

Then a bird really, and its pinions whirred,
 And there were countless sisters whirring with it,
 All from that heavenly source, and round the pyre
 Three times they flew, three times their noisy clamor
 Rose up to air, and then the flock divided
 Into two tribes, which warred against each other
 With beak and talons, wearying wing and breast
 In the fierce struggle, and came fluttering down
 As funeral offerings to the buried ashes,
 Their father and their hero. And his name
 Was given them, Daughters of Memnon; still,
 Each year, they fight and die again, to honor
 Their father's festival.

And so Aurora

Kept her own grief and could not join the others
 To weep for Hecuba, barking, and to this day
 She weeps, at times, and dewes the world with tears.

The Pilgrimage of Aeneas

And yet the Fates did not permit Troy's hopes
 To perish with her walls, for Venus' son,
 Aeneas, carried with him on his shoulders
 Her sacred relics, and another burden,
 His venerable father. His devotion
 Made that one choice from all his wealth, and with them
 He took his son, Ascanius. The fleet
 Sailed from Antandros, north to Thrace and south,
 Leaving that land of crime, where Polydorus
 Lay in his blood. The winds and tides were kind,
 And so they came to Delos, where the king,
 Priest of Apollo, Anius, gave them welcome,
 Showed them his city, the well-known shrines, the trees,
 Olive and palm, to which Latona clung
 To help her in her labor. They burned incense,
 Poured wine, slew cattle in sacrifice, burnt entrails
 In the altar-fires, then came to the high halls,

Rested on lofty couches, took the bread
 Of Ceres and the wine of Bacchus' giving,
 And old Anchises spoke: "O priest of Phoebus,
 Am I in error, or, when first I came here,
 Did you not have four daughters, and a son?"
 Anius answered sadly: "No, great hero,
 You are not wrong, I once did have five children.
 Now, for the things of men are always shifting,
 I have almost none. My son has gone to Andros,
 An island named for him, and he is king there,
 Of little help to me; Apollo gave him
 The power of augury, but to my daughters
 Bacchus gave other gifts, beyond their power
 To hope for. Let me tell you more about them.

The Story of Anius' Daughters

Their touch could turn all things to corn and wine
 And gray-green olive; there was richness in them.
 This Agamemnon, ravager of Troy,
 Found out (your storms have swept our island also),
 Used force, dragged off my daughters, all unwilling,
 From their father's arms, told them to use their powers
 To feed the Grecian fleet. As best they could,
 They managed to escape; two sought Euboea,
 Two found their brother's Andros, but the soldiers
 Came after them: *Give up the girls*, they told him,
Or face the threat of war. His fear was greater
 Than brotherly affection, you could not blame him
 Too much for being timid; no Aeneas
 Was here to help him, and no Hector, either,
 Through whom you Trojans won ten years' endurance.
 The chains were ready for their arms; those arms,
 Still free, were raised to Heaven. 'Father Bacchus,
 Bring help!' they cried, and Bacchus heard and helped them,
 If you can call it help, in some strange fashion
 To lose their human form. I never knew,

I could not tell you, now, just how they lost it,
 I know the sum and substance of my evil:
 They took on wings, plumage, the color of snow,
 They were doves, the birds of Venus.”

With such stories

They filled the banquet till the feast was ended,
 Rested, and rose, and went to seek Apollo
 Whose oracle told them: *Seek your ancient mother!*

The Pilgrimage Resumed

Anius sped their going: he brought presents,
 A sceptre for Anchises, a robe and quiver
 For young Ascanius, and for Aeneas
 A bowl which once a guest of his named Therses
 Had brought him from Aonia. The gift
 Was Therses', but the artistry was Alcon's,
 Carved with this long device: there was a city,
 You could see its seven gates, and therefore know it
 For Thebes; before the city funeral rites
 Were visible, tombs, and blazing pyres, and women
 With streaming hair and naked breasts, grief-ridden.
 And the Nymphs appeared to weep in lamentation
 For their dry springs, and the trees were bare and leafless,
 Goats nibbled stony outcrop; in the streets
 Orion's daughters stood and fell, one striking
 Her own throat with the kind of wound no woman
 Should kill with, and the other, with a shuttle,
 Inflicting futile blows, both falling victims
 For the people's sake, and borne in funeral pomp
 Through the mourning town to ceremonial fires,
 And then, so that the race might not be ended,
 Out of the virgin ashes came to birth
 The two young men whom fame has named Coroni,
 Joining the solemn rites their mothers' dust
 Makes due demand of. So the gleaming figures
 Told, on the antique bronze, the ancient story.

Around the lip of the bowl, rough-carved in gold,
 Acanthus wove, and for such gifts the Trojans
 Gave others of no less worth, a box for incense,
 A saucer for libation, and a crown
 Gleaming with gems and gold.

Remembering

Their race had come from Teucer, they went on
 To Crete, but drought and pestilence fought against them,
 They left those hundred cities, and went on
 With eager spirit for the Ausonian coast
 Through raging winter seas, and in one harbor,
 Just at the turning point, the wingèd harpy,
 Aello, terrified them: they went on,
 On past Dulichium, Samos, Ithaca,
 The realm of false Ulysses, past Ambracia,
 For which the gods had argued once, and where
 The judge in the dispute was changed to stone—
 (Apollo's temple stands there now)—beyond
 Dodona with its speaking oaks, beyond
 Chaonia's bay, where King Molossus' sons
 Grew wings to flee from sacrilegious fires,
 On to Phaeacia, where the orchards grew,
 On to Buthrotum, where King Helenus
 Had made his little Troy, and where he gave them
 Much friendly prophecy to aid their journey.
 So they came on to Sicily, whose three headlands
 Face to the sea, Pachynos looking southward,
 And Lilybaeum westward, and Pelorus
 Facing the Bear in the north, and here they entered,
 Reaching, in the dark, the sandy beach of Zancle.
 Scylla was deadly on the right, Charybdis
 A menace on the left: one sucks down vessels
 And spews them up again, the waist of the other
 Belted with savage hounds. She has the face
 Of a pure virgin, and unless the poets
 Have told us lies, she really was a virgin

Once on a time, and she had many suitors,
 And scorned them all, and hid among the sea-nymphs
 Who loved her dearly, and she used to tell them
 How she escaped her lovers. Galatea
 Was there, and, sighing as she let Charybdis *Sylla*
 Comb out her hair, began to tell a story.

The Story of Galatea

“At least, dear virgin, you have men as wooers,
 A not unpleasing race; you can repulse them,
 And do, and have no fear, but I, whose father
 Is Nereus and whose mother blue-green Doris,
 Whose throng of sisters keep me safe, I could not
 Flee from the passionate Cyclops without suffering.”
 She could say no more for weeping, but Charybdis, *Sylla*
 White-fingered, dried her tears, offered her comfort,
 “Go on, my dearest,” she said, “do not conceal it,
 The reason for your sorrow; you can trust me,
 You know you can.” The Nereid continued:
 “Acis was son of Faunus and Symaethis,
 A great delight to his father and his mother,
 Greater to me; he loved me with all his heart.
 He was sixteen, and beautiful and young,
 And downy-cheeked. I must say, I pursued him,
 Incessantly, incessantly the Cyclops
 Kept on pursuing me. I cannot tell you
 Which was the stronger in me, my love for Acis,
 My hatred for that creature: both were equal.
 How mighty is the power of loving Venus!
 That savage, whom the very forest trembles
 To look upon, whom never a stranger sees
 Without being hurt, the scorner of Olympus,
 He feels the power of love, a captive, burning
 With terrible passion, wandering forgetful
 Of flocks and caves. His name was Polyphemus,
 And you should have seen him, suddenly taking pains

With his appearance, trying to cultivate
 The art of pleasing, using a rake to comb
 His shaggy mop, resorting to a sickle
 To trim his beard, using a pool for mirror
 To see his ugly features, making faces
 He thought would be more winsome, all his love
 For murder gone, and all his thirst for blood,
 And ships sailed in and out again in safety.
 And Telamus came there at the time, the son
 Of Eurymus, one whom no omen ever
 Had led to error, and he told the giant
That single eye in the middle of your forehead
Ulysses will take away! But Polyphemus
 Mocked him and called him stupid. *You are wrong,*
 He jeered, *Another has caught my eye already!*
 And so he scorned the man who tried to warn him,
 Clumped heavily along the shore, or lumbered
 Wearily home to his dark cave at evening.
 There is a hill there, wedge-shaped, running out
 Into the sea, and the waves wash around it.
 There Polyphemus came, and there he sat,
 And all his woolly sheep came trooping after,
 Obedient creatures, for he never led them.
 There he laid down the pine-tree that had served him
 As staff—it would have held a vessel’s yardarms.
 There he took out his rustic pipe; it had
 A hundred reeds, and all the waves and mountains
 Were bound to listen. In the shade of a rock,
 Resting in Acis’ arms, far off, I could hear
 The words he sang, and never could forget them.

The Song of Polyphemus

‘O Galatea’ (he sang) ‘whiter than privet,
 Bloominger than the meadows, slenderer
 Than the long alder-tree, brighter than glass,
 More capering than the tender kid, and smoother

Than shells worn down by everlasting waves,
 More welcome than sun in winter, shade in summer,
 Lovelier than apples, more worth looking at
 Than sycamores, translucenter than ice,
 Sweeter than grapes when ripe, and softer even
 Than swan's-down ever, or cottage cheese, more lovely
 (On one condition: that you do not flee me)
 Than a well-watered garden. But, Galatea,
 You are more obstinate than untrained heifers,
 Harder than ancient oaks, falsier than waters,
 Harder to bend than willow-withe and briony,
 Harder to move than rocks, more violent
 Than mountain torrents, vainer than a peacock
 When people praise him, crueller than fire,
 Sharper than thistles, deafier than the sea,
 And more aggressive than a pregnant bear,
 More pitiless than a trodden snake, and worst
 Of all, and I wish that I could stop it,
 Swifter not only than the deer the hounds
 Go barking after, but swifter than winds or breezes.
 But if you knew me well, you would regret it,
 This running off, you would come to me and seek me.
 I own a part of the mountain, caves that hide
 Under the living rock, where midsummer sun,
 Midwinter cold, do never come. I have apples
 That weight the trees down, grapes as yellow as gold
 On the long vines, and purple ones; the yellow
 And purple ones I have been keeping for you,
 And your own hand can pick the strawberries
 Sweet in the shade of the woods, and the autumn cherries,
 And plums, not only the juicy purple-black ones,
 But the new kind, the big ones, yellow as wax,
 And there are chestnuts for you and arbuté-fruit
 If I can be your husband, and every tree
 Is at your service.

‘All this flock is mine,

And there are many wandering the valleys
 Or hiding in the woods, or in stalls in the caves,
 I do not know how many, only poor men
 Can count their cows, and you need not believe me
 If I should praise them; you can see for yourself
 How the swollen milk-bags bother them in walking,
 And I have lambs, and kids, there is always plenty
 Of milk like snow, and some is kept for drinking,
 Some to make cheese with.

‘As for pets, you would not
 Like something easy to get, like deer or rabbits
 Or goats or doves or a nest of little birds,
 I found two bear-cubs on the top of the mountain
 For you to play with, you can hardly tell them
 One from the other: I said, as soon as I caught them,
I'll keep these for my lady!

‘Galatea,
 Lift up your shining head from the blue water,
 Now come, and do not scorn my gifts. I know,
 Surely I know, myself; I saw me lately
 In a clear pool, and liked myself. Just look
 How big I am! Jove up there in the sky—
 You always talk about some Jove or other
 Who rules up there—he can't be any bigger.
 Plenty of hair gets in my eyes and shadows
 My shoulders like a grove. Don't think it ugly
 If my whole body is covered thick with bristles:
 A tree is ugly without its leaves, a horse
 Ugly without a mane, and birds have feathers
 And sheep have wool, so beards and hair on the chest
 Are the sign of a man. In the middle of my forehead
 I have one eye, so what? Does not the Sun
 See all things here on earth from his high Heaven?
 And the great Sun has only one eye.

My father
 Rules in your seas, and I am giving him to you

For father-in-law. Oh, pity me and listen!
 I bow to you alone, I, who scorn Jove,
 His sky, his thunderbolts, I fear you only,
 Your anger is more deadly than the lightning,
 And this I could endure with greater patience
 If only you scorned the others, but why, oh why,
 Reject a Cyclops and fall in love with Acis,
 Prefer this Acis to my hugs and kisses?
 Let him please himself, but I wish, I wish, he did not
 Please Galatea! Let him give me a chance,
 He will find me just as strong as I am big,
 I will tear his guts out, I will pull him to pieces,
 Scatter him over the fields and over the seas,
 To lie with you so! I burn, and my passion, slighted,
 Rages more hotly in me; I seem to carry
 All Etna in my breast, and Galatea,
 You do not care at all.'

The Transformation of Acis

“All his complaining
 (The nymph resumed) was vain, and up he rose,
 I saw him, like a bull in rut, who cannot
 Hold still when someone has taken a heifer from him,
 But charges through the woodlands and the pasture,
 And when he saw my lover and me together,
 Both unsuspecting, he bellowed out, ‘I see you,
 I’ll make this the last time you get together!’
 His voice was big and terrible as a Cyclops
 Should roar with in his anger, Etna heard it
 And trembled, and I dove into the ocean
 In panic terror, but Acis turned to run
 Crying ‘O help me, Galatea, help me,
 Father and mother, take me to your kingdom
 Before I die!’ And Polyphemus chased him,
 Wrenched off a piece of the mountain, flung it at him,
 And though it was only the smallest edge and corner

That struck him, that was enough to bury Acis.
 But I, it was all I could do, saw that Acis
 Assumed the magic of his ancestors:
 Red blood came trickling from the mass, and faded,
 And turned the color of a torrent swollen
 By the spring rains, and then it cleared entirely,
 And the bulk of the earth was split, and through the cleft
 A reed grew tall, and the rock’s hollow sounded
 With gushing water, and, wonderful to tell,
 A youth was standing there, waist-deep in the current,
 Rushes around his new-formed horns, my Acis,
 But larger than in life, and with the color
 Of blue-green water-gods, but still my Acis,
 Whose waters keep their former name.”

The Story of Glaucus

So ended

The story, and the Nereids went their ways
 Swimming the peaceful waters. Scylla only,
 Fearing the far-off deeps, came wandering back
 To the shore, and there she strolled along, all naked
 Over the thirsty sands, or, growing weary,
 Found some safe pool to swim in. But here came Glaucus,
 Sounding his shell across the sea, a dweller
 New-come to ocean: change had come upon him,
 Not so long since, near Anthedon, in Euboea.
 He saw her, and he loved her, and he said
 Whatever words might make her pause to listen,
 But she was frightened, and fled, and swift in her fear
 Raced to the top of a mountain that hung over
 The shore, one sharp high peak, whose shadow fell
 Far over the water. Here she was safe, and watched him,
 Monster or god, wondering at his color,
 The hair that fell across his back and shoulders,
 The fish-form fig-leaf at his groin. He saw her,
 Leaned on a nearby mass of rock, called to her: “Maiden,

I am no freak, no savage beast, I am
 A sea-god; neither Proteus nor Triton
 Nor Athamas' son Palaemon, none of these
 Has greater power than I. I once was mortal,
 But even then devoted to deep waters
 From which I earned my living. Thence I drew
 My nets, or by the ocean side I dangled
 My rod and line. I can recall a shore
 That bordered on green meadows, which no cattle,
 No sheep, no goats, had ever grazed, no bees
 Came there for honey, and no garlands ever
 Were gathered there, nor sickle plied. I first
 Came there and dried my nets and lines and spread them
 Along that bank, counting the fish I caught
 By luck or management or their own folly.
 It will sound to you, no doubt, like a fishy story,
 But why should I tell you lies?—My catch, on touching
 The grass, began to stir, to turn, to swim,
 To jump on the land the way they did in the water.
 And as I stood in wonder, they slipped down
 Into their native element, and left me.
 I was a long time wondering: had some god
 Done this, or was there magic in the grasses?
 I plucked a blade and chewed it, and its flavor
 Had hardly touched my tongue, when suddenly
 My heart within me trembled, and I felt
 An overwhelming longing: I must change
 My way of life. I could not stand against it,
 'Farewell, O Earth!' I cried, 'Farewell forever!
 And plunged into the sea, whose gods received me
 With every honor, and called on Oceanus
 And Tethys, to dissolve my mortal nature.
 They purged me of it, first with magic singing,
 Nine times repeated, then with river water
 Come from a hundred streams, and I remember
 No more, but when my sense returned I knew I was

A different kind of creature, body and spirit.
 I saw, for the first time, this beard, dark-green,
 These locks that flow behind me over long waves,
 These shoulders and blue arms, these legs that trail
 Into a fish-like end, and all of this
 Of little good to me. Where is the profit
 In being a sea-gods' sea-god, if my Scylla
 Cares not at all?" There was more he would have spoken,
 But Scylla fled once more, and he, in anger,
 Went to the marvellous palace-halls of Circe,
 The daughter of the Sun.

BOOK XIV

The Story of Glaucus Continued

Glaucus, the haunter of the swollen waves,
 Had passed by Etna, heaped on the giant's head,
 Passed the unplowed, unharrowed fields which owed
 No debt to any cattle; he went on
 Past Regium's walls, past Zancle, through the straits
 Dangerous to mariners from either land,
 Ausonia or Sicily, and he swam,
 Untiring, through the Tuscan sea, and came
 To the grassy hills and court of that enchantress,
 Circe, the daughter of the Sun, where beasts,
 Or phantoms of them, thronged. He saw her there,
 Gave and received a welcome, and went on:
 "Goddess, have pity on a god, I pray you!
 No one but you can help me, if I seem
 Worthy of help. Better than any man,
 I know the magic power of herbs and grasses,
 For I was changed by them. What caused my passion
 You may already know: on Italy's coast,
 Across from Messina's walls, I have seen Scylla.
 I am ashamed to tell the promises,
 The prayers, the flattering words I wasted on her.

But you, if there is power in your charms,
 Sing me a charm, or, if the herbs are stronger,
 Use their tried strength. To heal these wounds, to cure me,
 Is more than I expect, but let her suffer
 Part of this heat that burns me." No one's heart
 Was ever more susceptible than Circe's,
 Why, no one knows: it may be that the cause
 Lay in her very nature, or maybe Venus,
 Angry about her father's gossiping,
 Had made her what she was. She answered Glaucus:
 "You would be doing better if you followed
 Someone who wanted you and prayed for you,
 Possessed with equal passion. You were worthy,
 Surely you were, to be pursued; you could be,
 And, if you give the least excuse, you will be,
 Oh, never doubt it; never doubt your gift,
 The power to charm: I, goddess though I am,
 The daughter of the shining Sun, the mistress
 Of charms and herbs, beg to be yours. Scorn her
 Who looks on you with scorn, repay with love
 The one who loves you, and so repay us both."
 But Glaucus answered: "Leaves will grow on the sea,
 And sea-weed flourish on the mountain-tops,
 Before I change my love, while Scylla lives."
 Circe was angry; she could not harm the god,
 And would not harm the god, because she loved him,
 And turned her wrath on her successful rival.
 Offended, hurt, she crushed together herbs
 Whose juices had a dreadful power, and, singing
 Spells she had learned from Hecate, she mixed them.
 Then she put on a robe of blue, she left
 Her palace-halls, through beasts that fawned around her,
 And went to Regium, opposite Zancle's coast.
 Over the boiling tide she sped, dry-shod,
 As if on solid ground. There was a pool,
 Not very large, into a deep bow curving,

A peaceful place, where Scylla loved to come,
 Where she would flee from the heat of sea and sky
 When sun burned hot at noon and shadows dwindled.
 And Circe dyed this pool with bitter poisons,
 Poured liquids brewed from evil roots, and murmured,
 With lips well-skilled in magic, and thrice nine times,
 A charm, obscure with labyrinthine language.
 There Scylla came; she waded into the water,
 Waist-deep, and suddenly saw her loins disfigured
 With barking monsters, and at first she could not
 Believe that these were parts of her own body.
 She tried to drive them off, the barking creatures,
 And flees in panic, but what she runs away from
 She still takes with her; feeling for her thighs,
 Her legs, her feet, she finds, in all these parts,
 The heads of dogs, jaws gaping wide, and hellish.
 She stands on dogs gone mad, and loins and belly
 Are circled by those monstrous forms. And Glaucus
 Wept at the sight, fled the embrace of Circe,
 Too cruel with her potent herbs, but Scylla
 Remained there fixed, and when a chance was given
 To vent her hate on Circe, she robbed Ulysses
 Of all his company, and would have wrecked
 The Trojan ships as well, but she was changed,
 Before their coming, to a rock, which stands there,
 Dreaded by sailors, to this very day.

The Pilgrimage of Aeneas Resumed

The Trojan ships, without mishap, made voyage
 Past Scylla and Charybdis, almost reached
 Ausonian shores, when the wind veered and drove them
 To Libya's coast, where the Sidonian queen,
 Dido, received their king in home and heart,
 And could not bear his going, but built a pyre,
 Pretending these were sacred rites, and fell,
 Dying, upon the sword. Herself deceived,

She deceived others. And Aeneas left
 The new town on the sandy shore, went back
 To Sicily, land of Eryx, and his friend
 The King Acestes, and he paid due honors
 There to Anchises' tomb, and loosed again
 The ships that Iris, messenger of Juno,
 Had almost burned; they passed the Aeolian isles,
 The lands that reeked with sulphur, the rocky coast
 The Sirens haunted. In those seas his ship
 Had lost his pilot, but they coasted on
 Past Inarime, Prochyte, Pithecusae,
 A town on a barren hill, named for its natives,
 Where once the father of the gods, who hated
 Cecropian tricks and lies, and all the crimes
 That treacherous race committed, changed the men
 To ugly beasts, human, and yet not human,
 With stunted limbs, snub-nosed and deeply wrinkled,
 And sent them here, with their bodies covered over
 With long and yellow hair, but he took from them
 The power of speech, the use of tongues, and left them
 No syllables except hoarse grating sounds
 Useful, no more for perjury, but protesting.
 From there, he left Parthenope's walled city
 On his right hand, and, opposite, he passed
 Misenus' tomb, and came to Cumae's shores,
 Marsh-lands, and found the caverns of the Sibyl,
 The long-lived prophetess, and prayed for passage
 Through Hell's dark realm to see his father's shade.
 She kept her eyes cast down, it seemed forever,
 But lifted them at last, and with the god
 Possessing her, replied: "Great are the things
 You ask for, O great hero, but your hand
 The sword has tested, and the fire has proved
 The power of your devotion. Have no fear.
 Your wish is granted, Trojan; with my guidance
 You shall behold Elysium, the last realms

Of all the world, and you shall see the shade
 Of your loved father. Every path lies open
 To virtue." And she showed him, deep in the forest,
 The golden bough, and he, obedient, took it
 At her command, and saw the dreadfulness
 Of Hell, and his ancestral shades, among them
 The aged ghost of the great-souled Anchises.
 He learned the laws that govern there, what dangers
 He had to face in wars to come, and upward
 Retraced his steps, and as he trod that road,
 Dreadful in dimness, he beguiled the journey
 In conversation with his guide. "I know not,"
 He said, "if you are goddess, or a maiden
 Most pleasing to the gods. I know that I
 Will hold you as a goddess, and I know
 I owe my life to you, since by your will
 I have approached Death's world, seen it, returning
 In safety from that world of Death. For this,
 When I have come again to the upper regions,
 I promise you a temple, and incense burning
 In everlasting honor for your service."
 Sighing, she answered: "I am not a goddess:
 Never consider any mortal woman
 Worthy of holy incense. Still, I would not
 Leave you in ignorance; I once was offered
 Eternal life, if I had let Apollo
 Take me, still virgin. While he still was hopeful,
 Seeking to bend my will with gifts, he told me
Choose what you will, O maid, and you shall have it.
 I pointed to a heap of sand and uttered
 The foolish prayer that my years might be as many
 As there were sand-grains in that mound. I should have
 Asked that those years should be forever young,
 But I forgot. He granted me the years,
 And promised endless youth if he could have me,
 But I refused Apollo, and no man

Has ever had me. Now my happier days
 Are gone, and sick old age comes tottering on,
 And this I must endure, for a long time.
 I am seven hundred years of age; I have
 Three hundred still to go, before I equal
 The tally of those grains of sand. The time
 Will come when I shall shrivel to almost nothing,
 Weigh almost nothing, when no one, seeing me,
 Would ever think a god had found me lovely.
 Even Apollo, it may be, will see me
 And not know who I am, or, if he knew me,
 Would say he never loved me. To such change
 I am borne onward, till no eye can see me,
 And I am known by voice alone; my voice
 The Fates will leave me."

Along the hollow way

The Sibyl told her story, and they came
 Out of the Stygian world, again to Cumae,
 Where the due rites were given, and the hero
 Went on to shores that later bore the name
 Of his old nurse, Caieta. There he found
 Macareus, an old comrade of Ulysses,
 Who stayed there after years of wandering.
 Here two Greeks met again: Macareus
 Once more saw Achaemenides, and knew him,
 Long since given up for lost, among the rocks
 Of Etna. "Now what god, what chance," he asked him,
 "Has saved you, Achaemenides? How is it
 A Greek sails in a Trojan ship? And whither?"
 The other, his own man once more, no longer
 In rags and tatters, garments pinned together
 With thorns, made answer: "May I look again
 On Polyphemus and those open jaws
 Dripping with human blood, if ever I call
 My home and Ithaca more friendly to me,
 More of a haven than this ship has been,

Whose captain, kinder to me than a father,
 I owe more gratitude than I can pay.
 I speak, I breathe, I see the stars and sunlight,
 Because he saved me: should I not be thankful?
 Because of him my life escaped the jaws
 Of Polyphemus; were I, now, to leave
 The light of life, I should, at least, be buried
 In a decent tomb, and not that monster's belly.

Achaemenides Tells His Story

What were my feelings (except that fear took from me
 All sense, all feeling) when I was left behind
 And watched you making for the open seas?
 I would have called, but feared to make a sound
 That might betray me; even Ulysses' cry
 Was almost fatal to your ship. I saw him,
 The giant, when he wrenched a rock from the mountain
 And hurled it out to sea, saw him let fly
 Great stones, as if his arms were catapults,
 And feared that the splash of the stones, or the wind
 of their motion
 Would sink the ship; I forgot I was not in her.
 And while you fled from certain death, he, groaning,
 Rambled all over Etna, groped through woodlands,
 Bumped blindly into rocks, stretched bleeding arms
 Out over the sea, and cursed the Greeks, and muttered:
 'Oh, for some piece of luck, to bring Ulysses
 Within my reach again, or one of his comrades,
 Any one, for my rage to feed on, vitals
 To eat, body to tear apart, and blood
 To flood my throat, and mangled limbs to quiver
 My blindness would be nothing then, or nearly.'
 He said much more, and I was pale with horror
 Watching that face, still smeared with blood, the eye
 With no sight in it, the cruel hands, the limbs,
 The beard, matted with human blood. Death stood there,

The least of all my troubles. I imagined
 He would catch me any minute, take my flesh
 Into his own, and I could see the time
 When he snatched up two friends of mine together
 And smashed them on the ground, and lay across them
 Like a lion on his prey, gauming and crunching
 The marrow bones, the limbs with life still in them.
 I trembled and my blood ran cold, to watch him
 Chewing and slavering and drooling blood
 With bits of flesh mixed in the wine, and knew
 My time was coming. For many days I hid,
 Trembling at every sound, fearing my death
 Yet longing for it, driving off my hunger
 With acorns, grass and leaves. I had no help,
 No hope, forsaken, doomed to suffering
 And death. And, after a long time, I saw,
 Far off, this ship, gestured to them *Come save me!*
 Ran down to the shore, I moved their hearts, a Greek
 Was taken on a Trojan ship! Now tell me
 What happened to you, your leader, and the band
 You sailed the seas with?" And Macareus told him
 How Aeolus ruled the Tuscan waters, keeping
 His winds imprisoned in a sack, and gave it
 As present to Ulysses. For nine days
 The wind blew fair astern; they sighted land,
 And in the morning, overcome by greed,
 Thinking the sack held gold, they loosed the cords,
 And the winds blew them back where they had started.
 "Then," said Macareus, "we came to the old city
 Of Lestrygonian Lamus; I was sent,
 With two companions, to their king. One comrade
 And I myself reached safety, but the third
 Was caught, and his blood dyed red the wicked mouths
 Of those wild Lestrygonians. Antiphates,
 The king, came after us; on came his mob,
 Hurling great stones and beams, to sink our ships,

To drown our men. One ship escaped, and I
 Was in it, with Ulysses, and we sorrowed
 For our companions lost, and came at last
 To the land that you can see from here, far off.
 Far off, believe me, is the way to see it!
 I warn you, son of Venus, righteous Trojan,
 Not enemy, now that the wars are over,
 Keep far from Circe's shores. We moored our ship
 Beside the shore, with no desire of going
 Inland for any distance: we remembered,
 Too well, Antiphates and Polyphemus.
 But the lots gave us orders: we were chosen,
 I and Polites, to approach the palace,
 Eurylochus went also, and Elpenor,
 Who liked his wine too much, and eighteen others.
 We came to Circe's city, and she stood there
 Within her courts, and a thousand wolves and bears
 And lionesses met us, and we feared them,
 For no good reason, for, it seemed, they would not
 Make even a single scratch upon our bodies.
 They even wagged their tails, and fawned upon us
 As we went on, until the serving-women
 Led us through halls of marble to their mistress.
 She sat there on her throne, in shining robes,
 With golden mantle, and the place was lovely,
 And nymphs and nereids were waiting on her,
 Carding no fleece, spinning no wool, but only
 Sorting out plants, arranging, from confusion,
 In separate baskets, the bright-colored flowers,
 The different herbs. She told them what to do,
 Knew what each leaf was for, which ones would blend,
 Weighing her simples. When she saw us coming,
 She gave us welcome, and she smiled upon us,
 Gave all we asked for, and she bade them bring us
 Barley and wine and honey and curdled cheese,
 All in a sweetish brew, and in the sweetness,

Were hidden drugs. We took the cups she offered,
 And we were thirsty, and we drank them down,
 And then the cruel goddess touched our foreheads
 With her magic wand—I am ashamed to tell you,
 But I will tell—I had bristles sprouting on me,
 I could not speak, but only grunting sounds
 Came out instead of words, and my face bent over
 To see the ground. I felt my mouth grow harder,
 I had a snout instead of a nose, my neck
 Swelled with great muscles, and the hand which lifted
 The cup to my lips made footprints on the ground.
 They shut me in a pigsty with the others.
 Her magic worked on all of us but one,
 Eurylochus; he had refused the potion.
 Had he not done so, I should even now
 Be in the bristly herd, but he told Ulysses
 Of our disaster, and that hero came
 To Circe to avenge us. He had a flower
 Cyllenius had given him, called moly,
 White, but the root is black, and safe with this
 And safe with warnings from the gods he came,
 Entered the palace, but when the drink was offered,
 He struck the wand aside, and drew his sword.
 That frightened Circe; vows were made; she took him
 Into her chamber, and for wedding gift,
 Since that was what the bridegroom asked, she gave him
 His friends restored. We were sprinkled with some juices,
 Better ones, from some herbs or other; she turned
 Her wand around, and tapped our foreheads lightly,
 Chanting her counter-charm, and as she chanted,
 The bristles dropped, feet were no longer cloven,
 We had our shoulders again, and arms came back
 To their right places. We were all in tears,
 So was Ulysses, as we all clung to him,
 And the first words we spoke were those of thanks.
 We stayed a year there, plenty long enough

For me to see a lot of things, to hear
 All kinds of stories. Here is one of many
 I heard from one of four, those nymphs, I mean,
 Whose tasks I told you of. One day when Circe
 Was with Ulysses somewhere, this nymph showed me
 A snow-white marble statue, a young man
 With a woodpecker on his head, and many garlands
 Hanging about it—this was in a temple.
 I asked her who it was, why he was worshipped,
 And why he wore a bird instead of helmet.
 ‘Listen, Macareus; learn from what I tell you
 How strong my lady’s magic is. But listen!

The Story of Picus

Picus was Saturn’s son; he was once a king
 In Italy, a passionate admirer
 Of horses useful in war. The statue tells you
 About his form, but in his living presence
 He was much more beautiful, and his spirit equalled
 His grace of body. He was hardly twenty
 When his good looks brought all the Dryads to him,
 And all the nymphs of the fountains, all the naiads
 From Albula’s stream or Numicus or Anio,
 From Almo, shortest of rivers, and rapid Nar
 From shady Farfar, from Diana’s pool,
 From other lakes nearby. He scorned them all
 And loved one nymph alone, Venilia’s daughter
 By the god from Thessaly, the two-faced Janus.
 She was ripe for marriage, and she came to Picus,
 Most dear of all her suitors. Rare indeed
 Her beauty was, but rarer still her gift
 For singing; that was why they called her Canens,
 The Singing Girl. Her song would move the woods,
 The rocks, would tame wild beasts, would stop the rivers,
 Would stay the wandering birds. One day she went
 Singing her songs across the fields, and Picus

Had gone to hunt wild boars. His war-horse pranced
 Beneath him as he rode, in crimson mantle
 With brooch of gold, and javelins held ready.
 And Circe came to those same woods, to gather
 Fresh herbs on those rich hills; she had left the regions
 Called by her name. She was watching from a thicket
 And saw the youth, and she was struck with wonder;
 The herbs she had gathered fell to the ground; she burned,
 All through, with fire, but she controlled her passion,
 Managed, almost, to get her thoughts in order,
 Was ready, in fact, to tell him what she wanted,
 But always he rode off, or other people
 Got in the way. “But you will not escape me,”
 She said, “not even on the wings of the wind,
 Not if I know myself, unless my magic
 Of herbs has gone, and my charms have lost their virtue.”
 And so she made a phantom boar, an image
 With no real substance, and she gave it orders
 To cross the trail before the prince, to hide
 In a grove where fallen trees lay thick, and forest
 Too dense for horse to enter. No sooner said
 Than done, and Picus, knowing no better, followed
 The shadow of his prey, leaped down, pursuing
 The vanity of his hope, on foot, a wanderer
 In woodland depths. She made up prayers and said them,
 Worshipping unknown gods with unknown singing,
 Her customary magic, which would cover
 The white moon’s face and darken the sun with cloud.
 So now the sky was darkened and a mist
 Rose thick from the ground, and Picus’ hunting comrades
 Wandered blind ways. The time and place were fitting
 And “Oh,” she said, “most beautiful youth, I beg you
 By those bright eyes that have captured mine, that beauty
 Which makes a goddess subject, heed my passion,
 Be son-in-law to the Sun, do not be cruel
 Scorning his daughter Circe.” But he repelled her

Fiercely, almost, and in answer to her pleading
 Replied: "Whoever you are, I am not yours; another
 Has taken and holds my love, and she will have it,
 I hope, forever, and I shall do no cheating
 While the Fates keep Canens for me." She tried again,
 Again, in vain, and then exclaimed in anger:
 "You shall be punished for this, you shall not be given
 To Canens any more, and you will learn
 What a woman, scorned in love, can do, that woman
 Being Circe, loved and scorned!" Twice to the west
 She turned, and twice to the east; three times she touched him
 With magic wand, and sang three spells. He turned
 To run, and was amazed that he ran more swiftly
 Than ever before, and he saw wings on his body,
 And, angry at this new bird, Picus, coming
 Into the Latin woods, he struck at the oak-trees
 With his hard beak, and his anger wounded the branches,
 And his wings were the color of his crimson mantle
 And the golden brooch he wore was changed to feathers,
 His neck encircled by a band of orange,
 Nothing he had before was left to Picus
 Except his name.

 'Meanwhile his comrades, calling
 Across the fields in vain, finding him nowhere,
 Came upon Circe, for the air had cleared,
 The clouds were driven away by wind and sunshine,
 And knew what she had done, and told her, bluntly,
 Their king must be returned, and their spears were ready
 For an attack upon her, but she sprinkled
 Poisonous juices on them, and called forth
 Night and the gods of Night from Hell and Chaos,
 Wailing to Hecate in long-drawn crying,
 And the woods leaped from their place, and the ground
 rumbled,
 The trees grew white, and the grass was clotted red
 Where the drops of poison fell, and stones, it seemed,

Made hoarse and bellowing sounds, dogs bayed, and the
 ground
 Crawled loathsome with black snakes, and the thin phantoms,
 The silent dead, fluttered around. The men
 Trembled and wondered, and she touched their faces,
 Trembling and wondering, with her wand; no man
 Was any longer man; they all were beasts,
 All different, all horrible.

 'It was evening
 By now, and Canens, longing, watching, waited
 Her lord's return, in vain. Her slaves, her people,
 Bore the bright torches through the woods to find him,
 And Canens wept, and tore her hair, and beat
 Her bosom, but that was not enough: she searched
 With a mad rushing or vain wandering over
 The Latin fields, over the hills, through valleys,
 Sleepless and fasting, wherever chance directed,
 For seven days. Tiber was last to see her,
 Grief-stained and travel-worn, resting her body
 Along his bank, weeping, and crying faintly
 In dying melody like the swan. Her marrow
 Dissolved, and into the thin air she vanished,
 But people know her story still, and the place
 Keeps the name Canens, given by ancient Musae.⁷
 Many such things (Macareus said) I heard
 And saw through that long year. We were slow and lazy
 From our long idleness, and had no relish
 For voyage when the order came, for Circe
 Had warned us of the perils of the ocean,
 The doubtful sea-lanes, the tremendous reaches.
 I was afraid to go, and I admit it,
 And so I stayed here."

 Somewhere on this coast
 The marble urn received Caieta's ashes,
 Nurse of Aeneas, and her tomb was graven
 With a brief epitaph: *Here I, Caieta,*

*Saved from Greek flame, was burned with proper fire
Through my dear son's devotion.*

The Pilgrimage of Aeneas Resumed

They loosed the cables
From that grassy shore, kept far from the treacherous island,
Made for the woody coast where shadowed Tiber
Roils yellow to the sea, and there Aeneas
Won a new bride and kingdom; there was warfare
With a fierce race, and violent Turnus battled
To keep his promised bride. Etruria clashed
In arms with Latium, victory was hard
To win through that long doubt, and both sides needed
To go for foreign aid, though many guarded
Rutulian and Trojan camps. Aeneas
Found help from Evander; Venulus in vain
Appealed to Diomedes. That Greek hero
Had built a city, Arpi, where he ruled
Lands that had come to him as marriage portion,
But when, at Turnus' order, Venulus
Asked for his aid, he said he could not grant it,
He had too little strength, he would not risk
Either himself or his bride's people in battle,
All his own warriors were gone. "I will tell you
The truth," he said, "much as I hate to tell it;
Believe me, these are no trumped-up excuses."

The Narrative of Diomedes

So he went on: "After high Troy came down
In fire, and the burned walls fed the Greek hunger,
And after Ajax, Oileus' son, had ravished
The virgin priestess and brought down upon us
The virgin goddess' anger, made us all
Pay for what he alone had done, we were driven
Over the angry waters, under lightning,
Through storm and dark, the rage of sky and sea,

Until we reached Caphereus, the summit
Of all our woes. I can sum it up by saying
That even Priam might have pitied us.
Minerva saved me from the waves, but I
Was driven once again from my home in Argos,
And that was Venus' doing; she remembered
The old wound I had given her, she took
Her vengeance, and on land and sea I suffered
So much that over and over I called happy
Those who had drowned, and wished I had been with them.
My comrades, too, were weary, begged me end
This wandering, but one of them, named Acmon,
Hot-tempered anyway, and even more so
From all we had been through, exclaimed in anger:
'What is there left to bear, O patient heroes?
What more can Venus do, even if she wants to?
As long as there is something left to fear,
There is room on us for wounds; but when the worst
Has happened, fear is trampled underfoot.
We are at last secure. So let her hear us,
Let her hate us, as I know she does, but still
We scorn her hatred, and her great power stands—
Or does it?—great before us.' So did Acmon,
Insulting Venus, rouse her former anger.
Only a few approved him; all the others,
The most of us, rebuked him, and he tried
To answer back, but both his voice and throat
Grew thin, his hair was feathers, and feathers covered
His different neck, and breast, and back; his arms
Grew heavier plumage, and his elbows curved
Into light wing-joints, and between his toes
Were webs, and his face grew hard, like horn, and ended
In a sharp beak. They looked at him in wonder,
Lycus and Idas, Nycteus, Rhexenor,
And while they wondered, all of them were like him,
Flying and flapping their wings around the rowers.

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METAMORPHOSES

translated by ROLFE HUMPHRIES



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