the blue,
 A voice like lilies to the heroes, too,
 Who would have cast their ropes upon the land
 But that, Bistonian lyre in his hand,
 Orpheus, Oiagrus' Thracian son, now strung
 The instrument and out of it was wrung
 A hasty tune so that from all around
 Their ears would fill up with the twanging sound,
 The lyre stifling the maidens' air;
 And now the ship was hurried on from there, 1130
 The wind and sounding rollers hastening
 Across her stern, those maids continuing
 Their endless song. Butes, Teleon's fine son,
 Of all his comrades was the only one
 To leap ahead of them into the sea
 From the smooth bench, the Sirens' melody
 Melting his heart. He swam through the dark foam,
 Poor wretch, until he reached the Sirens' home.
 They would have robbed him, in their usual fashion,
 Of reaching Greece right there, but in compassion 1140
 Cypris, Eryx's ruler, from the swell
 Now snatched him up, allowing him to dwell
 In Lilybea's heights. In agonies
 They left the Sirens, but where the two seas

Converge yet further perils they'd sustain,
 Which shatter ships. On one side in the main
 Smooth Scylla stood, while on the other side
 Charybdis roared and spewed; in that great tide
 Elsewhere the Wandering Rocks were crashing, where
 Before from rocky heights a blazing flare 1150
 Had shot beneath the glowing rock on high;
 The air was thick with smoke; none could descry
 The sun's rays. Though Hephaestus had concluded
 His toil for now, yet still the sea exuded
 A warming vapour. Then from everywhere
 The Nereids met them. Thetis laid foursquare
 Her hand upon the rudder-blade that she
 Might through the Wandering Rocks be company
 As guide. As dolphins round a speeding craft
 In sunshine sport, now sighted fore, now aft, 1160
 Now at the side, the sailors revelling,
 So round the Argive ship a compact ring
 Of Nereids darted; meanwhile Thetis steered.
 Now when the Wandering Rocks the *Argo* neared,
 Above their white knees raising their garments' hem,
 They ran about as the waves broke over them,
 Upon the very rocks hither and yon,
 Apart from one another; then upon
 The ship the current crashed and side to side
 She swayed; the furious roller, high and wide, 1170
 Broke on the rocks, now way up in the air
 Like beetling crags, now in the deepest lair
 Of the sea embedded; the fierce undulation
 Rushed on them in a massive inundation.
 As maids when they are near a sandy bay
 Roll to their waists their clothes out of the way
 So they may play at ball, tossing it high
 Among them, never suffering it to lie
 Upon the ground, so they sent her in turn,
 One to another, over the rollers' churn 1180
 As from the Wandering Rocks she ever soared
 While vicious waves in floods over them poured.
 Now Lord Hephaestus on a smooth rock's crest
 Was standing, burly shoulder now at rest
 Upon his hammer-handle; Zeus's mate
 From glittering heaven saw him contemplate
 The scene; Athene with both hands she grasped
 And with great dread at what she witnessed gasped.
 A spring-day's span they laboured as they sent
 The ship from the echoing rocks, then forward went 1190

The heroes once again once they had caught
 The wind. Thrinacia's meadow soon was brought
 Within their view, where Helios's cattle fed,
 And there the nymphs down to the ocean-bed,
 Like water-hens, plunged once they'd satisfied
 The wife of Zeus. And now from every side
 The noise of bleating sheep filled up the sky,
 Their ears assailed by lowing sounds close by.
 Phaethousa, Helios's youngest, in her hand
 A silver staff, watched over, in that land 1200
 Of dewy leas, her flock, while, with the crook
 Of gleaming copper ore, Lampetia took
 Care of her herd. Those beasts the company
 Saw grazing over plain and watery lea
 Beside the river. Not one of their ilk
 Was dark in colour, all as white as milk,
 Exulting in their golden horns. By day
 They passed them, while, when night was on her way,
 They cleft a mighty sea-gulf in delight;
 Then as they journeyed early Dawn cast light 1210
 Upon them. Fronting the Ionian bay
 There is an island, well-equipped with clay,
 Having two ports, in the Ceraunian Sea,
 Beneath which – or so goes the history –
 (O Muses, grant me grace – for I impart
 This ancient story with a willing heart) –
 There lies a sickle with which, so they say,
 His father's manhood Cronus cut away
 Inhumanly, though others hold the view
 That it's Demeter's reaping-hook, she who 1220
 Rules Hades. She once dwelt there, educating
 The Titans in harvesting, adulating
 Macris. Since then Drepane was its name,
 The sacred nurse of Phaeacians, who became
 Thus from Uranus' blood his progeny.
 Now *Argo* came through the Trinacrian Sea
 (And many toils!), wind-driven; at their advent
 Alcinous and his folk with glad consent
 And kindly sacrifice received them; they
 All whooped for happiness; you might just say 1230
 The crew were their own sons. Those men also
 Revelled among the crowd: it was as though
 They'd stepped into Haemonia. But nigh
 Approached the time to make the battle-cry
 And arm themselves, for now close by appeared
 A mighty host of Colchians who had steered

Between the Wandering Rocks through the gateway
 Of Pontus, seeking out the chiefs that they
 Might take Medea unexpectedly
 Back to her father's, or most cruelly 1240
 They'd raise the dreaded war-cry both then and
 When Aeëtes embarked upon that land.
 But Lord Alcinous their eagerness
 For war restrained. For he longed to repress
 The lawless strife of both sides and evade
 Warfare. Now often in great fear the maid
 Begged Jason's crew and often clasped the knees
 Of Arete, Alcinous's bride: "Queen, please,
 I beg, be gracious, don't deliver me
 To the Colchians and my father, if you be 1250
 One of the race of men whose hearts careered
 To ruin for light sins. My wisdom veered
 Away, not out of wantonness. Pure light
 Of Helios, witness, wanderer of the night,
 Daughter of Perseus, witness, too – that I
 With strangers from my home resolved to fly
 Unwillingly. Dread fear forced me to flee
 For how I've sinned. No other remedy
 Exists. Even now my girdle I retain,
 As in my father's halls – it bears no stain. 1260
 Have pity, queen; beseech your spouse also,
 And may the gods a perfect life bestow
 Upon you, and delight and progeny
 And an unravaged city's majesty."
 She wept and clasped Arete's knees and then
 She did the same to each one of the men
 In turn. "O mighty chiefs, I am afraid
 On your account and through my efforts made
 On your behalf. I helped you in the field
 To yoke the bulls and reap a deadly yield 1270
 Of the earthborn men. To Haemonia you sailed
 To fetch the golden fleece, and I availed
 In that as well. I've lost my family,
 My home, my country, life's felicity;
 Your home and country I've restored to you;
 Your parents will into your happy view
 Be brought again; some harsh divinity,
 However, of all joy has cheated me;
 With strangers an accursed thing I stray.
 Both covenants and pacts hold in dismay, 1280
 And the requiting Fury, should I be
 Aeëtes' captive and unspeakably

Destroyed. I throw myself down at your feet –
 No shrine, no bulwark, no other retreat
 I seek. You're cruel, harsh and pitiless,
 With no respect for my unhappiness
 As you behold me clasp a foreign queen
 About the knees. When you were oh-so-keen
 To take the fleece, your spears would then have met
 That proud king and the Colchians. You forget 1290
 Your valour now they're cut off and apart.”
 This was her prayer. Each man bade her take heart
 When she beseeched him, trying to subdue
 Her grief. They shook their pointed spears and drew
 Their swords. They swore to help if there should be
 A wicked judgment. A shared lethargy
 Assailed the host when Night, that halts all men
 From labour, came upon them. So she then
 Lulled all the earth. No sleep assuaged the girl,
 However, for her heart was in a whirl 1300
 Of woe. Just as a woman all night long
 Works at her spindle while her children throng
 Around her, moaning, fatherless (for she
 Is widowed), and her dreary destiny
 She ponders as she weeps, thus did she steep
 Her cheeks. Sharp stabs of torment pierced her deep.
 Alcinous and his queen were in their room,
 Just as before, and pondered in the gloom
 About the maid, and thus did Arete
 Fiercely address her mate: “My dear, set free 1310
 The maid from the Colchians, displaying grace
 To the Minyans. Nearby is the Argive race
 And Haemonians. Aeëtes is not near:
 We do not know him, just his name we hear.
 The pain-plagued maid, when she entreated me,
 Quite broke my heart. O lord, this is my plea –
 Don't give him to the Colchians to send
 Back to her home. She was at her wit's end
 When she gave him the medicine to beguile
 The bulls. As in transgressing many a while 1320
 Do we, with ill she cured ill when she fled
 Her haughty father's heavy wrath. It's said,
 However, that he strongly vowed that he
 Would wed her in his halls. My dear, don't be
 The means of his forswearing. And if you
 Can help her, do not let her father do
 Him dreadful harm. Too often parents show
 Their jealousy against their children. Lo,

How Nycteus planned against Antiope
 The Beautiful! See, too, how Danaë 1330
 Suffered at sea because of her distract
 And raging father. Look, too, at the act
 Of Echetus, nearby and recently,
 Who transfixed spikes of bronze most cruelly
 Into his daughter's eyes. Day after day
 Her grievous destiny's to waste away
 Within a barn's dim gloom while grinding grains
 Of bronze." Thus she beseeched him and her pains
 Were recompensed, for his heart was allayed.
 He said: "Arete, I, with arms arrayed, 1340
 Could drive away the Colchians for her
 And bring the heroes grace. Misgivings stir
 Within me, though, for caring not a whit
 For Zeus's righteous judgment, nor is it,
 As you say, any better to neglect
 Aeëtes: no-one merits more respect
 Than he. Though far away, he could bring war
 To Greece if he so wished it, and therefore
 It's right to take a stand that seems most wise
 To all of you, so I will not disguise 1350
 My verdict. Thus: if she remains a maid
 She should back to her father be conveyed
 But if she shares a husband's bed, I'll not
 Estrange the two of them. If he's begot
 A child within her womb, no enemy
 Shall have her." Thus he spoke and instantly
 Sleep stilled him, and within her heart she kept
 His words of wisdom. Then at once she leapt
 Up from her couch and through the halls she strayed;
 To tend her mistress came each servant maid. 1360
 And now she called her herald secretly,
 Prudently urging her matrimony
 With Jason, telling him he should not plead
 With King Alcinous for he indeed,
 She said, would go to the Colchians to say,
 If she were pure, he'd carry her away
 Back to her father, but that if a bed
 They shared he would, since now they had been wed,
 Not part them from their bliss. He spoke. His feet
 Then sped him from the halls that he might greet 1370
 Jason with the fair words of Arete
 And god-fearing Alcinous' decree.
 He found the men aboard in Hyllus Port,
 Near Drepane, armed and wakeful. His report

He gave in full. This news brought happiness
 To all. At once, with fitting righteousness,
 They mixed a bowl for all the gods and led
 Sheep to the altar, then prepared a bed
 Within a holy cave that very night
 For her after the nuptial day. This site 1380
 Was where Macris once dwelt (the progeny
 Of him who came upon the industry
 Of bees and olives, oleaginous
 With labour, honey-lord Aristaeus).
 Zeus's Nysean son was here at first
 Within Euboea where she quenched his thirst
 With honey after Hermes from the fire
 Removed him. Hera saw this and her ire
 Caused her to banish her from everywhere
 Within the island. Far away from there 1390
 Inside a sacred cave she came to live
 Within Phaeacia, a great wealth to give
 Its people. Then they laid a mighty bed
 And on it the bright golden fleece they spread
 That so the marriage might be venerated,
 A theme for song. The nymphs accumulated
 Multi-hued flowers which they thither bore.
 A fire-like gleam played all around them, for
 The golden tufts reflected such a glow.
 Their eyes blazed with a sweet desire. Although 1400
 They longed to touch it, reverence all the same
 Gripped each of them. Some nymphs went by the name
 River Aegaeus' daughters, while again
 Some dwelt round Melitaeus' peaks; the plain
 Was home to some wood-nymphs. Hera, the mate
 Of Zeus, had sent them there to venerate
 Jason. "Medea's cave," so people say
 When speaking of this cave even today –
 Where they conjoined the couple, having spread
 The fine and fragrant linen for their bed. 1410
 The men, though, wielded hostile spears in case
 An unexpected foe they had to face,
 All wreathed in leafy sprays appropriately,
 While Orpheus's harp resoundingly
 Rang out while at the chamber's entrance they
 Chanted the wedding-song. His wedding-day
 Jason did not intend to celebrate
 In Alcinous' halls. That sacred date
 He meant to be observed, when he the foam
 Had crossed to Iolcus, in his father's home. 1420

That was Medea's mind also. But need
 Urged marriage at that time. For we indeed,
 We woeful mortals, never go the way
 Of joy on fearless feet. But every day
 Some bitter pill keeps pace with our delight.
 Though melting with sweet love, they still took fright
 Lest Alcinous should fulfil his decree.
 Dawn came up with ambrosial lambency,
 Scattering through the sky the pitchy night.
 The island's beaches laughed out with delight 1430
 As did the dewy pathways of the plain
 Far off; a din rose up in every lane
 As people in the city were astir,
 While on Macris's bounds the Colchians were
 Moving about. Alcinous then went,
 By reason of his treaty, to give vent
 To his intentions concerning the maid.
 The golden staff of office he had laid
 Within his hand, through which righteous decrees 1440
 Were made throughout the city. The grandees
 Of Colchis now in order, in a throng
 And armed for war, began marching along.
 En masse the women left the walls to see
 The heroes. At the news the peasantry
 Flocked there to meet them, for Hera had sent
 A true report. With one of them there went
 A chosen ram, a calf that never paced
 The furrows with another. Others placed
 Some mixing-jars nearby. From far away 1450
 The sacrificial smoke rose. In the way
 Of women, so the women thither bore
 Fine robes, stitched with much toil, and many more
 Gold gifts and other things a new-wed bride
 Receives as presents. They were stupefied
 When they beheld the men, shapely and fair,
 Those celebrated heroes gathered there,
 Among them Orpheus, son of Oiagrus,
 Who to his lyre, most mellifluous,
 Sang out a song while beating on the ground
 With shining foot. The nymphs all gathered round 1460
 And, when he sang of marriage, they let ring
 The lovely wedding-song, though, circling,
 They sometimes chanted individually,
 Hera, for you, who cautioned Arete
 To speak Alcinous' wise words. Once he'd stated
 His just decree and it was indicated

The marriage was completed, he made clear
 That it be ever firm. No deadly fear
 Assailed him, nor was he intimidated
 By Aeëtes' deep wrath: he consolidated 1470
 His faultless oath. Now when the Colchians heard
 They'd begged in vain and he urged that his word
 Be honoured or they keep their ships away,
 Far from his harbours, then it was that they,
 Fearing their own king's threats, begged that he may
 Take them as comrades. Now for many a day
 They'd lived with the Phaeacians there till when
 The Bacchiadae, a race of Ephyrian men,
 Settled among them. Then they emigrated
 To an opposing isle, whence they were fated 1480
 To reach the Ceraunian hills that nestled where
 The Abantes abided, and from there
 The Nestaeans and Oricum. All this, though,
 Occurred across a wealth of years. Even so,
 The altars there that have been consecrated
 To Phoebus, Shepherd-God, and those created
 By Medea for the Fates are blessed today
 With yearly offerings. When they went away
 The Minyans were given much largess
 From Alcinous as proof of friendliness, 1490
 And from Arete, who subsequently
 Gave to the maid, to bear her company,
 Twelve handmaids from Phaeacia. They set sail
 Upon the seventh day. To their avail
 Zeus sent at dawn a powerful breeze, and they,
 Relying on its breath, sped on their way.
 However, they had not yet been ordained
 To reach their homeland until they had strained
 Their limbs in furthest Libya. Now they
 Had left behind them the Ambracian bay 1500
 And the Curetes' land, their sails outswelled,
 And then the narrow islands that were held
 By the Echinades; now they could see
 The land of Pelops, when relentlessly
 A deadly tempest from the north now bore
 Them to the Libyan Sea, a squall which wore
 Out nine full nights and days, until they sailed
 Well into Syrtis (every ship had failed
 To extricate itself once driven there).
 For in that gulf are sandbanks everywhere 1510
 And much seaweed, while on them light foam blows,
 And dimly-seen sand lies there. Nothing goes

Upon the ground or flies. The flood then bore
 Them suddenly upon the inmost shore –
 For many times the tide ebbs from the land,
 Then, roaring, surges back onto the strand –
 And little of the keel was left below
 The waterline. They leapt ashore and lo!
 Grief seized them when they saw the mist where there
 Were vast stretches of country everywhere, 1520
 Extending far. No place for watering,
 No path, no farm they saw, and everything
 Was deadly calm. Each to another said:
 “What land is this? Whither have we been led,
 Hurlled by the storm? Would that with bravery
 And disregarding dreadful horror, we
 Had sailed straight through the rocks. Better the will
 Of Zeus to spurn and go on to fulfil
 A worthy goal, though dying. Now what may
 We do, hemmed in by winds and forced to stay, 1530
 Though it be brief? There looms on every hand
 The furthest part of this relentless land.”
 That’s what was said. At their adversity
 The helmsman Ancaeus was grieved and he
 Addressed them: “We are doomed to dreadful fate –
 There’s no escape. We’ll have to tolerate
 The cruellest woes since we have landed so
 Upon this desolate spot, though breezes blow
 From it. Looking around, on every side
 I see sea-shoals; this place is well-supplied 1540
 With water, though it’s fretted into spray,
 Running along the white sands of the bay.
 Long past, our holy ship most terribly
 Would have been pulverized far out at sea
 But that the very flood threw her to land.
 Now, rushing back, the foam she can’t withstand,
 Just covering the ground, whirls all about;
 I think, then, that, cut off, we are without
 All hope of sailing and returning. Let
 Another show his skill – he must be set 1550
 Beside the tiller who desires that we
 Be saved. Yet Zeus does not wish us to be
 Sent home despite your toils.” That’s what he said
 While weeping. With him those who were well-read
 In ships agreed. Hearts froze within them all
 And over every cheek was cast a pall,
 And as like lifeless spectres men will stray
 About the city, waiting for the day

When war or else some pestilence takes place,
 Or some huge squall that bears away the face 1560
 Of hard-worked furrows, or spontaneously
 Statues both sweat and bleed, and there can be
 Discerned a bellowing in the shrines, or, say,
 The sun brings night from heaven at midday
 Through all the mist, the stars shine on the land,
 So did the chiefs along the endless strand
 Go creeping. Then dark evening suddenly
 Appeared, and they, all weeping piteously,
 Embraced each other, planning then to fall
 Upon the sand, apart, and die; they all 1570
 Sought out a resting-place. About his head
 Each wrapped his cloak and then lay down, unfed,
 All night and through the day in readiness
 For piteous death. The maids in their distress
 All thronged around the daughter of the king,
 Aeëtes elsewhere, greatly sorrowing.
 In the same way as, falling from a cleft
 Within a rock-face, fledglings, all bereft,
 Cry shrilly, or as swans upon the edge
 Of fair Pactolus sing, the dewy sedge 1580
 And pretty streams re-echoing, just so
 All through the night they wailed their song of woe,
 Their golden tresses trailing in the dust.
 The bravest of those men would have been thrust
 From life, unnamed, unsung by mortal men,
 Their labour unfulfilled, but that, right then,
 As they were languishing in misery,
 The heroine-nymphs, Libya's security,
 Who found Athena once when from the head
 Of her father, armour glistening, she sped, 1590
 And by the River Triton washed her clean,
 Took pity. The sun's rays, extremely keen,
 Were now at midday scorching all the land
 Of Libya, and now they came to stand
 By Aeson's son, removing gingerly
 The cloak from off his head. In piety
 Towards them, Jason turned his head, and they
 Addressed him gently as alone he lay,
 Bewildered: "Hapless one, why are you struck
 With such despair? We know you aimed to pluck 1600
 The golden fleece; your labours, every one,
 We know, the mighty deeds that you have done
 On land and sea. Lone heroines are we,
 Libya's daughters and security,

Divinities of the land. Don't wallow, then,
 In misery. Rise up and rouse your men
 And when Poseidon's well-wheeled car's set free
 By Amphitrite, pay indemnity
 To your mother who had suffered long travail
 With you within her womb, and you shall sail 1610
 Back home to holy Greece." With this, from where
 They stood, they vanished with their voice, but there
 Sat Jason on the ground, looking about.
 "Be gracious, desert goddesses. I doubt,"
 He said, "if I incontrovertibly
 Have grasped your meaning when you said that we
 Shall get back home. I'll gather all the men
 And, should we see a chance for this, why, then
 I'll tell them. Counsel's better when there are
 More minds." He spoke, then rose and called afar 1620
 To them as in the dust they lay prostrate,
 Begrimed, just as a lion seeks his mate
 With roars within a wood, and this deep sound
 Causes the glens to tremble all around
 Up in the mountains, while the beasts in fear,
 And herdsmen too, shudder at what they hear.
 This sound, though, of a friend awakening
 His comrades did not cause a shuddering
 Of fright. With downcast looks they gathered there
 But Jason made them, in their grief, sit where 1630
 The ship was moored, the women too. Then he
 Told everything: "My friends, listen to me:
 Three goddesses, while I lay there, distressed,
 Stood at my head: in goatskins they were dressed
 From neck to back and waist, like maids. They drew
 My cloak gently away and urged me to
 Get up and call you, paying compensation
 To my mother who had borne long tribulation
 When she within her womb had carried me,
 After Poseidon's fair car was set free 1640
 By Amphitrite. I can't comprehend
 Fully this holy message that they send.
 They say they're heroines, the daughters and
 The guardians of all the Libyan land.
 They boast that all our labours, every one,
 They know, and all the mighty deeds we've done
 On land and sea. No longer did I see
 Them then – some mist or cloud hid them from me."
 He spoke, and what he said would stupefy
 Them all. Thereafter to the Minyae 1650

Appeared the strangest sight. A monstrous horse
 Out of the sea to shore with bursting force
 Now leapt, his golden mane held high. He shook
 The ample foam away, then off he took,
 Fast as the wind. At once Peleus rejoiced
 And to his comrades gathered there he voiced
 His thoughts: "Poseidon's car has been set free,
 I think, by his dear wife, and I can see
 Our very ship's our mother, for indeed
 She bears within her womb our crew, her seed, 1660
 And labours long. We'll raise the *Argo* and,
 With firm and brawny shoulders, cross the sand
 That cloaks this place, where that swift horse has just
 Now sped. He'll not sink through the earth. I trust
 His tracks will lead us to some bay located
 Above the sea. " He spoke. All were elated
 At this fit strategy. This is a tale
 About the Muses. I, bidding all hail
 To the Pierides, now sing, for I
 Have heard it truly. O, you sons most high 1670
 Of kings, with strength and pluck over the shore
 Of desert Libya, with all her store,
 Bore *Argo* for twelve days and nights. O, who
 Could tell the pain and sorrow that the crew
 Then suffered? Surely they were of the race
 Of gods, such labours did they all embrace,
 Forced by necessity. How far did they
 So gladly to Lake Triton's streams convey
 The ship! How they strode on and staunchly brought
 Her to the water! Then a spring they sought 1680
 Like raging hounds because, with their distress
 And pain, they felt a parching thirstiness.
 Nor did they roam in vain. The blessed plateau
 They found, where till one day ago
 Ladon, the serpent that resided there,
 Of all the golden apples took great care
 In Atlas' garden; busy all around
 Were the Hesperides, a lovely sound
 Of song upon their lips. The serpent, though,
 Was struck by Heracles and languished low 1690
 By the trunk of an apple-tree. The tail alone,
 Just at the tip, yet moved, his dark backbone
 Up to his head now lifeless. Dessicated
 Flies in the festering wounds could be located,
 Where the Lernaean hydra's bitter gall
 Out of the arrows lay. Night's Daughters all,

White hands above their golden heads, wailed high
 And shrilly. All the men at once drew nigh
 But, at their quick approaching, straightaway
 These maids transformed themselves to dust and clay 1700
 Right where they stood. This holy augury
 Orpheus discerned and for the crew made plea
 To them: "Divine, fair, kind ones, lend your grace,
 O queens, whether in heaven you take your place
 Or on the earth or else prefer to go
 By "Solitary Nymphs", appear and show
 To our impatient eyes some rock-face spring
 Or yet some sacred current issuing
 Out of the earth, goddesses, to allay
 Our constant burning thirst, and if we may 1710
 Sail back to Greece, we'll willingly bestow
 On you (among the first to whom we owe
 Devotion) countless gifts, libations, too,
 And banquets." This he prayed in sonorous rue.
 As they stood near, they pitied all their pain
 And, first of all, produced upon the plain
 A crop of grass, above which now there grew
 Tall shoots, then blooming saplings flourished, too,
 To a great height. A polar Hespere
 Became, Aegle a sacred willow-tree, 1720
 Eretheis an elm. Just as before, each shape
 Stood out from them, a sight to make one gape.
 Aegle spoke gently, for they longed to hear:
 "A mighty succour to your toils came near,
 That dreadful man who robbed the guardian-snake
 Of life, withdrawing, making bold to take
 The goddess' golden apples, though dismay
 Was left for us. There came just yesterday
 A ruthless man, and terrible to see,
 His sullen eyes flashing relentlessly, 1730
 A vicious soul. Around his frame we saw
 A monstrous lion's hide, untanned and raw;
 He bore a branch of olive and the bow
 With which he shot and killed his monstrous foe.
 He came like one who travels overland,
 Parched; lightning-fast, this area he spanned
 For water, nor would it be seen. Now here
 There stood a rock near the Tritonian mere:
 On purpose or urged by a god, down low
 He kicked against it and in copious flow 1740
 Water gushed out. His hands and chest he rested
 Upon the ground and from the cleft ingested

A massive draught till, bowing down his head,
 Beast-like, his mighty maw he'd surfeited."
 She spoke. They gladly hastened to the spring
 She showed them and, like ants earth-burrowing
 In swarms will round a narrow cleft convene,
 Or else as flies, intemperately keen,
 May find a tiny honey-drop, just so
 The Minyae collected, row on row, 1750
 Around the rock-bound spring. Each happily
 On moistened lips said: "What an oddity!
 To think that Heracles, though far away from here,
 Has saved us as we were extremely near
 To death from thirst. O would that we could meet
 Him on his way as we make our retreat
 Over this land." They spoke and those prepared
 To do this task replied. Then they repaired
 Upon their separate ways and off they raced
 To find him, for the night winds had effaced 1760
 His tracks upon the whirling sand. Relying
 On their wings, the sons of Boreas went flying,
 Speedy Euphemus, Lynceus with his sight
 So keen, and Canthus with them. His own might
 And holy destiny had sent him out
 That he might ascertain without a doubt
 From Heracles where he had left the son
 Of Eilatus, for every single one
 Of all the points about his friend he meant
 To ask. Craving a safe return, he went 1770
 In search of *Argo* after settling
 In Mysia a city dazzling
 In glory. Then he fetched up on the land
 Of the sea-girt Chalybes. On that strand
 Fate conquered him. His grave, facing the bay,
 A lofty poplar marks. But on that day
 Lynceus imagined he saw Heracles
 Far over the endless land, as one who sees,
 Or thinks he does, the moon beneath a cloud
 On a new day. He ran back to the crowd 1780
 Of men to tell them that they would not see
 Another seeking him. Subsequently
 They too came back, the speedy Euphemus
 And Boreas' twin sons, all profitless
 For all their toil. Canthus, in Libya's land
 The Fates of Death possessed you. You a band
 Of grazing sheep encountered. Following,
 A shepherd went; while you were conveying

Yours to your needy friends, he, for *his* flock
 Concerned, slew you through casting of a rock - 1790
 No weakling, this Gaphaurus, the grandson
 Of Lycorean Phoebus and of one
 Acacallis, chaste maid, who once was brought
 To Libya, after the god had wrought
 His heavy load within her, by him who
 Had fathered her, Minos. She had borne to
 That god a glorious son called Garamas
 And Amphithemis, and it came to pass
 That he wed a Tritonian nymph, and she
 Bore him Nasamon and Caphaurus, he 1800
 Who slew Canthus as he tended his sheep.
 But from the chieftains' hands he could not keep
 Secure, when they learned what he'd done. The men,
 Those Minyans, heard of the deed and then
 Raised up his body, deeply sorrowing,
 And buried him, determining to bring
 His flock with them. A pitiless fate that day
 Took Mopsus, son of Ampycus: no way
 Could he avoid a bitter doom, despite
 His prophecies, for there are none who might 1810
 Avert their deaths. A dreadful snake lay prone
 Upon the sand so that the torrid zone
 Of midday would not reach him, not inclined
 Through his own sluggishness to have a mind
 To strike an exposed foe or full-face dart
 At one who would shrink back. Into that part
 Of men that fecund earth sustains once he
 Has shot his dark-black venom there will be
 A path to Hades but a cubit's span,
 Yes, even if Paeëon tends the man 1820
 (If I may say this) or he's merely brushed
 The skin. When over Libya there rushed
 God-like Perseus Eurymedon in flight
 (His mother named him thus) so that he might
 Give to the king the Gorgon's head which he
 Had newly lopped, there grew a progeny
 Of snakes from where the dark-blue blood had dripped
 Upon the earth. Now Mopsus merely tripped
 With his left foot on the extremity
 Of the snake's spine; it writhed in agony 1830
 And through the leg and muscles there it rent
 The flesh. Running in fear, Medea went
 Away with all her maids. He placed his hand
 Upon the fatal wound, for he could stand

Excessive pain. Poor man, upon his frame
 Even now a limb-unloosing numbness came
 While a thick mist over his eyes there spread.
 Helplessly he fell, his limbs like lead.
 His friends and Jason flocked around him. He
 Would not, though dead, be laid out publicly 1840
 Beneath the sun for long. For, deep inside,
 His flesh was starting to be putrefied
 By the poison and his hair fell in decay
 From his body. A deep tomb without delay
 They dug with bronze pick-axes hastily.
 Both men and maidens tore their hair, then he
 Was mourned for all his suffering, and when
 He had received due funeral honours, then
 The tomb they circled thrice, in armour clad,
 Then heaped the earth upon it. When they had 1850
 Boarded the ship, as on the sea there blew
 The South Wind, they now sought a passage through
 Lake Triton: for long no clear plan had they
 But merely wandered aimlessly all day,
 And as upon its crooked way a snake
 Will slither while the sun's sharp rays all make
 Him shrivel as from side to side he'll turn
 His head, while hissing, and his two eyes burn
 In rage like sparks of fire until when
 He sidles through a cleft into his den, 1860
 Just so the *Argo*, seeking navigation
 Out of Lake Triton, for a long duration
 Wandered. Orpheus at once told them to bring
 Phoebus' large tripod as an offering
 To that land's gods that they may, safe and sound,
 Sail home. They left and placed upon the ground
 Apollo's gift. Mighty Triton came nigh,
 In stature like a youth, and lifted high,
 As guest-gift for the chiefs, a clod of earth
 And said: "Since I have nothing of great worth 1870
 To give you here, take this, my friends. If you
 Now seek a route across this sea, as do
 Men often in a strange land, I will tell
 You of it, for I have been tutored well
 About this sea by him who fathered me,
 Poseidon, and I have supremacy
 Over the shore – far in your distant nation
 Perhaps you have heard of the appellation
 "Eurypylus", born in the Libyan lands,
 That yield wild beasts." He spoke. With both his hands 1880

Euphemus took the clod most readily,
 Replying, "If you know the Minoan Sea
 And Apis, tell it us, heroic sir.
 We're here against our will; plagued by the stir
 Of heavy storms, we touched the boundary
 That hems this land and, burdened grievously,
 We raised the *Argo* high and carried it
 Across the mainland hither. Not a whit
 About the passage home to Pelops' land
 We know. " He spoke and, stretching out his hand, 1890
 Triton disclosed the sea and deep gateway
 Of the lake and said: "That mouth is where you may
 Sail on – it's deep, unmoving, ebony;
 On either side white breakers will you see,
 Rolling with shining crests, and in between
 These rollers will your narrow path be seen.
 To Pelops' holy land the misty main
 Stretches past Crete. When from the lake you gain
 The swelling sea keep to the right and steer
 Close to the shore as long as you still veer 1900
 Northward, but when the land starts to decline
 The other way, your journey will be fine
 If from the jutting cape you sail on straight.
 Gladly go on and do not contemplate
 Distress that youthful, vigorous limbs should be
 In pain." Thus he addressed them cordially.
 Then they embarked, anxious to row away
 Out of the lake; then they sped on their way
 In eagerness. They all saw Triton take
 The great tripod and pass into the lake. 1810
 Yet no-one saw him as he disappeared
 Nearby with that tripod. But they were cheered
 To think a god had met them favourably.
 Thus they exhorted Aeson's son that he
 Should sacrifice the choicest sheep and sing
 A hymn of praise, so, quickly settling
 Upon his choice, over the stern he slew
 The beast and, praying, said: "Divine one, you
 Who showed yourself to us upon this lake,
 Whether the name of Phorcys you should take 1920
 Or Triton, that sea-marvel, from the maids
 Born of the sea, be gracious, be our aides
 And grant to us the pigrimage that we
 So crave." He spoke and, with a litany,
 Slaughtered the beast over the lake and then
 From stern into the water cast it, when

The god, just as he was, came from the deep.
 And as a man a speedy steed will keep
 To train for racing, while the shaggy hair
 He grasps and makes him docile, in the air 1930
 Rearing his proud neck, and the bright bit rings
 While, biting on it, side to side he flings
 His head, just so the god led to the sea
 The hollow *Argo*'s keel. He seemed to be
 A blessed one from head to waist and round
 His back, although below his sides they found
 A long sea-serpent's forked tail, with whose spines,
 Which split below into two curving tines
 Just like the horns of a moon, he beat the sea.
 He led the *Argo* on its course, then he 1940
 Sank swiftly through the great abyss, and then,
 As they saw this dread portent, all the men
 Shouted. There's evidence of *Argo*'s stay
 Within her harbour even to this day
 And altars to Poseidon and Triton
 Because that day they lingered. They sped on
 At dawn with sails outspread, the desert land
 Kept to their right, blown westward. The headland
 And inner sea they sighted at cockcrow,
 The cape projecting with the sea below. 1950
 At once the West Wind ceased. A breeze blew clear
 Now to the south. The men rejoiced to hear
 The sound it made. The sun set and there rose
 The star that gives fatigued shepherds repose
 And rules the fold; then when the wind had passed
 In darkest night, they took down the tall mast
 And furled the sails, all night and through the day
 Plying their polished oars, and on their way
 Continued through the next night, and were met
 By rugged Carpathos, though it was yet 1960
 Far off. They were to cross to Crete which rose
 Above the other islands. Now Talos,
 A man of bronze, breaking the rocks away
 From the hard cliff, persuaded them to stay
 Their hand from mooring *Argo* when they'd rowed
 To Dicte's port. The name of bronze he owed
 To his ancestors who from ash-trees came:
 He was the last one to receive the name
 Of demigod. By Father Zeus was he
 Entrusted to Europa that he be 1970
 The island's guardian, striding over Crete
 Three times a day upon his bronze-clad feet;

Bronze and invulnerable he was elsewhere;
 Beneath the sinew by his ankle there
 Was a blood-red vessel, which a thin tissue
 Covered. Every life and death issue
 Was its concern. Though weary, they in fright
 Rowed slowly from the land, and now they might
 Have travelled far from Crete in wretchedness,
 Afflicted with both thirst and dire distress, 1980
 Had not Medea, as they turned away,
 Addressed them all: "Listen to me, I pray.
 It's I alone, I think, who can defeat
 This man, whoever he is, though bronze complete
 Holds him, unless he has the destiny
 Of everlasting life. He'll yield to me
 If you will hold the ship far from the scope
 Of his stones." She spoke. They kept the ship, in hope
 Of what she'd planned, far from the missiles' aim
 And rested on their oars. On deck she came, 1990
 On either side her cheeks holding the fold
 Of her purple robe. Now Jason moved to hold
 Her hand and guide her through the benches, where
 She then propitiated with sweet air
 The goddesses of ruin who devour
 The soul, swift hounds of Hades, with the power
 To wander through the air and unawares
 Pounce on the living. Three times now with prayers,
 Three times with songs, she called, while genuflecting
 Upon the goddesses and then, injecting 2000
 Her soul with wicked thoughts, bewitched the sight
 Of bronze-clad Talos, with the bitter bite
 Of wrath within her mouth, and then she sent
 Dread phantoms at him, wild and vehement
 With rage. O Father Zeus, there now arose
 Great wonder in my mind that not by blows
 And plague alone dreadful destruction may
 Attack us but that yet from far away
 We're tortured. Though of bronze, he abdicated
 His might to her who was accommodated 2010
 With many poisons. While great rocks he threw
 That he might hinder them from sailing to
 Their port, he grazed his ankle on a bit
 Of pointed rock and now there poured from it
 Ichor like molten lead. The beetling
 Projection kept him upright, towering,
 Not for much longer – now he seemed to be
 An imitation of a tall pine-tree

Up in the mountains, which is left half-hewn
 By forest woodsmen with sharp axes. Soon 2020
 It sways in the night breeze, then at the stump
 It snaps and falls down with a mighty thump.
 He hovered for a while on tireless feet,
 Then, losing all his strength, the ground he beat
 With a resounding thud. The heroes lay
 That night in Crete and at the break of day
 They built a shrine to Athene of Minos,
 Drew water, then embarked to row and cross
 Past Cape Salmone. But at once that night
 They call the Pall of Darkness caused them fright 2030
 As they rowed the unfathomable deep
 Of Crete. No star, no moon would even peep
 Through that dread night. All was black emptiness
 In heaven, or some other duskiness
 Rose from its hidden depths. They could not tell
 If they rowed on the waters or in Hell,
 Entrusting their return home to the sea,
 In ignorance of their own destiny.
 To Phoebus Jason gave a mighty shout,
 His hands stretched out, that he might let them out 2040
 Of their predicament. His grief was so
 He wept. He often promised to Pytho,
 Ortygia, Amyclae, that he'd send
 Abundant gifts. Leto's son, swift to lend
 An ear, from heaven you came immediately
 To the Melantian Rocks that in the sea
 Are set. To one twin peak you leapt, your bow
 Of gold in your right hand; a dazzling glow
 Beamed from that bow. There came into their view
 A small isle of the Sporades, close to 2050
 Tiny Hippouris. Anchoring, there the night
 They spent. The rising dawn soon gave them light;
 To Phoebus then, among dark greenery,
 A dusky shrine and glorious sanctuary
 They built and called it, for the gleam that they
 Saw far off, Gleamer, and the sobriquet
 They gave that bare isle The Appearing One,
 Since Phoebus made it rise for those fordome
 With fright. Whatever things that could be got
 For sacrifice in such a desert spot 2060
 They sacrificed. Medea's maids, who came
 From Phaeacia, now beheld the torches' flame
 Quenched by the water rendered for libation,
 Unable to restrain their cacchination

For in Alcinous' halls they'd see
 A wealth of oxen slaughtered. Jokingly
 The heroes crudely taunted them: an air
 Of merry railing and contention there
 Was tossed about. Out of the heroes' lay
 Folks wrangle thus as in appeasement they 2070
 Burn offerings to Apollo, Gleaming One,
 The warder of Anaphe. When they'd done,
 Under a sky of calm tranquillity,
 Loosing the ropes, Euphemus' memory
 Recalled a dream which granted true devotion
 To Maia's famous son. He had the notion
 That on the holy clod which he had gripped
 Within his palm close to his breast there'd dripped
 White streams of milk; from it, though it was slight,
 A woman like a maid rose in his sight. 2080
 He lay with her, held by strong lustfulness;
 United with her, then a tenderness
 Swept over him for her as though she were
 A maid and with *his* milk he suckled her.
 Consoling him, she said: "I, my good friend,
 Am Triton's daughter and it's I who tend
 Your children. I'm no maid. My family,
 Are Libya and Triton, who made me.
 Take me to Nereus' daughters – on the main
 I'll dwell near Anaphe and shall come again 2090
 To the sun's light a dwelling to afford
 Your progeny." This memory he stored
 And told it Jason, who a prophecy
 Of the Far-Darter pondered, so that he
 Took in a mighty breath and said: "A great
 And glorious renown shall be your fate,
 My friend: into the sea this clod you'll cast,
 Which the gods will make an island that will last
 To house your children. This guest-gift Triton
 Gave you from Libya, yes, he alone 2100
 Of all the gods." He spoke, nor profitless
 Was Jason's answer. Now in happiness
 At this prediction, deep into the sea
 He threw the clod and up rose Calliste,
 Euphemus' children's holy nurse (though they
 Had lived in Sintian Lemnos); cast away
 By the Tyrrhenians, they landed then
 As suppliants on Sparta's shores, and when
 They left, they were led by the excellent
 Thoas, the son of Authemion, and went 2110

To Calliste, but Theras changed the name
Into the one he went by. All this came
To pass after Euphemius. The wide
And endless sea they swiftly left to abide
Upon Aegina's shores, and promptly they
Vied in retrieving water, but in play,
Spurred on by both the constant winds and need.
Even today the Myrmidon youths will speed
To lift full-brimming jars in rivalry,
At shoulder-height, to earn the victory.
Be gracious, blessed chiefs! From year to year
May all these songs be sweeter yet to hear!
I've reached the glorious end of all your pain,
For from Aegina, traversing the main
No incidents befell you. No, on you
No hurricanes or raging tempests blew.
Past the Cecropian and Aulian land,
You calmly skirted the Euboean strand;
All the Opuntian cities you sailed by
And gladly reached the beach of Pagasae.

2120

2130

