

OVID'S METAMORPHOSES

I

I'm moved to sing of altered forms both new
And strange. Immortal gods, I beg of you,
Inspire my heart, for you have changed as well,
As have all things. Assist me, then, to swell
My smooth and leisured strains, from days of old
When earth began its essence to unfold.
Before the earth appeared, before the sea,
Before the skies had formed a canopy
Above them, all was in a unformed state,
A mass of nothing, just a ponderous weight, 10
All in discord. The sun gave earth no light,
The crescent moon as yet not shining bright;
The earth was not suspended in the sky,
Particularly counterbalanced by
Her massive weight. Not far along the strands
Had Amphitrite stretched her queenly hands;
The land was mixed with sea and air, and it
Could not be stood upon, the sea unfit
For sailing, and the air was thick, and naught
Possessed a proper form: thus all was fraught 20
With strife and intermingled far and wide
In a seething mass; with hot the cold parts vied,
The dry with wet, the hard with soft and weight
With weightlessness. But God would terminate
The strife (or kindly Nature lent a hand) -
He cut the land from skies, the sea from land,
The heavens from the air; all things evolved
From that dark mass; the rogue parts he resolved
And pacified. Within the convexed sky
The fire, lacking weight, darted up high 30
To make its home upon the summit there,
To which, the next in quality, went air.
The earth was now more dense than formerly,
Attracting larger parts by gravity
Pressed down. The water, flowing all around,
Took the last place and formed a liquid bound
Around the solid world. This god, whom we
Don't know yet, once carved this immensity,
Dividing it in parts. Then at its birth
He made into one massive ball the earth, 40
On all sides uniform, then bade the seas
To spread and rise up in the flowing breeze
And pour around the coasts. Then he designed
Springs, standing pools and lakes, and he confined
The streams and banks, some of which were to be

Absorbed by earth, others to reach the sea
And beat against the coasts. At his behest
The plains spread out, the valleys were depressed,
The trees showed leaves, the mountains rose up high,
And, just as there were four zones in the sky, 50
Two north, two south, between them yet one more,
Consumed with heat, the god with that same score
Marked off the compassed weight, and thereby we
Have five climes; there is such torridity
That plagues the middle zone that none may go
To it; two others lie beneath deep snow;
The other two are temperate. Hanging there
Above the god's creations is the air,
Heavier than fire is as to equate
Earth's lightness as compared with water's weight. 60
He bade the mist to gather in the air
And spread the clouds; the thunders, too, that scare
Our souls he fixed. He also caused to be
Lightning and winds, though he did not agree
That in the pathless skies they all could race
Unbounded, but he fixed each one in space,
Although his power scarcely could control
Their angry aim to lacerate the whole
Universe, while Eurys went, at his command,
To the far east and Nabataean land 70
And Persia and the heights beneath the light
That morning brings, while Zephyrus took his flight
To Evening and where, once the day is done,
The peaceful shores are warm with the setting sun;
Boreas to Scythia went, that snowy land,
And Auster to the distant south was fanned,
Where there are clouds and rain incessantly;
Above it all the weightless heavens, free
Of earthly dross, he placed. Scarcely had these
Been fixed in their allotted boundaries 80
When all the stars, long pressed and long concealed
Within the mass, gleamed out and thus revealed
Themselves. So that no region anywhere
Might lack its own inanimate beings, there
Appeared the stars and gods, who occupied
The floor of Heaven, and then, far and wide,
The sea received the fish, the earth was home
To beasts and flying things would start to roam
The air. As yet no beast could be assessed
As capable of ruling all the rest. 90
Then Man was born, whose unknown deity
Maybe designed a world whose progeny
Was holy, or from its new-moulded land
Prometheus possibly took one stray strand

Of this new soil and mingled it with rain,
Creating from the gods a human strain.
Brute beasts look downwards, but the human race
Instead was furnished with a lofty face
And then commanded to gaze on the skies
And with that upright face to scrutinize 100
The stars. And so it was that shapeless clay
Created Man, unknown until that day.
The Golden Age came first and it maintained
The truth in all, alone and unconstrained.
There was no fear, there was no punishment,
No laws on brazen tablets, whose intent
Was frightening the people. No pine-tree
Was yet hewn in the mountain greenery
That men may sail across the sea and find
Countries abroad – they still would live confined 110
In their own land. No town was yet erected
With walls and ditches; no-one was subjected
To horns and trumpets, helmets, swords, for men
Lived quietly in peace and comfort then.
The fertile earth of plough and hoe were free,
Submitting produce independently,
With food uncultivated satisfied.
Men plucked strawberries on the mountainside,
Wild cherries, blackberries; acorns, as well,
They gathered which from Jupiter's oak-tree fell. 120
Spring was eternal: breezes with warm air
Caressed the flowers which were growing where
They'd not been fertilized. Uncultivated,
The earth would burgeon as she demonstrated
Her swelling ears of corn. Occasionally
Rivers would flow with milk and there would be
Cascades of nectar; honey, too, would flow
From oaks. Once Saturn had been forced to go
In banishment to gloomy Tartarus
And now Lord Jupiter ruled over us, 130
The Silver Age, which was less precious than
The Golden but less abase than Bronze, began.
Jove trimmed the spring: four seasons then in all
He brought in – winter, summer, fickle fall
And short-lived spring. First great torridity
Menaced the air, then ice subsequently
Hung down in icicles. At first all men
Built houses as protection: before then
They dwelt in caves and thickets, or they lay
Beneath a tree. In lengthy furrows they 140
Buried their corn-seeds; bullocks could be heard
To groan beneath the yoke they bore. Then third
Came the Bronze Age, whose men on war were set,

In nature crueller but not quite yet
Beyond redemption. But then finally
The Iron Age arrived: immediately
Into this baser age all wickedness
Erupted: honour, truth and decorousness
Vanished and in their place came trickery
And lust and violence. They went to sea 150
But had poor seamanship; the ships they'd made
From mountain-trees now leapt about and swayed
Through unknown waves. Land that, like air and sun,
Had formerly been shared by everyone
But now were being marked out carefully.
Not only corn and other fruits would be
Demanded of the earth, but now the ground
Was excavated, where much wealth was found
In Stygian shade, inciting lawlessness.
Now harmful iron appeared, and gold, no less 160
Harmful (indeed more so!). Then war arose
With clashing weapons aimed at hostile foes:
They lived on spoils, no friendship anywhere -
Warmth among relatives was very rare;
Husbands and wives longed for their spouse to die
And deadly aconite was blended by
Vile stepmothers, and young men would regret
The fact their fathers were existing yet.
Now goodness lay dead. Astraea, the last
Of all the deities to leave, now passed 170
Out of the blood-drenched earth. Then, to make sure
The realms of Heaven were no more secure
Than earth, the Giants, as our poets say,
Piled mountains high, but Jupiter straightway
Propelled his bolt of lightning and thereby
Fractured Olympus, throwing through the sky
Pelion down from Ossa. As they lay,
Slain for their violence, the earth, they say,
Took their warm blood and gave it life again:
So, lest their name die out, she made them men 180
Once more. But they were savage, violent,
Eager for slaughter, fierce and malcontent
With all the gods, and that's how we all know
That they were born of blood. Jove looked below
At this and groaned, for it made him recall
Lycaon's feast, which was not known by all
As yet. He was incensed – and worthily! -
And called a council, which immediately
Was held. There is a path, when skies are bright,
That's well-defined above and, since it's white, 190
Is called the Milky Way, and it provides
Access to where the Thunder God resides

For all the deities: it's very wide
 And all of them are seen on either side
 (There are inferior gods who dwell elsewhere,
 But potent gods, renowned of Heaven, live there).
 But if I now may speak audaciously,
 It is a glorious locality,
 The palace of high Heaven. The lord of all
 Sat on his throne within his marble hall 200
 Before the seated deities, as he
 Leant on his ivory sceptre, full times three
 And four shook his imposing locks, whereby
 The earth, the seas and stars up in the sky
 Were stirred and spoke with indignation thus:
 "When serpent-footed Giants charged at us
 With all their hundred arms, it worried me
 No more than now – a savage enemy
 Indeed, but single. Now, though, I must face
 Destroying utterly the human race. 210
 By Stygian streams and regions this I swear.
 There have been countless methods here and there:
 What can't be cured, though, I must cut away
 In order that the healthy parts may stay
 That way. Though I rule rustic deities,
 Fauns, nymphs and oreads, yet all of these,
 Although unworthy of a heavenly home,
 Should be permitted all the same to roam
 The earth, as I've bequeathed. Can you ensure,
 However, that they all will be secure 220
 When I, your lord, who cast my bolt upon
 My enemies, am trapped by Lycaon?"
 Then the astonished gods indignantly
 Called for revenge upon him. Recently
 It was thus when the Forum's floor was red,
 As by assassins Caesar's blood was shed.
 The fear of ruin outdid everything
 And shocked all men, the whole world shuddering.
 Augustus, just as much do we love you
 As they adored the king of Heaven, who 230
 Suppressed their murmurs, causing them to cease
 Their clamour. Once again he broke the peace:
 "He paid the penalty, so be content!
 I'll tell you of both crime and punishment:
 An infamous report had come to me,
 And, hoping that it was a falsity,
 I left Olympus in the guise of Man,
 Although a god, intending thus to scan
 The world. And yet to broadcast every crime
 (And they were many!) would take a long time, 240
 For tales were false. I traversed Maenalus,

Where dreadful lairs abound, and Lycaeus,
 The wintry slopes endowed abundantly
 With pine-trees, and Cyllene. Finally,
 At night I reached that tyrant's grim abode,
 And when to all the people there I showed
 My godliness, the humble folk then prayed
 To me, kneeling before me. But he made
 A mockery of all their piety
 And said, 'I'll make a test of him – we'll see 250
 If he's a god or born of humankind
 And thus the undisputed truth we'll find.'
 He aimed to kill me unexpectedly
 As I lay dreaming in my sleep: thus he
 Would prove the truth! But he was not content
 With this and took a hostage who was sent
 By the Molossi and slit side to side
 His throat: some of his limbs he boiled, some fried.
 Once he was served to me, I set alight
 His house with all its gods and he took flight 260
 In terror and upon the silent plain
 He howled out loud and tried to speak in vain:
 He raved and raged as he hankered to kill.
 He turned against the sheep, delighting still
 In blood. His arms now legs, the clothes he wore
 Now hair, some hint of what he'd been before
 Remained, though he was now a wolf – the same
 Grey hairs, fierce face, eyes glittering like flame,
 The same ferocious look. Thus one house fell,
 Though others, too, deserved to fall as well, 270
 And everywhere crime would proliferate.
 All men conspired in sin, so let the weight
 Of dreadful, well-earned penalties descend
 On them, for on this my will shall not bend!"
 Some gods approved his words and amplified
 His wrath, while others silently complied,
 But all deplored and questioned his decree
 To rid the world of all humanity.
 Who'd offer incense now from day to day?
 Would he assent to hungry beasts of prey 280
 Roaming the earth? Such questions, though, he banned
 (For all else would be under his command)
 Yet promised that a very splendid race,
 So different from the first, would fill the face
 Of earth. His bolts he'd scatter, but his fear
 Was that the many flames of fire would sear
 The world, recalling that the scroll of fate
 Decreed that all things would evaporate -
 The sea and land and sky would all ignite
 And this vexed world-mass would be set alight. 290

And so the Cyclops' arms he chose to lay
Aside, instead deciding straightaway
To send rainstorms to drown humanity
From every sky above. So instantly
He trapped the North Wind in the Aeolian land
In caves and every wind that might have fanned
The clouds away. He bade the South Wind go,
Whose wings send moisture to the earth below,
His grim face pitchy-black, his forehead, too,
Showing dark clouds, his garments dripping dew,300
His wings as well. He crushes in his hand
The hanging clouds and, as at his command,
There is a crash and torrents pour. In hues
Of many kinds Queen Iris then renews
The clouds with moisture, and the standing grain
Is beaten to the ground by all the rain.
The peasant's crops are scattered everywhere
As he bewails the long year's fruitless care.
The wrath of Jupiter was not content
With heavenly powers, but he also lent 310
Aid to Lord Neptune, ruler of the sea;
He called the waves to council, and when he
Entered the house, he said, "A lengthy plea
Is pointless. All of your intensity
And wrath pour out! For that's what must be done.
Open your doors! Drain each and every one
Of all your springs! Clear each impediment!"
And at his orders back the rivers went,
And all the fountains rolled tumultuously
And spilled into the deep and fruitless sea. 320
Then Neptune with his trident shook the earth,
Which trembled as it opened its wide girth
To let the water in, which, rampaging
Across the plains, swept on, demolishing
Sheep, orchards, houses, people, shrines and all
Their contents. Homes that managed not to fall
Were overwhelmed by waves – one massive sweep
Of land and sea commingled in the deep,
A shoreless sea. One man in desperation
Seized fast upon the nearest elevation, 330
One plied his oars where he'd once ploughed, one rowed
Above his grain and his erstwhile abode,
One caught a fish that nestled in a tree,
Perhaps an anchor in some verdant lea
Was stuck, or curving keels were thrust between
The tangled vines, and where upon the green
Goats grazed unsightly seals reposed; below
The waves Nereids would wander to and fro,
Taking homes, groves and cities in their view,

And there were dolphins, also, darting through 340
The trees, within the twisted branches caught,
Stirring the oaks, and sheep would swim, distraught,
With wolves, lions and tigers, while the boar
Could not employ the power anymore
For which his tusks were formed, nor was there need
In water for the stag's uncanny speed.
The bird, long seeking land in which to dwell,
With weary wings drops down into the swell.
The waves rise up above the hills and batter
The mountain-tops and all the billows scatter 350
So many people, bearing them away;
Some few the waters do not drown, but they
Soon slowly starve to death. But now there rose
A lovely, fruitful land beneath all those
Strong waves. For through the clouds up in the skies
'Twixt Oeta and Aonia Phocis lies,
Where Mt. Parnassus with its double peaks
And its unmeasured elevation seeks
The stars. Deucalion and his wife rowed there
In their small boat (the waters all elsewhere 360
Had drowned the rest), intending to adore
Corycia's nymphs and Themis, furthermore,
And all the mountain-gods. None more than he
Was more upright, no woman more than she
So pious. When Jove now beheld a world
In ruin, swept with waves that rolled and swirled,
With just two people left, both innocent
And honouring the gods, the clouds he sent
Away and all the frigid storms that blow
Down from the earth. He showed to Earth below 370
The sky, the sky to Earth. Putting aside
His three-pronged spear, Neptune now calmed the tide.
He called upon Triton, dark as the sea,
His shoulders decked with purple dye, and he
Commanded him upon his conch to blow
And thereby call the rivers back. And so
He took the hollow shell, which from its base
Spiralled from side to side, and on the face
Of Ocean makes the shores sound, east and west,
And blew upon it and thereby repressed 380
The floods, since by all waters it was heard
And, when they heard it, all of them concurred.
Again, each sea can boast it has a shore
And channels hold the rivers in once more,
And hills appear as now the floods subside.
Earth rises and up through the ebbing tide
The soil increases, and the trees display
Their tops, their leaves still slimy. On that day

The world revived. But when Deucalion
Observed its emptiness, deep silence on 390
The desolate lands, he said to his dear wife,
“Pyrrha, who through our origins, share my life,
This danger draws us close, for you and I
Are now the only people witnessed by
The setting and the rising suns – the sea
Took all the rest. Yet there's no certainty
That we'll survive: these clouds fill me with fear.
If Fate saved you, but not me, my poor dear,
How would you feel? How could your trepidation
Be borne? Who'd offer you their consolation? 400
If you were drowned, dear wife, I'd follow you
So that the ocean's waves would have me, too.
If only, like my father, I could bring
Earth's people back again by fashioning
Her clay! We represent the human race -
The gods willed that we are its only trace.
Then at these words they wept and both agreed
To beg the sky-god to promote their need
With sacred oracles. Without delay
They sought the springs of Cephissus, for they, 410
Though muddy, ran within their bounds, and when
They smeared its waters on themselves, they then
Went to the temple of the staunch goddess,
All green with moss, its altars fireless.
There they dropped down together and lay prone:
With trembling lips they kissed the chilly stone
And said, “If our just prayers soften the will
Of all the gods and thereby we can still
Their anger, Themis, tell us in what way
Our race may be restored! Help us, we pray, 420
In this drowned world!” Then moved, the goddess said,
“You now must quit the temple with veiled head
And loosened clothes! Behind you you must fling
Your mother's bones.” Stunned, they said not a thing.
Then Pyrrha broke the silence - she said 'No'
To her command: her lips were trembling so
As she begged pardon, fearing she would rile
Her mother's spirit in this way. Meanwhile,
They thought about the dark words she had said 430
And their uncertain meaning – had they read
Them wrong? Deucalion said comforting
Words to his darling Pyrrha, uttering,
“Either she is mistaken or, since we
Know oracles are never evil, she
Must mean our Mother Earth and that the bones
That she has mentioned are in fact the stones
Strewn on the ground. It's these that we must throw

Behind us.” Hope was dubious, although
She perked up at the thought. This augury
Left them unsure, but what harm could there be 440
In trying? Therefore they, with covered head
And loosened garment, did what she had said
That they needed to do: the stones they threw
Behind them, and these stones – I ask you who
Would credit it if it traditionally
Had not been handed down – would gradually
Soften and change their form, and so it grew
And ripened to a vague likeness which you
Might see as human, like a newly-made
Statue of marble. Those parts which displayed 450
An earthy juice turned flesh, while what stayed stone,
Inflexible and solid, became bone.
The veins stayed veins; the stones Deucalion threw
Took on the shape of men, and women, too,
Were formed by Pyrrha's stones, and thus did we
Become a race of durability.
Then Earth alone created many a form
Of creatures. Once the moisture had turned warm
In the sun's fire, with heat the marsh-mud swelled,
And seeds, which in the fertile soil were held, 460
As in a woman's womb, grew shapes. And so
When Nile from oozy fields could duly go
Back to its wonted bed, the sun's rays burned
The fresh-made mud, and when the farmers turned
Great earth-clods, many animals they found,
Some of them newly spawned there in the ground,
Deprived of limbs, imperfect, frequently
Part quick, part slime, and yet one entity.
Moisture and heat create all life despite
The fact that fire and water are apt to fight 470
Each other: vapour and humidity
Combine to merge discord and harmony,
Suited for growth. So when the earth, all mud
That had collected from the recent flood,
Now glowed again with sunlight's burning heat,
She spawned a wealth of species – she'd repeat
Her former work but made new monsters, too.
Against her wishes she gave birth to you,
Python, who on a mountain rage's spread
Your massive body, filling full of dread 480
The new-made race. The god who wields the bow
(Once used only by hunters who would go
After the deer and goats) has put an end
To you (although he almost had to spend
All of his darts) and from his wounds was seen
Envenomed blood. In case, though, time should screen

What he achieved, he founded in his name
 The Pythian Games, where youths would win great fame
 When they were victors in a chariot race,
 Outboxed their rivals or the fastest pace 490
 As sprinters held, crowned with oak leaves (the bay
 Had not yet been discovered in their day,
 For Phoebus, with his lovely flowing hair,
 Upon his forehead various leaves would wear).
 Phoebus' first love was Daphne, progeny
 Of Peneus – though not accidentally -
 He angered Cupid: boasting in his joy
 At slaying Python, he observed the boy
 Bending his bow and said to him, "How rude!
 That bow possesses much more aptitude 500
 For me than you! For I can certainly
 Dispatch wild beasts and wound an enemy:
 Not long ago that bloated beast I killed,
 Whose plaguey belly many acres filled.
 You should be stirring with your burning flame
 The hidden fires of love, not laying claim
 To my success." Said Cupid in reply,
 "You may strike every other thing, but I
 Will strike *you*! All live creatures count much less
 Than gods." And with these words, with fieriness 510
 He smote the air with beating wings and flew
 To dark Parnassus, and he then took two
 Darts whose effects were wholly opposite -
 One kindled love, the other banished it:
 The first was gold and sharp, the other, though,
 Was blunt and made of solid lead below
 The shaft. With this he shot the progeny
 Of Peneus, piercing Phoebus thoroughly
 With the former. Now one loved, and one took flight
 From him, in the deep woods taking delight 520
 In wild beasts' skins; like virgin Phoebe, she
 Tied back her hair, and men would frequently
 Pursue her, but each one of them she sent
 Packing, as through the pathless groves she went,
 Ignoring love. Her father said, "I need
 A son-in-law and, from your womb, a seed
 To be my grandchild." But the marriage-bed
 She hated as a crime and, blushing red,
 Her arms around him in a fawning way,
 She said, "Grant me until my dying day 530
 To stay a virgin, as by his decree
 Diana's father granted!" To that plea
 He would not yield because her looks opposed
 Her prayer. Phoebus immediately proposed
 To wed the maid he loved, but, although he

Possessed prophetic skill, his prophecy
 Failed him. As in a field when all the wheat
 Is gone, some stubble starts to burn, as heat
 From sparks ignite a hedge when someone lets
 Them get too close and then next day forgets 540
 About them, so his heart was set on fire
 And fed with hopes his desperate desire;
 He looks upon her tumbled hair and sighs,
 "Would it were neat!" then gazes at her eyes,
 Which like the stars above are burning bright,
 And mouth; he praises, too, her lily-white
 Arms, fingers and hands, but merely to see
 Is not enough; what she has hidden he
 Imagines fairer yet, but like the air
 She flees away from him with not a care 550
 To heed his call to bring her back. "Nymph, wait!"
 He cried. "I'm chasing you not out of hate.
 This way the sheep flees from the wolf, the deer
 From mountain lions; doves, too, out of fear
 Fly from the eagle. From its enemy
 Everything flies, but love is driving me.
 Have pity! I fear you may fall or maim
 Your legs on thorns and I may be to blame.
 This place is rough – slow down and check your flight!
 I'll slow down, too. Who is your love's delight? 560
 I am no rustic guardian of flocks
 Nor do I dwell among the mountain rocks.
 You cannot realize whom you are shunning,
 You thoughtless girl, and that is why you're running
 From me. I own Delphi and Tenedos,
 Patara owns me as its king, Charos
 As well. Jove is my father, and through me
 The past, the present and what's yet to be
 Are known; through me as well the lyre's string
 Rings out in harmony, as people sing. 570
 My aim is certain, but a truer dart
 Has wounded my once-independent heart.
 I succour all the world, for I revealed
 Medicine and herbs to all, but love's not healed
 By herbs. My arts cure all humanity
 But I can't cure myself – what irony!"
 More words he would have spoken Daphne fled,
 Still beautiful, and left those words unsaid.
 The winds exposed her body as the air
 Fluttered her clothes and shook her streaming hair. 580
 And now, no longer pleading, at full speed
 He hastens, driven on by passion's need,
 And, like a Gallic hound chasing a hare
 In an empty meadow far from any lair,

He seems about to clutch her as he rushes
 Behind her, now imagining, as he brushes
 Her heels with outstretched jaws, he has her caught,
 While she is hesitating in her thought
 That might be true, as she escapes his bite,
 The god spurred on by lust, the maid by fright. 590
 Love gave him wings and he more speedily
 Pursued her yet more closely, constantly
 Hanging upon her shoulders, breathing on
 Her flying tresses: all her strength was gone
 As she grew pale, tired out from her swift flight.
 Nearing her father's waters, she in fright
 Yelled, "Help me, father! If your streams can aid
 Me with their sacred mastery, let fade
 This beauty that is loved too well!" Her plea
 Scarce done, a dull insensitivity 600
 Possessed her limbs, and now a thin bark ranged
 About her breast and her long tresses changed
 To leaves, her arms to branches and, although
 Her feet were swift but one moment ago,
 They were slow-growing roots, her lovely face
 Lost in the sprawl – only her shining grace
 Remained. Yet Phoebus loved her even thus -
 He touched her and her heart was tremulous.
 And then he took the branches in his hand,
 As though they were the arms she once had, and 610
 He kissed the wood, but even this denied
 His kisses. "Since you cannot be my bride,"
 He said, "you'll have to be my tree instead.
 Bay, with my hair shall you be garlanded,
 My lyre and quiver, too. You will be there
 When joyful Roman generals declare
 Their victories among a lengthy band
 That sings their praises. And, bay, you will stand
 As guardian of the oak-leaf crown between
 Your branches, where you ever will be seen 620
 Before Augustus' gates. As my long hair
 Shows me as ever young, you, too, shall wear
 The beauty of undying leaves. She bowed
 Her new-made branches, showing she allowed
 That role. Within Haemonia may be found
 A thicket which on every side is bound
 By wooded cliffs, called Tempe: through it goes
 The frothing river Peneus as it flows
 From Pindus' foot, and in its violent fall
 Clouds gather as it drives the smoking pall 630
 Of mist, upon the tree-tops scattering
 The spray and with its roaring deafening
 Remoter places. Here's his sanctuary,

And in his rocky cavern his decree
 He gave his waters, and his nymphs as well,
 Who in those waters and their streamlets dwell.
 And here was where his country's brooks all met
 Originally, dubious as yet
 Whether they ought to offer consolation
 To Peneus or indulge in celebration: 640
 For here among the poplars was Spercheus,
 Gentle Amphysus, restless Enipeus,
 Aeas and Apidanus, who had run
 For countless years, afterwards all but one
 Of them, whichever way their energy
 Carried them to the weary, wandering sea:
 The only absentee was Inachus -
 Down in the deepest cave, so piteous,
 He swelled the seas with tears: in misery
 He wept for Io, his own progeny, 650
 Not knowing if she was among the quick
 Or lifeless, so, not finding her and sick
 At heart, he feared that she must then be dead.
 Jupiter saw her first, to whom he said,
 As she came from her father's stream, "Maid, you
 Are worthy of the king of Heaven, who
 Will make some unknown man thrill with delight.
 So while the sun is at its greatest height
 Seek out the deepest woods." (he showed their shade
 To her). "If wild beasts' lairs you are afraid 660
 To enter, to these woods you may repair
 In safety, for you will be in my care,
 The God Supreme, no lesser god but he
 Who hurls his lightning bolts. Don't fly from me!"
 But she was flying, leaving far behind
 Lerna and the Lycean pastures lined
 With woods, but he sent fog that he might shade
 His presence and defiled the fleeing maid.
 Juno meanwhile looked down at Argos, shocked
 That rapid mists in shining daylight blocked 670
 Her view. She knew these weren't fumes rising out
 Of streams or damp earth's breath so looked about
 To find her spouse, knowing he frequently
 Had been caught out in infidelity,
 And when she could not find him in the sky,
 She said, "I've made a big mistake or I
 Am wronged." She ordered all the clouds to melt
 When she'd flown down to earth, but Jupiter felt
 That she was there and therefore changed Io
 Into a gleaming heifer: even so, 680
 She still was fair. Juno her beauty praised,
 Though grudgingly, and asked him where she'd grazed

And from which herd she came, although she knew,
 And Jupiter replied, with words untrue,
 That she was earth-born, hoping thus to stay
 Her questions, and then she went on to pray
 That she should be her gift. What could he do?
 Cruel to give her up, suspicious to
 Withhold her, though! He feels humiliated
 But pressed by Love, which would have subjugated 690
 His shame, but to refuse a gift so slight
 To her who was by matrimonial right
 The partner of his bed, it might appear
 No heifer! But, despite the gift, her fear
 She still maintained, of his deceit afraid,
 Till into Argos' hands she gave the maid.
 He had a hundred eyes that took their break
 Two at a time, the others staying awake
 To keep their watch. Wherever he would be
 He had his eyes on her, even when he 700
 Had turned his back. He let her graze in light
 But when the sun sank at approaching night,
 He penned her in and tied a rope around
 Her neck, and till the morning she was bound
 To feed on leaves and bitter herbs, and she
 Would lie upon the bare ground frequently
 And drink from muddy streams, and when in prayer
 She wished to stretch her arms to Argos, there
 Were no arms there for her to stretch. Although
 She tried to make complaint, out came a low 710
 Instead of words, and she was filled with fear
 At her own voice, and when she ventured near
 The Inachus, where she would often play
 When she was still a maid, she felt dismay
 And consternation after she'd inspected
 Her gaping mouth and new-made horns, reflected
 In water, and then vanished. "Who is she?"
 The naiads said, and Inachus – yes, he
 Who was her father! - said the same. She went
 After him and her sisters, and she lent 720
 Herself to be admired and stroked. Then he
 Pulled up some grasses which he temptingly
 Held out to her: she licked his hand and kissed
 The palm, wholly unable to resist
 Weeping. If she'd had words, she would have said
 Her name and how she'd been transformed and pled
 For help. However, with her hoof she traced
 Her wretched story, how she'd been replaced
 With a cow's form. Her father Inachus cried,
 "Have pity!" as the heifer groaned and sighed 730
 And he clung to her horns and neck. 'Are you

Really the daughter I've been trying to
 Recover, searching through a wealth of ground?
 I was less sad when you'd not yet been found!
 You cannot answer me in words – your best
 Is deeply heaving sighs from out your breast
 And lowing. I had hoped that you'd be wed
 And therefore planned for you a marriage-bed
 That you might then give birth to progeny,
 Thereby producing grandchildren for me. 740
 Now you must choose a husband and an heir
 Out of the herd. I may not end despair
 By dying: ah, to be a god is hard
 Because to gods the door of death is barred.”
 Argos drove him away as thus he wept
 And into further meadowlands he swept
 Her from her father; he sat far away
 Upon a mountain's summit to survey
 The world. Jupiter can now no longer stand
 Inachus' torment and, at his command 750
 To kill Argus, comes his son, Mercury,
 Who dons his wingèd sandals instantly
 And takes his soporific wand and places
 His cap upon his head before he races
 To earth. He doffs his cap and wings, though he
 Retains his wand. In the identity
 Of a shepherd, through many devious country ways
 He drives his goats and, as he goes, he plays
 His oaten pipe. Now this new strain enthralls
 The guard that Juno hired and so he calls 760
 To Jupiter, “Sit down upon this rock -
 Here is no better pasture for your flock
 Or better shade for shepherds.” Straightaway
 King Jupiter sits down and spends the day
 Talking of many things while on his reed
 He plays, attempting meanwhile to succeed
 In conquering those eyes that never sleep,
 While, for his part, Argos attempts to keep
 Awake (though some eyes close, some, notwithstanding,
 Keep watch). He even finds himself demanding 770
 Just how the instrument had been created
 Since it was new, and Jove delineated
 The facts: on the cold slopes in Arcady
 There was a nymph of notability
 Called Syrinx; many satyrs chasing her
 She often would escape (others there were,
 The demi-gods, dwelling in woods and leas
 Who chased her, too). But the solemnities
 Of Diana she attended, tireless
 In her virginity. For in a dress 780

Resembling Diana's, she betrayed
Herself and seemed to be the goddess-maid,
Except her bow was horn, Diana's gold.
Yet she was still deceptive – for we're told
That Pan, who was in vine-shoots garlanded,
Came from Lycaeus, spotted her and said
To her... The god, though, still had to relate
His words because she, at a fearful rate,
Fled his entreaties through the wilds until
She came upon the sandy Ladon's still 790
Waters: and when they stopped her flight, the maid
Approached the sisters of the stream and prayed
That they'd transform her, for this deed she sought
So that Pan, thinking that he had her caught,
Would hold but reeds and, as he heaved a sigh,
The winds would stir the leaves and, by and by,
There would ring out a sweetly mourning sound.
Charmed by this skill, he said, "Aha, I've found
A way to bond with you." So lengths of reeds,
Unequal, waxed together, would succeed 800
In always keeping fresh the maiden's name.
About to tell all this, Mercury came
To see all hundred eyes were lost in sleep,
And so immediately, that he might keep
Them thus, he brought a touch of sorcery
And brushed them with his magic wand; then he
With his curved sword chopped off his nodding head
Which stained the lofty cliff as down it sped
Onto the rocks. Argos, your many eyes
Have been extinguished! - one sole darkness lies 810
Beneath the lids. The eyes Queen Juno placed
Into the very feathers that had graced
Her bird. She blazed in wrath immediately,
Imagining foul sights, her jealousy
Knowing no bounds and, plagued with restless care,
She set Io to wandering everywhere,
And after many dreadful miseries
She reached the Nile and crumpled to her knees
And raised her neck (not easy for a cow,
To do, and yet she managed it somehow) 820
And groaned and wept and lowed, as though a plea
She made to Jove to end her misery.
Jove wrapped his arms around his wife and pled
To end her punishment, because, he said,
"Don't fear she'll ever trouble you again!"
And called upon the Styx that it maintain
His words were true. As Juno calmer grew,
Io became the maid that all once knew:
The coarse hair left her body and her eyes

Grew smaller as her large mouth shrank, likewise 830
 Her horns were gone, her hooves became once more
 The human nails that they had been before,
 Her shoulders and her hands a welcome sight,
 And nothing of the cow she'd been but white
 Remained. She now stood on her own two feet
 And, fearing that she might moo like a neat,
 Some long-neglected words she timidly
 Attempted to pronounce again. Now she
 Is worshipped by a crowd of linen-clad
 Acolytes and eventually she had 840
 A son called Epaphus, and he was due
 To share his mother's temples when he grew
 To adulthood – it's thought he was the son
 Of Jove; he was a friend of Phaethon,
 In years and will his equal, who'd not cede
 To him in that he boasted that indeed
 He was the son of Phoebus. Epaphus
 Could not endure this boast of his, and thus
 He said, "Madman, you credit everything
 Your mother says, forever trumpeting 850
 That Phoebus is your father." Flushed with shame,
 He overcame his anger when he came
 To tell his mother all that Epaphus
 Had said: "The fact that I, so valorous
 And free, am silent will most certainly
 Upset you, mother, and ignominy
 Plagues me that this wicked approach should stay
 Unchallenged. If I am divine, display
 The proof!" About her neck once he had thrown
 His arms, by Merops' head and by his own 860
 And by his sisters' marriages, his plea
 To her was that of his paternity
 She show a clear-cut sign. Clymene, stirred
 To pity or to anger at each word
 He spoke, stretched out her arms, looked at the sky
 And said, "I swear to you, my son, that by
 The bright sun's glittering rays, that hear and see
 Us all, you are indeed the progeny
 Of that bright god above us who holds sway
 Over the world. If I prove false, then may 870
 I never see him more. You'll not, my dear,
 Be weary finding him, for he is near
 Our country, where he rises at cockcrow.
 So seek him, since you ardently would know,
 And he will tell you." Then immediately
 He leapt from where he sat exultantly,
 Imagining that he could touch the sky -
 His land of Ethiopia he passed by,

The Indies, too, and, by the hot sun burned,
Towards the land of Dawn his steps he turned. 880