

# OVID METAMORPHOSES XIII

The chiefs sat and the soldiers formed a ring  
 Around them. Ajax, burning with the sting  
 Of anger, looking sternly out to sea  
 Beyond the shore and at the argosy,  
 Stretched out his hands and said, "Jove, recognize  
 My plea, for here is Ulysses who vies  
 With me! He did not shrink from giving way  
 To Hector's torches, but I saved the day.  
 To fight with lies is much less dangerous  
 Than using fists – I'm not alacritous 10  
 To speak, as he to act. The battle-field  
 Finds me as powerful as he's revealed  
 To be in talk! I do not think I need  
 To tell my deeds to you, for you indeed  
 Have seen them. But the deeds that *he* has done  
 Have not been taken in by anyone  
 But only Night. The prize, I will admit,  
 Is great, but such a rival weakens it.  
 I do not thirst for anything that he  
 Hopes for, however great, but rivalry 20  
 With me makes him a victor. If there's doubt  
 About my excellence, then think about  
 My noble birth and know my ancestry!  
 I'm the son of Telamon, who crossed the sea  
 And conquered Ilium with great Hercules  
 And in the *Argo* sailed the Colchian seas  
 With Jason. My grandfather Aeacus  
 Is judge among the dead, where Sisyphus  
 Rolls up his stone, forever mocked, and he  
 Is called by Jupiter his progeny. 30  
 Thus am I third from Jove, a joy I share  
 With great Achilles, for it's only fair -  
 He was my cousin. Ulysses is the son  
 Of Sisyphus, who like that man has done  
 Such deeds of trickery upon the race  
 Of Aeacus. Will you cause me disgrace?  
 Will you deny me since originally  
 I put my armour on quite willingly?  
 Will you prefer one who refused to take  
 Up arms against the foe and stooped to fake 40  
 Madness till Palamedes (shrewder, though  
 It was to cost him dear) was swift to show  
 His cowardly deceit and made him fight  
 The enemy? Does this man have the right  
 To own the choicest armour when his aim  
 Was having none? Shall I, then, lack all fame  
 Though I was first to face the enemy?

O would that folk had seen his lunacy  
As real or it indeed was genuine! 50  
O would the man who has fomented sin  
Had never fought in Troy! For then Lemnos,  
To our humiliation and our loss,  
Would not hold Philoctetes, who, they say,  
In woodland caves gives out cries of dismay,  
Moving the stones, and damns deservedly  
Ulysses. You won't damn him fruitlessly  
If gods exist! One of our chiefs who swore  
With us to take up arms in this fell war,  
Who used the arrows of great Hercules, 60  
Is broken now by famine and disease,  
His clothes but feathers, and the arrows meant  
For Troy he uses for his nutriment  
By shooting birds. He's still alive, since he  
Is not with Ulysses fortunately.  
Palamedes might have wished that he as well  
Was left behind, for then he still would dwell  
Upon this earth or die illustriously.  
This man recalled the sad discovery  
Of his feigned lunacy, and then he made  
An attack on Palamedes: "He betrayed 70  
Us all," he said., and then he showed us gold,  
Which he had hidden previously and told,  
The truth he said. Thus by expatriation  
Or death he has diminished our Greek nation.  
That's how he fights and that's why you must fear  
The man. And even if he could come near  
Old Nestor's eloquence, I still would be  
Convinced that he committed a felony  
When he deserted Nestor who, in need,  
Slowed by a wound inflicted on his steed 80  
And bent with age, asked Ulysses for his aid  
And was abandoned by his own comrade.  
Diomedes knows the charge is true, for he  
Called Ulysses by name repeatedly  
And scolded him for his vile cowardice.  
The honest gods look down on all of this.  
A man who asked for help now needs it – he  
Abandoned Nestor and so rightfully  
Should be abandoned, too, this precedent 90  
Established by himself. To him I went  
As he cried out, pale, trembling with fear,  
Uneasy at the thought that death was near.  
I held the shield above him where he lay  
And saved him from his passing in this way,  
For which I should receive scant approbation.  
But if you still possess the inclination

To own the arms, let's once more seek the foe,  
 When you, as is your wont, will seek to go  
 And hide behind my shield. And yet when I  
 Supported you, you would not even try 100  
 To stand, although you surely ran for it,  
 By wounds impeded not one little bit!  
 Hector brought all the gods to join the fight,  
 And even the stalwart Greeks were filled with fright.  
 I felled him with a rock, and when he tried  
 To face a Trojan foe, him I defied.  
 My friends, you prayed the lot would fall on me:  
 It did and I declared my victory.  
 The foe attacked the Grecian fleet, but where  
 Was glib Ulysses? Certainly not there! 110  
 I saved the fleet! Award me, then, the prize!  
 Yet I believe these arms will realize  
 More fame – in this way they'll unite with me!  
 They need Ajax; they're no necessity  
 For Ajax, though. Compare the things I've done  
 With deeds of his – let's take them one by one!  
 The killing of Rhesus and cowardly  
 Dolon and taking Priam's progeny,  
 Helenus, captive, and his pilfering  
 Of the Palladium – each single thing 120  
 Done in the night with Diomedes right there.  
 In that case you should give the greater share  
 To Diomedes. Why give that other one  
 The arms? The things he has achieved were done  
 With only stealth, fooling the enemy  
 With clever stratagems and trickery.  
 The helmet won't support Ulysses' head  
 And he will find the ash-spear feels like lead;  
 The multi-chiselled shield will not adapt  
 To that faint-hearted fellow, ever apt 130  
 For theft. Why want a gift that on the field  
 Of battle will drain you and make you yield?  
 Should they be given you, the enemy  
 Won't fear you but into captivity  
 Take you, and when you run away (a thing  
 That you excel at), you'll be carrying  
 Those heavy arms which will reduce your speed.  
 Your shield, for which you have so little need,  
 Is totally untouched, while mine's imbued  
 With countless piercings and must be renewed. 140  
 Who, then, needs words? Achilles' arms must be  
 Employed against the foe, and finally  
 To him who brings them back we'll give reward.”  
 The son of Telamon then stopped. The horde  
 Began to murmur. Ulysses stood there,

Eyes cast down briefly, but he did not spare  
 His eloquence when he raised them."You men,"  
 He said, "had you and I prevailed, why then  
 Achilles would retain his arms and we  
 Would have him still. However, Destiny 150  
 Said otherwise. So who should be the one  
 To win the armour but Laertes' son,  
 Who brought Achilles to this war? " (and here  
 He seemed to wipe away a grieving tear)  
 "Let Ajax win no votes, because it's true  
 That he is dim. I've always succoured you,  
 So do not let my gifts bring harm to me!  
 And do not let my gifts of fluency  
 (If such we call them), which I've used for you  
 Often, bring envy. Let each of you do 160  
 Your best! Now of my birth and ancestry  
 And deeds we've not committed personally,  
 They're hardly ours! But if you hear him crow  
 About his great-grandfather, you must know  
 That Jove was founder of my family.  
 My birthright is of just the same degree  
 As his. Jove was my great-grandfather – thus  
 You may believe he sired Acrisius.  
 And when you further scan my ancestry,  
 He sired Laertes, he who sired me. 170  
 We have no banished felons. Mercury, too,  
 Upon my mother's side, shows that it's true  
 That I'm of noble blood. But all the same,  
 These aren't the reasons why I make my claim..  
 Think of the merit and of that alone!  
 Alright, Ajax is the son of Telamon,  
 Whose brother was Peleus! Should that hold sway?  
 No, it is his ability you should weigh  
 In your appraisal. Come now, make compare -  
 If you seek out the next of kin and heir, 180  
 Achilles' father was Peleus, his son  
 Pyrrhus. And what of Ajax then? Each one  
 Of those two men might win the arms – maybe  
 Teucer, because part of his ancestry  
 Is great Achilles' cousin!! Could you stand  
 To give your sanction for such a demand?  
 It's deeds that count, and although I have done  
 More than I can recount, I'll take them one  
 By one. Achilles' mother prophesied  
 His death, determining therefore to hide 190  
 His aspect in girls' clothes. How he was dressed  
 Deceived Ajax, as well as all the rest.  
 And even when he bore a spear and shield  
 He wore them. Then I said, 'The battle-field

Of Troy awaits your victory. So why  
 Do you hold back?' With this bold statement I  
 Caused him to do his acts of bravery,  
 For you might say that they were done through me.  
 I conquered Telephus, who then appealed  
 To me and with my lance's touch was healed. 200  
 I caused the fall of Thebes; I took Lesbos  
 And Cilla and Chryse and Tenedos,  
 The cities of Apollo; Scyros, too,  
 I took, and the Lymnesian rampart you  
 Must know I shook and levelled to the ground.  
 Let this, then, be sufficient! I have found  
 Famed Hector's slayer, and for this I claim  
 The arms that brought Achilles world-wide fame.  
 I gave them to him while he lived - therefore  
 They should be mine now that he is no more. 210  
 Once one man's misery had reached this land  
 And at Aulis a thousand ships, all manned,  
 Now lay at anchor, while no breeze would blow  
 To aid the helpless fleet that it might go  
 To Trojan shores, it then was prophesied,  
 So that Diana would be satisfied,  
 That Agamemnon's darling child must be  
 Made sacrifice. He stood there, angrily  
 Cursing the gods, a parent though a king.  
 I used discernment while importuning 220  
 Our king to think about the benefit  
 Of all – a tricky case, I must admit.  
 I asked his pardon, but, considering  
 His brother and his duty as a king,  
 He balanced right with blood. I tried to sway  
 The mother, who would not in any way  
 Be won, and so I had to use deceit  
 With her. Had Ajax gone to her, the fleet  
 Would be in Aulis still. Then I was sent  
 As an ambassador to Troy and went 230  
 Thither. The senate-house I fearlessly  
 Entered where there was a large company  
 Of heroes. I spoke for the Grecian nation,  
 Demanding from the Trojans restoration  
 Of Helen and the gold taken away  
 By Paris, and with Priam I held sway,  
 And with Antenor. But the progeny  
 Of Priam and that murderous company  
 Of thieves seemed keen to slay me. This you knew,  
 Lord Menelaus, for I shared with you 240  
 That danger. Many details I have told  
 Already of my counsel and my bold

Exploits. For a long time the enemy  
Remained within the walls inaudibly  
After the first clash. Full nine years had passed  
Until we fought it to the end at last.  
In all that time, Ajax, what did you do,  
Warrior as you are? What use were you?  
'What were *you* doing?' you may ask of me.  
Planning ambushes for the enemy! 250  
I built a trench around the walls and I  
Consoled our allies that they might not by  
A long campaign be wearied; I made sure  
That with both arms and food we'd be secure.  
I was dispatched to sort out anything  
That needed fixing. Then Jove sent our king  
A faulty dream that he might put and end  
To the war, a dream he thought he could defend  
Due to its cause. Let Ajax tell him, though,  
That he should persevere and lay Troy low! 260  
Why does he not restrain the Greeks who long  
To leave? Don armour! Show them someone strong  
To lead them! After all, you're constantly  
Boasting. Words fail me ! – Ajax, you, too, flee.  
Indeed I witnessed it, and at the sight  
I felt such shame that you prepared for flight.  
With exclamations and without delay  
I said, 'O Ajax, will you run away  
Now Troy is almost ours? Listen to me! -  
You'll take home nothing but ignominy! ' 270  
My sorrow gave me eloquence, and so  
I changed the minds of those who planned to go  
Back home. The king amassed the frightened men,  
And yet the son of Telamon even then  
Spoke not one single word. But Thersites  
Against the kings spewed out profanities,  
And I reprov'd him. Then I rose to cheer  
My friends and allies who were filled with fear,  
For from that time whatever bravery  
That man is seen to show is due to me - 280  
I brought him back! Who of the Grecian nation  
Has ever given you his acclamation

Or sought you out? However, Diomedes  
 Is my comrade and shares his every deed  
 With me. It's such an accolade to be  
 Picked out among a multiplicity  
 Of Greeks by Diomedes. I did not go  
 By lot and yet the dangers of the foe  
 And night I hated and one man I slew,  
 Dolon, a Phrygian, who dared to do 290  
 What we have dared, but only after I  
 Made him tell of the trickery planned by  
 The Trojans, and for this I would have bought  
 Much acclamation but instead I sought  
 Rhesus's tent and slew him and his men,  
 And in a captured chariot I then  
 Drove back in triumph. Would you, then, rob me  
 Of the arms of him whose steeds the enemy  
 Claimed at the price of one night's work? To us  
 Even Ajax has been so generous! 300  
 Why should I name Sarpedon's Lycian horde  
 Among whom I've wrought havoc with my sword?  
 I killed Coeranus, Prytanis, Noemon,  
 Alcander, Chersidamas and Thoon,  
 Alastor, Chromius and Helius,  
 And finally Cherops and Ennomus,  
 Not counting humbler men I killed also.  
 And, friends, my wounds inflicted by the foe  
 Are on the front. Look for yourselves and see!  
 He drew his robe aside. 'Here, look at me!' 310  
 He said. 'Here is my breast – for you it bled,  
 Yet for his comrades Ajax never shed  
 A drop of blood. He fought against the foe,  
 He says, and I admit that it is so,  
 But that's a honour shared by all of us.  
 Clad in Achilles' armour, Patroclus  
 Drove back the Trojan horde so that our fleet  
 And Ajax didn't feel the burning heat  
 Of fire. Ajax believes that he, and he  
 Alone, faced Hector's spear, ignoring me, 320  
 Our king and all our chieftains. He was picked  
 By lot, the ninth man. But did he inflict

A wound on Hector? No! Ah, bitter fate  
To recollect the moment when the great  
Achilles died! I lifted him, despite  
The grief I felt, despite my tears and fright,  
His precious armour, too, for such a weight  
I could support; I could appreciate  
The honour. Was Thetis, his mother, so  
Ambitious for him that these arms should go 330  
To this ill-mannered soldier? They were wrought  
With skill, but to that he gives not a thought.  
The seas, Orion, lands, the Pleiades,  
The Hyades, the Bear – not one of these  
He comprehends. The man demands a prize  
Whose quality he would not realize  
If he should own it. Ever taunting me,  
He says I shrank from war's hostility  
And came late the fray. In saying so  
He blames Achilles, too! Does he not know? 340  
We both delayed but I came sooner; me  
A loving wife restrained some time, while he  
Was hindered by his mother. What you bring  
Against me is the very selfsame thing  
You bring against Achilles. Therefore why  
Should I be anxious? For you know that I  
Brought him to Troy by my dexterity,  
But Ajax had nothing to do with me  
Being here. He condemns me but all the same  
He condemns *you*, thus earning life-long shame. 350  
Accusing Palamedes was a slight  
For you! Again, the son of Nauplius  
Could not defend a crime so villainous.  
You heard of it, but you beheld it, too,  
Shown by the gold that I exposed. Nor do  
I merit blame since Poëas' progeny  
Remains on Lemnos still. But I agree  
That I persuaded him to ease the pain  
He felt, abandoning the stress and strain 360  
Of war. And he still lives! My words were wise  
As well, since every augur prophesies  
That he must lead us if we still maintain

Our expectation that we shall obtain  
Victory. Do not put your faith in me!  
Send Telamon's son instead! His fluency  
Will quell his rage, or by some artifice  
He'll bring him here. The river Simois  
Would backwards flow, Mt. Ida would be bare  
Of foliage and Greeks would offer care        370  
To Troy before Ajax would do some good  
For all the Grecian forces. And I would  
Bring Philoctetes back again, though he  
Raves at the king, his countrymen and me.  
He longs to shed my blood, but I will still  
Attempt the quest and use all of my skill  
To do that deed, and if by happy fate  
I find success, then I'll appropriate  
His arrows, as I took the Trojan seer  
Captive and found out what would happen here 380  
By means of oracles and took away  
Minerva's image through a vast array  
Of foes. Can Ajax possibly compare  
Himself to me? We must all be aware  
That if we lose the statue we'll not gain  
Success against the Trojans, and in vain  
Will Ajax bear that shield. In dead of night  
I entered Troy and to the stronghold's height  
I crept past the armed guards and took away  
The statue. And Ilium would in that way        390  
Be by us conquered. I see by your face  
And mumbling that Diomedes took his place  
As my accomplice in the deed. Well, he  
Deserved the praise he won. You certainly  
Were not alone when you drove back the fleet -  
A crowd was there, assisting the defeat,  
But only one man aided me. Did he  
Not know a fighter gains the victory  
Less surely than a wise man, he would claim  
The prize. The lesser Ajax, too, would aim        400  
At it, Eurypylus, Thoas as well,  
The son of Andraemon and, truth to tell,  
Cretan Idomeneus and Meriones

And Agamemnon's brother. All of these,  
 My equals, heed my counsel. You're in need  
 Of my direction, for, though you indeed  
 Are tough, you're dim. I am intelligent  
 And look out for the future, while your bent  
 Is fighting; I use my sagacity -  
 As captains have superiority 410  
 Over the oarsmen, as enlisted men  
 Are lesser than their generals, so then  
 I outshine you. A man's intelligence  
 Is rarer than his hand – thus excellence  
 Is measured. Sirs, award my watchfulness  
 And years of worry and uneasiness  
 In serving you! Now every complication  
 Of fate I've shed. So by our expectation,  
 Doomed Ilium, by the gods I recently  
 Took from the foe, by anything you see 420  
 That needs my wits or pluck, if anything  
 That you may contemplate encompassing  
 Troy's fate, remember me! And if you should  
 Not give the arms to me, I pray you would  
 Give them to her!' And here he pointed out  
 Minerva's statue. But there was no doubt  
 Among the princes. Eloquence held sway!  
 Now Ulysses, amidst a loud hurray,  
 Received the arms. But Ajax, who had fought  
 Hector and Jove himself, was now much fraught 430  
 With overpowering wrath. With sword in hand,  
 He yelled, 'Well, *this* is mine! Does he demand  
 This, too? I'll use it on myself! The blade  
 Shows blood of many Phrygians I have made  
 Corpses. But now its owner's blood will run  
 From it. For I'll be slaughtered by no-one  
 But Ajax.' Saying this, a vital spot  
 He found upon his breast, which never got  
 A wound. With his insuperable strength  
 He there immersed his sword to its whole length. 440  
 The blood itself expelled it; in the green  
 Beneath his feet a purple flower was seen,  
 With letters at its very core, which read

AIAS and AIAI, signifying woe.  
The victor Ulysses set sail to go  
To Lemnos, well-known in its history  
For women slaying all its menfolk. He  
Desired to to steal the darts of Hercules  
And take them back with him. Then, after these 450  
Were given to the Grecians, finally  
An end was made to all hostility.  
Both Troy and Priam fell, while Priam's queen  
Lost everything she'd had and now was seen  
As a dog upon the Hellespont, where she  
Frightened the folk in the vicinity  
With savage barks. Great Troy was burning still;  
The flames still raged; Jove's shrine was seen to swill  
Priam's scant blood. Apollo's priestess there  
Was dragged away, alas, by her long hair, 460  
The Trojan women, too, who were to be  
The spoils of war, while they despairingly  
Clung to the burning shrines. And Hector's son  
Was flung down from the tower, the very one  
He'd watched his father from (Andromache  
Had shown his father to the boy as he  
Fought for his country). Then the North Wind blew  
A welcome breeze. The men were ordered to  
Accept its welcome and at once set sail.  
The women kissed the ground and, with a wail, 470  
Cried, 'Farewell, Troy! We leave unwillingly!'  
The last to leave – a piteous sight to see! -  
Was Priam's consort, Hecuba the queen  
Of Troy. Beside her sons' grave she had been  
Discovered, clinging there as she embraced  
The urns that held them and then fondly traced  
A kiss upon their bones. Then ruthlessly  
Ulysses bore her off, the prize that he  
Had claimed. She had concealed beneath her dress  
The urn of Hector and had left a tress 480  
Of her own hair. There is a land called Thrace  
Where dwell the folk of the Bistonian race,  
West of the Hellespont, where secretly  
King Priam sent one of his progeny,

Polydorus, to Polymestor's wealthy seat  
Where he would be protected from the heat  
Of war. It would have been a prudent plan,  
But Polymestor was a greedy man,  
For when his kingdom's fiscal problems grew  
He stabbed his foster child's windpipe and threw 490  
Him from a cliff into the sea, as though,  
Once the lad's body was concealed below  
The waves, no-one would learn of his foul deed.  
Waiting until the strong winds would recede  
And calm the sea, Agamemnon had to berth  
His fleet upon the shore. Then from the earth  
Achilles rose, as stalwart as when he  
Yet lived, and he looked just as savagely  
As when he with his sword threatened the king.  
'Will you set sail, no more remembering 500  
Achilles?' said he. 'Is your memory  
Of what I've done for you interred with me?  
Don't leave until I have been venerated,  
And let Polyxena be immolated  
To ease my ghost!' His unforgiving shade  
The old friends of Achilles all obeyed.  
The sad and noble virgin instantly,  
Exhibiting the intrepidity  
Of a man, was taken from her mother's side,  
More cherished by her now Priam had died, 510  
And taken to the altar which would be  
Where she was to be sacrificed. Then she  
Beheld the rites and Neoptolemus  
Who stood beside her with his pitiless  
Sword in his hand, his fierce eyes riveted  
Upon her countenance. At this, she said,  
"Be quick! Accept my gift of blood!" And there  
And then she laid her throat and bosom bare.  
'I will not be a slave. No god will be  
Appeased by rites like these. I certainly 520  
Wish that my mother will not know I'm dead  
Because my love for her causes me dread  
And kills my joy of death. Not my demise  
But her sad life brings tears into my eyes.

Stand back and let me go with dignity  
Down to the Stygian halls. And if my plea  
Is just, let no man touch me! For he who  
You hope will be the man appeased by you  
Will find my blood thus satisfactory.  
If my last words move you (the progeny        530  
Of Priam speaks these words!) restore, I pray,  
Me to my mother that she may not pay  
Gold for my corpse! But when she could do so,  
She paid with gold as well' With tears of woe  
The crowd responded to her words, but she  
Was mute. And then the priest unwillingly  
Pierced the maid's breast while showing his dismay  
With tears himself. At once her knees gave way,  
Although she kept her look of bravery  
Up to the end. And yet she carefully        540  
Guarded the honour of her maidenhead.  
Recalling all the sons of Priam dead,  
The matrons took her as in their distress  
They shed tears for the virtuous princess  
And Hecuba, who had but recently  
Depicted Asia's fair prosperity  
As queen. Ulysses did not want to take  
Queen Hecuba were it not for the sake  
Of her being Hector's mother. How would he  
Feel that she had been doomed to slavery        550  
With *him* as master? Hugging her brave son,  
She shed sad tears as often she had done  
For Troy and Priam, whom she dearly missed,  
And all her sons. Her daughter's wounds she kissed,  
Wet with the tears, and beat her breast, her hair  
Clotted with blood. Then she began to tear  
Her bosom, saying, 'What more woe can I  
Possess? I see your wounds as there you lie -  
Those wounds are certainly my own! And lest  
I lose one child without bloodshed, your breast 560  
Displays your wound. You are a maid, and so  
I thought you safe from deadly steel, but no!  
That same Achilles who has terminated  
So many of your kin has liquidated

You, too. Yet when to Paris' darts he fell,  
With Phoebus's assistance, I said, "Well,  
We may not fear you now," But that's not true -  
His ashes in his tomb are hostile to  
Our race. My womb has teemed for him. Our woe  
Is ended now our Ilium lies low - 570  
I grieve it all alone. Now at the height  
Of fame, surrounded by my husband's might  
And all my kinsmen, all my family,  
I'm dragged away to wretched slavery,  
Leaving my loved ones' tombs, a minion.  
Ithaca's curious women will say, 'Yon  
Is she who was the wife of Priam and  
The mother of great Hector in the land  
Of Troy.' So many dead! And now my grief  
Was solaced by a mother's last relief. 580  
Atone for this upon Achilles' tomb!  
A victim for the foe came from my womb!  
Why am I living? Why do I delay  
From dying? Why does old age make me stay  
Upon this earth? You gods, why do you keep  
Me here? Or are you anxious that I weep  
At future funerals? Surprisingly  
King Priam is contented now that we  
Are conquered, for he's dead and unaware  
That you were slaughtered at the altar. There 590  
Will be no funeral rites for you, I fear -  
The wastes of foreign sands will be your bier.  
One child is left from all my family,  
My youngest son, the dearest one to me,  
And he's the cause, though I've lost nearly all,  
For me to live on for a while. I call  
Him Polydorus. He's inhabiting  
These shores, sent by the friendly Thracian king.  
Meanwhile I'll cleanse your wounds and wash away  
Your facial blood.' Then she stumbled her way 600  
Down to the shore. 'Give me an urn,' said she,  
'Women of Troy, to take down to the sea  
That I may gather water!' There she spied  
Polydorus' corpse, thrown on the ocean-side,

Covered with wounds made by some Thracian spears.  
The Trojan women tried to shed sad tears,  
But they were dumb with grief. She could not stir,  
Now gazing on the ground, now lifting her  
Gaunt countenance up to the heavenly skies.  
Sometimes his stark corpse she would scrutinize, 610  
More frequently his wounds, then radiated  
With wrath and, set on vengeance, concentrated  
On punishment as if she still were queen.  
Forgetting her old age, grief mixed with spleen,  
Like a lioness made crazy by the theft  
Of her young cub, she found the footprints left  
For her to see imprinted in the ground  
And thus the murderous Polymestor found.  
Then, dreaming up a cunning ruse, she told  
The villain of a secret hoard of gold 620  
She wished to give her son. He trustfully  
Believed her and, with his proclivity  
For gain, he went with her to see where she  
Had hidden it. Then he said craftily,  
'Give it all to your son! To you I swear  
He'll have it all.' Then she looked fair and square  
Into his eyes, then furiously she flew  
At him, escorted by her retinue,  
And dug her fingers in those eyes, then tore  
Them from their very sockets; furthermore, 630  
She drank his blood, made strong by rage. And then,  
Enraged at what she'd done, the Thracian men  
Attacked the women – stones and darts they threw.  
And with harsh growls and snapping jaws she flew  
Upon the stones. Instead of speaking, she  
Barked like a dog. The place one still may see,  
Named Cynossema ("Bitch's Monument").  
Still in the fields she howls in sad lament,  
Recalling endlessly her ancient woe.  
It moved the Trojans and even their foe 640  
And all the gods. Juno herself would state  
That Hecuba did not deserve such fate.  
Although Aurora aided Troy, she still  
Did not have time to care about her ill

Or Hecuba's fate. A private misery  
Tormented her – Memnon, her progeny,  
Was by Achilles slain. She saw him die;  
The lovely rose that shows Dawn drawing nigh  
Turned deathly pale. Hair strewn all around  
Her head, she bowed and crouched upon the ground 650  
And prayed to Jove, 'A lesser deity  
Am I, my temples few, you now see me  
As a goddess. Indeed that you will grant  
Me festivals and shrines my hope is scant.  
But if you think about the good I might  
Be seen to do you when the edge of night  
I mark, you may reward me. But my plea  
Is not for honours, though they well may be  
Deserved. I've lost my son, who fought in vain  
To aid his uncle but he has been slain 660  
By great Achilles. Give my son, I pray,  
Some comfort for this deed that will allay  
A mother's grief.' He nodded, and the pyre  
Collapsed as all the leaping flames rose higher.  
Black smoke obscured the day as streams exhaled  
Dense fogs and from on high the bright sun failed  
To shine on earth. Black ashes upwards flew,  
Solidified and formed a shape and drew  
Heat from the fire. At first it seemed to be  
A bird until it changed undoubtedly 670  
Into a bird indeed. Its wings it whirled  
And then into the air rose many a bird,  
Its sisters, whirring, too. Three times they flew'  
Around the pyre, but then they turned into  
Two hostile camps who clashed in their warfare  
With beaks and crooked claws as through the air  
They fought until their wings could not sustain  
Them any longer. Then they fell like rain  
To honour Memnon buried in the earth  
Below – he was the author of their birth. 680  
They're called Memnonides, who each year fight,  
Accomplishing a sacrificial rite  
For him. And so, while others wept to hear  
Hecuba's barks, Aurora would adhere

To her own grief, and even now she sheds  
 A mother's loving tears, which then she spreads  
 Across the world as dew. However, Fate  
 Did not allow Troy's hope to terminate  
 Completely. Aeneas, the progeny  
 Of Venus, bore her images, and he 690  
 Chose from his riches that he should take care  
 Of Anchises, his father, whom he'd bear  
 Upon his shoulders, such a sacred weight,  
 And tend his son, Ascanius. Through the strait  
 He sailed in exile, leaving sinful Thrace;  
 With favouring winds he reached the holy place  
 Of Delos with his friends, encountering  
 The high priest Anius, who was the king  
 Of Delos and showed him the sanctuaries,  
 The city and his home and the two trees 700  
 Which, giving birth, Latona once embraced,  
 And they poured out some wine with incense laced  
 And burned ox entrails, then their wine and bread,  
 Seated on thrones, they took. Anchises said,  
 'O priest of Phoebus, do I not recall  
 That you were father of a son and all  
 Of four young daughters when I first came here?'  
 The priest then shook his head and said, 'I fear  
 You're right, sir, though the inconsistency  
 Of fate that troubles men has rendered me 710  
 Almost bereft. My son cannot now bring  
 Assistance to me while he is the king  
 Of Andros (named for him). The deity  
 Of Delos gave the art of augury  
 To him, and for my daughters everything  
 He gave them turned to corn or sparkling  
 Wine or to grey-green olive oil – indeed  
 Most precious gifts that totally\ exceed  
 My wishes or belief. As soon as he  
 Who conquered Troy (for your hostility 720  
 We suffered, too!) he dragged my daughters there  
 With fierce coercion from my loving care  
 And ordered them to use their heavenly boon  
 To feed his fleet. Each one of them, as soon

As she was able, got away: two found  
Euboea, two more sailed across the sound  
To Andros, where their brother ruled as king.  
But then the army landed, threatening  
War if they weren't surrendered. This did he,  
Fear overwhelming love of family. 730  
Should you forgive him? There's a reason why  
You may – there was no warrior standing by,  
Like Aeneas or Hector, whose stout aid  
Kept Troy from ruin for a whole decade.  
Strong chains were brought to hold them. Suppliantly  
They lifted up their hands, which still were free,  
And begged Bacchus for aid, who had before  
Given to them the power of touch; once more  
He helped them, if one calls it help if they  
Transformed their human form in some strange way; 740  
How he performed this deed I could not learn,  
Though their misfortune's end I did discern -  
As doves of Venus, wife of Anchises,  
They flew away.' Once matters such as these  
Had been discussed, they slept, and at cockcrow  
Apollo's oracles told them to go  
And seek their ancient mother. Then the king  
Granted them gifts as they were exiting  
The land – to Anchises he was generous  
With a fine sceptre; to Ascanius 750  
He gave a robe and quiver, finally  
A goblet to Aeneas, formerly  
Given him by Therses, some time before  
His Theban guest. From the Aonian shore  
He'd sent it. Alcon should be mentioned, though,  
For he had made the cup some time ago,  
A tale inscribed upon it, where was shown  
A seven-gated city (you will own  
You know its name). A funeral outside  
The walls was etched, where many women cried, 760  
Hair streaming, breasts exposed to signify  
Their grief. There were nymphs, too, who stood nearby  
Who mourned their dry springs. All the trees were bare  
And all the she-goats that would ramble there

Nibbled on arid fields and stony ground.  
Orion's daughters also could be found -  
One slashed her throat, one stabbed her valiant breast  
In order that they might protect the rest  
Of Thebes from plague. Along the streets there went  
The cortège as all Thebes howled its lament. 770  
From the maids' ashes, lest the race should be  
Stamped out, two youths arose, the Coroni,  
To pilot the procession. All around  
Some bronze acanthus leaves were to be found.  
The Trojans gave them gifts that were at least  
As fine – an incense-casket for the priest  
With a gold crown. Remembering that they  
Were all of Teucer's race, they made their way  
To Crete but could not face its plague. Therefore  
They hoped to reach Ausonian Italy's shore. 780  
But they were tossed about by stormy seas,  
So the vile harbour of the Strophades  
Became their shelter. They were terrified,  
Though, by the harpy Aello. The tide  
Then took them to Dulichium, Same,  
Neritos and Ithaca, the monarchy  
Of sly Ulysses. Ambracia they spied,  
Famed for Apollo, over which gods vied;  
They saw the judge's stony image and  
The vatic oak-trees in Dodona's land, 790  
Chaonia, where the sons of Munichus,  
The Molossi's king, escaped the impious  
Flames on their new-found wings. And then they went  
To apple-rich Phaeacia and then spent  
Some time in Buthrotis in Epirus,  
A small-scale Troy ruled by King Helenus,  
The Phrygian prophet. With the prophecy  
Which Helenus gave they came to Sicily.  
It has three tongues of land – one, Pachynus,  
Faces the rainy south, one, Pelorus, 800  
Looks to the north, Lilybaeum to the west.  
The Teucri thither rowed, and they were blessed  
With favourable winds and, as the night  
Was falling, reached Zancle. Upon the right

Scylla attacks, Charybdis restlessly  
 Attacking from the right-hand coast. There she  
 Grabs hold of ships, sucks them and spits them out;  
 Scylla possesses savage dogs about 810  
 Her belly, looking like a girl – indeed,  
 If what the poets tells us we may heed,  
 She used to be a girl. She had been wooed  
 By many suitors but, in sullen mood,  
 Rejected all of them, and then she'd tell  
 Her friends, the nymphs, about the living hell  
 She caused them. Galatea once one day  
 Let Scylla comb her hair. 'I have to say,'  
 Said she, 'that they are gentle men who woo  
 You, Scylla. You may ditch them – and you do! -820  
 But I, Nereus' and Doris' progeny,  
 Although protected by a company  
 Of nymphs, was not allowed to get away  
 From Polyphemus' lust unless to pay  
 The price of grief.' She wept, and when the maid  
 Had wiped her tears, Galatea was allayed.  
 Said Scylla, 'Dearest one, I pray, don't hide  
 Your sorrow's cause, for I can be relied  
 Upon.' She answered, 'Acis was the child  
 Of Faunus and Symaethis and beguiled 830  
 Them frequently. However, he delighted  
 Me even more, and we'd become united.  
 At sixteen he was handsome: I pursued  
 Him constantly, but Polyphemus wooed  
 Me equally, and I could hardly state  
 Whether my love for Acis or my hate  
 For Polyphemus was the greater, for  
 The two were equal. No goddess has more  
 Power than you, fair Venus! That beast, who  
 Is dreaded by the trees and those who view 840  
 His face, who hates Olympus, now can feel  
 The force of passion! Now he burns with zeal  
 For me! He tries to look his best – his hair  
 He combs with rakes; he has no time to care  
 About his herd or caves. Now carefully  
 He trims his beard with sickles; anxiously

He views his features in a pool. And so  
It's safe now for the ships to come and go,  
His thirst for slaughter gone. Now Telemus  
Arrived from Etna, son of Eurymus, 850  
A man who never failed to clarify  
An omen. To the Cyclops he said, 'I  
Tell you that that one eye within your head  
Ulysses will remove.' The Cyclops said,  
Laughing, 'Oh what a silly prophecy!  
A maid already took my eye from me.'  
And off he went. A wedge-shaped hill sticks out  
Into the sea while salt waves flow about  
Each side. The giant climbed it and sat there  
Upon its peak. No longer in his care, 860  
His flock followed. Then after he had laid  
Aside his pine-tree staff, which might have made  
A ship's mast, he began to play a tune  
Upon his hundred-reeded pipe, and soon  
The very mountains felt the sound; the sea  
Vibrated with the music. As for me,  
I lay beneath a rock with Acis, where  
I heard the words. I still recall the air:  
'O fairer than a privet's snowy-white  
Flower, my Galatea, blooming bright, 870  
Still brighter than the brightest fields, you are  
As slender as an alder, brighter far  
Even than glass; the kid can't rival you  
In friskiness; and you are smoother, too,  
Than sea-shells. You please me, delightful maid,  
More than the winter's sun or summer's shade,  
Fairer than apples and the tall plane-tree,  
Sweeter than any grape could ever be,  
Clearer than purest ice and softer, too,  
Than swan-down and soft, curdled milk, If you, 880  
Alas, did not flee from me, I'd declare  
You're lovelier than a garden anywhere  
On earth. And yet you are more mutinous  
Than untamed bullocks and more treacherous  
Than savage seas, harder than oak, more tough  
Than osier-twigs and white vines, hard enough

To move as these sea-cliffs, more violent  
Than torrents, peacock-proud, more virulent  
Than flames, deafer than seas, more merciless  
Than a pregnant she-bear and more murderous 890  
Than a snake when trodden on. I surely need  
To dispossess you of your rapid speed -  
You're swifter than the deer that hounds pursue  
And rapid windstorms.' But, fair maid, if you  
Should know me well, you'd rue your getaway,  
And you should even blame your own delay  
And woo me, too. My cave is quite the best  
Part of the mountain where I take my rest.  
It's cool at noon and winter's not felt there,  
For then its cosy. Vines and branches bear 900  
A wealth of grapes and apples – there are two  
Delicious fruits that I keep just for you.  
You shall uncover strawberries as well,  
Soft fruit that's shaded in the woodland dell.  
In fall cherries and plums are there for you,  
The juicy ones and those with a yellow hue,  
And chestnuts. You'll be served by every tree.  
The sheep that you can see belong to me,  
And in the valleys wander many more;  
The woodland and my caves hold many a score. 910  
If you should ask me, I could never guess  
Or count how many – it's the penniless  
Who count their beasts. Don't trust my word but go  
And see with your own eyes, for they will show  
That they can hardly stand due to the weight  
Of their distended udders. My estate  
Has lambs and kids as well, a future flock,  
In warm folds. I have snow-white milk in stock,  
Some ripe for drinking, some solidified  
With rennet. Vulgar treats I'll not provide - 920  
Does, hares, she-goats, even a nest, a pair  
Of doves – for on the mountain-top up there  
I've found twin bear-cubs (you will hardly know  
One from the other): I urge you to go  
And play with them. For on the very day  
I came across them I was moved to say

I'd keep them for my loved ones happiness.  
Come, raise your head above the sea and bless  
Me with your presence! Do not sneer at me  
Or any of my gifts! For certainly 930  
I looked into the pool and saw my face,  
And I admit I found it full of grace.  
Look at how huge I am! You often say  
Some Jove reigns over us, but there's no way  
That he is larger. Ugly qualities  
Are screened by my long hair, like groves of trees.  
I'm not uncomely, though, although I'm rough  
And hemmed about with bristles that are tough:  
A leafless tree is ugly, and a mane  
Will beautify a horse; and, then again, 940  
Birds must have feathers and sheep must possess  
Wool coats, and so there is attractiveness  
In men with beards and shaggy hair. My face  
Displays a single eye which has its place  
Within my forehead like a mighty shield.  
Well, is there anything that is concealed  
From the sun's single eye? You have to be  
Aware my father's ruler of the sea.  
So be his daughter-in-law! To you I pray,  
For it's to you I gave my heart away 950  
And no maid else. I, who despise the might  
Of Jove, his heavens and his piercing light,  
Shrink from your wrath that's like a lightning-flame.  
Beneath your slights, though, I would be more tame  
If you shunned every man. Why do you spurn  
The Cyclops for Acis? Why do you burn  
For his embraces? Soon enough he'll see  
That there is every ounce of strength in me  
Conforming to my size. I will pull out  
His guts and spread his torn limbs all about 960  
The fields and waves, and then let him unite  
With you! I'm burning fiercely at your slight.  
Mt. Etna's in my breast! Ah, hear my plea!  
Can you attend it so dispassionately?  
Then like an angry bull who's lost his mate  
He wandered off. We did not know our fate  
When he saw me and Acis. 'Never more,'

He roared, 'shall you parade your love before  
My eyes!' His voice was just as loud as he  
Was large, and all of Etna violently 970  
Trembled. I plunged into the sea, for I  
Was horrified. Acis gave out a cry  
As he ran off: 'Help me and let me go  
To where your parents dwell, for am so  
Near ruin.' But the Cyclops hurled a rock  
Wrenched from the mountain and the mighty shock  
Buried him, although there was but a part  
Of it that reached him. I applied my art  
(The only thing that was permitted me) -  
The power of every river deity 980  
I gave to him. Thus as my Acis bled  
Beneath the rock the blood altered from red  
Into a swollen river, gradually  
Clearing. The rock cracked open presently  
Whence sprang a verdant reed and the clear sound  
Of gushing water. There a youth was found,  
Circled with water, with new horns entwined  
With reeds (a wondrous thing, indeed, to find!).  
Yes, it was Acis, though his face was blue  
And he was larger now, transformed into 990  
A river god. Those waters to this day  
Retain his name.' The Nereids went away  
When she had finished, swimming through the sea;  
Scylla went to the beach, afraid to be  
Mid-ocean, wandering naked all around  
The arid shore, though, when she tired, she found  
A pool to cool her limbs. Then suddenly  
Came Glaucus, now a denizen of the sea,  
Transformed in Anthedon, now lingering  
In love for her, constantly uttering 1000  
Whatever words that would prevent her flight,  
Yet all the same she flew from him in fright.  
She climbed a mountain there above the sea  
That faced to waves and at its apogee  
Parted the waves. She stood there, quite secure  
Upon the summit, though she was unsure  
If he was god or beast. In wonderment

She goggled at his flowing hair which went  
Across his back and shoulders, marvelling  
At how a fish-tail was meandering 1010  
About his groin and at his brown skin's hue.  
All this he saw and said, 'I say to you  
That I'm no beast – in actuality  
I am a sea-god with such mastery  
Over the waves that's held by Palaemon,  
Athamas's son, and Proteus and Triton.  
I was a mortal man not long ago,  
Yet even then down to the sea I'd go  
With nets to catch the fish or take a seat  
Upon a rock and lure the fish to eat 1020  
The bait upon my line. A verdant lea  
Exists, on one side bounded by the sea  
And, on the other, grass, that's never seen  
With cattle grazing; sheep have never been  
Upon it, nor have shaggy goats; no bee  
Has gleaned the flowers there industriously,  
No wreaths, no mowers, scythes in hand. No, I  
Was first to sit there, for I went to dry  
My lines and lay out all the fish I'd caught,  
Which had by happenstance been happily brought 1030  
In nets or by my own naïveté  
Got hooked upon my line. I have to say  
It seems like fiction (but what good can be  
In fiction?) that my catch would instantly,  
Once in the grass, would slither as if they  
Were in the sea and now no longer prey.  
And while I gaped at this, they all took flight  
Back to the sea. Dumbfounded at the sight,  
I sought the cause, although incredulous:  
Was it a god that made them behave thus? 1040  
Some herbal juice? "And yet what herb could be  
So strong as to have such a property?"  
Said I. I took some grass on which I bit  
And swallowed. I had barely time for it  
To reach my guts before they instantly  
Began to throb and, correspondingly,  
My mind as well. I had to leave, so I

Yelled out these words: "Dry land, I bid goodbye  
To you forever!" Then into the sea  
I plunged: the sea-gods then accepted me        1050  
And asked their king and queen to take away  
My mortal qualities that I might stay  
With them, immortal. Then an incantation  
Was chanted nine times for my liberation  
From sin. I was to bathe then in five score  
Rivers. I can remember little more.  
But after I'd regained my memory,  
I looked quite different than previously.  
And then I saw this beard of deep-green hue,  
My flowing hair, my massive shoulders, too,    1060  
My azure arms, two legs that curve below  
Into a fish's fins. What profit, though,  
Is this new shape of mine if it won't please  
You, Scylla, though the ocean deities  
Accept it? Though he hankered to say more,  
Scylla arose and left him on the shore.  
Provoked at this, he hastened angrily  
To Circe, the Sun's well-known progeny.