

# OVID METAMORPHOSES XIV

He left the mountain piled upon the head  
 Of Typhoeus the giant and then fled  
 Into the Cyclops' fields that never knew  
 The harrow, plough or oxen. Zancle, too,  
 He left, and Rhegium's ramparts, and the sea,  
 The cause of many a shipping tragedy,  
 Between the isle of Sicily and the land  
 Of Italy. He swam, hand over hand,  
 To Circe's halls, where men, transmogrified  
 As animals were compelled to reside, 10  
 Beyond the magic hills. Hospitably  
 She greeted him, and he said, "Certainly  
 You should feel for me, being a goddess,  
 And you alone should offer me redress,  
 If I am worthy, for my ardency.  
 Nobody knows how potent herbs can be  
 More than I do, for I was turned into  
 A fish by them, and I'll now tell to you  
 My passion's cause – I met Scylla before  
 Messene's walls upon the Italian shore. 20  
 I am ashamed to tell you of each plea,  
 Caress and vow of mine and finally  
 The scorn that I received. If charms possess  
 Some power over mortal souls, then bless  
 Me with a charm! Or if a herb should be  
 More powerful than charms, use one on me!  
 I don't request you heal me – just bid hence  
 This pain of mine! Let her experience  
 It, too!" But none but Circe was more prone  
 To passion – did its root reside alone 30  
 In her, or had Venus been angered by  
 Her tell-tale father? She said in reply,  
 "Chase someone of like mind, who'll want you, too,  
 For you'll deserve the maid you come to woo!  
 Hold to your hope! Trust your attractiveness!  
 Behold! I am Sol's child and a goddess.  
 My charms and herbs are very strong, and I  
 Wish only to be yours. You must deny  
 Her who denies. Acknowledge equally  
 The one who offers such intensity 40  
 Of passion!" But to this Glaucus replied,  
 "Sooner upon the waves will trees reside  
 And sea-weed grow on mountain-tops than she  
 I love will lose that love." Though jealousy  
 Caught hold of her, Circe could never bring  
 Herself to hurt Glaucus, for whom the sting  
 Of love she still endured, and so she turned

Her wrath upon the maid for whom he burned.  
She ground up many horrid herbs, which she  
Then mingled with the spells of Hecate. 50  
Wrapped in a dusky cloak, she made her way  
Out of the palace through a great array  
Of fawning beasts, to Rhegium across  
From Zancle's rocks which cause many a loss  
Of lives and then across the sea she went  
As though upon dry land. An inlet, bent  
Just like a bow, was seen not far from there,  
Which Scylla had selected for her lair,  
A fitting place to use as her retreat  
Where she could linger sheltered from the heat, 60  
Most scorching in the middle of the day  
When from the sun the shortest shadows lay.  
There, in anticipation Scylla spilled  
Her monster-breeding drugs that were distilled  
From an obnoxious root while muttering  
Full twenty-seven times some puzzling  
Spells. Scylla came and stood waist-deep, but she  
Then noticed monsters yelping frantically  
Around her groin. She does not realize  
That they are part of her and so she tries 70  
To flee from them in vain, and then, in place  
Of her own nether limbs, before her face  
Are jaws like Cerberus', and all around,  
Are raging dogs, and monstrous beasts abound,  
Emerging from her belly and her thighs.  
Her lover Glaucus sheds hot tears and flies  
From Circe and her hostile sorcery.  
But Scylla didn't leave – as soon as she  
Was able, she robbed Ulysses of his crew  
In hatred of that witch. The Trojans, too, 80  
She would have wrecked if she had not been turned  
Into a rock which sailors all have learned  
To shun. Now, once the Trojan argosy  
Escaped her and Charybdis happily,  
When they had almost reached the Ausonian strand,  
The breezes took them to the Libyan land.  
There Dido, who had taken her dear spouse,  
The Phrygian Aeneas, into her house,  
Grieved at his flight, committing suicide  
Upon a pyre that she had built to hide 90  
Her aim. Aeneas sailed to Sicily  
And made a sacrifice in memory  
Of Anchises, his father, then that coast  
He left, although his fleet of ships almost  
Were burned by Iris at Juno's command,  
Then passed the isles of the Aeolian land,

Where sulphur burns, and then he passed and left  
Behind the Sirens' rocky haunt. Bereft  
Then of his helmsman, past Inarime  
And Prochyte and Pitheclusae he 100  
Sailed on (the Pitheclusans earned the shame  
Of lies and guile and therefore gained the name  
Since Jove changed them to apes, who could not speak  
Words of deceitfulness but merely shriek,  
Shortened, their noses blunt, the seeming care  
Of men set in their wrinkled looks, their hair  
All yellow). Then he passed Parthenope  
And then the grave of Aeolus' progeny.  
On Cumae's shores he reached the cavern where  
The Sibyl lived and offered up a prayer 110  
That she'd show him his father's shade when he  
Arrived at Lake Avernus; and then she  
Looked up at him and said, "A large request!  
And yet your famous exploits can attest  
Your courage, and your filial piety  
Is proved by flame, so there's no need to be  
Afraid. Be sure that I will grant your prayer:  
You'll see the strangest kingdom anywhere -  
Elysium – and your father's shade. You see,  
There's always triumph through integrity." 120  
At that, she pointed out a bough of gold  
Once they had reached the Underworld and told  
Aeneas 'Break it off!' and he obeyed  
And saw the power of Pluto and the shade  
Of old Anchises, noting furthermore  
The shades of his ancestors and the lore  
Of that strange place, thus learning how to bear  
All future wars. But then he went from there  
Back to the light. His labour was allayed  
By talking with the Sibyl as he made 130  
His way along the stygian murkiness.  
He said, "Whether you are truly a goddess  
Or merely cherished by the gods, to me  
You'll always be divine, and I will be  
Forever in your debt, for by your aid  
I saw the halls of death yet could evade  
My own death. Therefore when once more I gaze  
Upon the sea, a temple will I raise  
And burn incense for you." The prophetess  
Looked on him, sighing, "I am no goddess, 140  
And it's not well that you should honour me.  
I once was offered life's eternity  
If I would lie with Phoebus, offering  
To him my maidenhead; bribes would he bring  
And say to me, "You may have anything

You want.” And I, foolishly answering,  
 While pointing out to him a pile of dust,  
 Importuned him,”As many birthdays must  
 I have as grains of dust collected here.”  
 But I forgot to say that every year 150  
 Must still show youth. “If you will yield,” he said.  
 “It will.” But I demurred and never wed.  
 Though now I've lived through seven centuries,  
 Three hundred harvestings and vintages  
 Remain until my life comes to an end.  
 The time will come, as these long days extend,  
 That I will dwindle as I waste away  
 So that no-one will be able to say  
 With certainty that, though some time ago,  
 I pleased a god. Phoebus perhaps won't know 160  
 Who I might be and swear he loved me never.  
 But, though I'll change so that no eye could ever  
 Acknowledge me, my voice will certainly  
 Live on – the Fates will leave that voice in me.”  
 They rose to Cumae, and Aeneas came  
 To the shore that later on received the name  
 Of Caieta, who in his infancy  
 Had tended him, And it was there that he  
 Performed her funeral rites. The Neritan  
 Macareus, the staunch companion 170  
 Of Ulysses, had rested in that place  
 And inside Etna's cave saw face-to-face  
 Greek Achaemenides, amazed to see  
 Him still alive, and said, “What deity  
 Or chance preserves you? What land do you seek  
 Upon this foreign ship? - and you a Greek!”  
 No longer dressed in rags, himself once more,  
 He said, “May I see Polyphemus' gore  
 If that sweet domicile in which I live  
 And farthest Ithaca, my island, give 180  
 Me more delight than I am given by  
 Yonder barbarian vessel or if I  
 Should venerate the prince Aeneas less  
 Than my own father! I could not express  
 All of my thanks if I gave everything  
 I have; the thought of misremembering  
 All this disturbs me, for he rescued me  
 From Polyphemus' jaws. Now will I be  
 Interred within a tombs and not, instead,  
 Inside the monster's belly. If my dread 190  
 Had not removed all sensibility,  
 When I saw you departing on the sea,  
 What would I then have felt? I would have cried  
 Out to you all but I was forced to hide.

Indeed, Ulysses almost wrecked you when  
He shouted out himself. I looked on then  
As Polyphemus from the mountain rent  
A boulder, which into the sea he sent  
Flying, and, as I watched once more, he threw  
Huge stones, as from a catapult, onto 200  
The waves; and I, forgetting I was here  
And not aboard the vessel, felt great fear  
That she would sink. You fled. Then, stumbling,  
He roamed the whole of Etna, fumbling  
His way, without his eye bereft of sight,  
He raised his arms and cursed the Greeks in spite:  
“If only Ulysses were here with me,  
Or someone else who keeps him company,  
I'd eat his guts and tear him up. I'd fill  
My gullet with his blood. His limbs, though still 210  
Living, would quiver in my teeth. How slight  
Would be the deprivation of my sight  
If I could do that!” All of this he said  
And more, but I was filled with ghastly dread  
Seeing his bloody face, his hands, the space  
Where his one eye had lately been in place,  
His beard all matted through with human gore.  
It seemed that Death himself stood there before  
My eyes. But, worse than that, it seemed to me  
That very soon indeed I was to be 220  
His next repast! For I remembered when  
He threw down to the ground two of our men  
Three or four times, and, like a lion, he  
Crouched over both of them and greedily  
Fed on their flesh and bones. I stood in dread,  
Immobile, as that sight ran in my head,  
Him vomiting crushed pieces mixed with wine,  
As I thought that that doom would now be mine.  
I hid for days as every noise brought dread,  
Afraid of death yet longing to be dead, 230  
Leaves, grass and acorns gobbling hopelessly  
To stave off hunger, left to agony.  
At last I spied the vessel far away,  
By gestures showing them my hope that they  
Might rescue me. I ran down to the sea  
To meet them, triggering their sympathy.  
A Trojan ship took in a Greek! Well, well,  
Imagine that! Dear comrade, come now, tell  
Me of your exploits in the open sea,  
And of your captain and your company! 240  
Then Macareus told him about the son  
Of Hippotas, he whose dominion  
Is the Tuscan Sea – his name is Aeolus,

Who shuts the winds away, and he told us  
That Ulysses received those winds inside  
A bag that had been made from a bull's hide,  
An awesome gift. And then for nine whole days  
They sailed with favouring breeze and then could gaze  
Upon their native land far off. Next day,  
Thinking that there was gold hidden away 250  
In that bag, they untied the thong, and then  
The winds rushed out and drove them back again.  
To Aeolus's harbour. 'And from there',  
He said, 'we reached the city of Lamus, where  
King Antiphates reigned. I and two more  
Were sent to him, but one, reddened with gore,  
Was murdered. It was but by chance that we,  
The other two, escaped successfully.  
King Antiphates called his murderous band,  
Who, hurling stones and beams at his command, 260  
Sank all the ships but Ulysses'. Then we  
Mourned our lost friends, arriving finally  
At yonder land, which – trust me! - you must shun.  
O you most righteous Trojan, Venus' son,  
Aeneas, whom I no more call a foe,  
I warn you now that you must never go  
To Circe's land. We moored our vessel there:  
Knowing our recent past, we did not dare  
To go ashore, but some by lottery  
Were chosen to explore the place. Thus we - 270  
Myself, Polites and Eurylochus  
And Elpenor and eighteen more of us -  
Were sent to find a roof which they had spied.  
Thusb we found Circe's house and stood outside  
Her door. A thousand wolves, horrid to see,  
Came rushing from the forest suddenly,  
With bears and lionesses. But no call  
For fear was there, for we weren't harmed at all.  
They wagged their tails as we stood wondering,  
As though they were our friends, while truckling 280  
Upon us. Then handmaids took us all through  
The marble halls to introduce us to  
Their queen, who sat within a fair recess  
Upon her throne, wearing a purple dress  
And golden veil. Nereids and nymphs were there,  
Who never in their lives had had to care  
To card their fleece or draw out thread, and they  
Were setting potent herbs in apt array  
In baskets. Flowers, too, of every hue  
Were strewn about. She told them how to do 290  
Each task. She knew of each leaf's quality  
And how it acted when mixed properly

With other herbs. She carefully surveyed  
All of them as in order they were weighed.  
Once salutations had been made she smiled  
As if a friend (but thus we were beguiled!).  
Immediately she bade her maidens bring  
To us a drink prepared by mingling  
Wine, barley, honey and milk curds. But we  
Were unaware that she had wickedly 300  
Added vile drugs. We drank, and then the dread  
Goddess touched with her wand each person's head,  
And then, although to say these words brings shame  
Upon me, I will tell you – I became  
A silent grunting thing with a long snout.  
I looked towards the ground, my neck swelled out  
With muscle. I made tracks upon the sand  
With that part of me that had been the hand  
That took the cup. My friends were changed as I  
And we were all imprisoned in a sty. 310  
Eurylochus refused the cup and so  
Remained a man. If he had not said no  
Ulysses wouldn't have known about our plight  
Or made his way to Circe to requite  
Us all. Hermes had given him a *moly*,  
A white flower with a black root. With this he  
Went in to Circe's hall. Then Circe made  
To offer him the cup while she essayed  
To place her wand upon his head, but he  
Brandished his drawn sword terrifyingly. 320  
And then an offer of good faith they pled,  
And after she took him into her bed  
He asked that his friends' bodies be remade  
As human, and then all of us were sprayed  
With happier juices, and a backward stroke  
She made upon our heads; the words she spoke  
Were backward, too, and we by slow degrees  
Began to stand up straight; the crevices  
Upon our feet and all our bristles left;  
The shoulders of which we had been bereft 330  
Appeared once more, our arms restored, and we  
Wept tears of joy and hugged him happily,  
And not until our gratitude was paid  
Did any of us speak a word. We stayed  
For one full year, and in that time I spied  
A lot of things and heard as much beside:  
One of the handmaids told me secretly  
About their ceremonies. While Circe  
Lingered with Ulysses, to me she brought  
A statue of a youth that had been wrought 340  
In snow-white marble, a woodpecker's head

On top, within a temple garlanded  
 With many wreaths. 'What was its name?' I said.  
 'Why was it honoured? Why was the bird's head  
 Upon it?' Then the handmaid said, 'Circe  
 Is powerful. Picus, the progeny  
 Of Saturn and Ausonia's king, would breed  
 Horses for war, and this is he indeed,  
 Exactly as he lived, you would agree  
 If you had known him. His nobility                    310  
 Equalled his looks. Round about seventeen  
 Four of the five-year games he had not seen  
 In Elis. All the fountain-nymphs and dryads  
 In Latium, as well as all the naiads  
 In Tiber and Numicius, Anio,  
 The rushing Nar, the Farfar, the Almo  
 Adored him, even those who dwelt around  
 Diana's pool and those who may be found  
 In nearby lakes. But he burned only for  
 The nymph, whom, it is said, Venilia bore            320  
 To Janus on the Palatine, but she,  
 When she had grown into maturity,  
 Wed Laurentine Picus, her favoured care  
 Above all others. She was very fair  
 Of face but, even more, had earned her fame  
 In singing, for which art she gained the name  
 Canens. Her voice would tame wild beasts and thrill  
 The woods and rocks; long rivers would it still,  
 Detaining birds. Once, as she sang a song  
 Mellifluously, Picus came along                    330  
 Upon his horse to scour Laurentian land  
 And hunt the boar, two spears in his left hand,  
 Wearing a purple cloak, with crimson dyed,  
 Tied with a golden brooch. There Circe spied  
 The youth while hoping to discover new  
 Herbs that upon the fertile hillocks grew.  
 She watched him from afar, so captivated  
 She dropped her herbs; a fever permeated  
 Her marrow, as it seemed. When she returned  
 To her accustomed faculties, she yearned            340  
 To tell him of her passion. Nonetheless  
 His horse and all the guards denied access  
 To her. 'You'll not escape,' she said, 'although  
 You may be borne on winds, if I but know  
 Myself, as long as there's some potency  
 Still in my herbs and my ability  
 Remains.' She forged the image of a boar,  
 Allowing it to cross the trail before  
 The king and rush into the woodlands where  
 The trees were many; fallen trunks were there, 350



Thwarting the horse. Picus unconsciously  
 Pursued the phantom prey and hastily  
 Dismounted and on foot was following  
 A fruitless hope when Circe, capturing  
 The moment, called upon strange deities  
 With most unusual charms whose properties  
 Could envelop the moon and, way up high,  
 Wrap clouds around her father's head. The sky  
 Turned black whenever Circe's incantation  
 Was spoken and there was an exhalation 360  
 Of vapour from the ground so that the king  
 Now had no guards, for they were wandering  
 On dark paths. Circe said, 'You hypnotize  
 Me, most fair youth, with your amazing eyes.  
 I'm begging you, though I am a goddess,  
 To pity me in my feverishness!  
 O Picus, marry me said let the sun  
 Become your father-in-law. Don't sneer at me,  
 A Titaness!' But he repelled her plea. 370  
 'I love another maid,' said he. 'I pray  
 That she will stay with me for many a day.,  
 And therefore I will not contaminate  
 That love with any alien maid while Fate  
 Preserves my Canens! Then, when every plea  
 Had failed, 'You won't leave with impunity,'  
 Said she. 'You won't see her again, and you  
 Will find out what a slighted maid can do.'  
 Two times the west, two times the east she faced,  
 Then thrice upon the youth her wand she placed, 380  
 And sang three incantations. Picus fled.  
 But, marvelling at just how fast he sped,  
 He found he had new wings. This transformation  
 Enraged him, and so in great indignation  
 He pecked the oaks and harmed the boughs. His nape  
 And crest took on the crimson that his cape  
 Had shown; the golden brooch he'd worn became  
 Plumage, his neck green-gold. Only his name  
 Remained. Meanwhile his friends were calling out  
 For their young king around the fields without  
 Success. They met Circe, who'd dissipated  
 The clouds before the wind and re-created  
 The sun's rays. They blamed her appropriately  
 For Picus' absence, calling angrily  
 For his return, with their spears threatening  
 The witch to bring him back. She, sprinkling  
 Vile drugs and juice on them, invoked the aid  
 Of Night and Night's gods, who dwell in the shade  
 Of Erebus and Chaos, crying out  
 For Hecate with a long and wailing shout. 400

The woods leapt out from their localities,  
 The torn soil uttered deep groans, and the trees  
 Turned pale; the grass with sprinkled blood was soaked;  
 The very stones emitted groans, provoked  
 By Circe; dogs barked; and upon the ground  
 Black snakes were crawling; ghastly shades were found.  
 All quivered in alarm each face was wan,  
 And when her magic wand she placed upon  
 Those faces, they became wild beasts, and none  
 Retained his human shape. The setting sun     410  
 Now rested on the distant shores of Spain,  
 While Canens waits for Picus but in vain.  
 Her slaves and others ran with lights to see  
 If they can find him. She wept frenziedly  
 And tore her lovely hair and beat her breast,  
 And more! She roamed about the fields, distressed.  
 After six nights and six dawns she was found  
 Unfed and sleepless as she wandered round  
 The hills and dales. The Tiber finally  
 Beheld her tired out with misery                     420  
 And wandering as on its bank she lay.  
 In faintest tones she poured out her dismay,  
 Just like a dying swan. At last she died,  
 Her flesh, her bones, her marrow liquefied,  
 As by degrees she vanished as the air,  
 And yet her story ever lingers there,  
 Called *Canens* by the ancient Camenae.  
 Such things throughout that lengthy year did I  
 Both hear and see. Poisoned with lethargy  
 And therefore idle, we got the decree                     430  
 To set sail once again. The Titaness  
 Explained the peril and enormousness  
 Of the wild seas. I own I felt such fear,  
 And when I found this shore, I lingered here.'  
 Caieta, Aeneas's nurse, was placed  
 In a marble urn and on her tomb thus graced:  
 AENEAS, WHO WAS KNOWN FOR PIETY,  
 RECOVERED ME OUT OF THE FIERY  
 GRECIAN ATTACKS, AND NOW I TELL TO YOU  
 I WAS CREMATED HERE, AS IS MY DUE. 440  
 The cable loosened from the bank, they steered  
 A course that kept them from the wiles they feared  
 From Circe, seeking where the shadowy  
 River Tiber breaks into the sea.  
 That's where Aeneas won Lavinia and  
 Her father Latinus, who ruled in the land  
 Of Latium, but it was not easy, for  
 Turnus fought for his promised bride, and war  
 Was waged. And thus with restless energy

Both sides were struggling for victory, 450  
 And both enlisted aid, well fortified  
 By many forces backing either side.  
 Aeneas found Evander willing, though  
 Venulus gained no aid against his foe  
 From exiled Diomed, who ruled Arpi,  
 His father Daunus' principality,  
 Which was his dowry. For, when his request  
 For aid he heard, Evnnder thus addressed  
 The man: 'I'm poor in soldiers, and I hate  
 To risk a war. I don't dissimulate, 460  
 For I will tell my story patiently,  
 Though telling it will cause me misery.  
 Once Troy was burned and fed the Grecian flame,  
 The lesser Ajax, hero of great fame,  
 Brought us the virgin goddess' penalty,  
 Which he alone deserved, when on the sea  
 We were dispersed by storms. Such lightning,  
 Such storms, such darkness and such threatening  
 From sea and sky we suffered! The headland  
 Of Cephareus shipwrecked our Trojan band, 470  
 The climax of our woe. Not to delay  
 You further with our grief, I'd have to say  
 It's possible that even Priam might  
 Have wept to hear about the Grecians' plight.  
 Although well-armed Minerva rescued me  
 From all the rocks and waves upon the sea,  
 I was once more ousted from my own land,  
 For Venus in her bitterness had planned  
 Revenge for what I did so long ago  
 And on the sea I met with dreadful woe 480  
 And on the shore as well, and frequently  
 I thought that all those many whom the sea  
 Had taken were in bliss and wished that I  
 Was with them. All my friends were anguished by  
 The war and on the sea; their courage they  
 Had been deprived of, starting now to pray  
 That I would end their wandering. But then,  
 In his great anger, Acmon yelled out, 'Men,  
 Be patient! Can Venus do any more?  
 Than she has done (if she were willing)? For, 490  
 While we dread further evils, we will find  
 A cause for patience. When Fate is unkind,  
 Fear's underneath our feet and we're carefree.  
 Though she should hear me with hostility  
 About Diomedes' troops (and she does so!)  
 We scorn her and are keen to let her know  
 We spurn great powers.' This revitalized  
 Her former anger. Few men sympathized

With what he uttered – the majority  
 Of his own friends rebuked him, and when he 500  
 Tried to reply, his voice was light, his hair  
 Now plumage of the creatures of the air  
 Upon his feathered body, his elbows  
 Twisted to form swift wings, and lengthy toes  
 Replaced his feet, his mouth a beak. To see  
 So fast a change in physiognomy  
 Astonished Lycus, Abas, Nycteus,  
 And Rhexenor, all four incredulous.  
 The they took on that feathered aspect, too,  
 And then the larger portion of my crew 510  
 Flew from the boat, flapping their wings around  
 The oars while giving out a bird-like sound.  
 If you should ask their shape, I would report  
 That, though they were not swans, they were a sort  
 Of swan. I fear that with uncertainty  
 I can watch over this locality  
 With so few men.' That was Diomed's reply.  
 Then Venulus left the region by and by.  
 Among the fields he saw a cave around  
 The woods and reeds, and there Pan could be found, 520  
 Though nymphs once lived there, but they fled in fright  
 When a local shepherd scared them into flight.  
 But they retrieved their wits and poured disdain  
 On him and ventured back, there to remain  
 To dance before him. Then he, capering  
 About them while grotesquely mimicking  
 Their graceful steps, indulged in raillery  
 At them with coarse and foolish words till he  
 Became a tree, which rendered him quite mute,  
 The bitterness that's in the olive fruit 530  
 Coming from him. The legates told the tale  
 That Aetolia would be of no avail  
 In battle, and the valiant Rutuli  
 Fought on without her. There was butchery  
 Galore. Then Turnus with a torch drew near  
 The pine-built Trojan fleet: now there was fear  
 Of flame. Soon Mulciber was burning pitch  
 And wax and other sources that are rich  
 In fire, and the lofty masts it scaled  
 And over all the curving hulls it trailed, 540  
 But then the sacred mother Cybele,  
 Because it lingered in her memory  
 Those pines were felled on Ida, filled the air  
 With throbbing cymbals crashing everywhere  
 And boxwood flutes. Upon tame lions she  
 Came riding and cried out, 'Listen to me,  
 Turnus! You hurl these firebrands in vain!

I'll not let fire burn to be a stain  
 Upon my woods!' It thundered while she spoke  
 Those words, and then a storm of hailstones broke 550  
 Through heavy clouds. The winds raged angrily  
 Through air and swollen waters. Cybele  
 Used one of them to break the hempen ropes  
 Of the Trojan ships, for they now lost their hopes  
 And sank. Then they lost their rigidity,  
 Now flesh, germane to all humanity,  
 Heads superseding every curving prow;  
 The oars were legs and fingers, swimming now,  
 The sides now flanks, the keel a spine, while hair  
 Replaced the ropes and arms the yards, though there 560  
 The dusky hue remained. Now naiads, they  
 In waters that they used to fear now play;  
 Born in the hills, they revel in the sea,  
 Their birth extinguished from their memory.  
 Bravely they often gave a helping hand  
 To ships, unless they happened to be manned  
 By Greeks – recalling Troy, they hate the race  
 Of Greeks and it was with a joyful face  
 They saw Ulysses' vessel wrecked, and when  
 They saw the ship with Alcinous' men 570  
 Turn into stone. Folk hoped the Rutuli,  
 In awe of how the Trojan argosy  
 Became sea-nymphs, would terminate the war.  
 But it continued, both sides grateful for  
 Divine assistance and the bravery  
 That they themselves displayed which frequently  
 Is godly, too. A dowered realm no more  
 Was sought nor pure Lavinia – only war,  
 Which they would shame to lose. Then finally  
 Venus saw her victorious progeny 580  
 In arms, for Turnus fell, Ardea, too,  
 Which had been strong. The Trojan weapons slew  
 Its citizens. The houses burned away  
 And sank. A bird, unknown before that day,  
 Flew from a burning heap, belabouring  
 The ashes with its wings: its uttering,  
 Its lean, pale look, and everything that fits  
 A captured town are in that bird: it flits  
 About and even bears Ardea's name  
 And mourns the town's defeat. The gods now came 590  
 To know Aeneas' worth, encompassing  
 Even Juno, thereby eager to bring  
 An end to the feud. Aeneas' progeny,  
 Young Iulus, had now found security,  
 His father ripe for Heaven. Venus sought  
 The opinion of the gods, and, as she brought

Her arms about her father, she said, 'You,  
 Father, are always kind – I beg you to  
 Grant Aeneas, who claims heredity  
 As your grandson, to have some sanctity, 600  
 However small! He has already gone  
 To Tartarus, and thus to look upon  
 It once is quite enough.' Each deity  
 Assented. Juno also quietly  
 Agreed. 'This gift of mine you've merited,  
 The two of you,' the King of Heaven said.  
 'Daughter, you have your wish!' With great delight  
 She thanked her father as she took her flight,  
 Drawn by her team of doves through the clear air,  
 Till coming to Laurentum's city, where 610  
 The waters of the river Numicius,  
 Hidden by reeds, glide on their tortuous  
 Journey down to the sea. The river she  
 Ordered to banish all mortality  
 From Aeneas and send it far away  
 Silently to the sea. Keen to obey,  
 He did so, and the most essential side  
 Of him remained. Once he was purified,  
 She smeared him with divine incense; then she  
 Applied upon his face a potpourri 620  
 Of nectar and ambrosia. Thereby  
 He turned into a deity on high  
 Called Indiges, whom Romans venerated.  
 Latium and Alba thus were designated  
 Under Ascanius, then Silvius  
 Was ruler after him, then Latinus,  
 Then splendid Alba and then Epytus  
 Reigned there, then Capys and then Capetus,  
 Then after him Tiberinus was the king,  
 Who drowned in a stream, thereby contributing 630  
 His name to it. His sons successively  
 Inherited their father's monarchy,  
 Fierce Acrota and Remulus by name,  
 The elder, who was killed by lightning-flame,  
 Then Acrota, and then the next to claim  
 The throne was Aventinus, he whose name  
 Depicts the mountain which he ruled upon  
 And then Proca became the ruler on  
 The Palatine. In this king's monarchy  
 Pomona lived – no-one more skilfully 640  
 Of all the wood-nymphs in the Latian land  
 Tended her garden or had such command  
 Over her orchards. Branches loaded down  
 With apples she adored, but with a frown  
 She looked on woods and rivers. In her hand

She held a pruning-knife to rid the land  
 Of copious growth, but she would never bear  
 A javelin. The branches here and there  
 She lopped and spread about; the bark she split  
 And grafted, introducing into it 650  
 A new stock, watering the tendrils. She  
 Adored her work while shunning intimacy.  
 She stayed inside the orchards and denied  
 Entrance to anyone, so terrified  
 Was she of rustic crime, and kept away  
 From men. The dancing satyrs every day  
 Tried to possess her, as did Silenus,  
 More youthful than his years, and Priapus,  
 Who scares off thieves, and woodland deities,  
 Brows garlanded with pine. Yes, all of these 660  
 Pursued her! Though Vertumnus loved the maid  
 More than the others, still it did not aid  
 His wooing. He, disguised in reaper's dress,  
 Would frequently approach the maid and press  
 Upon her ears of barley or display  
 His forehead bound about with fresh-cut hay  
 As though he'd just left work. Frequently, too,  
 He'd hold an ox-goad in his hand as you  
 Would think he'd just unyoked his wearied team.  
 A knife held in his hand would surely seem 670  
 To say he had been pruning the fruit-trees  
 Or tending to the well-kept vineries.  
 If he came with a ladder, you'd suppose  
 That he was gathering fruit. Sometimes he chose  
 To seem a soldier if a sword he bore,  
 Or an angler with his rod. So many more  
 Disguises did he have, and frequently  
 He gained admittance thus. Such ecstasy  
 Did he enjoy to see her! Once he went  
 With faux grey hair as on a staff he leant, 680  
 A coloured scarf positioned on his head,  
 Just like an ancient crone. To her he said,  
 Admiring the garden's fruit, 'You are  
 Even lovelier than you have been by far!'  
 While praising her, he gave her kisses, too,  
 But hardly how an ancient crone would do!  
 He sat down on the flattened grass and gazed  
 Upon the heavy boughs, and then he praised  
 An elm weighed down with shining grapes, then he  
 Said to her, 'Just imagine if this tree 690  
 Weren't wedded to this vine, it would enthrall  
 Us only with its leaves and soon would fall.  
 You find no warning in this thought but shun  
 Marriage, but think about a union!

Helen would not have had more suitors to  
 Annoy her, nor Hippodamia, who  
 Caused trouble for the Lapithae, or she  
 Who married Ulysses, too long at sea  
 To reach his island kingdom. Even now  
 A thousand mortal men are keen to vow 700  
 Their love for you, and gods and demi-gods, too,  
 And then you shun them when they try to woo.  
 Make a good match if you are wise! Now hear  
 An ancient crone, to whom you are more dear  
 Than all of them! Reject them all! Instead,  
 I urge you, take Vertumnus to your bed!  
 He does not better know himself than he  
 Is known by me. He doesn't endlessly  
 Wander the world but lives right here. He shows  
 That he is not mercurial like those 710  
 Others who woo you and who chose the miss  
 They met most recently. Pomona, this  
 Is he who'll love you always. Besides, he  
 Is youthful and has the affinity  
 Of charm and can become whatever you  
 Require. All that you order he will do.  
 Like you, he loves your apples and will be  
 The first to hold your fruits reliably  
 In his right hand. But now he does not itch  
 For fruits plucked from your tree, however rich, 720  
 Or herbs with pleasant essences which grow  
 Within her cultivated garden – no,  
 He thinks only of you. Have sympathy  
 For him and know your suitor's here and he  
 Is pleading with my lips. You must recall  
 The vengeful gods and fear them most of all.  
 Fear Venus, who for cruel folk feels hate,  
 And Nemesis, for let me now relate  
 What happened in Cyprus (for, being old,  
 I know a wealth of things). Once you are told, 730  
 You may be swayed. Iphis, whose family  
 Was humble, had seen Anaxarete,  
 Who had been born into the ancient race  
 Of Teucer. Once he saw her lovely face,  
 He burned with love. For ages struggling,  
 He could not quell his love through reasoning.  
 He travelled to her home, where he confessed  
 His passion to her nurse and made request  
 To favour him by all the hopes that she  
 Had for her dear. Sometimes with flattery 740  
 He spoke to her attendants, hankering  
 For their approval. Often he would bring  
 Love-notes for her and hung wreaths that were damp



With tears upon her door. He would encamp  
 Upon her threshold and, as there he lay,  
 Complain about the bolts that barred his way.  
 She spurned him, though, more cruel than the sea  
 In winter, wounding him with mockery  
 Harder than tempered steel or rocks still set  
 Within their bed, while adding even yet 750  
 Proud words that robbed him of all expectation.  
 Unable to endure such tribulation,  
 He said these final words before her door:  
 "You've conquered me, and you shall have no more  
 Discomfort from me now. Accordingly  
 Prepare yourself at last for victory.  
 Woman of iron, I am now resigned  
 To die. Rejoice! At least, though, bear in mind  
 That in my passion you'll find some delight:  
 Remember that I lose a twofold light - 760  
 My love and life itself. No news will be  
 Relayed to you of my fatality.  
 No, I'll be there before your very eyes  
 As proof that you're the cause of my demise.  
 You gods, if you've some knowledge of the ways  
 Of men, remember me whose tongue now prays  
 No longer, and let me in future be  
 Of some renown since you have cheated me  
 Of a long life." Then, looking at the door  
 That had been wreathed so many times before, 770  
 His pale arms raised, he started fastening  
 A noose and uttered, "Do these garlands bring  
 You joy, cruel maid?" Into the noose his head  
 He thrust, then he dropped down and hung there dead,  
 His eyes on her. His feet then shook as he  
 Battered the door with them, which seemingly  
 Made groans. The door flew open then to show  
 The dreadful sight. The servants, full of woe,  
 Cried out. They tried to save him but then bore  
 Him to his mother's house (some time before 780  
 His father died). She held him to her breast,  
 Embracing his cold limbs. Once she'd expressed  
 A mother's grief, across the streets she led  
 The funeral train, the coffin of the dead  
 Upon the bier, and in the central square  
 Iphis was laid. It happened that near there  
 The maid's house stood. The sounds of misery  
 She heard. Roused by a vengeful deity,  
 She said, "Let's see these rites!" and then she hied  
 Up to the house's roof which was supplied 790  
 With windows. But almost immediately  
 Her eyes grew stiff and she turned totally

Pallid, which left her bloodless. As she tried  
 A backward step, she found that she was tied  
 To earth's roots. As she tried to turn away,  
 She could not, and the stone that long held sway  
 Within her heart possessed her thoroughly.  
 You doubt this tale? There is an effigy  
 Of her in Salamis, and Venus, too,  
 The watchful goddess. I'm advising you                      800  
 To shun disdain and cheerfully unite  
 With one who loves you, nymph. May frost not bite  
 Your fruits nor scatter them!" Vertumnus, who  
 Dismissed the crone's form and was born anew  
 As a young man, who'd said this fruitlessly,  
 Began to blaze with luminosity  
 Just like the sun when it is unimpeded  
 By clouds. The force he planned was not now needed,  
 For by this new-made god she was obsessed  
 And by this mutual ardency possessed.                      810  
 Unjust Amulius now ruled this land  
 By force with all the wealth in his command.  
 But Numitor with his two grandsons' aid  
 Captured the realm he'd lost, and thus was made  
 The city of Rome upon the very day  
 Pales was honoured. Almost straightaway  
 The Sabine monarch Tatius went to war  
 With Rome. Tarpeia then was punished for  
 Giving him access to the citadel -  
 Crushed by a heap of weaponry she fell                      820  
 And died. The men of Cures silently,  
 Like wolves, subdued the Roman enemy  
 Who were asleep and tried the gates the son  
 Of Ilia had barred. Saturnian  
 Juno unbarred the hinges silently,  
 And it was only Venus who would see  
 Her do it, and she would have closed it, too,  
 Were it not wrong for a deity to undo  
 Another's actions. The naiads from there  
 Possessed a place where they resided, where                      830  
 Janus's temple stood and a cold spring  
 Refreshed it. Venus asked the nymphs to bring  
 Her succour, and with her solicitation  
 They all concurred. So the co-operation  
 Of the spring's waves she gained. Till then, the pass  
 To Janus' shrine was open, but, alas,  
 They laid hot sulphur of faint azure hue  
 Beneath the spring, applying fire to  
 The pitch. By this and many a violent course  
 The vapours reached the fountain's very source.                      840  
 Those waters which in their frigidity

Were like the Alps now showed their rivalry  
 With flames! And while the gatepost steamed with spray,  
 The gate, opened in vain to lead the way  
 Inside for Sabines, could not now be passed  
 Because of that hot fountain, till at last  
 The Romans gained their arms. The men were led  
 By Romulus, the Roman soil soon spread  
 With the corpses of the dead from either nation,  
 And thus the weapon of abomination 850  
 Quelled father-in-law and son-in-law. Then peace  
 Was chosen that would bring the war surcease,  
 Thus saving many lives and sanctioning  
 Both Romulus and Tatius to be king  
 Of Rome together. Then the god of war  
 Took off his helmet as he stood before  
 Lord Jove and said to him, "A strong foundation  
 Has been established for the Roman nation,  
 And in the future we should not rely  
 On just one man. So raise my grandson high 860  
 Up to the heavens (as you promised me),  
 For you once told me in a colloquy  
 In Heaven (for your words, gracious and kind,  
 Are living still in my retentive mind),  
 "There will be one I'll raise up high." Allow  
 Your words to be authenticated now."  
 He nodded his assent and dimmed the sky  
 With heavy clouds and sent down from on high  
 Thunder and lightning. Mars immediately  
 Perceived this as a sign, transparently 870  
 Given for change. So, leaning on his spear,  
 He made a leap without a hint of fear  
 Upon his chariot. Over its bloodstained yoke  
 He urged his eager horses as he broke  
 The silence with his lash on his descent,  
 And to the wooded Palatine he went,  
 Where Romulus made laws fit for no king,  
 And, like a ball of lead shot from a sling,  
 His mortal flesh dissolved and he was given  
 A nobler shape more fitting for high Heaven, 880  
 Now Quirinus in ceremonial dress,  
 A form to signify his holiness.  
 Hersilia, his wife, was lost in grief  
 When Juno bade Iris bring her relief  
 And say "O glory of the Latin race  
 And of the Sabines, too, lady of grace,  
 The consort of the stalwart Romulus  
 And chosen now as wife of Quirinus,  
 The god, you must not weep for him. If you  
 Desire to see him, let me take you to 890

The grove that shades the temple of the king  
Upon Quirinus Hill." Surrendering  
To Juno's will, upon her tinted bow  
Iris glissaded to the earth below  
With Juno's message. Hersilia's reply,  
With modest look and barely lifted eye,  
Was "Goddess (though I may not speak your name,  
You still must be a goddess all the same),  
Please take me to him now! If Destiny  
Will but permit me once again to see 900  
My darling husband Romulus, I'll say  
That Heaven is mine." Then they both made their way  
To Romulus's hill. Then through the air  
There fell a star, wherefrom Hersilia's hair  
Was set alight, and as the star retreated  
She disappeared with it and then was greeted  
Warmly by Romulus, who changed her name  
As well as her old shape and she became  
The goddess Hora, and her Romulus  
Would ever be the sacred Quirinus. 910