

IBIS

Till now, at fifty years, my poetry
Has harmed nobody.; not a line from me,
Who've written thousands, has with blood been stained.

Except myself none of my books has pained
A soul – this poet's art brought no perdition.
Cruelly one man will not give me permission

To live a life of purity. Whoever

He *is* (in any case, his name I'll never

Repeat), he forces me to do a thing

Against my nature: fight. The North Wind's sting

10

I bear and yet he will not suffer me,

Exiled, to languish in obscurity.

He violently chafes my wounds which long

For rest and shouts my name among the throng

Pressing the forum and won't allow my wife

To grieve for one who lives a death-in-life.

I cling to the shattered remnants of my craft,

Yet he'd posses those wrecked planks fore and aft;

Though he should quench the flames that suddenly rise,

He looks for spoils before my very eyes

20

Within the fire and strives that, now I'm sent

To aged exile, I'll lack nourishment.

He's worthier than I of my downfall.

The gods forbid! The greatest of them all

Is far away and he would not consent

That on my journey I be indigent.

So he deserves my thanks which I'll impart,
 Wherever I am, for his so kindly heart.
 Let Pontus hear this and see to it maybe
 Some nearer land will be required by me 30
 As witness. But you spurned me where I lay,
 And so, fierce wretch, I, wherever I may,
 Shall be your foe. Moisture shall sooner be
 Opposed to fire, the luminosity
 Of the sun joined to the moon; from the same sky
 Shall the western and the eastern breezes fly
 And warm South Winds freeze us; new harmony
 Shall couple that Theban fraternity
 Which old wrath parted on the pyre; and spring
 Shall merge with autumn and the winter's sting 40
 Join summer's heat before our enmity
 Be laid aside and between you and me
 There be that friendship that your every crime
 Has sundered. There'll be peace, as long as I'm
 Alive, between us as the peace among
 The wolf and frightened flock. First, with this song
 That I've begun, I'll join the battle, though
 There are few wars that are conducted so.
 Just as a soldier who does not yet boil
 With battle-lust and on the sandy soil 50
 Will cast his spear, I with my sharpened steel
 Shall not attack you, nor are you to feel
 My warlike javelin. I will specify
 No name or action in my work, and I
 Will for a little while suffer you to hide

Your real self. Later, though, should you decide

To persevere thus, my unlimited

lambs shall rain their weapons on your head

With Lycambean blood. Callimachus

Once curse his enemy Ibis, and I thus

60

Will curse both you and yours and cryptically,

Like him, will I construct my poetry

(It's not my usual style). It will be stated

That in my *Ibis* I have initiated

His opaque mode, forgetful of my wont

And judgment. Since to those who ask I don't

Reveal yet who you are, meanwhile profess

The name of Ibis! Since my lines possess

Something of darkness, may your life be dark

As will and on your birthday let him mark

70

The date with *Ibis* and on each new year

Lips speaking but the truth all men shall hear.

Gods of the land and you, gods of the sea,

You who with Jove possess supremacy

In better realms, attend and add some might

To my desires; earth, sea, heavens, sunlight,

Stars, moon who never shine as once before

You did, night, whose dark beauty we adore;

You who with triple thumb your labour spin,

You river who with a horrendous din

80

Flow with pure water through the vales of Hell,

And you, locks twined with serpents, as they tell,

Who sit before the dim jail-gates, hear me,

All you hold Heaven's supremacy,

Fauns, Satyrs, Lars, Streams, Nymphs – on you I call:
 And ultimately you, both one and all,
 Who from the ancient chaos of the past
 Till now have been our gods, while I have cast
 Spells on that rogue while wrath and grief have lent
 Their aid. Now all of you give your assent 90
 To my desires, and let my prayer not be
 Ignored in any way, my litany
 Fulfilled, and let him think I did not say
 These words, but Theseus, whom Pasiphae
 Once loved. And if there is some penalty
 That I've neglected, see to it that he
 Bears that as well, and may his suffering
 Be greater than my native wit can bring
 To bear, and may the vows that doom a name
 That's feigned be no less capable to maim 100
 Or move less powerful gods. I execrate
 That Ibis, whom the mind can penetrate –
 He knows his deeds have earned my curse. I'll wait
 No longer: I'm the priest who'll perorate
 The appointed prayers, and all you who attend
 My rite, be favourable now and lend
 Your voice the words of woe and, weeping, meet
 Ibis: approach, leading with your left feet,
 And utter evil omens, wearing black.
 And, victim, you as well – do not hold back 110
 From wearing the garb of misery. You see
 The altar. Ready is the ceremony:
 Now let my angry prayers brook no delay.

O fearful victim, to my dagger lay
Open your throat. May earth deny to you
Her harvest and the streams her waters, too,
And winds deny their breath. May the sunlight
Not warm you and may Phoebe not be bright
For you and may the luminous galaxy
Of stars betray your sight. May you not see

120

The aid of Vulcan or the air and may
Neither earth nor sea show you your way.
Roam destitute in exile! Go about
To others' doors and scraps of food seek out
With trembling mouth, and may your ailing mind
And body always fretful agony find.
And may the night be bitterer than the day,
And day than night, for you: and always may
You be a pitiful wretch, yet, sympathy,

Be absent, and may all humanity

130

Take pleasure in your pain. May bitterness
Crown all your tears; may everyone assess
That you, who've suffered much, should be subject
To further misery. May the aspect
Of your good luck -and this is rare - , although
It's lost its wonted favour, now bestow
Ill-will on you. May you have cause to die
And yet no means. May you be forced to fly
From death despite your wish to die: and may
Your spirit struggle in prolonged delay

140

Before it leaves your tortured limbs. You'll see
These things occur. Apollo gave to me

Of late this omen, and a bird of woe
Flew from the left. I truly think I know
The gods will favour me and I'll be fed
Always with hope to finally see you dead.
That distant day shall sooner take from me
My life, which you sought so repeatedly,
Than age shall steal away my bitterness
Or time shall cause my hate to evanesce. 150

While the lazygians in their battles throw
Their spears and while the Thracians use the bow,
While the Ganges is warm, the Danube cold;
While mountains hold oaks and while prairies hold
Lush pasture, while the Tuscan Tiber flows,
I'll war with you; nor shall my passing close
My wrath but it shall send my innocent shade
Fierce arms. The, too, when, scattered, I shall fade
Into thin air, my cold ghost shall abhor
Your ways; I'll come you then, furthermore, 160

Remembering your deeds; my skeleton
Shall assail your face, whether I shall live on
To old age (this I would not wish) or die
By my own hand; whether in shipwreck I
Be tossed by massive billows of the sea
Or eaten by some distant fish or be
The prey of alien birds or wolves should stain
Their gullets with my blood, or someone deign
To place my lifeless corpse beneath the ground
Or on a common pyre. Wherever I'm bound, 170
I'll strive to break out from those Stygian strands,

Exacting my revenge with icy hands
 Upon your face. When waking, you shall see
 Me there, and in the mute obscurity
 Of night, I shall appear and drive away
 Your slumbers. Whatever you do, there shall I stay
 And flit before your face and make protest,
 And everywhere you go, you'll have no rest.
 Twined thongs shall crack, coiled serpents hiss; you'll see
 Torches that smoke before you constantly, 180
 You evil man; by these you'll be harassed,
 Alive and dead – your penance shall outlast
 Your life. No rites shall be your destiny
 When you are dead, and your own family
 Will not bewep you. Grieved with not one tear
 Will you be cast out; as the people cheer,
 The executioner will then apply
 His hook to you. The flames themselves will fly
 From you, though they consume all else; you will
 Be spurned by the righteous ground. With claws and bill 190
 The cruel vulture, too, will lacerate
 Your loins and ravening dogs will masticate
 Your faithless heart. Of this fame you may boast –
 Over your corpse shall rise a quarrelling host
 Of gluttonous wolves. Far from the Elysian plain
 Shall you be called and there will you remain
 With guilty people. Sisyphus is yon,
 Who rolls and retrieves his rock, and Ixion,
 Bound to his flying wheel, and dwelling there
 Are Belus' daughters who forever bear 200

Water in sieves, a bloodstained company,
Exile Aegyptus' daughters-in-law, and he
Who grasps at fruit which he may never take,
Circled by water which will never slake
His thirst; and he who measures from his head
To toe nine acres and whose guts are fed
To the assiduous bird. Your sides will be
Whipped by a Fury so that thoroughly
You may confess your crime; and of that band
Another shall to Tartarus' serpents hand

210

Your limbs which she has hacked; a third shall roast
Your reeking face with fire. There is a host
Of ways your foul ghost can be lacerated,
And Aeacus you'll find is dedicated
In finding penance. To you he'll remove
All ancient sinners' torments. You shall prove
To be the cause of all those ancients' peace:
Sisyphus, others will bring you release
From your revolving rock. New limbs shall be
The victims of swift wheels. Now bootlessly

220

This man will grasp at boughs and waves, while that
Will with his liver make the birds grow fat
Forever. Death shall not each penalty
Bring to an end: no, such great misery
Shan't have a final hour. Of these I'll tell
As few as one may gather leaves from Hell
Or water from the Libyan Sea, for I
Can't speak about the number of croci
In the Cilician earth or flowers that grow

In Hybla or when, blown by Aquilo, 230

Fierce winter's tempest shakes, how many hail-
Stones make amount Athos white: yet, I must fail
To label all your sins, though you give me
So many voices; so much misery
Assail you, wretch! Such misery that I
Could be compelled to weep! Yet will I cry
With happiness forever. That will be
Sweeter than laughter. Your own pedigree
Was contrary - so willed the gods. There shined

No kind light at your birth. Venus declined 240

To look on you at your nativity,
And Jove, too. In no fit locality
Either the sun or the moon had then been placed.
.The son of Jove and smiling Maia graced
You with no fruitful fires. The cruel stars
That bring no respite from the hand of Mars
And aged Saturn wrought severity
On you. The day of your nativity,
Lest you see aught but desolation, came

Dark-clouded, rank and black. The day, whose name 250

Is deadly Allia, imposed misery
On Rome and later spurned Ibis. Yes, he
Dropped from an impure mother's womb and lay
On the Cinythian soil, befouled with clay.
An owl sat on a tree-top bough nearby,
Hooting a dour and death-foreboding cry.
The Furies washed his body instantly
In the marsh where from the Styx' locality

There flowed a stream, meanwhile administering
 Upon his breast a hellish serpent's sting 260
 Of poison, clapping hands befouled with gore,
 And wet his infant throat with dog's milk: for
 It was his first food: thence the nursling swallowed
 His nurse's madness. Listen, then, what followed –
 His snarling in the city far and near;
 In dusky bands snatched from a funeral bier,
 Renounced as cursed. They swathed him. Lest it lay
 Unpropped upon the earth beneath him, they
 Placed flint below his head. Before his view
 They set a greenwood torch and then withdrew. 270
 The babe wept, smarting with the pungent smoke,
 When one of those Eumenides thus spoke:
 "Forevermore these tears of yours we call
 And endlessly they shall with reason fall."
 But Clotho bade her promises to stand
 And spun the dark hues with a hostile hand;
 Let's she should not speak the long prophecy,
 She said, "A bard will sing them." I am he.
 You'll learn your grief from me. May the gods send
 Me strength; the weight of circumstance shall lend 280
 Weight to my songs – you'll feel them at your cost.
 Lest precedents of an earlier age be lost,
 Ay your ills equal them of those who fought
 At Troy and may he pain that has been wrought
 On Philoctetes sting you equally
 Upon your leg, and no less grievously
 May you be maimed than he nursed by a deer,

Wounded and then healed by Achilles' spear,
Or he who tumbled headlong from his steed
Into the Aleian fields, whose face indeed 290
Was well-nigh his destruction. May you see
What phoenix saw and fumble haltingly
With the aid of a stick, deprived of sight, and may
You see no more than he who made his way
Helped by his daughter, whose grandparents bore
The impact of his sins; be, furthermore,
Like that old man well-known for prophecy
When he was called to issue his decree
In a jesting quarrel; or like him who showed
The *Argo's* crew their way as on they rowed 300
By giving them a dove as guide; or be
Like him who, having seen the treasury
Of gold, lost both his eyes at his great cost –
It was Hecuba's gift to the son she'd lost;
Or Aetna's shepherd, whose calamities
Telemus told him in his prophecies;
Or Phineus' sons to whom the light of day
Their father gave yet later took away;
Or Thamyris and Demodocus. May someone
Cut off your limbs as Saturn once had done 310
When severing the parts of Uranus
That spawned him. May he be less chivalrous
To you than Ceyx who on the swelling sea
Changed both his wife and brother suddenly
To birds; and may none be as pitying
As Ino, when she saw Ulysses cling

To his shattered craft, and, lest this punishment
 Be known by just one man, may you be rent
 And pulled apart by horses galloping
 In four directions; may you feel the sting 320
 That was inflicted upon Regulus
 By the Punic chief who thought it infamous
 A Roman should be ransomed. May you gain
 No godly help, like Priam who was slain
 Before the palace altar; as the king
 Of Thessaly leapt from the dizzying
 Summit of Ossa, may you too be flung
 Down from some rocky ridge; may you be stung
 To death by greedy snakes, as that king's heir
 Was flung. Or may you perish as you share 330
 The fate of Minos, for upon his head
 Was boiling water poured. May birds be fed
 On you while fettered, the same destiny
 Prometheus bore. May the immeasurable sea
 Receive your slain frame, like Erechthides,
 Conquered three times by mighty Hercules
 Or Philip, whom Pausanias ran through
 After his shameful wooing; or may you
 Receive the poison Alexander downed,
 Son of the horned Jove. May you be found 340
 Hanged like Achaeus who deplorably
 Hung near the gold-filled stream' or may you be
 Just like Achilles' son, who gained renown
 From that great name but whom a tile brought down,
 Flung by a foe. May you in no more peace

Repose than Pyrrhus who, since hid decease,
Lies scattered in Ambracia. May you be
Killed like Laodamia, progeny
Of Pyrrhus' father, murdered by the flight
Of several javelins: this sacred rite 350

Ceres may not conceal. May Spanish fly
Given at your mother's hand cause you to die.
May an adulteress be called virtuous
For slaying you, just as the rancorous
Themisto slew Leucon and became known
As moral. May your dearest ones be thrown
By you upon your funeral pyre, for thus
Was the surcease of Sardanopalus;
As Libyan Jupiter's shrine that soldier band

Prepared to violate, may the driven sand 360
Sent by the South Wind blind you, too; and may
The sinking ashes burn your face away –
Darius the Second by some trickery
Slew his conspirators similarly.

Like him who olive-bearing Sicyon
Once left, may cold and hunger set you on
A path to death. Or like Atarne's king,
Sewn in a bullock's hide, may someone bring
You to your master. As that tyrant fell
Beneath his spouse's sword, may you as well 370

Be slain in your bedroom. May those you view
As faithful turn disloyal and stab you
(Aleuas of Larissa suffered thus).
And, just like Milo who was merciless

To Pisa, under hidden waters drown!
 And may those god-sent missiles take you down
 That took Phylacia's king. May you, bereft
 Of raiment, on Achilles' soil be left.
 As round Thrasyllus' tomb Eurydamas
 Was thrice dragged on a chariot, or as 380
 Hector who purified the walls that he
 Had often saved (though soon calamity
 Would overtake them) ; like, as people say,
 Limona's rapist over Attic clay
 Was dragged, wile she endured a novel death;
 Thus may steeds, while you lie bereaved of death,
 Pull your dishonoured body vengefully;
 May some rock pierce your flesh as formerly
 In the Euboeans bay the Grecian crew
 Was pierced; and that vicious fellow who 390
 Ravished Cassandra perished both by sea
 And thunderbolt, so may your destiny
 Be death by fire and water. May your soul
 Be frenzied like that warrior who was whole
 But for his left side; or Lycurgus who
 Was lord of Rhodope and wore one shoe,
 Or Hercules who on Mount Etna burned
 Or Athamas who parents-in-law turned
 Into serpents, or Tisamenes' father, or
 The man who slew his mother Eriphyle for 400
 Causing her husband's death; may your mother be
 No less immoral than Aegiale
 Who shamed her father-in-law, or her who lay

With her brother-in-law and later ran away
 Dressed as her slaughtered maid; and may you find
 Joy in a faithful husband – of the kind
 That Talaus and Agamemnon noted; and
 As, when the daughters of Belus had planned
 To kill their cousins (forced then constantly
 To bear sieved water), a like discovery 410
 Was made, and may your sister by a brand
 Of flame be made to burn like Canace and
 Biblis and verify your faithfulness
 But by a sin, and, if you should possess
 A daughter, should she Pelopea be
 To King Thyestes, or Nyctimene
 Or Myrrha to their fathers. May she show
 Less filial duty than did Comaetho
 To Pterelas or, Nisus, as did she
 You fathered, or than she whose infamy 420
 Made Scylla known as on her steed she sped
 Over her father's limbs. May you lie dead,
 Killed as those youths whose faces, arms and feet
 Pisa's gates once sustained; as in defeat
 Oenomaus stained with blood more profitably
 The ground those wretched suitors frequently
 Had drenched; or as the traitorous charioteer
 Of the fierce tyrant perished, as we hear,
 Giving a new name to the Myrtoan Sea
 Or as those suitors who would fruitlessly 430
 Won the swift maid till three apples were sent
 To slow her down; or as those men who went

Into the Minotaur's hidden den, whence none
 Returns; or as those twelve men heaped upon
 The lofty pyre by Achilles' smouldering
 Wrath; as those foxed by the riddling
 Mouth of the Sphinx were doomed, as people tell,
 To hideous death; or as those folk who fell
 At Thracian Minerva's shrine (her face is veiled
 Even today); or as those men who trailed 440
 Diomede's stalls with blood; or those who knew
 Theodamas's lions, or those who
 Were burnt for Artemis by the Tauric lord
 Or those who, trembling, were snatched from on board
 Odysseus' ship by Scylla in her greed
 And near Charybdis; or those made to feed
 Polyphemus' massive paunch; or those who bore
 The violence of the Laestrygonians; or
 Those whom the Carthaginian chieftain thrust
 Into the well, the waters by the dust 450
 He threw made white; and those Odysseus slew –
 His wife's twelve serving-maids and those twelve who
 Had wooed them – or the traitor who extended
 Arms to those men; or Antaeus, upended
 By Hercules, though (wonder to relate!)
 He later won; or those who crushing fate
 Mighty Antaeus wrought; or him who taught
 A cruel rite and then, much later, brought
 A flood of rain; or Busiris who bled
 To death in shrines where it was right to shed 460
 A victim's blood; or him who fed not grain

But humans to his steeds; or those two slain
 By Hercules – Nessus and Eurytion;
 Or as, o Saturn, your own great-grandson
 Whom Aesculapius in the city he
 Inhabited saw die; or, equally,
 Sinus, Sciron, Procrustes and that thing
 Part man, part bull; or him given to fling
 Bent boughs into the air, who saw this sea
 And that; or him whom Ceres joyfully 470
 Saw Theseus' own hands butcher – Cercyron.
 Such ills, or some no less, will fall upon
 Your head – my wrath is justified. Bereft
 Completely Achaemenides was left
 On Etna when he saw the Trojans row
 Away – I hope you'll be abandoned so.
 The two-named Irus bore such misery,
 And those who haunt the bridge – such destiny
 Is more than *you* may hope for, and in vain
 May you love wealth, which you may not attain 480
 Despite your efforts: as the sands subside
 Beneath one's feet may all your fortunes glide
 Out of your hands; as Mestra's father (she
 Who changed her frame's appearance constantly)
 May you be ever hungry: don't forget
 Your love f human flesh - be ever yet
 The Tydeus of the day, and may a deed
 That you perform cause the Sun's steeds to speed
 In fear back to the East; you shall repeat
 The foul Lycaonian feast and try to cheat 490

Jove with false food; and may someone foment
A god by serving you as nourishment
That you be Pelops or the progeny
Of Teleus. May your body parts all be
Strewn over the broad fields, as Absyrtus
Delayed his father. May your hideous
Cries match the bull which Perillus created.
As vicious Phalaris, tongue lacerated,
Bellowed in Paphian bronze, similarly
May you be treated. Though you yearn to be 500
Robust again, may you, like Pelias,
Be cheated. May you sink in a morass
Of mud on horseback, yet attain no fame
Therefrom, and may you perish just the same
As those sprung from the teeth that Cadmus spread
On Grecian fields, and may upon your head
The ill-starred oaths Hippolytus expressed
About Eurystheus fall and come to rest:
And those with which that bird is execrated
In that small work Callimachus created 510
Which cleans itself with water. May you shed
As much blood as that man – so it is said –
Who bans knives from his rites. May you castrate
Yourself – the priests of Cybele’s wretched fate
While Phrygian music played. May you become
Nor man nor woman, beating your loud drum
With your soft hands, and may you suddenly
Be turned into a beast of Cybele.

Like her who won and him who lost the race.

And lest Limone didn't have to face 520

This punishment alone, may your flesh be

Torn by a horse's tooth. Like Ptolemy

Ceaunus, may you, just as virulent

As was that monarch, have your body rent

And lie beneath a high-piled mound. May you,

Like Perseus and Tenes, be hurled into

The sea, imprisoned. As his enemy

Butchered Theodotus, may you too be

At Phoebus' altar slain. May execration

Be flung at you on days of purification 530

And stones more numerous than hail be cast

At you. May Jove slay you with his triple blast,

Like Capaneus and Aesculapius

As well as Iascon and Salmoneus

Or him who drove the steeds precipitately

Which he had importuned for hastily

Or Aeolus' bold son or the Great Bear,

Aratus, his sister, set high in the air

Devoid of rain from Heaven, or Macelo

Who with his spouse was slain by lightning – so, 540

I pray, may you be slain. May you be prey

To them who from Delos must stay away

Since Trasus there was killed, or those who brought

An end to Linus when he had been caught

Spying on chaste Diana. May you not be

Less lightly stung than was Eurydice

By a poisonous snake, or than the infant son

Of Hypsipyle, or the first soldier to run
 His sword into the suspect horse; nay, nor
 May you more cautiously than Elpenor 550
 Climb up the lofty steps, and, conquered, may
 You fall as those Dryopians who that day
 Helped churlish Thiodamas when he had sent
 For arms, or fierce Cacus who, when the pent-
 Up cow betrayed him by her moos, subsided,
 Slain in his cave, or that man who provided
 Jason's wife with the gift that Nessus spread
 With poison, and he stained the waters red
 With his own blood. May you to Hell descend
 From a sheer rock, like him who read *The End* 560
Of Life, or him who as Theseus sailed past,
 Mistook his black sails; or the infant cast
 From Ilium's top; or Bacchus' aunt who tended
 Him as a babe; or him whose life was ended
 By the saw he forged; she who through jealousy
 Leapt from high rocks with animosity
 And anger at that mighty god; and may
 A lioness meet you with her cub, I pray,
 As happened to the son of Lycurgus,
 And may the boar that ravaged Ancaeus 570
 Adonis and brave Idmon kill you too;
 And may a boar, though slaughtered, fall on you
 As it fell on that hunter. May you be
 Felled in a similar fate by a pine tree,
 As ere two hunters named Attis. Nay, more –
 If in your ship you reach the Cretan shore,

May all the Cretans there assume that you
 Came from Corcyra. May you go into
 A house about to fall, as did the son
 Of Aleuas, although luck shone upon 580
 Simonides, and may you give your name
 To a river as those torrents gained their fame
 From Tiberinus and Evenus who
 Have left their names to rivers; and may you,
 Like Melanippus, be robbed of your head
 And, though fit food for wild beasts, serve instead
 A man, and as Brotea did, it's stated.
 Longing to die, may you too be cremated
 Upon a kindled pyre, and may you be
 Imprisoned and then slaughtered, as was he 590
 Whose history profited him not at all.
 And may your wayward tongue prove your downfall,
 As did Archilochus', who had created
 The fractious iamb; and may you die, hated,
 Of hunger, .like the man whose halting lay
 Harmed Athens. As he perished, so they say,
 The stately poet broke an amity –
 May you so die. Orestes' destiny
 Was a serpent's lethal bite, and may you too
 Die thus. And may your wedding-night for you 600
 Be but *one* night. Eupolis and his bride
 Enjoyed no second. Buskinned Lycophron died
 Pierced by a dart, it's said – may this, too, be
 Your fate. May you be by your family
 Slaughtered within a forest, as was fated

For him who by a snake's son was created.
And as a bull through wild heights dragged Dirce,
Lycus's haughty wife, similarly
May you be dragged. And may you lose your tongue,
Ripped from your mouth and straight before you flung, 610
Like Philomela, Procne's adversary
(Her sister!) though unwilling. May you be,
Like him who met death through his final name
And wrote *Myrrha*, which brought him tardy fame,
Found scattered here and there. And may your sight
Be lost when the craftsman bee with noxious bite
Injects your eyes, just like the Grecian bard.
And may you be en fettered on the hard
Rocks with your live entrails torn incessantly,
As was Prometheus. Note the history 620
Of old Thyestes and Lycurgus' son
And, mutilated, find your home upon
Your father's guts. May you be mutilated
By a cruel sword as it has been related
Mamertas died. And may a noose be made
To kill you, as Theocritus was stayed
By strangling. May your flesh be stripped away
Like him whose name is to this very day
Borne by a Phrygian river. May you see
Medusa's stony face, for it was she 630
Who slaughtered many men of Cephenus.
May Potnian mares consume you, like Glaucus.
And may you cast yourself into the sea,
Just like another Glaucus. May you be

By Gnosian honey drowned as happened to
Another man called Glaucus. And may you,
Though Socrates drank it without distress,
Drink poison anxiously. And even less
Happy than Haemon, may you love. The fate
Of lovelorn Macareus, too, imitate! 640

What Hector's son saw from the citadel's height
When flames consumed all Troy...may such a sight
Greet you, and may you with your blood atone
For your remorse, like him whose very own
Sister had shared their father's bed and so
Gave birth to him. Into your bones may go
The kind of weapon that Telegonus
Used on Odysseus. And as Antichus
Was choked in the maple horse that he might be
Silence, may someone's thumb similarly 650

Stifle your voice. May you be deep inside
A mortar, crushed as Anaxarchus died,
Your bones making the sound the barley made.
May Phoebus bury you deep in Tartarus' shade
As he did to the father of Psamathe
Who murdered her. May on your family
That blight descend which strong Coroebus' hand
Crushed, aiding the poor women of the land
Of Argos. As Hippolytus, who through
Venus's wrath was doomed to die, may you 660

Be flung from frightened horses far away
From home. And for you few possessions may
Your host slay you, as Polymestor slew

His ward for his great wealth. Along with you
May all your kin expire, as, so they say,
Damasichthon died with his six brothers. May
You tire of life, as that harpist who died
After his children by his suicide.
May you be turned to stone like Niobe
Or Battus, doomed by his own perfidy. 670
If you should throw the discus, may it thus
Slay you as the young man of Oebalus
Was killed. Should you be swimming in the sea
May each strait offer more uncertainty
Than did Abydos. And as Terence died
Far out to sea, thus may the Stygian tide
Choke you. Surviving on the windy sea
A shipwreck, may you on the promontory
Expire like Palinurus. May you end
Your life as a crowd of watchful hound-dogs rend 680
Your flesh. Be like Empedocles and cast
Yourself into the giant's mouth whose blast
Spews Etna's flames. May those mothers of Thrace
Madly shred you, thinking you took the place
Of Orpheus. And as absent flames were fanned
For Meleager, may a firebrand
Consume you. As Creusa took the crown
Of Phasian flame, which brought her father down
And all their house as well; as though the frame
Of Hercules the gore ran, may the same 690
Gall run through you. And as his progeny
Took vengeance on Lycurgus, similarly

May you be strangely slain. And, like Milo
In trying to cleave the split oak-tree, also
May you be snared. May you encounter, too,
A drunken mob, as Icarus did, that you
May die through your own gifts. Mourning his death,
His loving daughter drew her own last breath
At a rope's end – be this your punishment!
May you be starved to death while you are pent 700
Within your house, like him whose wretched fate
Was chosen by his mother. Imitate
That man who once profaned the effigy
Of Minerva, breaking his rash odyssey
From Aulis. Like Palamedes, may you leave
The earth on a false charge and not receive
Aid from your innocence. As Aethalon
Was slain by his host, for which the Ionian
Excludes him from his rites even today;
And as Odysseus hid himself away 710
Though tracked down by his mother's shining light,
And so Melanthus' death he would requite,
May you be stabbed and thwarted, I implore,
By those who wish to succour you. What's more,
Just like the timid Phrygian who would trade
Stalwart Achilles' horses, may night's shade
Treat you. May you have less tranquillity
In life or death like Clinias' progeny,
Beset by venomous flames. And may you be
Assailed by rustic spears, as would befall
Remus, who dared to leap that recent wall.

And in conclusion may you live and die

Among barbaric arrows in Tomi.

Receive this hasty book lest you express

A fear that I forgot you. I confess

It's brief: but may the gods send more and so

By their goodwill allow my prayers to grow.

730

Written to you, you shall anon read more

Whose metre fits the theme of bitter war.

