

# ARGONAUTICA

Apollonius Rhodius

Translated by Christopher Kelk

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## BOOK I

Phoebus, of ancient heroes' deeds I'll sing,  
Starting with you: they, at the ordering  
Of King Pelias, out through Pontus' gateway  
And then across its rocks, sailed clean away  
On well-benched *Argo* for the fleece of gold.  
A dreadful fate stayed for him he'd been told  
By an oracle – that he would slaughtered be  
Through the prompting of a man whom he would see  
One-sandalled, of the common folk. They say  
That not long after, Jason made his way 10  
By foot through chill Anaurus and, although  
He saved one sandal from the mud, even so  
He left the other mired in the sea.  
He reached King Pelias immediately  
To partake in a banquet he had planned  
For Poseidon, the god who'd sired him, and  
The other gods; no honour did he pay  
To Grecian Hera. So, without delay,  
Pelias eyed him and deliberated  
And a laborious voyage formulated 20  
That, being thrown amongst barbarian men  
Or sailing on the sea, never again  
Might he behold his native land. It's stated  
By ancient bards that Argos fabricated  
The ship with Athene's help. Now let me be  
The bard who sings the heroes' ancestry,  
Their names, the lengthy voyage, all that they  
Achieved while on they wandered. To my lay  
May the Muses lend their hand. Initially,  
I'll sing of Orpheus whom Calliope, 30  
They say, produced close to Pimpleis' height,  
When she with Oiagrus had spent a night  
Of love, the Cretan. With his songs' sweet sound  
The harsh rocks of the mountains all around  
He pacified, the rivers too, they say.  
Wild oaks, still tokens of his songs today,  
Growing on Thracian Zone's shore, close stand  
In rows, which Orpheus from the Pierian land  
Conducted thither with his soothing lute.  
And Aeson's son received him at the suit 40  
Of Chiron (he then held supremacy

Throughout Pieria) so he could be  
A sharer in his toils. There went as well  
Asterion, who by the whirling swell  
Of Apidanus' streams first saw the light  
(His father Kometes within the sight  
Of Mt. Phyes then dwelt – Peiresiae  
Was his abode: bonding as one nearby  
In deluge teemed great Apidanus and  
Mighty Enipeus), then, to join their band 50  
Polyphemus came, the son of Eilatus,  
Who once had fought among the vigorous  
Lapiths against the Centaurs. Now, despite  
Stiff limbs, his spirit still retained its might.  
Nor was Iphiclus left in Phylace  
For long (Aeson had wed Alcimede,  
His sister, there – with this as stimulation,  
He entered into the association).  
Nor did the ruler of sheep-rich Pherae,  
Admetus, stay beneath the mountain high 60  
Above Chalkodon. Nor yet in Alope  
Did those two men well-versed in trickery,  
Hermes's sons, Erytus and Echion,  
Each corn-rich, stay behind, and boldly on,  
To keep them company, with them one more -  
Their kin, whom Phthian Eupolemeia bore  
To Aithalus, where Amphryssos sweeps on,  
Myrmidon's child; those two were each the son  
Of Antianeira, child of Menetes.  
And then came Coronus, as well as these, 70  
The son of Kaineus, leaving rich Gyrton,  
A stalwart man but in this not alone –  
His father equalled him in gallantry.  
Caineus, it is preserved in poetry,  
Was killed by the Centaurs, while he was aside  
From the other leaders, routing far and wide  
The foe. In flight they could not move nor slay  
The man - unbowed and underneath the clay.  
Engulfed in sturdy pines. Then Mopsus went,  
From Titarus, who was pre-eminent 80  
In augury, tutored by Leto's son.  
Eurymadas was yet another one,  
The child of Ctimenus: in Ctimene,  
In Dolope, in the vicinity  
Of Lake Xynias, he dwelt. To co-exist  
With leaders, Actor sent into the list  
Menoitius from their home in Opoeis.

Teleus' son Eurytion took his place  
 As well, and stout Eurybates, the son  
 Of Actor's son Iros. Another one 90  
 Was Oileus, an expert in soldiery,  
 Well-skilled in striking at the enemy,  
 Breaking their ranks. Also Canethus sent  
 Euboean Kanthos, keen and vehement  
 (Abantias was his grandfather). To see  
 Cerinthus once again grim Destiny  
 Would not allow. For he would evermore,  
 With prophet Mopsus, on the distant shore  
 Of Libya lie slain. No agony's  
 Too great for mortals since for even these 100  
 Is Libya their grave – as far away  
 From Colchis as the rising of the day  
 Is from the setting sun. There Clytius  
 And Iphitus, sons of rich Eurytus,  
 Oechalia's lords, foregathered (his own bow  
 Apollo gave to Eurytus, although  
 He had no joy of it, for willingly  
 He clashed with him who gave it). Subsequently  
 Came the Ajaxes, not in unison  
 Nor from the same place, for they both had gone 110  
 To live far from Aegina, having slain  
 Phocus, their brother, a deed quite insane.  
 Peleus now lived in Phthia, Telamon  
 Still on the isle. The child of Teleon,  
 Bold Boutes from Cecropia, also went,  
 And spearsman Phaleros, for Alcon sent  
 Him there, his father. No more sons had he  
 To care for him in his senility.  
 Young and an only child, yet nonetheless  
 He sent him that he might show worthiness 120  
 Among bold heroes. Under Taenarus  
 Theseus, who was the most illustrious  
 Of the Erechtheids, had been restrained  
 By dark chains, for the same path he'd maintained  
 As Peirithus. Both, by their industry,  
 Would have effected, with them all to see,  
 A better outcome. Tiphys, Hagnias' child,  
 Predictor of when surging seas grow wild,  
 Of storms and when the time is right to sail,  
 Left Thespian Siphaes. Of avail 130  
 In urging him to join the hero throng  
 Was Athene, she herself going along,  
 A welcome friend. She was the very one

To build the swift ship, though Arestor's son,  
Argos, was her assistant. The best ship  
It was of all that ever made a trip.  
From Aerithyrea to join them there  
Was Pthlias who, through Dionysus's care,  
His father, near the springs of Asopus  
Settled in riches. Then, too, Tanaus 140  
And Areius, Bias's sons, who went  
From Argos, also the magnificent  
Leodokos, the issue of Pero,  
Neleus's daughter; she caused grievous woe  
To Melampus of Aeolia when he  
Strove in Iphiklus' stables. Nor do we  
Believe stout-hearted Heracles had spurned  
Determined Jason's call. No, when he learned  
Of heroes gathering while on his way  
To Argos from Arcadia that day, 150  
A live boar in his arms, which until then  
Had grazed the pasture in Lampeia's glen,  
In the great Erymanthian morass,  
And reached Mycenae's agora, that mass  
Of trussed-up boar he dropped and with a will  
Took off (although Eurystheus took it ill).  
Young Hylas, too, went with him, a true friend,  
To bear his arrows and his bow to tend.  
Then Nauplius, who was from the holy race  
Of Danaus: his ancestry we trace 160  
Through Clytonaeos and through Naubolos,  
And Lernus and Proitos and Nauplius:  
Poseidon's wife, Danaan Amymone,  
Bore him, a man who gained supremacy  
In seamanship. Last of the Argive men,  
Idmon, had known through augury even then  
His fate, yet went so that the Argive race  
Might not begrudge that he would earn a place  
Among the heroes. Abas, though, was not  
His actual father – he had been begot 170  
By Leto's son, among the celebrated  
Aeolians revered and educated  
By Leto's son himself in prophecy,  
In avian auspices and augury  
Through fire. Then Aetolian Leda pressed  
To join the throng from Sparta in the west  
Castor and stout Pollux, masterly  
With winged steeds; extended pregnancy  
Produced them in the House of Tyndareus

And in one birth; she managed to induce 180  
 Their going, for the thoughts that she possessed  
 Fit well a bride of Zeus. To join the rest,  
 From Arene Lynceus and proud Idas went,  
 Apharitos's sons, both confident  
 In their great might. If rumour tells no lies,  
 Lynceus had such perceptive eagle eyes  
 That they could penetrate the earth below.  
 Then Periclymenos was keen to go,  
 The eldest august Neleus had begot  
 In Argos: it had been his happy lot 190  
 That Lord Poseidon gave him boundless might,  
 Allowing him to take on in each fight  
 What shape he chose. Amphidamas went, too,  
 And Kepheus from Arcadia, both who  
 Lived in Tegea, on Apheidas' land,  
 Both sons of Aleus, and, close at hand,  
 Ancaeos, who was sent by Lycourgos,  
 Their elder brother, sire to Ancaeos,  
 But he was left behind that he might tend  
 The aged Aleos, though glad to send 200  
 Ancaeos with his brothers. At their side  
 He was wrapped in a Maenalian bear-hide,  
 A massive, two-edged axe in his right hand,  
 For, to prevent his entering that band,  
 His grandfather had, deep within his den,  
 Concealed his arms.. Augeias followed then  
 (Eëlius' son, they say) – he was the king  
 Of Eleia, in riches glorying.  
 He longed to see Colchis and Aeëtes,  
 The ruler of that country. Next to these 210  
 Asterios and Amphion appeared,  
 The sons of Hyperasius, both reared  
 In Achaean Pellene, founded by  
 Their grandfather and perching way up high  
 Upon Aegalios. Leaving the land  
 Of Taenarus, Euphemos joined that band,  
 Poseidon's son – Europe gave him birth,  
 Stout Tityos's daughter – on this earth  
 No-one was swifter: on the grey-green sea  
 He sped and such was his rapidity 220  
 Only his toes got wet. Another two  
 Of Lord Poseidon's sons then joined the crew:  
 From great Miletus' city, Erginus  
 Arrived, as well as mighty Ankaeos,  
 Who left behind Parthenia, the land

Of Imbrian Hera, both with great command  
 Of seamanship and war. From Calydon  
 Stout Meleager went, Laocoön  
 As well, Oineus's sons: the latter, though,  
 Was born of a mother whose status was low 230  
 (She was a slave). Oineus had him conveyed,  
 Now getting old, to be Meleager's aide.  
 Still young himself, he joined the gallant team  
 Of heroes. There'd be no-one, I esteem,  
 Excepting Heracles, who could transcend  
 That man, had he but seen one more year's end  
 With the Aetolians. Now Iphiklus,  
 His uncle and the son of Thestius,  
 Accompanied him, skilled in both hand-to-hand  
 And javelin. With him, to join the band, 240  
 There also went one Pylaemonius,  
 The son of Lernus from Olenios  
 (Or so it has been said, but actually  
 His father was Hephaestus). Therefore he  
 Was crippled in one foot, though there was none  
 Dared fault the great strength of Hephaestus' son:  
 He too was added to that company  
 Of leaders, boosting the celebrity  
 Of Jason. From Phocia went Iphitus,  
 Born of Naubolus, son of Omytus 250  
 Who had been Jason's host some time before  
 When he had gone to Pytho to explore  
 A forecast for a future odyssey  
 And offered him his hospitality.  
 Then went Zetes and Calais, two more,  
 Boreas's sons, whom Oreithyia bore,  
 Erechtheus' child, far off in wintry Thrace  
 (And from Cecropia in his firm embrace  
 He snatched her when he saw her dance and sway  
 Near Iphissos). He took her far away 260  
 To where there stands the Rock of Sarpedon,  
 Where Erigonus' streams meander on,  
 And took her, hiding her beneath the screen  
 Of dusky vapours. Now they could be seen,  
 Their ankles shaking wings of ebony,  
 With scales of gold, a wondrous thing to see.  
 All down their backs, from head and neck, dark hair  
 Hither and yon would flutter in the air.  
 Stout Peleas' son Acastus would be gone,  
 Not staying home, and he who waited on 270  
 Athene, Argos. Therefore they both planned

To be included in the hero-band.  
All these were met, Jason's authorities.  
Those dwelling thereabouts called all of these  
Great leaders Minyans, because the most  
And best could from Minyas' daughters boast  
Their heritage. Thus Jason was the son  
Of Alcimede, who had been just one  
Of Minyas' daughters, Clymene. Each maid  
Had readied everything that should be laid 280  
Within the ships when men must sail the seas,  
Then through the city these celebrities  
Went to their ships where that part of the coast  
Is called Magnesian Pagasae; a host,  
A very host, went with them. Stars that glow  
Among the clouds they seemed. Seeing them go,  
All armed, each man said: "Zeus, what's Pelias  
Up to? Where is he sending this huge mass  
From all of Greece? They'd burn in just one day  
Aeëtes' halls with deadly fire if they 290  
Did not receive from his consenting hand  
The fleece. The ships, however, must be manned,  
The venture will be hard." From here and there  
The city heard these words. Into the air  
The women often raised their hands and prayed  
To the immortals that they lend their aid  
For a successful outcome. They all sighed,  
Lamenting to each other as they cried:  
"Sad Alcimede, pain is yours, though late.  
Unhappy old age has become your fate. 300  
Aeson as well, poor Aeson! It would be  
Far better that, not knowing misery,  
Before this day beneath the earth he lay,  
Wrapped in his shroud. Thus Phrixus, on that day  
Young Helle died, should, ram and all, have met  
A Stygian engulfing wave. And yet  
An evil, mortal-sounding augury  
For Alcimede forecast misery  
And countless woes thereafter." As the men  
Departed, thus the women spoke. By then 310  
A host of slaves had gathered. There, also,  
Came Jason's grieving mother. There was woe  
In every woman's heart. Bowed down with years,  
His father, closely wrapped in bed, shed tears  
With them. But Jason then soothed their heartache  
And cheered them, ordering the slaves to take  
The weapons up: this silently they did



And sadly. First of all his mother slid  
 Her arms about her son, vociferously  
 Weeping, just as a maiden tenderly 320  
 Will fall upon her white-haired nurse, bereft,  
 And grieve, when there's no other servant left  
 To aid her, living now an onerous life  
 Under her stepmother who turns the knife  
 With many fresh abuses, while her core  
 Is bound with woe while she bemoans once more  
 Each slight, nor can she utter every groan  
 That struggles in her throat. Thus did she moan  
 And cradle Jason and, in yearning, say  
 These words: 'My child, would that upon that day 330  
 I heard King Pelias's vile decree  
 I had expired, forgetting misery,  
 That you your dear self might put me to rest –  
 The only hope I've left: I have been blessed  
 By all the other fruits. Once so respected  
 Among Achaean women, now neglected,  
 Left like a slave within this empty palace,  
 Pining for you, the dupe of fate so callous:  
 Through you I had renown and majesty,  
 For you alone my prized virginity 340  
 I lost: you were my one and only one:  
 Eileithyia begrudged me any son  
 Or daughter after you. Alas! I never,  
 Not even in my dreams, imagined ever  
 Phrixus's flight could bring me misery.'"  
 She and her women-servants vehemently  
 Thus mourned. But Jason tenderly addressed her:  
 "Dear mother, don't let such resentment fester  
 Within your heart; tears won't erase your sorrow,  
 But rather you'll be dealt more pain tomorrow. 350  
 The gods give unseen grief to men: forbear  
 To weep, although your heart be filled with care.  
 Bear up and trust Athene's guarantees  
 As well as the celestial prophecies  
 (For Phoebus augurs great prosperity)  
 And then the chieftains' aid. Stay quietly  
 At home, you and your maids; pray, do not show  
 Yourself a fateful bird to the *Argo*.  
 With me shall go my servants and my kin."  
 He spoke these words and set out from within 360  
 The house. As from a temple odorous  
 With balm Apollo sets out for Delos,  
 That holy isle, or Claros, or Pytho,

Or Lycia, that spacious land, where flow  
The streams of Xanthos, thus he went among  
The crowd of people and, from out that throng  
There rose a mighty shout. Then the priestess  
Of Artemis, the town's benefactress,  
Old Iphias there met him: as that band  
Of people ran ahead, she kissed his hand. 370  
She could not speak, though eager to, but she  
Was pushed aside and, as the elderly  
Are treated by the young, was left forsaken.  
He was soon far away. When he had taken  
The path of well-built city streets to reach  
The place they called the Pagasaeon beach,  
His comrades welcomed him, all packed aboard  
The *Argo*; then he stood before this horde  
Right at the entrance, so they gathered there  
And stood before him. They were all aware 380  
Of Argos and Akastus making right  
For them straight from the city in despite  
Of Pelias. Argos wore a bull's hide,  
Arestor's son, floor-length, black on one side  
With hair. A lovely cloak he wore as well  
From his child Pelopeia. Jason would not tell  
Them anything they asked but made them go  
And sit, assembled. Each then, in his row,  
They sat upon the folded sail and mast.  
Then Jason kindly spoke: "All's firm and fast – 390  
Our naval needs are all in readiness.  
Let us make no delay – the breezes bless  
Our ship. So, friends – for all of us have planned  
To journey back as well as to the land  
Of Aeëtes – let's vote unstintingly,  
To be the leader of this odyssey,  
The bravest man to care for everything  
And take our covenants and quarrelling  
With enemies upon himself." At that,  
To the courageous Heracles, who sat 400  
Amongst them, all the young men turned their eyes  
And bade him with one shout up to the skies  
To lead them. He extended his right hand  
From where he sat and said: "Such a command  
Of high esteem let none put upon me.  
You'll not persuade me. I shall also see  
That none else will stand up. Let him who brought  
Us here command the host." A noble thought!  
As he had ordered them, they acquiesced.

Bold Jason, glad at heart, rose and addressed 410  
Them in their eagerness: "If you commend  
Me for this honour, let there be an end  
To more delay. Let's show our piety  
To Phoebus with incense and instantly  
Prepare a meal. When those who oversee  
My quarters, whose responsibility  
Is to decide which oxen to convey  
Hither, my slaves, arrive, let's all away,  
Dragging our ship down to the sea, and tote  
All arms aboard and each one cast a vote 420  
For the benches and along the waterline  
To Phoebus Embrasius let's build a shrine –  
He promised by a prophecy the way  
Across the sea to show – that thus I may  
Begin my toil for Pelias the King  
With sacrifice. " Straight to his labouring  
He turned and they all rose obediently  
And piled their clothes on a smooth stone the sea  
Did not approach (but in the distant past  
The wintry waves had cleansed it). Hard and fast 430  
They bound the ship, at Argos's command,  
With twined rope, stretching it in a tight band  
On either side so that the planks may be  
Well-nailed and face the lashing of the sea.  
Straightway they dug a ship-wide waterway  
Which stretched her journey's length into the bay,  
Dragged by their hands. Ahead of her they made  
Deeper and deeper furrows while they laid  
Smooth rollers on them. On the first of these  
They dipped her so she should be borne with ease 440  
While gliding on. High up on either side  
They turned the oars and fitted them inside  
The oarlocks so they stretched one cubit's span,  
And then in rows they settled, every man,  
And pushed with chest and arms. Tiphys got on  
To urge the youths to row in unison.  
He shouted loudly, and immediately  
In one great thrust with all their energy  
They moved the *Argo*, giving her her head  
By straining with their feet, and on she sped. 450  
All yelled and ran on either side, elated.  
Beneath the sturdy keel the rollers, grated,  
Emitted groans. Due to the gravity,  
Dark smoke gushed forth, and down into the sea  
She slipped. They held her back as on she went.

Oars fitted, they placed each accoutrement,  
 The mast, the well-made sails on board. But when  
 All things were well attended to, why then  
 The benches were by lots all allocated,  
 Two men per bench, though one was designated – 460  
 The very centre one – for Heracles  
 And Ancaius, apart from all of these  
 Others (the latter was a resident  
 Of Tegea). An outright settlement –  
 No lot – gave them alone the middle row;  
 With one accord they voted to bestow  
 On Tiphys the responsibility  
 Of steering the well-keeled ship. Then, by the sea  
 They piled up stones and built on the seaboard  
 An altar to Apollo as the Lord 470  
 Of Shores and Embarkation. Soon they spread  
 Dried olive-logs on top. Two steers were led  
 By Jason’s herdsmen from the herd, and then  
 These were dragged forward by the younger men  
 Near to the altar. Barley was conveyed  
 And holy water, too. Then Jason prayed  
 To Apollo, his ancestral deity:  
 “O lord, who dwell in Pagasae, hear me,  
 O lord, who in Aesonis also dwell,  
 Named for my father, you who vowed to tell 480  
 How we should find and win our cherished aim  
 When to your Pythian oracle I came –  
 You were the cause of this our expedition –  
 Keep us, as on we sail, in sound condition,  
 Take us and bring us back. For each of us  
 Returning, just so many glorious  
 Bulls shall be sacrificed to you. As well,  
 I’ll carry countless gifts to where you dwell –  
 Ortygia and Pytho. Phoebus, King,  
 Far-Shooter, come, accept this offering, 490  
 First given as our fare. Grant that I may  
 Unloose the ropes and thus get underway  
 Unscathed, and may there be a gentle breeze  
 To help us make our way on quiet seas.”  
 He spoke and cast the barley with this prayer.  
 And then those two great men made to prepare  
 To kill the sacrifices, Heracles  
 And proud Ancaius; and while one of these,  
 The former, clubbed one smartly on the head  
 So that at once it sank and lay there dead, 500  
 The other’s spacious neck was lacerated

By Ancaius who quickly penetrated  
With his bronze axe the tough, resilient  
Sinews and, holding both its horns, he sent  
It sprawling. Then their comrades swiftly ripped  
Their throats apart and then their hides they stripped,  
Sundered the joints, then carved the flesh, then tore  
Apart the sacred thigh-bones; furthermore  
They smothered all in fat and set it aflame  
On cloven sticks of wood. Then Jason came 510  
And poured unmixed libations; standing there,  
Idmon rejoiced, beholding everywhere  
The glowing sacrificial conflagration,  
Auspicious smoke in purplish gyration  
Arising. With blunt speed he spoke the bent  
Of Leto's son: "It is the gods' intent  
And destiny that you the fleece convey  
Hither, though countless trials on your way  
Will hound you. But there is a god's decree  
That must one day prove terrible to me, 520  
Condemning me to die far, far away  
On mainland Asia. Thus before today  
I learned from evil auguries my fate  
Yet boarded ship that I might generate  
Fame for my house." Hearing the prophecy,  
The youths expressed their great felicity  
At their return but grieved at Idas' fate.  
So when the sun had passed the midday's date  
And boulders now were just about to shade  
The fields in darkness and the sun to fade 530  
Beneath the evening dusk, they thickly spread  
A bower of leaves and lay down on that bed  
In ranks just where the breakers reached the shore,  
With food and honeyed wine, a spacious store,  
The goblet-bearers having drawn the wine  
Into their pitchers, then line after line,  
They told such tales as youths often relate  
When wine and viands pleurably sate  
And ravenous insolence is then elsewhere.  
Then Jason, at a loss, weighed every care 540  
Like someone troubled. Taking him to task  
On seeing this, said Idas: "May I ask,  
Son of Aeson, what scheme is in your head?  
Tell all. Have you been overcome with dread,  
Which crows all cowards? Witness, my staunch spear,  
With which I win illustriousness clear  
Beyond them all against my foes (not Zeus

Himself has ever been of greater use  
 Than has my spear), no pain proving to be  
 A fatal one, each risk destined to see 550  
 Fulfilment while Idas is close at hand.  
 That's the ally you brought here from the land  
 Of Arene." With these words a brimming cup  
 He grasped with both his hands and swallowed up  
 The unmixed wine, his lips and dark cheeks wet  
 With purple residue. Each man then let  
 A shout out, and Idmon spoke openly:  
 "You fool, you plan before your destiny  
 Your own destruction. Your stout heart's distended  
 With unmixed wine: your life will soon be ended. 560  
 Dare you insult the gods? Some words of ease  
 May cheer a friend but haughty words are these,  
 Such as the sons of Aloeus, they say,  
 Once blurted out against the gods, and they  
 Were mightier than you. They were snuffed out  
 By Phoebus's swift arrow, strong and stout  
 Though they had been." Then Idas lengthily  
 Guffawed, then looked askance and stingingly  
 Replied: "Come, tell me through your prophecy 570  
 That by your father was granted those two  
 And say how these two hands will suffer you  
 Safely to dodge them both if you are seen  
 To be a charlatan." Such was his spleen  
 In his reproach. More railing they'd have heard  
 Had not their comrades – Jason too – deterred  
 With shouts their scrap. Orpheus began to sing,  
 Holding his lyre, his theme the severing,  
 After destructive strife, of earth and sea  
 And sky, once fastened in one entity, 580  
 And how the sun's paths, moon and stars up high  
 Had each its permanent locus in the sky:  
 The mountains rose, and every creeping thing  
 And rivers, with their nymphs, all clamouring  
 Then came alive. He sang how Ophion  
 And Ocean's Eurynome first held the throne  
 In cloudy Olympus; Cronus snatched the sway  
 From one, and Rhea from the other; they  
 (That is Ophion and Eurynome)  
 Fell into Ocean. This authority 590  
 Over the blessed Titans was maintained  
 While Zeus was yet a child and entertained  
 Nothing but childish notions and still dwelt  
 In the Dictaeon cave nor had been dealt

The bolt with thunder and lightning supplied  
By the earthborn Cyclopes: these things provide  
Zeus with renown." At this he stayed his lyre  
And his sweet voice, though all were still afire  
To hear, bent forwards, pricking up each ear  
In fascination, so great was the cheer 600  
His singing left behind. Subsequently  
They mixed libations, as is customary,  
To Zeus; upon the flaming tongues it streamed.  
They settled down for sleep. Bright Dawn now gleamed  
On Pelion's steep rocks with eyes that flashed,  
And the calm headlands now were being splashed  
By the seas unsettled by the wind's attack.  
Tiphys awoke and bade the men go back  
On board and prime the oars. At Pagasae 610  
The port and *Argo* cried a dreadful cry,  
Urging departure. For a sacred spar  
Had been sunk in her, brought there from afar  
By Athena from a Dodonan oak which she  
Had planted in her stem. Then orderly,  
In single file, they then took up each row,  
All which had been assigned some time ago,  
And sat beside their arms, then came along  
Ancaeus and stout Heracles among  
That host; the latter placed beneath his heel  
His club, which quite submerged the *Argo*'s keel. 620  
The ropes were being slipped, while on the foam  
Wine-offerings were poured. But Jason's home  
And country he averted from his sight.  
Then they, just as a gang of young men might  
Arrange for Phoebus in Pytho a dance,  
Or in Ortygia, or yet, perchance,  
Beside Ismenus' stream, and to the sound  
Of lyres round the altar beat the ground  
Harmoniously with rapid feet, so they  
Beat the tempestuous waters of the bay 630  
To Orpheus' lyre with their oars, each blade  
Awash with surf, whose jet-black waters made  
A gushing roar, engendered by the might  
Of sturdy heroes. Armour shimmered bright  
Like flames as on she sped, and far behind  
Their wake gleamed white as you perhaps might find  
A pathway through a green plain. On that day  
All gods looked earthwards upon that display  
Of ship and mighty half-divinities,  
The bravest who then sailed upon the seas. 640

The nymphs of Pelion looked on, surprised,  
From their high peaks at what had been devised  
By Itonian Athena, as they plied  
The oars; Chiron came to the Oceanside.  
The son of Philyra, from his great height  
And where the breakers crashed upon the bight,  
He dipped his feet. Waving his heavy hand  
A score of times he shouted to the band  
And bade them safe return. His consort bore  
Achilles and held out the infant for 650  
Peleus, his sire, to see. So now when they  
Had left behind the harbour's curving bay,  
Through warlike Tiphys' plan, who skilfully  
Handled the polished helm that he might be  
A steadfast guide, they place the mighty mast  
Straight into the cross-beam and tied it fast  
On either side with mainstays, then let down  
The sail once they had raised it to the crown  
Of the masthead. Then there came a piping wind.  
Upon the deck they separately pinned 660  
The ropes with polished clasps, then peacefully  
Sped by the long Tisaeon promontory.  
And then Oiagrus' son took up his lyre  
And sang the daughter of a noble sire,  
The ship-protecting Artemis whose care  
Were those sea-peaks and Iolcus, and this air  
Was sweetly sung. The fish beneath the deep,  
Both large and small at once, would dart and leap  
Among those watery paths. So, just as when  
Large flocks will trail their shepherds to the pen, 670  
Sated with pasture, while he pipes a high  
Bucolic tune, those fishes followed nigh,  
While constant breezes bore her swiftly on.  
Suddenly the Pelasgian land was gone,  
Corn-rich and misty, out of sight, and they  
Now passed the Pelian crags while on their way  
They sped. The Sepian headland lost to view,  
Sciathus loomed ahead, Piresias too,  
And the serene Magnesian shore and where  
Dolops was buried. Then at eve the air 680  
Began to blow them backwards, so, that night,  
They roasted sheep in sacrificial rite  
To honour him nearby the swelling sea.  
There on the shoreline in tranquillity  
They sojourned for two days: the following day  
They hoisted their huge sail and sped away.



Still do they call that beach-head Aphetæ  
 Of *Argo*. Thence they hastened, passing by  
 Melibœa as its stormy shore they spied.  
 Then they at dawn came to the seaside 690  
 Port of Homole, and soon they would go by  
 Amyros' streams, and then Eurymenæ  
 They'd see as well as the well-sluiced ravines  
 Of Ossa and Olympus, hilly scenes  
 In Pallene, the hillocks hovering  
 Above Canastra: with the fluttering  
 Of winds they sped beyond them in the night.  
 Now Thracian Athos' peak at morning light  
 Appeared: its top left Lemnos, obfuscated  
 As far as Myrine, though separated 700  
 From them as far as any merchantman,  
 Well-trimmed, sails till midday – a goodly span.  
 Then and into the night there came a blast  
 That strongly blew, the sails upon the mast  
 Ballooning. With the setting of the sun  
 The breezes ceased and then they came upon  
 The rocky isle of Sintians, Lemnos.  
 The year gone by they'd suffered a huge loss –  
 All of the men, due to the lechery  
 Of women, were victims of butchery. 710  
 Their lawful wives in hatred they'd repelled  
 And for their captive women now they held  
 An ardent passion, while upon their raids  
 In Thrace they seized and brought across these maids.  
 The dreadful wrath of Cypris they had earned  
 Because for many years now they had spurned  
 To render her her due. O ravenous  
 And to your own misfortune envious,  
 You wretched women! Not only each mate  
 And captive-maid did they obliterate 720  
 For their adultery but, so they may  
 For their foul deeds no retribution pay,  
 All males as well. One man received a pass –  
 Hypsipyleia rescued old Thoas,  
 Her father, king of that community:  
 She found a chest and pushed it out to sea  
 With him inside to save him from the slaughter.  
 Oenoean fishers pulled him from the water  
 (The isle was Sicinos, though, latterly,  
 Because the water-nymph called Oenoe 730  
 Bore him of Thoas). Now a cowherd's care,  
 Donning bronze armour, using the ploughshare

In cornfields for them all was easier  
Than were Athena's works which earlier  
They had been busy with. But constantly  
They looked with pitiful dread upon the sea  
For fear of Thracians. So when they espied  
The *Argo* pulling close they rushed outside  
The gates, all armed, and dashed down to the strand  
Like raging Bacchants. Thracians in our land! 740  
They thought. With them Hypsipyleia wore  
Her father's arms as they began to pour  
Out, helpless, speechless, hemmed in by unease.  
The leaders then sent out Aethalides,  
Their speedy herald who was in command  
Of messages and carried in his hand  
His father Hermes' sceptre (for him he  
Had gained a comprehensive memory,  
An ageless gift). Although to Acheron  
And its repellent eddies he had gone, 750  
Forgetfulness had not planted its seed  
Yet in his soul, though it had been decreed  
That she is always moving here and there,  
Sometimes beneath the earth and sometimes where  
Men dwell under the sun. But why should I  
Tell lengthy tales of him? The day gone by  
And creeping into night, he coaxed her then  
To let ashore and entertain the men.  
Nor did they loose the ropes at break of day.  
The women of the island went away 760  
Up to the city where they settled down  
Within the meeting-place inside the town  
At her command. Then to the congregation  
At once she gave a spirited oration:  
"My friends, let us give gifts that will content  
These men, gifts fit for sailors, nourishment,  
Sweet wine, that they resolve to stay beyond  
Our towers nor create too great a bond,  
Out of necessity, with us and thus  
Provoke much talk. A dreadful deed by us 770  
Was done, which would not please them if they knew it.  
Such is our plan now: having listened to it,  
If you know of a better, rise, for that  
Is why I called you hither." Then she sat  
Back down upon her father's stone-built seat.  
But then her darling nurse got to her feet,  
Polyxo, whose old legs had grown so bent  
That she but limped as on her staff she leant,

Eager to speak. There were sat near her there  
Four unwed maids with blond and downy hair. 780  
She stood among them, slowly raised her head  
Above her crooked back and thus she said:  
“Let us send presents to these foreign men,  
As Madam wishes – it were better then.  
What’s your survival plan if we’re brought low  
By Thracian soldiers or some other foe,  
As often happens? Unexpectedly  
Did they arrive. If some divinity  
Relieves us now, much woe is still ahead,  
Worse than mere battles, when old ones are dead 790  
And you young maids, still childless, then arrive  
At hateful old age? How will you survive  
In wretchedness? Will oxen, yoked by you  
To the deep plough, of their accord cut through  
The fallow? At the ending of the year  
Will they, with no ado, harvest each ear  
Of corn? Till now the Fates have bypassed me  
In horror, yet next year I well may be  
Clothed in earth’s garments, with my share of rites,  
As it should be, before the blackest nights 800  
Appear. You younger ones, I beg, take heed  
Of what I say. A chance of being freed  
Lies at your feet: turn over to the crew  
The care of home, stock, glorious city, too.”  
The place was filled with shouts: they liked this speech.  
Hypsipyle leapt fast into the breach  
And said: “If all of you approve this plea,  
I’ll send an envoy to the company.”  
At that, she said to one who sat nearby,  
Iphinoë: “Iphinoë, go hie 810  
You to that man (their leader, I surmise);  
Tell him to come here that I may apprise  
Him of some news that our community  
Will love, and bid them enter fearlessly  
Our land and town, if that’s their inclination.”  
With these words she dismissed the convocation  
And set off home, and to the Minyae  
Went Iphinoë. They inquired why  
She came. Quickly she said: “Hypsipyle,  
Thoas’s child, said our community 820  
Will love the news the leader of your band  
Shall hear from me – you may enter our land,  
Our town, if that you wish, and feel no fear.”  
Her happy words filled all of them with cheer.

Since Thoas was deceased, Hypsipyle  
 They deemed was now their queen, thus speedily  
 They sent their chief and started to prepare  
 To go themselves. He buckled, then and there,  
 A two-fold purple cloak, Athena-wrought,  
 Upon his shoulders, which she once had brought 830  
 To give to Jason when she first had laid  
 The keel-props of the *Argo* and had made  
 Him master of the art of measuring  
 The timbers with a rule. An easier thing  
 It were to watch the sun's ascendancy  
 Than look upon that blazing majesty.  
 For in the centre it was flaming red  
 Yet purple at its foot and at its head,  
 While at each edge were fashioned skilfully  
 A segregated multiplicity 840  
 Of artworks. One beheld the Cyclopes  
 Applying their deathless abilities,  
 Fashioning a thunderbolt for Father Zeus,  
 Now almost finished, almost set for use:  
 A shaft of light was all it was without,  
 And this one thing was being hammered out  
 With iron mallets as it shot a flare  
 Of raging flame. Antiope's sons were there,  
 Zethus and Amphion, Asopus' brace  
 Of grandsons. Thebe, too, took up a space 850  
 Nearby, yet unprotected, whose foundation  
 They were just then, in keen anticipation,  
 Laying. Zethos was heaving shoulder-high  
 The peak of a steep mountain while, nearby,  
 With golden lyre and a loud, clear song,  
 Amphion led a rock that rolled along  
 Behind him, twice its size. Then following  
 Was long-tressed Cythereia, handling  
 Ares' swift shield: her tunic was untied  
 From her left shoulder and all down that side 860  
 Beneath her breast. Reflected in that shield  
 Of bronze she stood out clear. There was a field  
 Of oxen, where there was a skirmishing  
 In place between Alectryon's offspring  
 And the Teleboae, who were on a foray,  
 Taphian brigands, being kept at bay  
 By the former. With their blood the dewy lea  
 Was drizzling, while the majority  
 Conquered the fewer herdsmen. Then a race  
 Between two chariots upon its face 870

Was worked, Pelops, shaking the reins, before,  
 Hippodameia, and then yet one more,  
 Myrtilus, drove *his* horses, and, his spear  
 Grasped, couched, in hand, Oenomaus stood near,  
 Yet falling when an axle turned and split,  
 Though eager to stab Pelops' back. Near it  
 Was wrought Apollo, yet a youth, although  
 A strapping lad, who's shooting from his bow  
 Great Tityus who dragged audaciously  
 His mother by the veil, Tityus, he 880  
 To whom the glorious Elare gave birth  
 (Though nursed and given life again by Earth),  
 Then Minyan Phrixus, listening, seemingly,  
 To a ram that seemed to talk. Were you to see  
 These things you'd be struck speechless and mislead  
 Your soul in hope that you might have indeed  
 Heard actual words of wisdom as you viewed  
 Them long and with that hopeful attitude.  
 These were Athena's gifts. In his right hand  
 He held a lengthy spear which, in the land 890  
 Of Maenalus, Atalanta had bestowed,  
 As guest-gift, with warm greetings, for that road  
 Of exploration she desired to take;  
 Yet he prevented her, fearing she'd make  
 Resentful rivals in carnality.  
 He entered the city, glowing dazzlingly,  
 As though he were a star which maidens eye,  
 While pent in splendid huts, ascending high  
 Above their homes, gleaming both red and fair,  
 Charming their eyes as through the dark-blue air 900  
 It goes; each maid delights while pining for  
 Her youth who sojourns on a foreign shore,  
 For whom her parents keep him for his bride.  
 Thus he approached the city. In a tide  
 Its women surged behind him, revelling  
 In him. He went straight on, though, focussing  
 His eyes upon the ground, until he came  
 To Hypsipyle's mansion of glorious fame.  
 When he appeared her servants opened wide  
 The double doors which had been beautified 910  
 With well-wrought panels, and then, straightaway  
 Leading him through a handsome passageway,  
 Iphinoë placed him on a gleaming seat  
 Facing her mistress, who down at her feet  
 Now cast her eyes while blushing prettily;  
 And yet she spoke, for all her modesty,

With crafty words: “Why stay so long out there,  
Stranger, beyond our walls? Not anywhere  
Will you see men residing in this place:  
They plough their wheat-filled furrows out in Thrace 920  
As immigrants. I’ll tell you of our hell  
That you might know it all and know it well.  
Thoas, my father, once was ruler here:  
Back then our men would sometimes disappear  
And plunder from their ships the habitations  
In Thrace (there’s little space between our nations)  
And brought back loot aplenty, maids as well;  
Deadly Cypris was planning to propel  
Her scheme which brought lethal infatuation  
To them. There now evolved a detestation 930  
Of their true wives: to madness giving way,  
They threw them out and took their spear-won prey  
Into their beds, the rogues. We stuck it out  
For some time, hoping that they’d start to doubt  
Their choice. This bitter plight, however, grew  
And doubled. In the halls their children, too,  
Were treated badly, and a bastard race  
Sprang up, and thus there roamed throughout this place  
Each widowed mother and unmarried maid.  
No heed, however fleetingly, was paid 940  
By fathers to their daughters, in despite  
Of evil stepmothers, before their sight,  
Murdering them; and, not as formerly,  
Mothers against such foul indignity  
Received no help from sons; there was no care  
Of brother for sister: and everywhere,  
At home or in the dance, a convocation  
Or at a feast, their one consideration  
Would be their concubines. Eventually  
Some god gave them a desperate bravery 950  
No longer to allow them back when they  
Returned from Thrace, that they might choose the way  
Of right or, with their captive-maids, take sail  
And leave. They begged of us each infant male  
Left in the city, then took off. So now  
They still reside in Thrace and ply the plough  
On snowy fields. Stay here, and, should you yearn  
To do so and it pleases you, you’ll earn  
My father Thoas’ privilege. You’ll not,  
I think, despise our land, for it has got 960  
A deeper soil in the Aegean Sea  
Than any other isle. Listen to me,

Go to your ship, relate all that I say  
 To your companions; do not stay away  
 Beyond our walls." These were her words, but she  
 Did not disclose to him the butchery  
 Of all their men. He answered: "Very dear  
 Is the support you offer to us here,  
 For we're in need of you, Hypsipyle.  
 I shall return when I accordingly 970  
 Have told them all. Continue to possess  
 The island's sovereignty: no scornfulness  
 Provokes my yielding it, but I'm impelled  
 To grievous woes." He spoke and briefly held  
 Her right hand, then set off back; all around  
 There whirled about him with a joyful sound  
 The countless maidens until he had cleared  
 The gates. Then later on they all appeared  
 On smoothly-running wagons on the beach  
 With many gifts (by now he'd told them each 980  
 And every thing she'd said). Then readily  
 They took them to their homes for company.  
 For Cypris gave to them a sweet allure,  
 For the sake of wise Hephaestus, to ensure  
 That Lemnos, uneradicated, be  
 Inhabited by men eternally.  
 Then Jason for the regal residence  
 Of Hypsipyle set out. As providence  
 Dictated, all the others went their way,  
 Except for Heracles, who chose to stay 990  
 With just a few picked friends. Immediately  
 The whole town danced and feasted joyously,  
 And all around them sacrificial savour  
 Was wafted here and there. They showed their favour  
 Above all of the other deities  
 To noted Ares and Cypris, for these  
 With sacrifice and song they adulated.  
 Day followed day while they procrastinated  
 Their setting sail. A long time they'd have dallied  
 In idleness had Heracles not harried 1000  
 Them all, far from the womenfolk, and thus  
 Rebuked them: "Wretches, is *this* keeping us,  
 From home, this kindred-butchery? Have we  
 Come here to wed and make a mockery  
 Of our own women? Do you think it grand  
 To dwell here, ploughing Lemnos' fertile land?  
 We'll win no fame kept back day after day  
 By foreign women. After such delay

No god will grant our prayers and thus bestow  
 The moving fleece. Let every man, then, go 1010  
 Back to his own: all day let Jason lie  
 In bed with *her* until he can supply  
 Lemnos with men and thus achieve great fame.”  
 Thus he rebuked them all. A sense of shame  
 Caused them to drop their eyes nor would they talk.  
 Then from the meeting they prepared to walk.  
 Learning their plan, the women speedily  
 Came running to them. Just as, droningly,  
 Bees haunt the splendid lilies when they shoot  
 From their rock-hive and gather the sweet fruit 1020  
 While dewy meadows smile, thus, sorrowing,  
 They streamed and thronged the heroes, welcoming  
 Each one with hands and voice while they implored  
 The gods a safe homecoming to afford.  
 Hypsipyle prayed too and wept to lose  
 Her lover: “Go, and may the gods all choose  
 To grant that you may in all safety bring  
 The golden fleece and give it to the king,  
 As is your wish. This island and the sway  
 Of my father shall be here should you, one day, 1030  
 Returning, come to Lemnos. Easily  
 Could you amass a goodly company  
 From other lands. You will not wish it, though;  
 I prophesy that it will not be so.  
 Remember me both when you’re far away  
 And on your homeward journey. May you say  
 Your wish and I will grant it readily  
 Should heaven grant to me maternity.”  
 Then Jason answered her in admiration:  
 “May heaven allow all this its consummation. 1040  
 Both think more nobly of me – by the grace  
 Of Pelias, to dwell in my birthplace  
 Is quite enough. May the gods just set me free  
 Of all my labours. If my destiny  
 Is not to see Greece more once, under sail,  
 I’ve travelled far, and, if you bear a male,  
 Send him when grown to Iolcus as relief  
 To my father and my mother from their grief  
 (If they still live) that, distanced far away  
 From the king, they may be cared for while they stay 1050  
 Within their home. “ He was the first to board,  
 The other chiefs behind. Each then was oared  
 In rows. The ship unloosed the ropes from round  
 The sea-girt rock. They made the sea resound



With their long oars. At Orpheus' decree,  
 That evening to Electra's island (she  
 Who was Atlanta's child) they came, that they  
 May learn the rites, that one may never say,  
 In gentleness, then cross the icy sea  
 In safety. You will hear no more from me 1060  
 Of this; however, let us say farewell  
 To the island and the gods that in her dwell,  
 The keepers of those rites, of which to sing  
 Is not allowed. With eager labouring  
 Upon the oars they crossed the deep black sea  
 (The land of Thrace at one extremity  
 And Imbrus on the other); day was through  
 When they reached Chersonese; upon them blew  
 A mild south wind, and, raising to the breeze  
 Their sails, they rowed to the profundities 1070  
 Of Athamas's virgin child, Helle;  
 At dawn they left behind the northern sea,  
 Sailing by night past the Rhoetaean strand  
 With Ida on their right, their left the land  
 Of Dardanus and for Abydos set  
 Their course, then, sailing further still, they met  
 Percote and the sandy waterside  
 Of Pityeia; by night they applied  
 Both sail and oar and passed the dark blue sea  
 Of eddying Hellespont. There happens to be 1080  
 A steep isle in Propontis, looming near  
 The corn-rich Phrygia, plunging so sheer  
 Her isthmus is immersed. Two shores are there,  
 The Aesepus below them; it's called Bear  
 Mountain by those who dwell around the isle;  
 Its own inhabitants are fierce and vile,  
 Earthborn, who are, to dwellers thereabouts,  
 A wonder to behold. Each of them sprouts  
 Six heavy hands – each sturdy shoulderblade  
 Has two, while on their dread sides are arrayed 1090  
 Four more. The isthmus and the plain contained  
 The Doliones, over whom there reigned  
 The son of Aeneus and of Ainete,  
 Commendable Eusorus' progeny.  
 Though dread, the Earthborn caused no aggravation  
 To them thanks to Poseidon's preservation  
 From whom these people had originated.  
 And then, by Thracian winds accelerated,  
 The *Argo* sailed into the anchorage  
 Of Kalos as upon their pilgrimage 1100

They sped, and it was there that they set free  
Their little anchor-stone at the decree  
Of Tiphys, leaving it beneath the spring  
Of Artacia; a fitter one (a thing  
Much heavier) they took. Subsequently,  
According to Apollo's prophecy,  
The Ionians, sons of Neleus, built of it  
A temple, as is proper, right and fit,  
In Jason's Athens. Cyzicus, along  
With the Doliones, in a friendly throng, 1110  
Met them and when they learned of their crusade  
And lineage, a cordial welcome made  
And urged them to row closer and to tie  
Their hawsers in their harbour, then nearby  
They built an altar right upon the strand  
To Phoebus, god of disembarking, and  
Gave sacrifices. Of his own largess  
The king supplied them in their neediness  
With sheep and sweet wine (he'd heard people say  
That, if a godlike army came their way, 1120  
He should receive them kindly and not seek  
To fight them). As with Jason, on his cheek  
There grew soft down, nor yet had he the pleasure  
Of fatherhood, and in domestic leisure  
His wife lived free of childbirth's misery,  
Percopian Merops's progeny,  
Fair-haired Cleite, whom from the opposite land,  
With countless gifts, winning the lady's hand,  
He'd just from her father brought. He left her bed  
And chamber, then he organized a spread 1130  
For them and cast all terror from his heart.  
They asked each other questions. For his part,  
He learned their quest and Pelias' decree,  
While they each bay of the Propontic Sea,  
So broad, and neighbour cities learned, although  
He could not tell them more, however so  
They longed to hear. The dawn saw them ascend  
Great Dindymum so they some time might spend  
In scanning for themselves each passageway  
Upon that sea, and then they made their way 1140  
To Chytus Port from where they first had bound  
Their hawsers, and the passage that they found  
Was called Jasonian Way. But then there ran  
From the far side of the isle each Earthborn man  
Down from the mountain and with rocks below  
Blocked up the mouth of vast Chytus, as though

They lay in wait for beasts inside their den.  
 But Heracles, left with the younger men,  
 Drew back his arching bow immediately,  
 Plunging them earthwards individually. 1150  
 They, in their turn, raised jagged rocks and threw  
 Them. Zeus's wife, dread Hera, I construe,  
 Had nurtured them to be a cause of woe  
 To Heracles. Back then, to meet the foe,  
 Came all the rest before they'd reached the height  
 Of outlook, mighty heroes all, to fight  
 And slay the Earthborn, spears, and darts as well,  
 Impaling them till each and every knell  
 Was knolled among them. As woodcutters throw  
 Tall, newly-cut tress row on mounting row 1160  
 Upon the beach that they, once drenched in brine,  
 May be fast-bolted, so, line after line,  
 At the foam-skirted harbour-mouth they lay,  
 Some with both head and breast bent to the spray  
 In heaps, their limbs spread out upon the strand,  
 Some with their heads resting upon the sand,  
 Feet in the deep, to birds and fish left there  
 As prey. The heroes, once the armed affair  
 Was over, loosed their hawsers to the breeze  
 And sailed on through the swelling of the seas. 1170  
 All day they sped by sail; at the advent  
 Of night the breezes failed and back they went,  
 Impelled by adverse winds, and they once more  
 Arrived at the kindly Doliones' shore.  
 That night they disembarked:           The Sacred Rock  
 Is still its name. Then quickly to the dock  
 They lashed their hawsers. No-one was aware  
 It was the same isle, and that they were there  
 The Doliones in the dark of night  
 Had no clear knowledge, thinking that they might 1180  
 Be the warlike Macrians. They armed and raced  
 At them; with shields and spears each faction faced  
 The other like a fervid fire's rush  
 That plunges down upon some barren brush.  
 A fierce and violent disquieting  
 Fell on the Doliones. Their own king  
 Would not escape his fate and go home free  
 From harm to his dear wife: immediately  
 The son of Aeson, as he wheeled around,  
 Impaled the king's chest with a single bound; 1190  
 Around the spear the bone was shattered and,  
 His fate fulfilled, he rolled across the sand –

No man avoids his lot: an ample net  
Is spread around us. While he hoped even yet  
To dodge his bitter death, that very night  
Fate tangled with him as he faced the might  
Of Jason's chiefs. More seeming enemies  
Were slain: Heracles dispatched Megabrontes  
As well as Telecles; Acastus slew  
Sphodris, Peleus Zelys and that man who 1120  
Was swift in war, Gephyros. The king, however,  
Telamon slew, that man proficient ever  
With the ash-spear. Prometheus and Hyacinthos  
Were slaughtered by Idas and Klytius,  
Phlogios by the two Tyndaridae,  
And Megalossaces, two others by  
The son of Oeneus, brave Itymoneus  
And one of their commanders, Artaceus.  
Heroic praise is given them today  
By the locals. All the others ran away 1130  
In fear, as doves in swarms timidly flee  
The rapid hawks. They scampered noisily  
Into the gates in throngs: then mournful weeping  
Because of this reverse was swiftly sweeping  
Throughout the city. Both sides at daybreak  
Took in the fatal fault, which to unmake  
Were hopeless. The heroic company  
Of Minyans was gripped by misery  
In seeing dead amid the dust and gore  
Cyzicus, son of Aineus. Both sides tore 1140  
Their hair in mourning for three days, but then  
Three times in their bronze armour all the men  
Paced round the tomb, performed rites for the slain  
And rightly held games on the meadowy plain  
Where even now this tomb can be descried  
By later folk. Cleite did not abide  
Long past her husband's death, for now she found  
An even greater wretchedness – she bound  
A rope around her neck. Her sad demise  
Even the grove-maids wept at. From their eyes 1150  
What tears they shed the goddesses created  
A spring they called Cleite, after the fated  
Lady herself; a day of misery  
It was for men and women equally  
Among the Doliones: none would take  
One bite of food nor, for their sorrow's sake,  
Would undertake to labour at the mill  
To grind the corn, but, so that they might still

Live on, they ate raw meat. Even today,  
 When the Ionian Cyzicans must pay 1160  
 Their annual libations for the dead,  
 The sacrificial cakes that must be fed  
 To them are made of corn that has been ground  
 At the common mill. Fierce storms began to pound  
 And lasted twelve whole days and nights, impeding  
 Departure. As the next night was receding,  
 The chieftains were asleep and as they slept  
 In deep repose a careful watch was kept  
 By Mopsus and Acastus, the issue  
 Of Ampycos. A kingfisher then flew 1170  
 Round Jason's golden head: its piercing mew  
 Now prophesied good weather. Mopsus knew  
 The shore-bird's omen. Some god made it turn  
 And, flying high, alight upon the stern.  
 As Jason, sleeping on soft fleeces, lay  
 The seer nudged him awake with no delay  
 And said: "O Jason, now you must repair  
 To stark Dindymus' temple and, once there,  
 The godhead's fair-throned queen propitiate.  
 The dreadful storms will cease: I heard of late 1180  
 The sea-bird's cry – it told me everything  
 While round your sleeping self a-fluttering.  
 Upon the winds, upon the earth, the sea,  
 Snowy Olympus she has mastery.  
 Even the son of Cronus, Zeus, concedes  
 To her when from the mountains she proceeds  
 To mighty heaven. To this dread goddess  
 The other gods bestow a copiousness  
 Of reverence." These words he joyed to hear.  
 He hurried from his bed, filled full of cheer. 1190  
 He roused all of his men immediately  
 As he sped on and told the prophecy  
 Of Mopsus, son of Ampycus, and then  
 Quickly the oxen by the younger men  
 Were driven from their stalls up to the tip  
 Of the sheer mountain; then upon the ship  
 They loosed the hawsers from the Holy Rock  
 And plied their oars to reach the Thracian dock.  
 They climbed the mountain, leaving but a few  
 Aboard. The Mithrian heights were close in view 1200  
 And Thrace. The misty Bosporus they spied  
 And Mysian heights, and on the other side  
 The Aesepus, the city and the plain  
 Of Nepeian Adrasteia. A stout skein

Of vine there was, and very old, which they  
 Chopped down in order that they might display  
 This idol for the peak's divinity,  
 Which Argos chiselled very skilfully.  
 They placed it on the rugged hill below  
 Tall oaks than which no other species go 1210  
 So deep beneath the earth. Then alongside  
 They built a gravel altar, then they tied  
 Oak leaves around their heads and took great care  
 With sacrifice, intoning to the air  
 To call upon the Mother, nonpareil  
 Of Dindymum, who holds all Phrygian sway,  
 And Titias and **Cyllenus**, the possessors  
 Of the right to dispense doom and be assessors  
 Of the Idaean Mother (only they can be,  
 Of many, owners of this liberty), 1220  
 Idaean Dactyls of the Cretan land  
 Whom, grasping Oiaxian soil with either hand,  
 Anchiale bore in the Dictaian cave.  
 The son of Aeson prayed that she might save  
 Them from the storms with frequent supplications  
 As he poured out the glittering libations.  
 The young men, then, at Orpheus's decree,  
 Began in armoured choreography  
 To move as on their shields their swords they struck  
 To dissipate the outcry of ill luck 1230  
 With which the people mourned their king. That scene  
 Has prompted kettledrum and tambourine  
 To be applied in their propitiation  
 Of Rhea by the Phrygian population  
 Even today. The goddess, I dare state,  
 Began to soften at those consummate  
 Procedures, for auspicious auguries  
 Appeared: abundant fruit grew on the trees,  
 While flowers sprang up automatically  
 Straight through the tender grass, while fawningly 1240  
 Wild beasts, their dens and thickets left behind,  
 Would wag their tails at men. Another find  
 Was marvellous to behold: for formerly  
 No water flowed in the vicinity  
 Of Dindymum, but now there gushed nonstop  
 Fresh water from the thirsty mountaintop.  
 And now its name the locals had devised  
 Is Jason's Spring. So then they organized  
 For Rhea, queen of queens, a solemn feast  
 Upon the Mount of Bears. The winds had ceased 1250

By early light and so they rowed away.  
 A spirit of contention rose that day  
 With each chief as to who would be the last  
 To leave his oar. A calming zephyr passed  
 Across the eddies, quieting the sea.  
 So, trusting in this new tranquillity,  
 They pressed the *Argo*: so fast did she race  
 That Lord Poseidon's horses have kept pace,  
 Storm-footed though they were. Nevertheless  
 Fierce blasts that evening caused a restlessness 1260  
 Brought for the rivers, harrying the seas.  
 The chieftains, spent, retired. But Heracles  
 With mighty arms pulled on the weary crew:  
 The ship's strong timbers shook. Now eager to  
 Reach Mysia, they passed Rhyndei' bay  
 And Aegaeon's great cairn, a little way  
 From Phrygia. But, ploughing through the swell,  
 Heracles then broke his oar and sideways fell,  
 One piece still in his hand, the other gone,  
 Swept backwards by the sea-surge. He sat on 1270  
 In silence, glaring: inactivity  
 Was not his wont. That time when from the lea  
 The delver or the ploughman in delight  
 Goes to his hut, desirous of a bite  
 To eat, and each one bends his weary knees  
 Upon the threshold, caked with dust, then sees  
 His toil-worn hands and curses to the sky  
 His belly - that was when they glided by  
 Cianian homes around Cius' gateway  
 And Mount Arganthon. Amicably they 1280  
 Were welcomed by those living thereabout,  
 The Mysians, who to them handed out  
 Comestibles and wine in plenteousness  
 As well as sheep for they in their distress  
 Lacked these. Some brought dry wood, some leaves to spread  
 Aplenty to provide for each a bed.  
 Some rubbed together firesticks to afford  
 A flame, some mixed wine, others spread the board,  
 Once they had to Apollo at nightfall  
 Made sacrifice (for he was god of all 1290  
 Who sailed to sea). The son of Zeus then bade  
 Them to prepare the feast but then he made  
 His way into a wood that he might mould  
 An oar to fit his hand: lo and behold,  
 Roaming, he found a pine with branches few  
 And not too leafy, likening it to

The shaft of a tall poplar, for so high  
 And thick it was. He laid his quiver by  
 Posthaste, his bow as well. His lion's hide  
 He doffed, and then his bronzed club he applied 1300  
 To it and, putting both his hands around  
 The trunk, he loosed the whole thing from the ground,  
 Relying on his strength, then, legs astride  
 For purchase, he upheld it on one side  
 Of his broad neck and ripped it totally  
 Skyward, though it had stood deep-rootedly  
 Within the earth. Just as in wintry days  
 Calamitous Orion starts his phase  
 Of setting and a sudden current shocks,  
 Falls on the ship's mast and removes the blocks 1310  
 And stays, it was the same with Heracles.  
 Taking bow, darts, hide, club, with all of these  
 He started back. Hylas began to turn  
 From the heroic crew, with a bronze urn,  
 And sought the holy spring that he might take  
 Some water for the evening meal and make  
 All else shipshape for Heracles when he  
 Returned, for Heracles had similarly  
 Brought up the boy from early infancy  
 Without his father, Theiodamas the Good 1320  
 Whom he over an ox slew cruelly  
 Among the Dryopians after he,  
 While ploughing fallow land, met with distress  
 When Heracles had, for its usefulness  
 For ploughing, compelled him, against his will,  
 To render up the ox: he yearned for ill  
 To the Dryopians while seeking a device  
 To wage a war against them for their vice.  
 This would, however, lead me far astray  
 From what I sing about. But, as I say, 1330  
 Hylas came to the fountain, called Pegae  
 By the inhabitants who lived nearby.  
 The dances of the nymphs were being held  
 Just at this time, for all three nymphs who dwelled  
 Upon that lovely headland took great care  
 Always to honour with a nightly air  
 Queen Artemis. Those nymphs who singled out  
 The peaks and dells were ranging far about  
 To guard the woods. A water-nymph, outside  
 The lovely, flowing spring, however, spied 1340  
 Close by, as she appeared, the ruddy lad  
 In comeliness and sweet enchantment clad



(For the full moon was beaming high above,  
Displaying him). Cypris so filled with love  
Her trembling heart that she could scarcely draw  
Her breath in her confusion. When she saw  
Him dip the urn into the stream as he  
Leaned over and the water brimmingly  
Roared as it poured around the vessel there,  
She laid her left arm on his neck four-square, 1350

Agog to kiss his tender mouth: her right  
She laid upon his elbow and the sprite  
Pulled him into the stream. One man alone,  
Eilatus' son, Polyphemus, heard the groan  
While on the path, for he was looking out  
For Heracles' return. He dashed without  
Delay to Pegae like a beast that's caught  
The sound of far-off bleating, being fraught  
With blazing hunger, so it turns around 1360  
But not a flock of sheep can there be found,

The shepherds having driven them within,  
And so he roars in an incessant din  
Until he's weary: groaning loudly thus  
Did Polyphemus, son of Eilatus,  
Wander about in the vicinity  
And shouted while his voice rang piteously.  
He drew his great sword and was on his way  
For fear that Hylas be to beasts a prey  
Or men might ambush him and easily  
Drag him away. Then on the pathway he 1370  
Met Heracles himself while brandishing

His naked sword, for in the deepening  
Of night he knew him well as on he went  
To the ship. He told him of the dread event  
At once, his breathing laboured: "I shall be  
The first to tell of dire calamity,  
My poor friend; Hylas set off for the well  
But has not safe returned. What man can tell  
If thieves attacked and now are dragging him  
Away or beasts are tearing limb from limb  
1380

His corpse? I heard him cry." That's what he said.  
When Heracles heard this, down his forehead  
Ran streams of sweat, black blood was bubbling  
Within his gut and anger made him fling  
The pine-tree to the ground, then off he went  
Upon the path, his spirit vehement.  
Just as a bull stung by a gadfly flees,

Abandoning the marshlands and the leas:  
 No thoughts of herd, no thoughts of shepherd fill  
 His head; he goes, now dashing, now stockstill, 1390  
 He bellows loudly, broad neck rising high,  
 Assaulted by the maddening gadfly –  
 It was in this way frenzied Heracles  
 Now restlessly applied his speedy knees  
 To running fast, and then, putting aside  
 His toil, he shouted loudly far and wide.  
 Immediately the morning star shone through  
 The mountain-tops while down the breezes blew.  
 Speedily Tiphys urged them all to board  
 The ship and, what the breezes could afford, 1400  
 Make use of, and they did this eagerly,  
 Hauling the ropes, and thrust off from the quay.  
 The sails were bellied by the wind, the strand  
 Left far behind and gladly the headland  
 Of Poseidon now they passed. Now dawn, bright-eyed,  
 Arisen from the east, they all espied  
 Beaming from heaven, and the ways showed, too,  
 So clearly, while the meadows, thick with dew,  
 Shone brightly: then it was they comprehended  
 That they had left behind, though unintended, 1410  
 Some men, and so a mighty quarrel fell  
 Among them, and incessant brawl as well  
 That they had left the bravest of their crew.  
 Bewildered, Jason knew not what to do  
 And sat in silence, eating out his heart  
 In grievous sorrow. With an angry start  
 Did Telamon speak out: “Oh sit there, please!  
 It’s fitting to abandon Heracles!  
 For his repute, it was your strategy,  
 Should not eclipse your own in Greece, should we 1420  
 Be blessed to come safe home. What joy is there  
 In words, though? I will take myself elsewhere,  
 Far from your friends who showed complicity  
 In your deceit. Those were his words. Then he  
 At Tiphys, son of Hagnas, swiftly came,  
 His eyes like curling licks of ravening flame.  
 They should have quickly come to Mysian turf  
 While battling through the endless winds and surf  
 But that the sons of Boreas the Thracian  
 Restrained the man with words of indignation: 1430  
 Alas, the dire revenge of Heracles  
 For staying of a search awaited these  
 Two men: in sea-girt Tenos they were slain

By him as they were coming back again  
 From the games for Pelias' death; the earth he piled  
 Around them, then two monuments he styled  
 Above them, one, a wondrous sight to see,  
 Which moves when the North Wind blows stormily  
 Upon it. These events in future time  
 Would be fulfilled. Out of the deep sea's rime 1440  
 Glaucus appeared, divine Nereus's wise  
 Interpreter. They all observed him rise,  
 His shaggy head and chest imposingly  
 Drawn up above his flanks, then sturdily  
 He seized the keel and to the eager crew  
 Cried: "Why do you pay no attention to  
 Great Zeus's counsel, proposing to bring  
 Bold Heracles to the city of the king  
 Aeëtes? He for the contemptuous  
 Eurystheus must complete twelve strenuous 1450  
 Labours and dwell in immortality,  
 Should he fulfil a few more; let there be  
 No grief for him. It's the gods' will, likewise,  
 That Polyphemus is to organize  
 A glorious city at the entranceway  
 Of Cios with the Mysians and stay  
 Thenceforward in the Chalybes' great land.  
 The holy nymph has taken Hylas' hand  
 In loving wedlock, for whose sake those two  
 Wandered around, now left behind by you." 1460  
 He spoke and with a plunge the restless swell  
 He swathed about himself; round him, pell-mell,  
 The dark waves foamed in eddies and assailed  
 The hollow ship as through the sea she sailed.  
 The heroes were excited. Eagerly  
 To Jason Telamon, the progeny  
 Of Aeacus, went up and grasped his hand  
 Within his own, embraced him warmly and  
 Said: "Jason, cease your anger, please, I pray:  
 I erred in folly – sorrow made me say 1470  
 Things arrogant and dreadful. Let me throw  
 My error to the winds that we may show  
 Our friendship as before:" Then prudently  
 The son of Aeson said: "You slandered me,  
 Good friend, with vicious words, to all men here  
 Saying I wronged a kind friend. Never fear,  
 However, for my anger I'll not keep,  
 Though pained beforehand. It was not for sheep  
 Or property that you felt indignation

But for a friend. I hold the expectation 1480  
That you would fight another man for me  
In such a case.” And then, as formerly,  
They sat united. It was Zeus’s will  
That of those two, Polyphemus would fulfil  
A city’s founding in the Mysian land,  
Named for the river flowing by it, and  
The other, Heracles, would go and toil  
For Eurystheus. He threatened to despoil  
The Mysian territory instantly  
Should they not bring to light the destiny 1490  
Of Hylas, quick or dead. Then they all chose  
The worthiest male progeny of those  
Who lived there and then pledged a guarantee  
Not to forsake their search. Accordingly  
The people of Cios even today  
Seek Hylas, Theiodamas’s son, while they  
Watch over well-built Trachis – Heracles  
Had settled in that place their guarantees,  
Those noble sons. The ship, all day and night,  
Was carried by strong winds but at first light 1500  
No breeze was felt at all. A promontory  
They then detected, very broad to see,  
Rising above the bay, so on they rowed  
And came to landfall as the rooster crowed.

## BOOK II

Here were the stables and the smallholding  
Of Amycos, the Bebrycians' arrogant king,  
Whom the Bithynian nymph named Melie  
Had to Poseidon borne - indeed she lay  
With him, who was the most presumptuous  
Of men for a decree contemptuous  
For even strangers, who could not depart  
Till they have tried the pugilistic art  
Against him. Many locals had he slain.  
He now approached the ship but did not deign 10  
To ask who they were or what was their quest;  
Instead immediately he thus addressed  
Them all: "Give heed to what you all must know,  
Seafarers. A newcomer may not go  
From here until he's tried his hand with me  
In boxing, so pick from your company  
Your finest man and put him to the test.  
If you refuse, trampling on my behest,  
It shall go hard with you." Thus haughtily  
He spoke; wild anger seized the company. 20  
Now this struck Polydeuces most of all  
And, standing forth, he said: "Contain your gall,  
Whoever you are; your rules we will obey,  
For I propose myself for this affray."  
Bluntly he spoke; the other, glowering,  
Rolled up his eyes just as, when in a ring  
The hunters hem him, a struck lion glares –  
Though circled, for the crowd he has no cares  
But on the man who, though he did not slay  
But wounded him, fixates. Then straightaway 30  
The son of Tyndareus his mantle doffed,  
A closely-woven cloak and very soft,  
Which, as a pledge of hospitality,  
A maid from the Lemnos community  
Had given him. The king threw down his dark  
And closely-buckled mantle and the stark  
Staff that he bore, cut from the olive-tree  
And mountain-grown. On the locality  
They looked and chose a satisfying space,

Then bade their comrades all take up their place 40  
Apart from them and sit upon the shore.  
In form and stature they could not be more  
Dissimilar. Of baleful Typhoeus  
One seemed to be the child prodigious  
And of Gaia herself, such as in spleen  
At Zeus she bore before; one had the sheen  
Of heavenly stars whose brightest beams appear  
At night-time just as eventide is near.  
So, with his downy cheeks and glittering eyes,  
Appeared the son of Zeus, yet still the size 50  
Of his strength was a beast's: he verified  
His hands could, as before, be well applied  
To boxing, not heavy from handling  
The oars. Amycos, though, did no such thing.  
Silent, he stood apart and fixed his eyes  
Upon his foe; he felt his spirit rise  
While hungering to scatter from his frame  
His life's blood. In between them then there came  
His servant Lycoreus who placed beside  
Them both four thongs of dry, raw leather-hide. 60  
And then the king addressed them haughtily:  
"If these you want, I'll give them willingly  
Lest you should blame me. Place them both about  
Your hands so you may say without a doubt  
To others how adept I am at slashing  
The desiccated ox-hides and at splashing  
Men's cheeks with blood." He spoke; no barbed reply  
Was made, just a swift smile; with what lay by  
His feet he clothed himself quite silently.  
Great Talaos, Bias's progeny, 70  
And Castor quickly came to fasten tight  
The thongs while urging him to show his might.  
Aretos and Oryntos did likewise  
And bound the king but did not realize,  
Poor fools, that they would never do this more.  
Standing apart, equipped, they held before  
Themselves their heavy hands and set to fight  
Each other: as a violent billow might  
Attack a swift ship, though for a little she  
Escapes it through pilot ability, 80  
While it spurts up the sides, thus did the king  
Go after Polydeuces, essaying  
To daunt him and not give him any rest,  
But he, with not a scratch and being blessed  
With skill, fought off his charge. The brutal sweep

Of fists he noted so that he might keep  
 An eye on where he showed his skills and where  
 His weaknesses, so, ever standing there,  
 He parried blow for blow. As woodsmen strike  
 A vessel's beams that they may meet each spike, 90  
 Each blow resounding, cheeks and jawbones clashed  
 On either side, and noisily teeth gnashed,  
 Nor did they cease till laboured gasps won out.  
 Standing apart a little, every gout  
 Of ample sweat they wiped away as they  
 Tried hard to catch their breath. Then straightaway  
 They re-engaged, as bulls in rivalry  
 Fight wildly for a heifer. Suddenly  
 Amycos, stretching himself, rose on tiptoe,  
 As one who slays an ox, and on his foe 100  
 Brought down his heavy hands. He turned his head  
 And took the blow on his shoulders instead,  
 A minor one; he then advanced his knee  
 Beyond that of the king and fleetingly  
 Smote him above the ear, thus shattering  
 The bones, and he fell to his knees. A ring  
 Of cheers went up among the *Argo's* men.  
 His life's blood issued from him there and then.  
 His folk did not neglect him as they caught  
 Up in their hands rough clubs and spears and sought 110  
 Polydeuces. His companions went up to  
 These men as they their pointed daggers drew.  
 One of them Castor struck upon the head  
 As he approached him and it plummeted  
 To earth each side of him, for it was slashed  
 In two. Huge Itymoneus and Minas crashed  
 In the dust – one Polydeuces speedily  
 Kicked in the chest, the other one, while he  
 Was running straight at him, with his right hand  
 Struck his left eyebrow, took the lid off and 120  
 Exposed the eyeball. Now the insolent  
 Oreides, the king's henchman, made a rent  
 In Bias' son Talaos' side, although  
 He was not slain but merely grazed below  
 The belt – the bronze did not disturb his skin.  
 Then with his seasoned club there waded in  
 Arctos, beating the brave progeny  
 Of Eurytos, Iphitos, his destiny  
 Of death still unfulfilled - soon Klytios  
 Would pierce him with his sword. Bold Ancaios, 130  
 Lycourgos' son, large, dark axe in one hand,

A bear's hide in the other, took a stand  
 Against the foe and leapt into the fray  
 Impatiently with, joining the melée,  
 The Aiacidai and, starting out as well,  
 The warlike Jason. As grey wolves, pell-mell,  
 On winter days rush down and terrorize  
 A flock of countless sheep, beyond the eyes  
 Of the keen-scented hounds and those who keep  
 An eye on them, determining which sheep 140  
 To take first, often glancing all around;  
 The huddled sheep are falling on the ground  
 Over each other; thus the violent  
 Heroes now terrorized the insolent  
 Bebrycians and, just as those men who tend  
 A flock and those who keep a hive will send  
 Thick smoke into a rock, thus dislodging  
 A bee-swarm, still with buzz-like murmuring  
 Packed tightly – they at last, quite stupefied  
 By all that smoke, unable to abide 150  
 For longer, flee the rock – thus, staying there  
 No longer, through Bebrycia everywhere,  
 Announcing their king's death. They did not know,  
 Poor fools, that there was further unseen woe:  
 For Lycos and the Mariandyni  
 Were ravaging the whole vicinity –  
 Each vineyard and each village – now the king  
 Was gone, for there was constant squabbling  
 In that iron-bearing land, so now these men  
 Destroyed each farm and stable while, again, 160  
 Hither and yon the heroes drove away  
 Their countless sheep. One to his friends would say:  
 "Pray tell me, what would these faint-hearted men  
 Have done if a god had brought to us again  
 Our Heraces? With him here, I suppose,  
 There would have been no test of trading blows  
 With fists. No, when he came to us to tell  
 His rules, those rules and his *hauteur* as well  
 Would quite have fled his mind when Heraces  
 Had plied his club. Instead we sailed the seas 170  
 And left him callously. We all shall see  
 Our fatal folly now he's gone." Thus he  
 Addressed them. But by Zeus' will everything  
 Was fulfilled. They remained that night to bring  
 Assistance to the wounded. Then they made  
 Their sacrifices to the gods and laid  
 A goodly spread. No slumber overcame



One man beside the sacrificial flame  
 And bowl. They interwove their golden hair  
 With laurel growing on the shoreline, where 180  
 Their hawsers had been bound; melodiously  
 They sweetly sang a hymn in harmony  
 With Orpheus's lute, the windless shore  
 Enchanted by their singing, which was for  
 Polydeuces. Now the sun from far away  
 Shone on the dewy hills; to greet the day  
 It roused the shepherds, and they now unmoored  
 Their cables from the bay tree while on board  
 They stored essentials. Now they steered straight through  
 The eddying Bosphorus while fair winds blew. 190  
 And then a breaker they could see appear  
 Assailant-like before them, mountain-sheer,  
 Ever upheaved above the clouds. You'd say  
 That death was certain, for it hung midway  
 Above the ship, cloud-like and angrily,  
 And yet it settles in tranquillity  
 When meeting a good helmsman. They were taken  
 From harm by Tiphys' skill, rescued but shaken..  
 Next day they roped their hawsers in the land  
 Of Bithynia, where Phineus lived, on the strand, 200  
 Agenor's son, who in his misery  
 Bore more woes, for the gift of prophecy  
 From Phoebus, than did other men. He cared  
 For Zeus himself no whit, for he declared  
 His holy will to all unerringly.  
 So Zeus a long-drawn-out senility  
 Afforded him and took the pleasing light  
 From his eyes and wouldn't let him take delight  
 In boundless food the neighbours, as they sought  
 Predictions, brought to them, for Harpies caught 210  
 It in their jaws and wrenched it all away  
 Out of his hands and mouth, so quickly they  
 Rushed at him through the clouds – now not a thing,  
 No, just a scrap so that his suffering  
 Might carry on, they left him – and they spewed  
 A loathsome stench. None dared to bring him food  
 Or even stand far off, so foul a smell  
 Those kitchen-scrap gave off. But he knew well  
 The voices and the tramping of the crew  
 Who would ensure his feasting would ensue 220  
 (So Zeus allowed): he rose from where he lay,  
 Just like a lifeless dream, and made his way  
 Towards the door on withered feet while bent

Over his staff and feeling, as he went,  
The walls; his body trembled, frail and old;  
His skin, quite parched with dirt, was, truth be told,  
The only thing that held his bones. He left  
The house and on the threshold sat, bereft  
Of vigour. A dark stupor wrapped around  
Him and it seemed to him the very ground 230  
Wavered beneath him. Speechless, there he lay,  
Both weak and in a coma, and, when they  
Saw him, they gathered round, amazed. But he  
With laboured breath pronounced this prophecy:  
“Hear, mighty Greeks, if it be truly you,  
Whom by a ruthless king’s decree pursue,  
Upon the *Argo* under Jason’s sway,  
The fleece. It’s you indeed. My mind still may  
Know every prophecy. I thank you, king,  
Son of Leto, though plunged in suffering. 240  
Zeus, god of suppliants, to sinful folk  
The sternest punisher, you I invoke  
For Phoebus and for Hera, through whose aid  
Especially you come; help me evade  
This torment in my misery. Don’t go  
And mercilessly leave me full of woe  
Like this. Upon my eyes a Fury set  
Her foot that I might pay an endless debt  
Through many weary years; not only thus:  
There hangs above me the most onerous 250  
Of woes: the Harpies snatch my food from me  
As, from some fatal place no-one can see,  
They swoop down. I am helpless. With more ease  
Might I escape my very thoughts than these,  
When I crave sustenance, so rapidly  
They fly, and if they have some scraps for me,  
The mouldy smell is just too great to bear:  
Though adamantine-hearted, none would dare  
Come close. Force, sharp and hard to tolerate,  
However, makes me stay and satiate 260  
My wretched belly. They, the gods decree,  
Shall be restricted by the progeny  
Of Boreas. No foreign aid are these  
If I am Phineus, once in prophecies  
And riches famed, Agenor’s son; when Thrace  
Was in my governance, I brought, to grace  
My home, their sister Cleopatra.” So  
Spoke out Agenor’s son, and each hero  
Was filled with formidable misery,

The sons of Boreas especially. 270  
 Then when they had their tears all brushed aside,  
 They came to him and now Zetes replied,  
 Taking the wretched old man's hand in his:  
 "Unhappy one, I do not think there is  
 A man more cursed. Why is such misery  
 Laid on you? Did some fell insanity  
 Within you cause you, by your readiness  
 In everything prophetic, to transgress  
 Against the gods? Did this stir their great spleen?  
 Our hearts, though, are dismayed, though we are keen 280  
 To aid you, if a god to both of us  
 Indeed bestows this due, for obvious  
 To men are their reproofs. For you we care,  
 But we won't stop the Harpies till you swear  
 The pantheon of the gods won't take away  
 Their favour. " That is what he had to say.  
 The old man opened eyes that could not see  
 And raised them, saying, "Silence. Child, let be  
 Such thoughts. Let Phoebus, who in kindness  
 Taught me to prophesy, be my witness; 290  
 Be witness, also, the portentous doom  
 That holds me in its grip, the murky gloom  
 About my eyes, the gods below – may I  
 Receive their curse if I should perjured die –  
 No anger from the gods shall come to you  
 Because you aid me." With their oath those two  
 Now yearned to give him help. The younger men  
 Made ready for the old man there and then  
 A dinner, for the Harpies a last prey.  
 Close by they stood that with their swords they may 300  
 Pierce them in flight. The old man touched the fare  
 And instantly the Harpies through the air  
 Came flying, like harsh squalls or lightning,  
 And through the clouds with sudden clamouring  
 They yelled their lust for food. When they'd been spied,  
 The heroes shouted loud on every side;  
 But, gulping all, the Harpies crossed the sea  
 In flight, but an oppressive pungency  
 Remained. The Boreads, with daggers drawn,  
 Pursued them: Zeus had given quenchless brawn 310  
 To them, for they could not have held their quest  
 Without Zeus, for in swiftness they could best  
 The West Wind's squalls whenever they came or went.  
 Like hounds that are proficient in the scent  
 In wooded valleys or sniff out the deer

Or hornèd goats as onward they career  
 And, straining from behind a little way,  
 They gnash their teeth in irritation, they,  
 Zetes and Calaïs, so close behind,  
 In vain their fingertips they'd always find 320  
 Just scraping at the Harpies, who'd have rent  
 Them quite apart against the gods' consent  
 When on the Floating Isles they met, had there  
 Not been swift Iris watching: through the air  
 She sped from heaven, checking them. Thus she  
 Spoke up: "O Boreads, illicitly  
 You chase with swords the Harpies, for they are  
 Great Zeus's hounds. I'll give you oaths to bar  
 Them from your path," and, saying this, she swore  
 By Styx's waters – there is nothing more 330  
 Awful and dread to all the gods – that they  
 To Phineus' house would never make their way  
 Again (thus Fate decreed), and to this oath  
 They yielded, turning from the ships, the both  
 Of them. Therefore this place has come to be  
 'The Turning Isles', though mortals previously  
 Called them 'The Floating Isles'. The Harpies and  
 Iris then parted: in the Cretan land  
 They entered their den; to Olympus she  
 Went flying up with great velocity. 340  
 The chiefs then washed the old man's squalid flesh  
 So thoroughly that it now shone afresh,  
 Then sacrificing sheep which carefully  
 They chose and was the looted property  
 Of Amycos. They cooked a mammoth feast  
 Within the hall, then dined; not with the least  
 Gusto did Phineus eat; his heart was glad  
 As in a dream. When everyone had had  
 Sufficient food and drink, they watched all night  
 For both the Boreads. By firelight 350  
 The old man sat among them, telling how  
 Their quest would be concluded. "Listen now:  
 You may not know all things undoubtedly,  
 But what the gods allow you'll hear from me.  
 From first to last I foretold Zeus's mind –  
 A foolish act, for he would give mankind  
 Unfinished details, that they still will need  
 Some knowledge of his will. You first will heed  
 The twin Kyanean Rocks upon the sea  
 Once you have left me on your odyssey: 360  
 No-one has ever made escape betwixt

Those two, for they are not rootedly fixed  
But at one point they clatter constantly  
Together while, above them violently,  
Salt-water spumes and on the rigid beach  
Comes crashing down. Attend to what I teach  
If you respect the gods and wisely go  
Your way nor bring about your overthrow  
Through foolishness and hold no certainty  
In youth's advice. When you are back at sea, 370  
Firstly release a dove, and should it dart  
Safe through those rocks, then afterwards depart  
No longer from your path; row sturdily  
And with your oars drive through the narrow sea,  
For safety's light is not so much in prayer  
As in your strength, and therefore have no care  
For aught but labouring with might and main.  
Till then, however, I will not restrain  
Your prayers. But if in flight between those two  
She dies, then turn around – much better you 380  
Yield to the gods. Those two rocks would entail  
Your doom though flint the ship in which you sail.  
Unlucky ones, my warnings do not dare  
Transgress, even though you think the gods might bear  
A thricefold hatred to me, or yet more  
Than that. Don't dare to sail beyond the shore  
In spite of my predictions. All shall be  
As it shall be. Should you unscathedly  
Avoid the clashing rocks and sail into  
The Black Sea, then Bithynia see that you 390  
Keep on your right until you skirt around  
Swift Rhodas and the black beach, finding ground  
In Thynias Island's port. Some little space  
Sail back and moor your vessel where the race  
Of Mariandyni abide. Close by  
A way to Hades lies, while up on high  
Acherusia's headland stretches. Far below  
The waters of the eddying Acheron flow  
Even through the headland through a huge ravine.  
Nearby, as you sail on, there will be seen 400  
The many Paphlagonian hills – their king  
First was Enetian Pelops, from whom spring  
Those folk, they boast, while opposite the bear  
Called Helice there is a headland where  
Approach is steep on every side. They call  
It Carambis: there is a constant squall  
Of north winds splitting round her head. Thus she

Looms high above and turns towards the sea.  
 Beyond lies broad Aigialos. Past here  
 Upon a jutting piece of coast appear 410  
 The streams of River Halys, on a shore  
 That bulges out, which, with a dreadful roar,  
 Spurts forth; then Iris, nearby rippling,  
 Though smaller, rolls to sea, white-eddying;  
 And then projecting forward from the land,  
 There stands a promontory, massive and grand;  
 Then Thermodon into a quiet bay  
 At Themiscyra's headland makes its way  
 From thrusting through a sweeping countryside.  
 Here is Doias's plain; close by abide 420  
 The Amazons in their three conurbations,  
 And then the wretchedest of all the nations,  
 The Chalybes, who ply a rugged soil,  
 Unyielding, working iron with much toil.  
 The Tibareni, rich in flocks, dwell near  
 Beyond the Genetaian headland, dear  
 To Zeus the god of hospitality.  
 The next in order, the Mossynici,  
 Dwell in the forests and declivities –  
 Their homes they built from towers made of trees, 430  
 Which they call Mossyni: their soubriquet  
 Derives from them. When you have made your way  
 Beyond them, moor your ship on a smooth isle  
 When you have driven off, with endless guile,  
 The birds of prey, which are a multitude  
 And dwell upon this island solitude.  
 It's here Otrere and Antiope,  
 The Amazon queens, once built a sanctuary  
 Of stone to Ares when they marched away  
 To war. With kindly heart I bid you stay 440  
 Since you will win from the astringent sea  
 Unutterable aid. Why must I be  
 A sinner once again since I forecast  
 Your total venture? On the mainland past  
 This island and across from it reside  
 The Philyri; the Macrones abide  
 Above them, while, beyond, the massive race  
 Of Becheiri is found. The next in place  
 Are the Sapeiri, following hard fast  
 The Byzeres; beyond these tribes, at last 450  
 The warlike Colchi live. Your odyssey  
 Keep up until you reach the innermost sea.  
 There on the Cytaiian mainland, far away

From the mountains and the plateau of Circe  
The eddying Phasis casts its ample flow  
Into the sea; into that river go:  
Cytaiian Aeetes' towers you will see  
And Ares' shady grove: on an oak-tree  
And guarded by a snake, dire to the sight,  
Eyes darting, is the spread-out fleece: nor night 460  
Nor day does sleep his wicked eyelids quell."  
He spoke, and fear upon his listeners fell.  
For some time they were hit with speechlessness  
But finally, dismayed by their distress,  
The hero, son of Aeson, spoke: "You now  
Have reached our journey's end and made your vow,  
Old man, which we believe will take us through  
The dreaded rocks to Pontus. But from you  
I'd gladly learn if, having shunned them, we  
May then return to Greece. How can it be, 470  
How could I sail so far, unqualified,  
My comrades likewise? On the utmost side  
Of earth lies Aian Colchos." In reply  
The old man said: "Child, when you have passed by  
Those dreaded rocks, fear not. Another track  
A god will show you. Thence you will not lack  
For guides. Take thought, friends, of the cunning aid  
Of Aphrodite. Your hopes must be laid  
On her in your endeavours. Ask no more  
Of me." Thus spoke the son of Agenor. 480  
The twins of Thracian Boreas through the air  
Came darting down, their swift feet brought to bear  
Upon the threshold. Then from every seat  
Each hero, seeing them, got to his feet.  
Zetes, still breathing hard from his travail,  
Then told the eager throng how long a trail  
They made to rout the Harpies far and wide,  
How Iris banned their slaughter and supplied  
Them, in her grace, with oaths, and how in fear  
The Harpies crept away to disappear 490  
Into their massive cave within the peak  
Of Dicte. Then, when they had heard him speak  
These words, the heroes all were jubilant,  
And Phineus, too. Then a benevolent  
Jason said: "Phineus, indubitably  
A god grieved for your great adversity  
And sent us from afar so that you might  
Be helped by Boreas's sons. If sight  
Were given you again, a joy so vast

As if I were returning home at last 500  
Would girdle me.” He spoke, but with an air  
Of sadness, Phineus said: “It’s past repair,  
Jason; there’ll be no cure. Deprived of sight,  
My eyes are blasted. Would a god may smite  
Me now instead with death that I may be  
In perfect bliss.” In suchlike colloquy  
They traded words, and early morning light  
Soon broke upon their converse, shining bright.  
The neighbours, who beforehand had amassed  
Each day to give a share of their repast 510  
To Phineus, gathered now. To each one he,  
Indifferent to any penury,  
Gave forecasts freely, with each revelation  
Releasing many from their tribulation:  
For this they came to him and lavished care  
Upon him. With them came a friend most rare  
To him - Paraibios. He was delighted  
To see them there, for long he had recited  
The story of the Greek heroic band  
Destined to moor their ship in Thynian land 520  
As they sailed on to reach Aeëtes’ port,  
Who by the will of Zeus would also thwart  
The Harpies’ rout. He sent upon their way  
The rest with kind, wise words but urged to stay  
Only Paraibios with those who led  
The expedition. And to him he said  
That he should bring to him immediately  
The choicest sheep and then, as soon as he  
Had left the hall, he graciously addressed  
The gathered oarsmen: “It must be confessed, 530  
My friends, not all men are imperious  
Or lacking kindness. This man came to us,  
Though loyal, keen to know his destiny:  
Despite his constant toil, his penury  
Chafed at him: more abject from day to day,  
He saw no rest. But he was doomed to pay  
The price of his own father’s wicked deed:  
Alone, while felling trees, he failed to heed  
A hamadryad’s plea. For clamorously,  
In grief, she begged him not to fell a tree 540  
Coeval with herself (a mighty span  
Of years she had lived in it). Foolish man,  
He cut it down with youthful loftiness.  
The nymph ordained perpetual distress  
Both to the man and to his progeny.



At his arrival, that iniquity  
 I recognized and bade him build to her  
 An altar and request that she defer  
 Forevermore his father's destiny.  
 Ever since he dodged this god-sent misery, 550  
 He's not forgotten me, for in regard  
 He holds me. Now it goes extremely hard  
 To send him off, unwilling, since he's so  
 Desirous to be with me in my woe."  
 Thus spoke Agenor's son. Immediately  
 His friend came back with two sheep from the lea.  
 The Boreads and Jason then arose  
 At the old man's command and, at the close  
 Of day, called on the god of divination,  
 Phoebus, and at the hearth made an oblation. 560  
 The young ones made a satisfying spread:  
 When it was eaten, some men made their bed  
 Alongside *Argo's* cables, others lay  
 Within the house in crowds. At break of day  
 Rushed periodic winds, over the land  
 Evenly blowing by Zeus's command.  
 Cyrene, it is said, would formerly  
 Tend to her sheep by the Peneian lea.  
 For maidenhood and an unspotted bed  
 Were dear to her. However, as she fed 570  
 Her flock beside the river, far away  
 From her Haimonia she was one day  
 Snatched by Phoebus Apollo and amid  
 The nymphs who haunt the earth deposited  
 (By high Myrtosios their habitation  
 They had established in the Libyan nation).  
 To Phoebus she bore Aristaeus there  
 (Although her corn-rich folk gave her a pair  
 Of names, Hunter and Shepherd: tenderness  
 Had caused Apollo to make timelessness 580  
 And hunting her especial care: he sent  
 The boy to Chiron's cave that time be spent  
 In nurturing his youth, and then when he  
 Was grown, the Muses taught him prophecy  
 And healing, giving him a bride, and made  
 Him keeper of the flocks of sheep that they'd  
 Been tending on Adamas's plateau  
 In Phthia round the Apidanos' flow,  
 That holy river, and the well-protected  
 Othys. Minos's islands were reflected 590  
 By Sirius and scorched – no remedy

Was there for those in the vicinity  
Until, at last, at Hecate's command,  
They called for him to banish from the land  
This plague. His father bade him go away  
From Phthia: in Ceos he made his stay  
And gathered the Parrasians (of the strain  
Of Lycaon), to Zeus the god of rain  
Built a large altar and established rites  
Of sacrifice to Sirius in the heights 600  
As well as Zeus, who sent to cool the land  
For his sake periodic winds which spanned  
Twice twenty days. In Ceos now as well  
Before the Dog-Star's rising, priests, they tell,  
Make sacrifice. The chiefs were urged to stay:  
The Thynians, sending great gifts every day,  
Paid Phineus honour. To the twelve gods they made  
An altar on the shore and on it laid  
Their offerings. They embarked on swift *Argo*,  
Remembering, as they set out to row, 610  
A timid dove. It trembled with dismay  
As Euphemos grasped it. They then made away,  
Loosing the double hawsers, not unmarked  
By Queen Athene, who with speed embarked  
Upon an airy cloud, which rapidly,  
Despite her strength, would carry her. For she  
Sped seawards to the oarsmen's service. Just  
As one leaves home, smitten with wanderlust,  
As hardy souls as we roam far and near,  
No land too far and every pathway clear, 620  
He seems to see his home, his odyssey  
Over both sea and land quite plain to see,  
Ardently thinking, striving here and there  
To find it, so, posthaste, upon the bare  
And inhospitable Thynian strand,  
The progeny of Zeus now came to land.  
When they came to the narrow, winding sound,  
Hemmed with harsh cliffs, there eddied all around  
The ship a surge from underneath the sea  
As they advanced with great anxiety, 630  
The sound of clashing rocks a never-ending  
Hubbub upon their ears, the sea-cliffs sending  
Out roars, then Euphemos began to climb  
The prow, grasping the dove; at the same time,  
At Tiphys', son of Hagnias, decree,  
They helped by rowing, in their certainty  
Of their own strength, so they might drive straight past

The rocks. Then straightaway they saw at last  
The rocks all gaping open after they  
Had rowed around the winding passageway. 640  
Their hearts melted; Euphemos sent the dove  
A-winging; then all cast their eyes above,  
Raising their heads, as through them all she soared:  
The rocks, clashing together, loudly roared.  
A deal of brine spumed up, just like a cloud,  
The sea let forth a noise, dreadful and loud,  
The mighty heavens crashed, within the spume  
That surged beneath the harsh crags came a boom  
From hollow caves, and in the air there hissed  
Above the cliffs the bubbling wave's white mist. 650  
Then round the ship the deluge pressed. Above  
The rocks clipped the tail-feathers of the dove  
As she flew back unscathed. A mighty shout  
Came from the oarsmen. Tiphys now yelled out  
For strenuous rowing, for the rocks again  
Were opening. Now trembling racked the men  
As on they rowed until the very tide,  
Receding, raised them up and back inside  
The rocks. Now all were struck with extreme fear:  
Up high inexorable death was near. 660  
The broad Black Sea was seen from left to right,  
But unforeseen there rose up in their sight  
A mighty curving wave resembling  
A sheer hilltop, and when they saw this thing  
They bowed their heads – it seemed about to flip  
Upon them and spread over the whole ship.  
But Tiphys swiftly slackened her as she  
Was fretting in her oars, and utterly  
It rolled beneath her keel: from stern to prow  
It drew her up far from the rocks, and now 670  
It bore her high. Through the entire crew  
Euphemos went and yelled that they must do  
Their utmost at the oars, so with a roar  
They struck the waves. But what ground every oar  
Achieved was in reversing halved. Each blade  
Was bent just like a bow as each man made  
Heroic effort. Then immediately  
A vaulted wave surged at the ship, and she,  
Cylinder-like, rode on that violent sweep,  
Rushed down and forward through the hollow deep. 680  
She was contained in the Symplegades  
By this vortex. They made a noise like bees  
And shook. The *Argo's* timbers had been jammed.

And then with her left hand Athene rammed  
The stout rocks far apart and with her right  
Pushed *Argo* through the middle. In her flight  
She was a winged arrow. All the same,  
The rocks, forever clashing as she came,  
Grazed off the top of *Argo*'s ornament.  
Athene rose and to Olympus went, 690  
Once they'd escaped unscathed. The rocks, however,  
Were quickly rooted in one spot forever  
By heavenly decree that, sailing by,  
A man might live. At last they breathed a sigh,  
No longer chilled with fear, as on the sea  
And sky spread out in their immensity  
They looked. They felt they had escaped from Hell.  
Tiphys spoke first: "I hope this ugly spell  
Is now behind us, ship and all. Alone  
Athene, since her heavenly strength was blown 700  
Upon our ship as Argos riveted her  
With nails, must now be called our saviour.  
She can't be caught. Jason, no longer dread  
Your king's command - a holy one has led  
Us through the rocks. Phineus said there's no doubt  
That all our labours will from hereon out  
Be easy." Thus he spoke and through the sea  
Drove *Argo* past Bithynian land. But he  
Heard Jason answer him with gentleness:  
"Phineus, why comfort me in my distress? 710  
I sinned and acted unforgivably.  
I should, when Pelias gave me his decree,  
Have flatly turned it down, though doomed to die  
Deplorably, hacked limb from limb. Here I,  
Beset with worries too extreme to bear  
And copious fears, hate each dread thoroughfare  
We must endure on shipboard, dread, also,  
The mainland, hostile everywhere you go.  
I've suffered sleepless nights since, for my sake,  
You gathered for the first time, while I rake 720  
Over everything. You speak with easiness,  
Concerned for self alone, yet all my stress  
Is for this man and for all of my men  
Lest I do not deliver you again  
To Greece." Thus did he test his chiefs, and they  
Yelled cheerfully, succeeding to allay  
His fears. He then addressed them openly:  
"My friends, the courage that you show to me  
Shall swell my confidence. Be I conveyed

To Hades' depths, I will not be afraid 730  
Since, faced with dreadful terrors, you stay true  
And steadfast. Since we now have sailed straight through  
And circumvented the Symplegades,  
I think no bogeyman will rival these  
As long as we attend the admonition  
Of Phineus as upon our expedition  
We go." He spoke, and they immediately  
Broke off all talk, and constant industry  
Was plied in rowing. Then they passed beside  
Colone's crag and the swift-flowing tide 740  
Of Rhebas and then the Black Promontory  
Nearby, when where the Phyllis meets the sea  
And where into his dwelling Dipsacos  
Received, when he had fled Orchomenos,  
The son of Adamas who with his ram  
Arrived; a meadow-nymph had been his dam.  
Devoid of insolence, he willingly  
Lived with his mother, feeding by the sea  
His flock nearby his father's stream. They spied  
His shrine while swiftly sailing alongside, 750  
The broad shores of the river, and the plain,  
And deep Calpe, but then with might and main  
They laboured at their oars all day and night  
When everything was calm. As oxen fight  
To cleave the land while down their neck and sides  
A constant source of perspiration slides,  
And underneath the yoke they glance around,  
Their fiery breath making a roaring sound  
Nonstop, and with their hooves in weariness  
They delve all day, the heroes did no less 760  
Lean on their oars. Before the holy light  
Yet when it was no longer wholly night,  
Some little specks now flickering through the dark,  
Which risers call the dawn, they moored their barque  
On Thynia, an uninhabited  
Island, and disembarked with heavy tread.  
The son of Leto came into their view,  
Who'd come from Lycia and was passing through  
En route to the great Hyperborean nation.  
His clustered locks hung in proliferation 770  
About his cheeks. He held in his left hand  
A silver bow; meanwhile a quiver spanned  
His back and shoulders. Underneath his feet  
The island shook. The waves crashed as they beat  
The shoreline. Nonplussed incredulity

Struck them and none had the temerity  
To look him in the eye. They all stood there  
With eyes cast down. But he flew through the air  
Across the sea. Then Orpheus, when he'd gone,  
Said to his chieftains: "let us, every one, 780  
Give nomination to this holy isle  
Of "Dawn's Apollo" since at Dawn's first smile  
He showed himself to us. We'll do what we  
Must do and build a shrine next to the sea.  
But if at last we make a safe return  
To our Haemonia, we'll surely burn  
A sacrifice of goats. I advocate  
That you with wine and meat propitiate  
The god right now. Show your benignity,  
O lord." He spoke, and they immediately 790  
With pebbles built an altar. Then around  
The isle they roamed to see if could be found  
Some deer or else some goats which often feed  
Deep in the wood, and then that very need  
Was granted them by Leto's son. They greased  
The thighs in fat and piously they placed  
Them on the holy altar's holy flame  
While calling out Apollo's holy name,  
'Eoios'. Around the offering  
They organized a spacious dancing-ring 800  
And sang, "All praise, healing divinity."  
Along with them a clear-toned melody  
Was started up on the Bistonian lyre  
By good Orpheus (Oiagros was his sire) -  
How once beneath Parnassus Mountain he  
Slew with his bow the monster Delphyne  
While yet a beardless youth and while his hair  
Was still unshorn. O grant our fortune fair!  
Be unshorn ever, lord! Lord, may you be 810  
(For it is right) secure from injury!  
Your tresses are by Leto's kindly hand  
Alone caressed. The Corykæan band  
Of nymphs, Pleistos's daughters, words of cheer  
Addressed to you while shouting, "Healer, hear!"  
Thus came this lovely Phoebus-hymn to be.  
After this music and terpsichory,  
They carried out an undefiled libation  
And made a promise of cooperation  
Between them for eternity, while they  
All touched the sacrifice. Even today 820  
There lies the shrine of joyful Harmony

Which they provided by their industry  
 For their great goddess. Then on the third day  
 They left the precipitous island, on their way  
 Under the strong west wind. Then on they sped  
 Beyond where the Sangarios River fed  
 Into the sea, beyond the fertile land  
 The Mariandyni inhabit, and  
 The Lycian streams, Anthemoseisis Lake...  
 The wind they sailed before made all thing shake - 830  
 The ropes, the tackle – then during the night  
 The wind calmed and, at dawn, with great delight  
 They reached the harbour set beneath the crest  
 Of Acherousia. She makes her nest  
 Amid steep slopes and looks upon the sea  
 Of Bithynia; sea-smoothed rocks appear to be  
 Deep-rooted there; the water round about  
 Rolls, loudly roaring; at the peak there sprout  
 Huge plane-trees, while from it, stretching away  
 Towards the mainland, deep-indented, lay 840  
 A hollow glen where, overarched with wood  
 And piles of rocks, a cave of Hades stood,  
 Whence chilly blasts of vapour endlessly  
 Would emanate from their foul cavity,  
 Congealing white frost which the noonday sun  
 Would melt away. The noise was never done  
 On this grim peak. Beneath the roaring sea  
 The groans continued, while the greenery  
 Shook from the blasts within. The Acheron  
 Emerged from them, disgorging straight upon 850  
 The Eastern sea down from the mountain's peak,  
 Within a hollow gorge. About to seek  
 A home among the Mariandynian nation,  
 The Megarans gave it the appellation,  
 Much later, "Sailor-Saver" - a bad squall  
 Had threatened them, and it had saved them all,  
 Their ships as well. The crew immediately  
 Went through the Acherousian promontory,  
 The wind now ceasing, as they reached the strand.  
 Unmarked by Lycos, ruler of that land 860  
 And the Mariandyni – they, who had slain  
 Amycos, as they'd heard, a dreadful stain –  
 They soon made out a compact for their sin,  
 And as from all sides they came flocking in  
 They welcomed Polydeuces as though he  
 Had been a god – for an eternity  
 The proud Bebrycians and themselves had clashed;

That very day to Lycos they now dashed  
 And in the royal halls in amity  
 Prepared a banquet and with jollity 870  
 Conversed. The very names and families  
 Of all his comrades, Pelias' decrees,  
 The Lemnian women's entertainment and  
 What in Cyzikos, Dolionian land,  
 Had happened, how Mysia and Cios  
 They visited, the unintended loss  
 Of Heraces, left there, the divination  
 Of Glaucos and their own extermination  
 Of Amycos and the community 880  
 Of the Bebrycians, Phineus' prophecy  
 And woe, and how they managed to evade  
 The Clashing Rocks, how on the isle they made  
 Acquaintance with Apollo, he related.  
 At all these stories Lycos was elated,  
 Though grieved they had abandoned Heraces.  
 To all he said, "Friends, though to Aetes  
 You travel, from a great man's aid you've strayed.  
 For well I know I saw him when he stayed  
 As Dascylos my father's guest: he went  
 On foot straight through the Asian continent, 890  
 Holding the girdle of Hippolyte,  
 The lover of all war: he found in me  
 A downy-cheeked young lad. That hero, when  
 My brother Priolas was by the men  
 Of Mysia slaughtered (whom we even yet  
 Lament with mournful songs), in contest met  
 Great Titias, a man who quite transcended  
 All youths in beauty and in strength, and ended  
 His life, his teeth smashed out. My father held  
 Command when all the Phrygians were quelled 900  
 By Heraces and the Mysians, whose land  
 Is next to ours; of each Bithynian band  
 He gained possession with its property  
 As far as to the peak of Colone  
 And Rhebas' mouth. The Paphlagonian men  
 Of Pelops yielded to them there and then,  
 Whom Billaios' dark water roars among.  
 But the Bebrycians and Amycos' wrong,  
 With Heraces far away, have cheated me.  
 For they've been chipping off my property 1000  
 For so long now that they can draw the line  
 At deep Hypios's meadows; yet the fine  
 They've paid is due to you; and that this day



He battled the Bebrycians, I must say,  
 Is with the gods' will – it's of him I tell,  
 Tyndareus, who sent that man to Hell.  
 What I can pay you in remuneration  
 I gladly shall pay. When cooperation  
 Begins from stronger men, it is the due  
 Of weaker ones. I urge that all of you 1010  
 Should take my son, Dascylos: if he goes,  
 You'll meet across the seaway only those  
 Who show true amity as far away  
 As Thermodon pours out into the bay.  
 And I shall raise to the Tyndaridae  
 A lofty altar reaching to the sky  
 Upon the Acherousian elevation  
 So that from far away propitiation  
 Is made by every sailor to the sea.  
 As for the gods, so for the community 1020  
 Upon the well-ploughed plain I will dispense  
 Rich fields. " All day they feasted well but thence  
 At dawn sped to the ship, and with them went  
 Lycos with countless gifts; he also sent  
 His son out of the palace. Destiny  
 Then took a man unmatched in prophecy,  
 Idmon, Abantios's son, whose skill  
 Did not avail him, for by heavenly will  
 He was destroyed. A white-toothed boar there lay,  
 Cooling his flanks and large gut in the clay, 1030  
 A dreadful monster (even the nymphs of the fen  
 Were greatly terrified), beyond the ken  
 Of every man, and here he fed alone.  
 Along this muddy river's banks Idmon  
 Was walking when out of the reeds this boar  
 With unexpected speed began to roar,  
 Then ran straight at him, fastening on the thigh,  
 Sinew and bone ripped through; with a sharp cry  
 He fell to earth. All yelled in unity  
 At this. Seeing the rabid animal flee, 1040  
 Peleus then launched a javelin, but then  
 The beast now turned around and charged again.  
 But Idas pierced it: with a roaring sound  
 It fell around the swift spear. On the ground  
 They left it. Then the men, in misery,  
 Conveyed him back towards the ship as he  
 Gaspd out his last, and in their arms he died.  
 They then delayed departure as they cried  
 Their grief around his body. Three whole days

They mourned him, then upon the next, with praise 1050  
 Aplenty, they interred him. Everyone,  
 King Lycos too, mourned him in unison.  
 They slaughtered countless sheep, a ritual  
 Due to the dead, then a memorial  
 Was built for him in that locality,  
 That future generations all might see.  
 The trunk of an olive-tree, of which are made  
 Our ships, stands as a token in the shade  
 Of Acherousia's cliff and blossoming.  
 If at the Muses' bidding I must sing  
 Of this, Phoebus Apollo stringently 1060  
 To Boeotia and Nysos gave his decree  
 To worship Idmon and authenticate  
 Him as their guardian and to fabricate  
 The city round the trunk of this old tree,  
 Yet Agamestor is the honouree  
 Today, not that devout Aeolian.  
 Who was the next to die? Now they began  
 Again to build a tomb to glorify  
 A dead comrade: two tombs will meet your eye  
 Even yet. The son of Hagnias, it's said,  
 Tiphys, expired. Two heroes lay dead, 1070  
 Their sailing done. A short-lived malady  
 Now granted him ceaseless tranquillity,  
 After the crew had paid due accolade  
 To Idmon's corpse. This cruel grief dismayed  
 Them all with an unsufferable pain.  
 Besides the seer, fulfilling once again  
 The funeral rites, they sagged down on the shore  
 In helplessness, with little longing for  
 Both food and drink, their spirits bleak and black,  
 Since there was now no hope of sailing back. 1080  
 They would have stayed there in their misery  
 Had Hera not imposed great bravery  
 Upon Ancaios (where the waters run  
 On Imbrasos was he, Poseidon's son,  
 Born to Astypalaia). Masterly  
 In steersmanship especially, eagerly  
 He spoke to Peleus: "Son of Aeacus,  
 How can it be appropriate for us  
 To give up toil amidst a foreign race?  
 Jason has not allotted me a space 1090  
 Upon the *Argo* the fleece to possess,  
 Far from Parthenia, for my skilfulness  
 In war but for my naval qualities.

So let there be no fear upon the seas.  
 The others are as are all men of skill  
 Not one of whom will cause us any ill,  
 Whoever guides us. Quickly tell them all  
 I've said and boldly urge them not to fall  
 From toil." Peleus's heart with gaiety  
 Was stirred at this, and he immediately 1100  
 Addressed the men: "What idle grief, my friends,  
 Is this which grips us? These two met the ends  
 Ordained for them, but here among the men  
 Are pilots, and a host of them. So then,  
 Let's not delay our task. Let misery  
 Be cast out, turn instead to industry."  
 Jason with helpless words replied: "So, these  
 Steersmen you speak about, Aiacidēs,  
 Where are they? Those in whom we would invest  
 Our trust in former days are more depressed 1110  
 Than I am now. So for them I foresee  
 The fate the dead were meted, if it be  
 Cruel Aeētes' city is denied  
 To us or if beyond the rocks the tide  
 Won't take us back to Greece and in this place  
 A wretched fate will veil us in disgrace  
 As we grow old in idleness." He spoke;  
 Ancaios eagerly put on the yoke  
 Of steering the swift ship – the impetus  
 Of Hera stirred him. Up leapt Erginos, 1120  
 Euphemos and Nauplios eagerly,  
 Agog to steer. Some of the company,  
 However, held them back, and of the crew  
 A number gave to Ancaios the due  
 Of steering. When daybreak on the twelfth day  
 Arrived, they boarded ship to sail away –  
 A strong west wind was blowing. Hurriedly  
 They rowed through Acheron and now shook free  
 The sails, their confidence placed upon the breeze.  
 With sails spread wide, they ploughed on through the seas 1130  
 In tranquil weather. Soon they came upon  
 Callichorus's mouth, where Zeus's son,  
 Bacchus, they say, when he in Thebes once dwelled,  
 Leaving the Indian tribes, where he then held  
 Revels and dances near a cave where he  
 Spent holy, smileless nights: accordingly  
 The neighbours call the stream Callichorus,  
 The grotto Aulion. Then Sthenelus'  
 Barrow they saw, the son of Actor, who,

Returning from the valorous set-to 1140  
Against the Amazons – for Heracles  
Accompanied him in those hostilities –  
Was wounded with an arrow, on the shore  
To perish. They then stayed a little, for  
Persephone had sent his soul, mush-rued,  
To beg, even for a short-lived interlude,  
Like-minded men to see him. Just as he  
Was when he fought, to the periphery  
Of his own tomb he climbed and looked upon  
The ship. Around his head a fair helm shone, 1150  
Four-peaked with blood-red crest. Then back he went  
Into the giant gloom. Astonishment  
Assailed them as they looked. But then the son  
Of Ampykus, Mopsus, urged everyone,  
In prophecy, to go ashore and then  
Appease him with libations. So the men  
Drew in the sail and cast the cables out  
Upon the shore, and then they set about  
The tomb; the water poured, they purified  
Some sheep as sacrifices and, beside 1160  
The water, to Phoebus, the island's aid,  
They built an altar; in the fire they laid  
The victim's thighs. Then Orpheus dedicated  
His lyre – hence this place was designated  
Lyra. They boarded ship immediately  
Because the wind was blowing fervently.  
The sail was now stretched to each corner tightly;  
The ship was carried forward, yare and spritely.  
Just as a swift hawk, airborne in the sky,  
Entrusts his wings to breezes way up high, 1170  
Not swerving in his flight but floating through  
A clear sky on untroubled wings. Then too,  
They passed Parthenius flowing to the sea,  
The gentlest of streams – the progeny  
Of Leto, when ascending through the air  
After her hunting, cools her body there  
In pleasant water. Then all through the night  
They sped past Erythini, great in height,  
As well as Sesamos, Krobalius,  
Past Kromna, too, and wooded Cytoros. 1180  
At rising of the sun they curved around  
Carambis, then beyond Aegialus sound  
All day and through the night. Immediately  
They beached on Assyrian land, where Sinope,  
Asopos' child, was granted maidenhead

And an abode by Zeus, who was misled  
 By his own oaths. For he had sorely needed  
 Her ardour and therefore he had acceded  
 To grant her anything she craved, so she,  
 In cunning, asked him for virginity. 1190  
 Apollo, too, she cozened just like this,  
 Who lusted after her by the Halys;  
 No man had ever in his fond embrace  
 Possessed her. There resided in that place  
 The three sons of Trikkon Deimachus -  
 That is Deileon, Autolykus  
 And Phlogios – ever since they strayed away  
 From Heracles. When they discerned that day  
 The crew, they made known their identity  
 When meeting them; they did not wish to be 1200  
 In that land any longer, so, when blew  
 The North-West wind, they went and joined the crew  
 On board. Together they left the Halys,  
 Borne on a swift breeze, left, too, the Iris  
 That flowed nearby, and then the delta-land  
 Of Assyria and then the far headland  
 Of the Amazons, that guards their port, that day  
 They rounded. Once, when going on her way,  
 Was Melanippe, Ares' daughter, caught  
 By Heracles. Hippolyte then brought 1210  
 To him her glittering girdle that would pay  
 To save her sister. He sent her away  
 And she returned unharmed. Then in the bay,  
 Where Thermodon pours out, they made their stay,  
 For as they came the sea was turbulent.  
 No river is like this: none yet has sent  
 Such mighty streams upon the land. If you  
 Should count them all, you'd lack but two times two  
 Out of a hundred. Yet there's *one* real spring.  
 It cascades to the flatland, tumbling 1220  
 From lofty mountain-peaks which, people say,  
 Are called the Amazons, then makes its way  
 Inland through higher country and from there,  
 This way and that, the streams flow anywhere  
 They may reach lower ground, an endless flow,  
 One far, one nearer. Many we do not know  
 By name, where they are drained off. With a few  
 Mixed in, however, one bursts out to spew  
 Its arching crest into the Pontic Sea,  
 Which hates all ships. In this vicinity 1230  
 They would have stayed to tangle in a fray

With the Amazons (for whom a bloodless day  
 Would not have passed) – they weren't a peaceful clan  
 But lawless, who on the Doeantian  
 Flatland resided; fierce pomposity  
 And war were all their care; their family tree  
 Grew from the nymph Harmonia and Ares,  
 Who, through the sexual intimacies  
 In Acmon's woods and valleys, bred a strain  
 Of warlike maids – except there came again 1240  
 From Zeus the North-West currents: with a breeze  
 Behind they left the rounded beach, where these  
 Themiscyreaean Amazons prepared  
 For battle: for their dwelling was not shared  
 In just one town, but, scattered through the land,  
 They lived in three tribes: under the command  
 Of Hippolyte, the Themiskureans  
 Were one, another the Lycastrians,  
 Then the Chadesians, who plied the spear.  
 A day and night of rowing brought them near 1250  
 The Chalybes, who did not care to till  
 Their soil nor yet with honeyed fruit to fill  
 Their stores, no flocks of sheep are to be found  
 In dewy pastures; no, they cleave the ground  
 That's hard and iron-bearing, and their pay  
 They use to purchase victuals day by day;  
 No dawn appears without some dire distress;  
 Amid black smoke they bear great heaviness.  
 They soon arrived at Father Zeus's cape  
 And safely passed the Tibarenes' landscape. 1260  
 Whenever there's a woman of this clan  
 Who has produced a child, it is the man  
 Who lies in bed and groans, his head bound fast,  
 While it's his wife who brings him his repast  
 And gives him child-birth baths. Then next to see  
 Was the sacred mount where the Massynnoici  
 Reside in mountain-huts (they got their name  
 From μᾶσσον). Laws and customs aren't the same  
 As ours are here. Those things the laws permit  
 In public places, these they all commit 1270  
 Within their homes, while all the acts that we  
 Perform indoors they do quite openly  
 Out in the streets without reproof; the act  
 Of love they don't respect – not even racked  
 With shame at others' presence they, like swine  
 That feed in herds, will on the ground entwine  
 In intercourse. Above them all, their king

Dispenses upright judgments, wretched thing.  
 For if he errs in his decrees, that day  
 They lock him up and starve him. After they 1280  
 Had passed this place, their oars sliced through the seas  
 All day past Ares' isle, for the light breeze  
 Abandoned them at dusk. Then they perceived  
 At last a bird of Ares as it cleaved  
 The air in flight (they all frequent this isle).  
 It shook its wings upon the ship, meanwhile  
 Dropping a knife-sharp feather vertically;  
 It fell on pure Oileus' left shoulder: he  
 Then dropped his oar; then all were stupefied  
 At this plumed bolt. Then sitting by his side, 1290  
 Erybotes pulled out the thing to wrap  
 The wound up tight, having released the strap  
 Suspended from his scabbard. Now there flew  
 Another, swooping down above the crew:  
 Klytius, Eurytus' son, a champion,  
 Now took his curving bow, drawing upon  
 The bird: that winged arrow reached its mark,  
 Which whirled and fell beside the speedy bark.  
 Amphidamas, Aleus' progeny,  
 Now spoke: "We see in close proximity 1300  
 Ares' isle. You yourselves must know this, too,  
 Seeing these birds. But arrows will not do,  
 I think, to aid us here. We must explore  
 Some other method if to go ashore  
 Is your intent. Even Heracles, when he  
 Came to Arcadia, would fruitlessly  
 Aim at the birds that on Lake Stymphalis  
 Would swim. I was an eye-witness to this.  
 But, on the lofty hilltop brandishing  
 A rattle of bronze, her made the whole cliff ring. 1310  
 The birds fled far and screamed in frantic dread.  
 Likewise let's plan anew. What's in my head,  
 Once I have pondered, I will let you know.  
 Put on your high-plumed helmets: half then row  
 In turns, the others fence the ship about  
 With polished spears and shields; raise a loud shout  
 Together that the unaccustomed sound,  
 The nodding plumes, the high spears all around  
 May frighten them. If we should reach the land,  
 With vigour clash your shields." What he had planned 1320  
 Much pleased them. Their bronze helms that starkly glowed  
 They donned; the crimson crests shook. Then half rowed  
 By turns; with spears and shields the other men

Surrounded the whole vessel, just as when  
 A man may tile his roof to beautify  
 His house while from the rain he keeps it dry,  
 One tile into another dovetailing,  
 Just so about the ship they made a ring  
 Of shields. Just like the din of warrior-men  
 As they sweep on to meet in battle, then 1330  
 A din rose from the ship. As yet they spied  
 No birds, but after they came alongside  
 The isle and clashed their shields, into the air  
 There flew a giant flock: we may compare  
 A time when the son of Cronus has flung down  
 A massive storm of hail upon a town  
 And all its houses, while the folk below  
 Can hear the din upon their roofs, although  
 They sit in silence, since they are aware  
 Of rain-storm season and have taken care 1340  
 To fortify their homes, these birds then sent  
 Thick showers of feathers as in flight they went  
 To the opposing peaks across the sea.  
 What then did Phineus have in mind when he  
 Bade this heroic band to go ashore  
 Upon this isle? What help was there in store?  
 The sons of Phrixus were upon the seas  
 From Aea and Cytiaian Aieëtes,  
 En route to Orchomenos, under the mast  
 Of a Colchian ship, that they might take the vast 1350  
 Resources of their father who, when he  
 Was dying, urged them to this odyssey.  
 That ship was near the isle that day, but lo!  
 Zeus gave the North Wind strength that it might blow,  
 Marking with rain Arctourus' moistened way,  
 And shook the mountain-leaves throughout the day  
 And gently breathed on tree-tops. But at night  
 He rampaged seaward and, with all his might,  
 With screaming winds, he roused the surge. A mist  
 Of darkness screened the sky; no bright star kissed 1360  
 The heavens through the clouds, dark gloominess  
 Loomed all around. Grave apprehensiveness  
 Assailed the sons of Phrixus as the ship  
 Bore them, quite drenched. They saw the mainsail rip,  
 Snatched by the winds' great strength which cleft in two  
 The bark herself which shuddered through and through,  
 Smashed by the surge. These four the gods induced  
 To grab a huge beam (with the ship reduced  
 To smithereens such things lay all around,



Held by sharp bolts). Upon the isle they found 1370  
 Themselves, near-dead and in great misery,  
 Borne by the waves and wind. Immediately  
 A mighty rain burst from the skies to fall  
 Upon the sea, the isle, indeed on all  
 The land that lay across from it. the home  
 Of the scornful Massynoici. Swelling foam  
 Cast Phrixus' sons upon the island's shore  
 On that huge beam, in murky night. The store  
 Of endless water Zeus at the first trace  
 Of dawn left off. Soon after, face-to-face 1380  
 The two bands met. Argos spoke first: "Our plea,  
 By Watchful Zeus, whoever you may be,  
 Is that with grace you'll succour our distress.  
 Upon the sea, with dreadful fiendishness,  
 Cascaded tempests, scattering far and wide  
 The poor ship's boards, on which we had relied,  
 On business bound. Therefore, if you will heed  
 Our prayer, we beg that you will serve our need  
 For clothes and for our plight show clemency –  
 For you are all of the same age as we. 1390  
 Strangers and suppliants for Zeus's sake  
 (Who loves them both) you deference should take.  
 To Zeus belong them all and, I may guess,  
 He looks on us as well." With canniness  
 The son of Aeson questioned him, convinced  
 That Phineus' prophecies would be evinced:  
 "We'll gladly do all this immediately,  
 But tell me where you live and why the sea  
 Compelled you hither, your line of descent  
 And your great names." Then Argos, impotent 1400  
 In his distress, said: "You heard previously,  
 I'm sure, a certain Phrixus crossed the sea  
 From his Aeolia in Greece and beached  
 On Aea's mainland – Phrixus, who then reached  
 Aeëtes' town astride a ram of gold  
 (The work of Hermes). Still you may behold  
 Its fleece today. Then, by its own advice,  
 To Lord Zeus he made it a sacrifice –  
 To Zeus, the son of Cronus, above all  
 The god of fugitives. Into his hall 1410  
 Aeëtes welcomed him. Chalciopé,  
 His daughter, he in magnanimity  
 Gave him in marriage, asking no payment.  
 From both of these we reckon our descent.  
 Within those halls, bowed with senility,

Phrixus now died, and, heeding his decree,  
 We promptly for Orchomenus set sail,  
 Of Athamas's assets to avail  
 Ourselves. If you would know our names, Argos  
 You may call me, this is Kytissorus, 1420  
 This Phrontis, this Melas. He spoke and they,  
 The chiefs, rejoiced at what he had to say.  
 Then Jason made rejoinder fittingly:  
 "You who would have us salve your misery  
 Are doubtless kin upon my father's side.  
 Cretheus and Athamas were unified  
 In brotherhood and I am the grandson  
 Of Cretheus. These, my comrades every one,  
 And I have come from Greece upon our way  
 To Aeëtes' city. But another day 1430  
 We'll speak of this. But first put on some wear.  
 The gods, I think, gave you unto my care.  
 He spoke and gave them clothes for them to don  
 Out of the ship. Together they went on  
 To Ares' shrine that they might sacrifice  
 Some sheep. Around the altar in a trice  
 They gathered – built of pebbles, close beside  
 The roofless temple, there it stood; inside  
 A massive, sacred stone had been made fast,  
 To which all Amazons had in the past 1440  
 Prayed. When they had arrived from opposite  
 This land, to offer ox or sheep to it  
 Was not allowed by law. Horses that they  
 Nurtured in great abundance they would slay.  
 The sacrificing and the feasting done,  
 There then began a speech by Aeson's son:  
 "Zeus can see all: his gaze we cannot flee,  
 We honest men. As Zeus once chose to free  
 Your father from the sanguinary guile  
 Of a stepmother, vouchsafing, too, a pile 1450  
 Of treasure, so from that ferocious gale  
 He saved you, too. On *Argo* you may sail  
 Here, there, indeed wherever your intent –  
 To Aea or the sacred, opulent  
 Orchomenus. For it was on the tip  
 Of Pelion that through her craftsmanship  
 Athene with her bronze axe felled each tree  
 That built this ship, and Argos' industry  
 Assisted her. But yours the vicious shocks  
 Of foam has crushed before you reached those rocks 1460  
 Which all day clash together in the sound.

But come and help our cause, for we are bound  
 To bring the golden fleece back to our nation;  
 Guide us for I intend an expiation  
 For Phrixus' plans for sacrifice (for these  
 Caused Zeus's wrath at the Aeolides)."  
 His words were soothing, yet a horror shook  
 The hearers for Aeëtes would not look  
 With kindness on them, they thought, if they  
 Intended to steal the ram's fleece away, 1470  
 So Argos, vexed at such a strategy,  
 Said: "Friends, what little strength we have will be  
 Forever yours in need. But Aeëtes  
 Is dread and ruthless; thus to sail these seas  
 I dread. He boasts that he's the progeny  
 Of Helios; in that vicinity  
 Dwell tribes of Colchians. His fierce war-shout  
 And massive strength would parallel, no doubt,  
 Those traits in Ares. It is no small chore  
 To take the fleece from him, and, what is more, 1480  
 A deathless, sleepless serpent guards it; Earth  
 Herself in the Caucasian vales gave birth  
 To it, by the rock of Typhaon: it's said  
 That beast by Zeus's bolt was buffeted  
 When he opposed him sturdily: there gushed  
 Hot lifeblood from his head, and thus he rushed  
 To the Nysaeon mountains and plateau,  
 Where still he lies beneath the water's flow  
 In the Serbonian lake." He spoke. There grew  
 On many cheeks a pallor now they knew 1490  
 The venture's aim. Peleus immediately  
 Encouraged him: "Do not excessively  
 Take fright, dear friend. We are not lacking might  
 So much that we can't match the man in fight.  
 We go there skilled, I think, in strategy.  
 If he won't give to us in amity  
 The golden fleece, the Colchians I doubt  
 Will be of use to him." Thus, turn about,  
 They spoke till, feasted, they took their repose.  
 At dawn a gentle breeze, as they arose, 1500  
 Was blowing, so they raised the sails which strained,  
 Stretched by its force, and, with the speed they gained,  
 Soon left that island, reaching, at nightfall,  
 The isle of Philyris, where the god of all  
 The Titans, Cronus, son of Ouranus,  
 Wooed Philyra, an act duplicitous  
 To Rhea, while, in a Cretan cave somewhere,

The Idaean Kyretes were taking care  
 Of infant Zeus. Then Rhea found those two  
 Entwined in dalliance, so Zeus then flew 1510  
 From bed, adopting the anatomy  
 Of a long-maned steed; the maid, the progeny  
 Of Ocean, left in shame and went to stay  
 In Pelasgia's long mountains where one day  
 She bore to Zeus huge Cheiron, half a horse,  
 Half god. From there they fetched up, in due course,  
 Near the Macrones and the boundless land  
 Of the Becheiri, then sailed beyond the strand  
 Of the proud Sapeires, then the Byzeres.  
 Forever moving on, they cleft the seas, 1520  
 Borne by the gentle breeze. As on they sailed  
 A nook appeared before them which availed  
 Them of the sight of steep crags rising high  
 Above the land of Caucasos. Nearby  
 Prometheus, to the harsh rocks tightly tied  
 With manacles forged out of bronze, supplied  
 With his own liver an eagle which, each day,  
 Came rushing back to reattack its prey.  
 At evening near the clouds they saw it fly,  
 Its wings a-whirring, high up in the sky, 1530  
 Yet with its wings, which made a buzzing sound,  
 Shaking their sails, though it did not, they found,  
 Look like a bird, its wings like polished oars  
 Poised in the air. They heard the dreadful roars,  
 The poor man's liver being torn away.  
 The air rang till that savage bird of prey  
 Was seen to leave the peak, its path of flight  
 The same as ever. Then, during the night,  
 They reached broad River Phasis, courtesy  
 Of Argos, and the sea's extremity. 1540  
 They let down sails and yard-arm and then packed  
 The mast and laid it flat, and then they hurled  
 The ship into that mighty stream, which swirled  
 While giving way. Steep Caucasos they spied,  
 Cytanian Aea also on that side;  
 Upon the other side from those there stood  
 The plain of Ares and his sacred wood:  
 Here was the fleece, hung on an oak's green bough,  
 By a serpent watched and closely guarded. Now 1550  
 From a gold cup pouring sweet wine, undiluted,  
 Into the stream, Jason thus executed  
 Libations to all the divinities  
 Near there, to Earth and to the essences

Of the dead heroes, offering up a plea  
That they would give them help indulgently  
And greet with grace the hawsers. This oration  
Came from Ancaius: "We have reached the nation  
Of Colchis and Phasis. The time is nigh  
To hatch a plan of action: should we try  
Aeëtes with soft words or should there be  
A somewhat different approach? Thus he  
Spoke out. Then Jason bade them take away  
The ship to anchor in some secret bay,  
At Argus's advice. This was nearby  
Where they encamped all night; and the sunrise  
Soon showed itself to their expectant eyes.

1560

### BOOK III

Erato, tell me, standing by my side,  
How, aided by the passion of his bride,  
Medea, Jason brought the fleece from there  
To Colchis. Aphrodite's power you share  
For charming unwed maidens – hence your name  
Of love. Thus in thick reeds those men of fame  
In ambush hid. However, they were spied  
By Hera and Athene who, aside  
From Zeus and the other gods, in a chamber weighed  
Their options. Hera, first to speak, assayed 10  
Athene: "Zeus's daughter, let me see  
Your counsel first. What's to be done? Tell me  
Of some device to take the golden fleece  
Away from Aeëtes and back to Greece.  
Or shall they sway the king with gentleness  
Of speech? For he is full of haughtiness.  
There is no scheme that ought to stay untried."  
She spoke. Athene speedily replied:  
"Hera, these things I too was pondering  
As you spoke out. As yet, though, not a thing 20  
Has struck me that will help these noble men,  
Though I've weighed many strategies." So then  
Both fixed their eyes upon the ground as they  
Brooded apart. Then Hera straightaway  
Expressed the thoughts she had: "Pray come with me  
To Aphrodite that together we  
Might get her to persuade her son to dart  
One of his shafts at the enchantress' heart,  
Aeëtes' daughter, causing love to spring  
In her for Jason. That's the very thing! 30  
Her schemes will bring the fleece to Greece," said she.  
Athene liked this clever strategy  
And gently answered: "Hera, born to learn  
No lessons from the darts which make folk burn,  
I know no love-charms but, if what you say  
Contents you, I'll agree in every way,  
Though you must speak first at our rendezvous."  
She spoke and they set off, journeying to  
Cypris' large home, which her lame husband wrought

When first from Zeus, to be his wife, he brought 40  
 The goddess. To the court they came and there  
 They stood beneath the gallery, just where  
 The goddess had prepared Hephaestos' bed,  
 But he had gone, as soon as night had fled,  
 To his forge and anvil on a floating isle,  
 In a broad cave, where he in many a style  
 And with the blast of flame had shaped much art;  
 Upon an inlaid seat she sat apart,  
 Facing the door, her snow-white shoulders cloaked  
 With locks that with a golden comb she stroked, 50  
 About to braid their length. She saw them there  
 And called them in, ceasing to comb her hair,  
 And rose and sat them down. When she'd done that,  
 Starting to bind her uncombed locks, she sat  
 As well, then smiled and hailed them craftily:  
 "Dear friends, what brings you here so tardily?  
 You were not frequent visitors before,  
 Since you are goddesses superior  
 To all of us. Why come now? This address  
 Hera rejoined: "You mock us. But distress 60  
 Disturbs us. *Argo*, Jason's ship, is moored  
 Upon the River Phasis, and on board  
 Are all the other heroes. For each one  
 We greatly fear – the labour to be done  
 Is close at hand – but more specifically  
 We fear for Jason. That man I will free  
 Even if he to Hades were to sail  
 To rescue Ixion from his golden gaol  
 Of fetters, while my limbs possess the might,  
 That Pelias, having dodged an evil plight, 70  
 May not make mock – for his pomposity  
 Denied me sacrifice. Yet previously  
 Was Jason loved by me: at the gateway  
 Of the Anaurus' flood I made essay  
 Of mortal righteousness, and there he met  
 Me, coming from the hunt. The snow had wet  
 The peaks and lengthy ridges, down which poured  
 The torrents that, cascading, rolled and roared.  
 I had assumed the similarity  
 Of an old crone and, thus, he pitied me: 80  
 He hoisted me and carried me straight through  
 The strong tide on his back - I will value  
 Him always for that. Pelias will not pay  
 For his outrage unless you pave the way  
 For Jason's safe return." She spoke. At that

Was Cypris rendered dumb as she looked at  
 The pleading Hera, she with awe and dread  
 Was struck, and thus with friendly words she said:  
 “Queen, goddess, may there be no viler thing  
 Than is Cypris if, at your hankering, 90  
 I undervalue you in word or deed,  
 Whatever my weak hands can do. I need  
 No favour in return.” Hera replied  
 With prudence: “Our quest you need not provide  
 With might. No, call your boy-child quietly  
 To captivate with love’s intensity  
 For Jason young Medea. I surmise  
 That, should she kindly aid him, being wise  
 In guile, with ease he’ll snatch the fleece of gold  
 And sail to Iolcus.” This was Cypris told, 100  
 Who said to both of them: “You he will heed  
 Rather than me: bold-faced he is indeed,  
 But there will be some small shame in his eyes  
 Before you, while he will not recognize  
 My worth but always in contentiousness  
 Disdains me. Angry at his naughtiness,  
 His bow and his ill-sounding darts I mean  
 To break within his sight. For he has been  
 So angry that he threatens that, if I  
 Do not keep off him while he makes a try 110  
 At stifling his temper, he will do  
 Me mischief.” Thus she spoke, and then those two  
 Smiled, looking at each other. Cypris, though,  
 Said in vexation: “Others find my woe  
 Amusing. I should not tell it to all –  
 I know it all too well – but, since you call  
 It pleasant, I’ll appeal to and beguile  
 The boy. He’ll not deny me.” With a smile,  
 Then Hera took her by her slender hand  
 And gently said: “O goddess from the land 120  
 Of Cythera, do just that immediately.  
 Do not be angry at your progeny:  
 He will not vex you now.” That’s what she said.  
 She left her seat and, with Athene, sped  
 Back home. Then Cypris went to search the ground  
 In the Olymplian glens, and then she found  
 The boy among Zeus’s large apple-trees,  
 Apart but not alone – Ganymedes  
 Was with him, whom Zeus once brought through the air  
 To live among the gods, for he was fair 130  
 And Zeus was smitten. They were gambling



With golden dice, which is a common thing  
For boys together. Eros stood upright  
And greedily was holding very tight  
Many dice in his left hand close to his chest,  
His cheek with rosy colour sweetly blessed.  
The other crouched nearby, both taciturn  
And sad. The two he had he threw in turn,  
Made angry by Eros's laughing tone.  
He lost those, too, then wandered off alone, 140  
Helpless and empty-handed, unaware  
Of the approach of Cypris. Standing there  
Before him, she now held him by the chin  
And said: "You dreadful rogue, why do you grin  
In triumph? Did you cheat and sinfully  
Defeat the innocent lad? Come, do for me  
A task I'll tell you of, and that fine toy  
Of Zeus I'll give you (when he was a boy  
With boyish ways in the Idaean cave,  
His dear nurse Adrasteia made and gave 150  
It to him). It is a well-rounded ball.  
You'll get no better love-gift, not at all,  
From Hephaestus. All its zones are gold, and round  
Each one of them a double seam is bound.  
Each stitch is hidden; over everything  
Is a dark-blue spiral. Toss it – it will zing  
Just like a flaming star. This gift from me  
You'll get, but you must charm the progeny  
Of Aeëtes with an arrow from your bow  
With love for Jason. You must not be slow 160  
Or else I'll thank you less." He heard her say  
These words and revelled, then he cast away  
All of his toys. He grasped her eagerly  
And clung on to her robe. He made a plea  
To give it him at once. But she then drew  
His cheeks to her and cordially, too,  
She, smiling, said: "I swear, by you and me,  
I'll give this present – no chicanery –  
If that Medea's heart will be injected  
With love by you." She spoke. Then he collected 170  
His dice, then counted all of them, then flung  
Them in his mother's shining lap, then hung  
Around his frame his quiver which he'd leant,  
With its gold sash, against a trunk, then went  
With his bow straight through the apple-trees which bear  
Much fruit near Zeus's hall, high in the air  
Passing through Olympus' gates. Twin poles on high,

The highest peaks on earth, held in the sky  
 Steep mountains where the sun, with its first rays,  
 Begins to redden. He could cast his gaze 180  
 From here upon life-giving earth as well  
 As sacred streams, the peaks, the ocean's swell,  
 As through the air he flew. A marshy part  
 Of the river held the heroes all apart  
 In ambush on their benches, meeting there  
 In council. Jason spoke. The very air  
 Was hushed as they attended silently,  
 Row upon row in place: "What pleases me,  
 My friends, I'll tell you; and you all must do  
 The task in hand, common to all the crew, 190  
 As is free speech: let him who locks away  
 His views know that it's he alone this day  
 Who thwarts the army's safe return to Greece.  
 The rest, stay with your arms, enjoy some peace  
 Upon the ship, but I'll be on my way  
 To the palace of Aeëtes to assay  
 The man with words to see if cordially  
 He'll give the fleece to us or not – if he  
 Trusts in his power, he will snub our quest.  
 The sons of Phrixus and, among the rest, 200  
 Two others I'll take with me. Since we know  
 His former badness, whether we should go  
 To battle or devise some other scheme  
 In lieu of battle-cries shall be our theme.  
 Till we test him with words, let us not wrest  
 The fleece from him by force: it is far best  
 To win him verbally. For frequently  
 That's often met a need, when potency  
 Could hardly win: apt mellowness and ease  
 Prevailed. When his stepmother's knaveries 210  
 And father's plan to sacrifice him he  
 Escaped, Aeëtes' hospitality  
 The noble Phrixus had. The wickedest  
 Of men – yes, all – revere Zeus's behest  
 (For he's the god of strangers)." With one voice  
 The youths cheered what he said. No other choice  
 Of action could be heard among the men.  
 He called upon the sons of Phrixus then,  
 Telamon and Augeias. He held the wand  
 Of Hermes. Then at once they passed beyond 220  
 The reeds and water onto the dry land  
 And where the plain rose up – I understand  
 They call it Circe's. There, line after line

Grow many willows, and, attached with twine,  
Corpses hung from their tops – at this late date  
It's still considered evil to cremate  
Dead men by the Colchians, while burial  
And monuments are likewise criminal.  
Instead, wrapped in untanned oxhides, they are  
Suspended from the trees some distance far 230  
From the city, thereby making earth and air  
Share equal portions, for the women there  
Are buried – that's their law. As on they went,  
In kindly thoughtfulness Queen Hera sent  
A heavy mist throughout the town that they  
Might not be seen, as they went on their way,  
By the vast horde of Colchians. Then again,  
When they came to the city from the plain  
And the palace of Aeëtes, she diffused  
The mist. They stood at the entrance, quite bemused 240  
At the king's courts, the broad gates and, around  
The walls in rows, the columns, while they found,  
High up, a stone cornice resting upon  
Its bronze triglyphs. In silence they passed on  
Beyond the threshold. There were vines nearby,  
Blooming with dark-green foliage on high;  
Four ever-flowing fountains stood below  
(Hephaestus had acquired them). A flow  
Of milk gushed out of one, another teemed  
With wine, while odiferous oil outstreamed 250  
From a third, the fourth poured water which became,  
At the Pleiads' setting, warm, yet that selfsame  
Liquid, when they arose, would bubble out  
Of the hollow rock, a crystallized, icy spout.  
In the palace of Cytaiian Aeëtes  
Craftsman Hephaestus had built all of these  
Wonderful things. Bulls he had made, their feet  
Of bronze, their mouths as well – a scorching heat  
Breathed out of them. He'd also forged a plough  
Of rigid adamant in one piece, a vow 260  
Of thanks to Helios, who took him upon  
His chariot to rest, when he was wan  
From fighting. There was built an inner square  
With well-built doors and chambers here and there;  
On either side there was a gallery,  
Cunningly fashioned, and, diagonally,  
There were yet higher homes that faced each other.  
Aeëtes and his wife lived in another,  
The loftiest. Another housed his son

Apsyrtus, born to a Caucasian, 270  
 The nymph Asteropodeia, before he  
 Took young Eidyia into matrimony,  
 Tethys' and Ocean's youngest girl. The name  
 Phaëthon was chosen, since his fame  
 Outstripped all other young men, by the sons  
 Of the Colchians, and then the other ones  
 Housed servants and the two girls of the king –  
 They came upon Medea wandering  
 From room to room, seeking Chalciope,  
 Her sister, who was kept in custody 280  
 By Hera, unaccustomed to frequent  
 The halls before because all day she'd spent,  
 As priestess, at the shrine of Hecate.  
 She saw them and cried out. Chalciope  
 Picked up the sound at once. Their yarn and thread  
 The maids threw at their feet, then out they sped  
 In droves. When she saw in that company  
 Her sons, she raised her hands in ecstasy.  
 They greeted her likewise; in joy they swept  
 Her up in their embrace and then she wept 290  
 And said: "So it was not your destiny  
 To travel far and leave me heedlessly  
 And cause me grief. Ah, what a mad desire  
 To travel far to Greece set you afire  
 At your father Phrixus' urging! As he died,  
 He caused my heart sorely to sorrow. Why'd  
 You go to the city of Orchomenus,  
 Whatever that is, and cause calamitous  
 Grief to your mother, for the property  
 Of Athamas?" She spoke. Then finally 300  
 Aeëtes ventured out, his wife as well,  
 Hearing Chalciope. Then such a swell  
 Of people now were thronging the courtyard.  
 Some slaves with a huge bull were working hard,  
 Some chopping kindling, some bringing to boil  
 Bath-water. None of them left off his toil  
 That served the king. Then, through the murky air,  
 Unseen, flew Eros, causing everywhere  
 Confusion, as a gadfly on a herd  
 Of heifers (oxherds call it by the word 310  
*Myops*) brings havoc. Once he'd strung his bow,  
 From his quiver a virgin arrow, full of woe,  
 He took beneath the lintel. Speedily,  
 Unseen, he crossed the threshold, cannily  
 Looking about, then, gliding nearer to

The son of Aeson, notched the cord and drew  
 The bow apart with both his hands, let go  
 And struck Medea, who was by this blow  
 Then rendered speechless. Eros laughingly  
 Flew back home from the high-roofed palace; she 320  
 Had been profoundly pierced, deep in the heart,  
 The bolt like flame. Her eyes would often dart  
 A flashing glance at Jason; from her breast  
 Her heart would thickly pant in its unrest;  
 Her memory was gone and in sweet ache  
 She melted, as a poor woman will take  
 Around a blazing brand some kindling  
 While spinning wool, that in the evening  
 She may have light within the house when she  
 Had been roused early; this small quantity 330  
 Of flame with wondrous blaze reduced to ash  
 Each stick of wood; so in a hidden flash  
 Destructive Eros round about her twined;  
 Her delicate cheeks, through her distracted mind,  
 Alternately grew sickly pale, then red.  
 After the servants had laid out a spread  
 And they had bathed, they revelled merrily  
 In meat and drink, and then accordingly  
 Aeëtes to his sons-in-law said: "You  
 Sons of Medea and of Phrixus, who 340  
 Was my most honoured guest, why are you back  
 In Aia? Were you put upon the rack  
 By Fate in your escape? You paid no mind  
 To me when your long journey I outlined.  
 When Helios my father hurried me  
 Behind his steeds I could not fail to see  
 Its length. My sister Circe to the west  
 He was conveying; so we came to rest  
 On the Tyrrhenian shore, where still today  
 She dwells, from Colchis many miles away. 350  
 What joy is there in words? Then lucidly  
 Say what befell you, who these men may be  
 Who travel with you, and where you touched shore  
 Upon your hollow ship." Argos, before  
 His kin in fear for the son of Aeson's quest,  
 Replied (for he was older than the rest)  
 With gentle words: "Aeëtes, she was split  
 By violent squalls, and then the crew was spit  
 On dry land by a wave in murky night  
 (We'd crouched under the beams) then to alight 360  
 On Euryalios Isle. We were rescued

By some god. In that island's solitude  
 Even the Arian birds that, before then,  
 Had dwelt there we could not find, for these men  
 Had driven them off when they had come ashore  
 The previous day. Then Zeus felt pity for  
 Our plight (or else some Fate), for he delayed  
 Them there, since straightaway a gift they made  
 Of plenteous food and clothes, once the renowned  
 "Phrixus" they heard, and your name, for they're bound 370  
 For your own city. If you wish to know  
 Their quest, I'll not withhold it. Longing so  
 To drive this man far from his property  
 And native land because in toughness he  
 Outstrips all of the house of Aeolus,  
 A king contrives a fruitless venture thus  
 For him and threatens Aeolus's line  
 Will not break free from Zeus incarnadine  
 And his great wrath until the fleece is brought  
 To Greece. This ship Pallas Athene wrought, 380  
 Not one like those you might in Colchis see  
 (We chanced upon its worst epitome  
 Which blasts and fierce winds shattered). This, however,  
 Her bolts hold firm should every squall endeavour  
 To buffet her. She speeds before the breeze  
 As fast as when her oarsmen beat the seas  
 Unceasingly. So Jason chose the best  
 Of Greece's heroes, sailing without rest  
 Through many towns across the angry foam  
 To your domain to take the fleece back home. 390  
 It shall be as you wish – to use duress  
 He is not here; payment of worthiness  
 He'll give to you, for he has heard from me  
 Of the Sauromatae, your greatest enemy:  
 He'll crush them to your sway. In answer to  
 Your wish to know their names and race, to you  
 I'll tell all. This man, for whose sake did all  
 The others gather out of Greece, they call  
 Jason, grandson of Cretheus, who begat  
 His father Aeson. If it's genuine that 400  
 He's of the lineage of Cretheus, he  
 Is our kin from the father's family –  
 Both Athamas and Cretheus Aiolos  
 Begat, and Athamas begat Phrixos.  
 You've heard of Helios' seed? Well then behold  
 Augeias. Here is Telamon, the bold  
 Aeacos' son and Zeus' grandson. The rest

With him can trace their lineage to the blessed  
 Immortals.” Thus spoke Argos. Nonetheless  
 This irked the king, angry tempestuousness 410  
 Causing his heart to rise, so testily  
 He spoke, his anger aimed especially  
 At Chalciope’s sons. For it was his surmise  
 The *Argo* came because of them. His eyes  
 Flashed in his fury. “Sinners, disappear  
 At once, you and your tricks. Begone from here  
 Lest someone to his sorrow see the fleece  
 And Phrixus! You and these men came from Greece  
 Not for the fleece but kingly dignity –  
 My sceptre! Had my hospitality 420  
 Not fed your stomachs, then I would have cut  
 Your tongues and hands off, sending you with but  
 Your feet upon your way and hindering  
 Your setting forth again and perjuring  
 Yourselves before the blessed gods.” Thus he  
 In his displeasure spoke. Then mightily  
 The heart of Telamon began to swell  
 Deep down and in his soul he longed to tell  
 A deadly tale to him in confrontation,  
 But Jason hindered him and, in placation, 430  
 Spoke in his stead: “Aeëtes, with this crew  
 Have patience, please. We have not come to you  
 To do what you surmise. Who’d cross the sea  
 So far to steal a stranger’s property?  
 No, no, fate and a ruthless king’s command  
 Compelled me. Grant our prayer and through the land  
 Of Greece I’ll publish your great prominence.  
 We’re ready now to pay swift recompense  
 In war, should you desire to overthrow  
 The Sauromatae or any other foe.” 440  
 He spoke with words both mild and flattering.  
 Yet with a two-fold purpose did the king  
 Sit brooding. Should he slay them instantly  
 Or test their strength? The latter seemed to be  
 The better choice to him, so in reply  
 He said: “Why must you tell all, stranger? Why,  
 If you indeed are of the heavenly line,  
 Your stock thus not inferior to mine,  
 I’ll give the fleece and gratify your will  
 Once you’ve been tested. For I bear no ill 450  
 To honest men, such as the one you say  
 Rules Greece. There’ll be a contest to assay  
 Your strength which I can compass though it be

A lethal one. Two bulls belong to me,  
 Bronze-footed, grazing on Ares' plateau  
 And breathing flame. I yoke them and we go  
 Through his severe four-acre field. With speed  
 I cleave it to its edge and cast the seed  
 In the furrows – not the corn of Mother Earth  
 But a dread serpent's teeth which then give birth 460  
 To armed men whom I slaughter with my spear  
 As they attack me from both front and rear.  
 At dawn I yoke my oxen and at close  
 Of day I cease to plough. If feats like those  
 You master, you shall take that very day  
 This fleece back to your king. I'll say you nay  
 Till then, you may be sure. The valorous  
 Should not surrender to the timorous."  
 He spoke, and Jason sat there silently,  
 His eyes fixed downward, his extremity 470  
 Leaving him helpless. Brooding long, his mind  
 Turned now this way, now that, he could not find  
 His courage for the deed (it seemed so vast).  
 With crafty words he answered him at last:  
 "Aeëtes, you restrict me with your plea  
 Of right. I'll take your challenge, though it be  
 A great one, even if it is the will  
 Of the gods that I should die: no harsher ill  
 Befalls a man than ruinous privation,  
 Which brought me, through a kingly proclamation, 480  
 To you." He spoke, with helplessness laid low.  
 Aeëtes, though, with words that fit a foe,  
 Replied: "Go to the meeting, since for sweat  
 You yearn, but if you shake with fear to set  
 The yoke upon the bulls or should you shy  
 From deadly harvesting, you'll see that I  
 Shall be the victor in all this: in fact  
 Another man may quake to interact  
 With a better." This was his abrupt response.  
 Then Jason rose up from his seat at once, 490  
 Augeias and Telamon too. Argos, as well,  
 Followed alone and gave a sign to tell  
 His brothers to remain. They left the hall,  
 And Jason's grace and beauty through them all  
 Shone out; the maid with sidelong glances cast  
 Her eyes on him and held her bright veil tight  
 To one side, while her heart was smouldering  
 With pain. Her soul, dream-like, was slithering  
 And flitting in his tracks. In sore distress



They left the palace. Now with speediness 500  
Chalciope to her room had made repair  
With all her sons, for she was taking care  
To keep far from Aeëtes' indignation.  
Medea went as well, in rumination  
About those things the Loves arouse. To her  
He still appeared – his clothes, his character,  
His words, the way he sat, the way he went  
Towards the door: it was her sentiment  
That there was none like him, while constantly  
His voice, the honeyed words he spoke would be 510  
Upon her ears. For him she worried lest  
The oxen or the king himself would best  
And kill him, grieving as though he were slain  
Outright already, while in her great pain  
There trickled down her cheek a soft, sad tear.  
She wept and softly spoke up loud and clear:  
“Why am I melancholy? Should he die  
The best or worst of all the heroes, I  
Say let him meet his doom. O would that he  
Were safe; however, o Queen Hecate, 520  
And sailed back home unharmed. If the gods ordain,  
However, that by oxen he'll be slain,  
Let him know in this dread calamity  
I'll take no pleasure. So oppressed was she  
By love's bite. When the others left the town  
And people by the path they'd travelled down  
From the plain, Jason by Argos was addressed:  
“Jason, you'll hate my plan but so oppressed  
Are we that I don't think that we should shun  
The contest. You have heard me talk of one 530  
Young maid who practises some sorcery  
Through Hecate's advice. It seems to me  
That, if we trust in her, no longer will  
We fear to be defeated thus. But still  
I greatly dread my mother won't agree  
To do this thing, but, since calamity  
Is hanging over us, then back I'll go  
To meet her.” These kind words he answered so:  
“If you believe in what you say, my friend,  
I'll not refuse. Go to your mother, bend 540  
Her ear with crafty words. Wretched indeed  
Is hope of reaching Hellas if we need  
To turn to women.” Thus he spoke and then  
They quickly reached the backwater. The men,  
When they came close, made question joyfully,

And Jason answered them disconsolately:  
 “My friends, there’s anger in Aeëtes’ soul  
 At us and we will never reach our goal,  
 Nor I nor you. He says on the lowland  
 Of Ares graze two bulls, bronze-footed and 550  
 Exhaling fire. This four-acre field  
 He bade me plough and said that he would yield  
 To me a serpent’s seed, which he will take  
 Out of its jaws and which will later make  
 Earth-born, bronze-armoured men. That very day  
 I must subdue them. This without delay  
 I took upon me, for no better plan  
 Existed.” Thus he spoke, and every man  
 Deemed it impossible, while silently  
 Regarding one another, tragedy 560  
 And helplessness oppressing them. But then  
 At last Peleus spoke up among the men  
 Who led the quest. He boldly stated: “It  
 Is time to plan our move. Yet benefit  
 Comes less from talk than might. If you’re intent  
 On yoking Aeëtes’ oxen, Jason, bent  
 On tackling this toil, to your vow you’ll hold  
 And in your preparations yet be bold,  
 But if you do not trust implicitly  
 Her skill, don’t go ahead nor try to see, 570  
 As you sit there, some other man to take  
 The task upon him. I shan’t shrink or quake  
 Since merely death will be the bitterest  
 Of pain for me.” He spoke, and Telamon’s breast  
 Was stirred. He rose, agog, immediately,  
 Then Idas in his pride made Number Three,  
 Tyndareus’ sons and Oineus’ son as well,  
 A mighty man, though yet there did not dwell  
 Soft down upon his cheek, so did his breast  
 With courage swell. In silence sat the rest, 580  
 Taking no part. Then Argos instantly  
 Said to the men who hungered eagerly  
 For the contest: “Friends, it’s we who in the end  
 Must act. My mother, I believe, will lend  
 Her timely aid. Now stay a short while more  
 On board, though eager, as you did before –  
 It’s better to refrain than carelessly  
 To end up with a tragic destiny.  
 Aeëtes’ halls have nurtured a young maid  
 Who learnt to master ably, with the aid 590  
 Of Hecate, the herbs that Nature grows

On land and in the flowing waters: those  
Can quench a blast of endless flame, impede  
At once the roaring rivers as they speed  
Upon their way and exercise control  
Over the holy moon from pole to pole  
And all the stars. We thought of her as we  
Went from the hall with the expectancy  
My mother, her own sister, might prevail  
Upon her now to offer some avail 600  
For this contest. If this pleases you, this day  
To make the trial I'll be on my way  
Back to Aeëtes' palace. I'll succeed  
Perhaps with some god's help." He spoke. Indeed  
The gods gave him a sign of their goodwill:  
As he fled from a mighty falcon's bill,  
A dove, trembling with fear, fell from on high  
Into the lap of Jason. From the sky  
The falcon fell upon the figurehead,  
Impaled. Prophetically then Mopsus said: 610  
'My friends, this sign is heaven's divination  
And there is only one interpretation:  
We must seek out the maid and skilfully  
Try to persuade her, and it seems to me  
She'll not deny us if Phineus did say  
That our return on Aphrodite lay.  
This gentle bird of hers escaped his fate,  
So by this falcon I prognosticate  
My victory. My friends, invoke the shield  
Of Cytherea and to Argos yield 620  
Yourselves." These words were praised by the young men  
Recalling Phineus's advice. But then  
Idas, the son of Aphareus, of all  
The only one, leapt up and, filled with gall,  
Yelled: "Travellers with women, o for shame!  
We call on Cypris, not the warlike fame  
Of Ares, look to doves and hawks to stay  
Away from toil! Don't think of war! Away!  
Beguile weak girls!" He shouted eagerly.  
Though many of his comrades quietly 630  
Murmured, not one replied. Back down again  
He sat in indignation. Jason then  
Spoke his own mind with this encouragement:  
"Since all approve this, let Argos be sent  
Ashore. But we will leave the river and  
In full view tie our hawsers to the land.  
We should no longer hide, far from the shout

Of battle.” Thus he spoke and summoned out  
Argos at once with orders with all speed  
To go back to the city and decreed 640  
That they draw up their anchors and then row  
A little from the marsh, and they did so.  
At once Aeëtes held a convocation  
With the Colchians far away from the location  
Of the palace, where they’d sat before, so he  
Could plan distress and ruthless treachery  
For the Minyans. When the oxen tore asunder  
Him who this heavy task had knuckled under,  
He threatened that above the leafy height  
He’d hew the oak-grove down and set alight 650  
The ship with all its men, that they might vent  
Their grief for being proudly insolent  
In all their schemes. Though he had been distressed,  
He would not have had Phrixus as a guest –  
A man in warmth and grace beyond compare –  
Had Zeus not sent a herald through the air,  
Hermes, that he might meet a friendly host,  
He stated, nor would pirates live to boast  
That they were scatheless there – men resolute  
On seizing others’ goods, who plan astute 660  
And wily schemes and with strident sorties  
Burn peasants’ stables. Also, penalties  
Were due from Phrixus’ sons for coming there  
With sinners and taking, without a care,  
His honour and his sceptre: earlier, he  
Had from his father heard a prophecy  
Most dreadful: Helios told him he must shun  
The cunning tricks and tactics of each son  
Of his and their crafty iniquity.  
So, as they wished, by fatherly decree 670  
He sent them to Achaia, far away:  
His daughters caused no little fear – did they  
Plan something vile? – and his male progeny,  
Apsyrtus. But upon the family  
Of Chalciopie this foul curse would be brought  
And to these folk he spoke dread things, all wrought  
In rage. He threatened to keep in his sight  
The ship and all the crew that no-one might  
Escape his death. Meanwhile, Argos, who’d gone  
To Aeëtes’ palace, on and on 680  
His mother to entreat Medea’s aid:  
She’d thought to do this earlier, afraid,  
However, lest she pointlessly should seek

To beg a maid who feared the fatal pique  
 Of her own father or, should her request  
 Be met, her deeds would all be manifest.  
 Deep sleep had soothed the maid, taking away  
 Her love-distress as on her couch she lay.  
 But fearful, crafty, grievous dreams appeared:  
 The foreigner had taken on, she feared, 690  
 The contest not to take away the fleece –  
 He had not travelled from his native Greece  
 To Aeëtes' town, she thought, for this – oh no,  
 He'd hither come to choose a bride and go  
 Back home: she fought the oxen easily,  
 She thought: her parents for their guarantee  
 Had no regard, for her they did not dare  
 To yoke the beasts but Jason, and from there  
 Arose between her father and these men  
 Contention of a doubtful issue: then 700  
 They told her that she should herself decide  
 What she should do and, setting them aside,  
 She chose the stranger. Wretched misery  
 Assailed them and they shouted angrily.  
 Sleep left her with a cry. Quaking with dread,  
 She leapt up, looking, as she lay in bed,  
 At those four walls and barely summoning  
 Her spirit as before and bellowing:  
 "Alas, these gloomy dreams have frightened me ;  
 I fear great ill comes from this odyssey 710  
 Of men. My heart is fluttering with fear  
 For the stranger. Let him far away from here  
 Among his own woo some Achaean maid;  
 Let maidenhood and life at home be laid  
 Upon me. Recklessly, however, I  
 No more shall stay aloof. No, I will try  
 My sister so that I may see if she  
 Will ask my help in the contest, misery  
 Assailing her for her own sons. This may  
 Quench all my grief. " That's what she had to say. 720  
 She rose, opened the door, barefoot and clad  
 In just one tunic and – for now she had  
 A yen to go and see her sister – went  
 Across the threshold. Standing there, she spent  
 A long time, checked by shame. She turned back then,  
 Then exited once more, then back again  
 She stole; her feet would go hither and yon  
 In vain; as often as she went straight on,  
 Shame kept her in the room. Shame held her fast,

Then bold love urged her on again. At last, 730  
After three times of turning either way,  
She fell upon her bed, in her dismay  
Writhing. Just as a bride within her room  
Sits grieving for her young husband to whom  
Her parents and her brother gave her, nor  
Yet has conversed with all her servants, for  
Shame and reserve preclude such things. So she  
Sits on her own and grieves; some tragedy  
Has taken him before they can delight  
In each one's body. At the very sight 740  
Of the empty bed she weeps inaudibly,  
Her heart on fire, lest the women see  
And mock her. Thus Medea showed her woe.  
A maid who served her saw her crying so  
When she came near and told Chalciope  
Who sat among her sons in reverie  
On how to coax her sister. When she heard  
The maid's strange tale, she trusted every word.  
She rushed straight to her sister's room, alarmed;  
She lay there in her grief, where she had harmed 750  
Her cheeks by clawing. When she saw each eye  
Tear-filled, she said to her: "Why do you cry,  
Medea? What is wrong? What dire distress  
Affects you? Has some god-inspired sickness  
Assailed your body? Have you maybe heard  
Your father tell you of some dreadful word  
Of menace to my progeny and me?  
Would that my parents' home I may not see,  
The city neither; rather let me dwell  
In this earth's limits, where there never fell 760  
'Colchis' on human ears." That's what she said.  
Chalciope with maiden shame blushed red;  
Though keen to speak, she dared not. Now would speech  
Rise up to her tongue's tip, now flit to reach  
Her breast's abyss. It often searched about  
To leave her lovely lips, but nought came out.  
At last she spoke with guile, for she was pressed  
By the swift Loves: "Chalciope, my breast  
Is trembling for my children, for I dread  
My father speedily will have them dead 770  
Along with all the strangers. Recently,  
While sleeping for a brief while, did I see  
Such dreadful dreams. May some god see they go  
Unrealized and you from dire woe  
About your sons are free." Thus did she try

Her sister, hoping she would first supply  
 Succour. Her sister in oppressive pain  
 And fear was caught at what she said. Again  
 She spoke: "I, too, to set all this in motion,  
 Have come to you. Do you have any notion 780  
 That you may put to use? Swear now by Ge  
 And Ouranus that what I say may be  
 Our secret and you'll work with me. I pray  
 By the gods, yourself, your parents, too, that they  
 Will not before your very eyes be fated  
 Unjustly to be foully extirpated,  
 Or else with my dear sons may I die, too,  
 Then afterwards from Hades come to you,  
 A vengeful Fury." Thus she spoke. A tide  
 Of tears then coursed her cheeks. On either side 790  
 Her hands embraced both of her sister's knees,  
 She laid her head upon her breast, then these  
 Two women shared their grief. The distant sound  
 Of women sorrowing was heard around  
 The halls. Medea answered in the sting  
 Of anguish: "Wretched maid, what can I bring  
 To ease what you have spoken of to me,  
 Your Furies and your dire calamity?  
 Would I could help your sons. The potent vow  
 Of Colchis you urged me to swear just now 800  
 Be witness, great Ouranos, Mother Ge,  
 You shall not, while there is some strength in me,  
 Lack my support, should all the gods comply  
 With your appeals." She spoke, and in reply  
 Chalchiope said: "Have you some device  
 To give the stranger who needs your advice,  
 Some ruse that he might win the tournament  
 And aid my sons? From him Argos was sent  
 To urge my help. I left him and came here."  
 She spoke. Medea's heart capered with cheer, 810  
 At once her fair cheeks flushed, here eyes aglow  
 Though wrapped in mist, and thus she answered: "O  
 Chalchiope, as is to yours and you  
 Sweet and delightful, even so I'll do.  
 May I no longer see daylight, not live  
 A moment longer if I ever give  
 A thought to ought before what will set free  
 You and your sons, who are my family,  
 My brothers, kinsmen, young comrades. It's true  
 I am your sister, and your daughter, too, 820  
 Because, like them, you took me to your breast

When I was tiny, as Mother confessed  
So often in the past. But hide this act  
Of mine so that I may fulfil my pact  
Without our parents' knowledge. At daybreak  
Some sorcery to charm the bulls I'll take  
To Hecate's temple." Then Chalciope,  
That she might relay to her progeny  
Her sister's aid, back to her room repaired.  
Medea, left alone, was greatly scared 830  
And wracked with guilt that she had hatched a plan  
Against her father's will to help this man.  
Night closed the earth. The sailors on the sea  
Saw from their ships the stars of Helice  
And of Orion, while a hankering  
For sleep assailed those who were travelling  
And the gatekeepers, and, her children gone  
Across the Styx, a mother slumbered on;  
No dogs barked in the town, there was no sound  
Of men, and pitchy blackness all around 840  
Was wrapped in silence. To Medea, though,  
No sweet sleep came. The son of Aeson's woe  
Kept her awake: she feared the bulls' fierce might  
Through which his wretched doom was endless night  
Upon the field of Ares, while her heart  
Seethed fiercely as a beam of light may dart  
Across a house, flung up from water splashed  
From a cauldron or a bucket, swiftly flashed  
And dancing here and there, a rapid whirl;  
So whirled beneath the bosom of the girl 850  
Her heart. Here eyes shed tears of sympathy  
And in her soul there smouldered agony,  
Round her fine nerves and neck where penetrate  
The deepest pains, when never the Loves abate  
From piercing shafts of torture. Now would she  
Intend to give to him the sorcery  
To charm the bulls, now would she change her mind  
And plan herself to die, but then she'd find  
Her thoughts had turned again – she would remain  
Alive, not give the charms but bear the pain 860  
In silence. Down she sat, still wavering,  
And said: "Poor wretch, must all these troubles fling  
Me back and forth? My heart's in misery  
On every side, and there's no remedy.  
A constant burn lives there. Would that a dart  
From Artemis' swift bow had pierced my heart  
Before I'd seen that man, before that band



Of my own sister's sons had reached the land  
 Of Greece. Some Fury or a god has brought  
 To us from thence this torture which has wrought 870  
 Full many a tear. In the contest may he die  
 If he must perish there. For how can I,  
 Without my parents knowing it, prepare  
 The charms? What story can I give them? Where  
 Is there a cunning, beneficial plan?  
 Should I give greeting when I see the man  
 Without his friends? Poor wretch, I can't foresee  
 That I shall rest from misery, though he  
 Be dead: when he's bereft of life, then woe  
 Will come; now shame, begone, begone, all glow. 880  
 Saved by my art, let Jason go away  
 And wander where he will, but on that day  
 When he's the victor in the contest, I  
 Shall die, either by fixing way up high  
 A rope to stretch my neck and swallowing  
 Destructive drugs. Still then people will fling  
 Their taunts at me. All cities far away  
 Will shout my destiny. My name shall play  
 In Colchian women's mouths and here and there  
 They'll mock me foully – 'that's the maid whose care 890  
 For a stranger was so great she died; that's she  
 Who shamed her home and parents; lunacy  
 Destroyed her.' What disgrace shall not adhere  
 To me? It would be better far right here,  
 Alas, to end my life this very night  
 Through some strange fate, for in this way I might  
 Avoid all taunts, thus never having wrought  
 Such dreadful shame." She spoke, and then she brought  
 A box wherein drugs that were remedies  
 And those that kill were kept. Upon her knees 900  
 She settled it and wept. Incessantly  
 The tears bedewed her bosom; copiously  
 They flowed as there she sat and at her fate  
 Wailed bitterly. She longed to designate  
 A fatal drug to taste. The box's string  
 She now untied, poor creature, hankering  
 To extricate the drug. But suddenly  
 Her heart was filled with dread anxiety  
 Concerning hateful Hades. Checking long  
 This urge, she sat while all around a throng 910  
 Of life's sweet cares appeared. She contemplated  
 The joys the living share and meditated  
 Her joyous friends, as maids are apt to do;

The sun now seemed much sweeter in her view  
Than heretofore – for every joy she yearned.  
The box she now put down, her judgment turned  
By Hera. Wavering no more, daybreak  
She longed to look upon that she might take  
The charms to Jason as she'd vowed to do  
And meet him face-to-face. Longing to view 920  
The dawn, she often locked the bolts. Dayspring  
Now shed its welcome light that it might bring  
The people to the streets. Argos then told  
His brothers to remain there to unfold  
Medea's plans, though he himself turned round  
And went back to the ship. Medea bound  
Her golden hair, which fell in disarray  
About her, when she first espied the day,  
And bathed her tear-stained cheeks. Her skin now shone  
With honeyed salve; a fine robe she put on, 930  
Well clasped with brooches, and above her head  
She placed a shining veil, and then she sped  
Throughout the palace, heedless of the woes  
That heaven sent to her and all of those  
Which were to come. She called her maids to her –  
The same age as herself, twelve maids there were,  
Who in the fragrant chamber's portico  
Would sleep, for whom it was not yet to know  
A man – and ordered them to speedily 940  
Yoke to the chariot mules that she might be  
To the fair temple of Hecate conveyed.  
While they prepared the chariot, the maid  
Took from the hollow box the talisman  
They call *Promethean* (if any man  
Should smear himself with it at night when he  
Makes sacrifice, appeasing Hecate,  
The only-begotten maid, there will be no  
Wound made upon him by a bronze sword's blow  
Nor shall he flinch away from fire; that day  
He'll prove superior in every way, 950  
In prowess and in might). From earth it grew,  
First-born, when the ravening eagle, as it flew,  
Upon the vales of Caucasus let fall  
Tortured Prometheus' blood-like ichor. All  
Of one full cubit high it bloomed, in hue  
Like the Corycian crocus, upon two  
Stalks rising. But the root, within earth's bed,  
Resembled new-cut flesh. She harvested  
Its liquid, like a mountain-oak's dark juice,

And placed it in a Caspian shell for use 960  
In her enchantment, after she had soaked  
In seven endless rivers and invoked  
Full seven times Brimo, youth-nurturing,  
Queen of the dead, in Hades wandering,  
In gloomy night, all clothed in black, and when  
The Titanian root was cut, the dark earth then  
Shook with a bellow; then Prometheus made  
A heart-charged groan. She took the charm and laid  
It in the fragrant band that circled round  
Her lovely breast. She went outside and found 970  
The speedy chariot which she mounted, two  
Handmaids on either side; she drove straight through  
The city, having seized the reins, one hand  
Holding a well-made whip. The rest of the band  
Of handmaids laid their hands upon the back  
As they now ran over the ample track,  
Their flimsy tunics all secured aloft  
Above their snow-white knees. As by the soft  
Parthenian waters or, bathed in the rills  
Of River Amnisus, across the hills 980  
Queen Artemis sped in her golden car  
Behind her swift roes, coming from afar  
That she may greet a tasty offering,  
Her nymphs with her; some gathered at the spring  
Of Amnisus, some gathered in the dales  
And spring-packed peaks, as beasts kept low their tails  
In fear at her approach, thus did they speed  
Straight through the town. The people, taking heed  
That they not look straight at the royal maid,  
Made way for her. But when the streets, well-laid, 990  
Of the city were behind them and the shrine  
Beyond the plains was reached, down from the fine  
Chariot she stepped at once impatiently  
And to her maids said: "My iniquity  
Is great: I was not heedful to restrain  
From foreigners who wander our terrain.  
The whole city is smitten with dismay;  
None of the women who'd meet here each day  
Is present. But since we alone are here,  
Let us not spare to soothe our hearts with cheer 1000  
By singing and let's pluck fair flowers that grow  
Upon the tender grass and straightway go  
Back home. You'll leave with many gifts that day  
If you perform the thing for which I pray.  
Argos has changed my mind, Chalciope

As well. But keep these words you hear from me  
 A secret lest my father hear what I  
 Have said. As for the stranger, who will try  
 To quell the bulls, I must receive, they state,  
 The gifts he brings to me and liberate 1010  
 Him from the fatal toil. This gladdened me.  
 I summoned him to come alone that we  
 Might portion out the gifts – mine he will bring  
 While I will give to him a different thing,  
 A deadly charm. When he comes, stand apart.”  
 She spoke, and this device pleased every heart.  
 Then was it that Argos rapidly drew  
 Jason from his companions when he knew  
 From his brothers that Medea now had gone  
 To Hecate’s holy shrine, then led him on 1020  
 Across the plain, and in their company  
 Went also Mopsus, good at augury,  
 Ampycus’ son, who counselled well all men  
 Who travelled. Never had there been till when  
 The bride of Zeus made Jason on that day  
 A man like him, to see or have parlay  
 With. His comrades themselves, as they all gazed  
 Upon the son of Aeson, were amazed  
 To look upon those graces as they shone 1030  
 Out of the man, and as they journeyed on  
 Mopsus rejoiced, already reckoning  
 The end. There was a poplar, burgeoning  
 With leaves, upon the footpath and near by  
 The temple, whither cawing crows would fly  
 To roost. One, on the branches way up high,  
 Now shook her feathers and was heard to cry  
 Hera’s counsels: “You do not understand,  
 Poor seer, what *children* know – in all the land  
 No maid will speak sweet nothings to a beau  
 When strangers are about. Non-prophet, go, 1040  
 You witless thing! No generosity  
 From Cypris or the gentle Loves shall be  
 Breathed on you.” Thus did Hera reprehend,  
 And Mopsos smiled a smile that she should send  
 A bird-borne message, so he said: “Repair  
 To Hecate’s temple, son of Aeson, where  
 You’ll find Medea. Thanks to Cypris, who  
 Will in the contest be a help to you  
 (As Phineus, son of Agenor, had foretold),  
 Medea will with kindness enfold 1050  
 You to her heart. Argos and I will wait

Right here till you return. Propitiate  
The maid, yourself alone, and cleverly  
Win her to you.” He spoke sagaciously.  
Both praised him then. Despite Medea’s song,  
She did not shift her thoughts; never for long  
Did such amusement bring her much delight.  
Perplexed, she faltered, though, so that her sight  
Upon her handmaids wavered, and she tried  
To see the far-off path, turning aside 1060  
Her cheek. Her heart was often quivering  
When she thought that she heard the hurrying  
Of feet or else the wind. But by and by  
Into her eager purview, striding high,  
He came, like Sirius coming from the sea,  
Which rises fine and clear, though misery  
That’s infinite it brings to flocks. Thus fair  
To see walked Jason. But a love-sick care,  
Along with him, came to her. Her heart’s core  
Then tumbled from her breast and, furthermore, 1070  
Her eyes were misted, while a reddening  
Suffused her burning cheeks. She could not bring  
Her knees up, for her feet seemed bound to stay  
Upon the ground. Her handmaids moved away  
From them. They stood there, silent, face to face,  
Like oaks or lofty pines which stand in place  
Upon the mountains when there is no hint  
Of wind, in silence, but will, without stint,  
Murmur when winds breathe on them. Similarly  
Would they converse, moved by the agency 1080  
Of Love’s sweet breath. And Jason knew a woe  
Sent down from heaven troubled her, and so  
He said to her: “Pray tell to me, fair maid,  
Why, since I’m here alone, are you afraid?  
I’m not an idle boaster, as some are,  
Nor was I when in my own land afar.  
Don’t be abashed before me to enquire  
About whatever is your heart’s desire  
Or speak your mind. But to this hallowed place, 1090  
Where sin cannot be sanctioned, face to face  
We have arrived, therefore you must feel free  
To ask and speak; and do not hoodwink me  
With honeyed words, for at the first you swore  
To your sister that the drugs I hankered for  
You would bestow on me. I beg of you  
By Hecate, my children, Lord Zeus, too,  
Who holds his hand out to those who implore

And strangers also, for my need is sore  
 And I am both of these. Without avail  
 From you, in this fell test I'll not prevail. 1100  
 Later I'll show you my appreciation,  
 For that befits men of another nation.  
 I'll spread your name and make you glorious;  
 You'll be ennobled by the rest of us,  
 Their wives and mothers, too, on our return,  
 Who now perhaps sit on the shores and yearn  
 In grief for us. Their painful misery  
 You may dispel. Once in antiquity  
 Minoan Ariadne loosed the bond  
 Of grim contests for Theseus in her fond 1110  
 Indulgence, daughter of Pasiphaë  
 (Her father was the sun god who held sway  
 Up in the sky). When Minos quelled his spleen,  
 She boarded ship and sailed with Theseus, keen  
 To leave her native-land. She was held dear  
 Even by the gods; each night one sees appear  
 A starry crown up high, which people call  
 The Crown of Ariadne; like a ball  
 It rolls along, a holy constellation  
 All night. And thus the gods' appreciation 1120  
 Will you receive if only you'll redeem  
 This mighty host of heroes, for you seem,  
 By your allure, in gentle courtesy  
 To shine." He spoke, bestowing dignity  
 Upon her, and she cast her eyes aside  
 And sweetly smiled, her heart melted with pride  
 At his acclaim, then faced him, having no  
 Idea how she should start to speak, although  
 She yearned to blurt out all immediately.  
 She from her fragrant girdle willingly 1130  
 Pulled out the charm, which forthwith in delight  
 He took from her, and now her soul she might  
 Have drawn from out her breast in her elation  
 At his desire and made it a donation  
 To him. Such was Love's honeyed flames that gleamed  
 From Jason's golden head; her eyes now beamed,  
 So captivated was she. Through and through  
 Her heart grew melting-warm just like the dew  
 Upon the roses; by the bright sunrise  
 Made warm. Now would they shyly drop their eyes, 1140  
 Now drink each other in, beneath each brow  
 With rapture smiling. Finally, somehow  
 She managed: "Take heed now, that I may frame

Aid for you. Since my father, when you came,  
 Gave you the dragon's deadly teeth for you  
 To sow, wait till the night is split in two,  
 Wash in the endless stream, then move away  
 From all your comrades, dressed in the array  
 Of dark-blue clothes, and dig a rounded pit,  
 Thereafter slay a female lamb in it, 1150  
 Then sacrifice it whole, accumulate  
 A pyre above the pit and then placate  
 The only-begotten daughter of Perses  
 And pour the hive-stored industry of bees  
 From a cup, seek her goodwill and let no sound  
 Of steps behind you make you turn around,  
 Or barking dogs, in case you should undo  
 All rites; don't go back duly to the crew.  
 When dawn appears, moisten the charm, undress  
 And smear yourself with oil. Then will prowess 1160  
 And mighty strength be yours – you'll have to say  
 You're like the gods, not men. Then you must spray  
 Your spear, your shield, your sword. The earthborn men  
 Will not transfix you with their spear-points then,  
 Nor the flame of deadly bulls, which cruelly  
 Darts quickly onward. But you shall not be  
 This way for long – just one day. Do not quail,  
 However, from the contest. More avail  
 I'll tell you of. You must immediately,  
 After the bulls are yoked, your energy 1170  
 And strength apply to sow the stubborn land.  
 The Giants will be springing up to stand  
 Among the rows, the serpent's teeth now sown  
 Upon the dusky clods. Throw a large stone,  
 Unseen, should you observe a massive pack  
 Arising from the field, for they'll attack  
 Each other over it, as over food  
 Wild dogs will fight. Then join them in this mood.  
 From out of Aia you shall take the fleece  
 By this device away from here to Greece. 1180  
 Go where you please after you've left this place.”  
 She spoke and silently levelled her face  
 Towards the ground and wept exceedingly  
 And moistened her fair cheeks in misery,  
 For he'd sail far away and leave her there.  
 Taking his hand, she spoke in her despair,  
 For shame had left her eyes. “Should you reach home,  
 Remember me. Though far across the foam,  
 I will remember you. Pray tell to me,

Where is your home? Whither across the sea 1190  
 Shall you be bound? Will you perhaps go by  
 Wealthy Orchomenus? Or shall you ply  
 Your oars close to Aeaëa Island? Pray,  
 Tell of the daughter of Pasiphaë,  
 The noble maid you named, who is related  
 To my father.” Deadly Love insinuated  
 Himself, at what she spoke and at her tears,  
 In him as well. He said: “If all my fears  
 Are groundless and I conquer, I can say  
 That I shall not forget you night and day, 1200  
 Should I get home to Greece, so long as there  
 Is not a viler toil that I must bear  
 At Aeëtes’ hands. But if it pleases you  
 To know where is my home, I’ll tell you true,  
 As I feel bound to do. There is a land  
 Where all around it lofty mountains stand,  
 Rich in both sheep and pasture: in that place  
 Deucalion, a hero full of grace,  
 Was fathered by Prometheus, progeny  
 Of Iapetus, who was the first to be 1210  
 A city-founder and who shrines created  
 To the immortals and who delegated  
 Himself as ruler. Those who dwell nearby  
 Have called this land Haemonia, where my  
 City, Iolcus, stands, and many more;  
 Aiaia Isle is unknown on that shore.  
 It’s said that Minyas, son of Aiolus,  
 Left there and built the town Orchomenus,  
 Which borders Thebes. What is the use to tell  
 To you these petty details? – where I dwell, 1220  
 Of Minos’ progeny, fair and far-famed  
 (You asked of her, who is for Minos named)  
 As for her sake Minos was well inclined  
 To Theseus, may your father turn his mind  
 Benignly to us.” Thus he spoke, allaying  
 Her fears with those soft words that he was saying.  
 Her heart was stirred with anguish unrelenting  
 As she addressed him, grievously lamenting:  
 “No doubt in Greece such covenants as these  
 Are recognized; however, Aeëtes 1230  
 Is not such as you claim Minos to be,  
 My husband and Pasiphaë’s progeny,  
 And I’m no Ariadne. Do not, then,  
 Discourse on hospitality but, when  
 You reach Iolcus, think of me, as I



Shall think of you: my parents I defy.  
 And may a rumour from afar reach me  
 Or an avian herald, if your memory  
 Of me has lapsed or else across the foam  
 May swift squalls snatch and take me to your home 1240  
 In Iolcus that before your eyes I might  
 Reproach you and remind you that your flight  
 Was due to my goodwill; may I then be  
 Your unexpected guest.” With these words she  
 Shed piteous tears. Then Jason said: “To hell  
 With empty blasts, that courier-bird as well,  
 My dear: your talk is vain. If to the land  
 Of Greece you travel, you will surely stand  
 In everyone’s respect and admiration;  
 They’ll treat you with a goddess’ veneration 1250  
 Because by virtue of your strategy  
 Their sons came home, and from calamity  
 Their brothers, kinsmen, stalwart spouses, too,  
 Were saved. Within the bridal chamber you  
 Shall then prepare our couch, and not a thing  
 Shall come between our love until the ring  
 Of Death’s grim knell.“ He spoke, at which, inside,  
 Her soul at what he’d spoken liquefied.  
 And yet she shuddered at the ruination  
 To come. Poor wretch! For her repudiation 1260  
 Of living in Hellas could not endure  
 For very long, for Hera made quite sure  
 Medea from Aeaea was to go  
 To holy Iolcus as a source of woe  
 To Pelias, leaving her native land.  
 Now, watching from a distance, her whole band  
 Of handmaids mutely grieved. She must now set  
 Off back to her mother’s home. She did not yet  
 Think of departure, for she filled with cheer  
 To look upon his beauty and to hear 1270  
 His winsome words. But Jason finally  
 With prudence said to her: “It’s time that we  
 Departed lest the setting of the sun  
 Should catch us unawares and then someone  
 From an alien land may know our strategy.  
 But we’ll return and meet.” To this degree  
 They tested out each other as they voiced  
 Soft words, then parted. Jason now rejoiced  
 As he returned to *Argo* hurriedly  
 To join his friends, while to the company 1280  
 Of her handmaids she went. They came to her

As one, but as they pressed her close, they were  
Unseen by her, for high up in the air  
Her soul was hovering. Right then and there  
She mounted the swift car robotically;  
With reins and well-made whip in each hand, she  
Urged on the mules, which to the palace raced.  
As she approached the city, she was faced  
With questions from Chalciope, distressed  
About her sons. Medea, though, oppressed 1290  
With changing fancies, didn't hear a word,  
Nor would she have replied if she *had* heard.  
She sat upon a low stool which was set  
At the bed's foot and, with eyes that were wet,  
Laid her left hand upon her cheek and thought  
Upon the evil deeds that would be wrought  
Through her advice. When Jason had repaired  
To where he'd left his comrades, he prepared  
To go with them, telling them all he'd done,  
Back to the other heroes. So, as one, 1300  
They went to the ship. They hastened to enfold  
Him in their arms and questioned him. He told  
Them of the maid's devices, having shown  
The dreadful charm to them. But, all alone  
Sat Idas, from the others separated,  
Biting his wrath. The crew, though, were elated  
And, when night's darkness hindered them, they went  
About their evening business. Jason sent  
Two men at dawn to ask of Aeëtes  
For the seed – Telamon, who loved hostilities, 1310  
And Aethalides, Hermes's famous son.  
Nor did their journey prove a useless one,  
For Lord Aeëtes gave them straightaway  
The Aonian dragon's fell teeth for the fray  
(In Ogygian Thebes had Cadmos, following  
Europe, killed that guardian of the spring  
Of Ares). There he settled, for Apollo  
Had given him a cow that he might follow,  
By his prophetic word, and she had led  
Him thither. From the jaws within its head 1320  
The goddess tore them all, delivering  
Them to Aeëtes as an offering  
And to the slayer. After dissemination  
On the Aonian plains, an earthborn nation  
Aeëtes founded of those who stayed free  
From death at Ares' sowing. Readily  
He gave them to take back to the *Argo*,

Thinking he'd not complete the task, although  
 He'd yoke the oxen. In the west the day  
 Was sinking through the dark earth far away 1330  
 Beyond the further Aethiopian height,  
 While all her steeds were being yoked by Night  
 And all the heroes now prepared to lie  
 On pallets by the hawsers. In the sky  
 The stars of gleaming Helice, the Bear,  
 Had set and under heaven's girth the air  
 Was still, when Jason went immediately  
 To a bare place with all the secrecy  
 Of a thief and all his needs. He'd taken thought  
 Of everything. Now Argos came and brought 1340  
 A ewe and sheep's milk, both of which he'd got  
 From *Argo*. But when Jason saw the spot,  
 Far from the haunt of men, a meadow still  
 And bright, to start with in the sacred rill  
 He washed his tender body solemnly,  
 Put on a dark robe which Hypsipyle  
 Of Lemnos gave to him, commemorating  
 For him full many an amatory mating.  
 Then, eighteen inches deep, he dug a pit  
 And then he heaped wood-billets over it. 1350  
 He cut the sheep's throat and above the height  
 Of wood he duly stretched it, set alight  
 The billets, pouring on the offering  
 Mixed wine, asked Brimo Hecate to bring  
 Him triumph in the contests, and then drew  
 Away and, from the utmost depths, she knew  
 His voice, that dread goddess, and came to find  
 His sacrifice, while her dread serpents twined  
 Round the oak boughs; a multiplicity  
 Of torches were a gleam, and one could see 1360  
 The hellhounds sharply barking all about;  
 The meadows trembled at her step; a shout  
 Rose from the nymphs who to each marsh resort  
 And every river, too, and who cavort  
 Round Amarantian Phasis. Now a dread  
 Seized Jason; even so, with forward tread,  
 He never looked back till he came upon  
 His comrades once again. Now early Dawn  
 Above the snowy Caucasos showed light.  
 Aeëtes then around his chest pulled tight 1370  
 His stiff breastplate which, having liquidated  
 Phlegraian Mimas, Ares had donated  
 To him, and then upon his head he fit

His golden helmet with the four plumes – it  
 Flashed like the rolling sun when up it slides  
 From Ocean. Now his shield of many hides  
 And grim, resistless spear he swung, whose blow  
 No hero could withstand, now there was no  
 Heracles with them – for he alone could stand  
 Its shock in war. Phaëthon was at hand, 1380  
 Holding the rapid steeds that he might go  
 Onto the well-built chariot: he did so  
 And grasped the reins. On the broad thoroughfare  
 He travelled from the city, out to where  
 The contest would be held, and, right along  
 With him, there went the multitudinous throng.  
 Just as Poseidon on his car would cross  
 The land to the Isthmian Games, or Tainarus,  
 Or Lerne’s water, or Hyantian  
 Onchestos’ grove or with those horses ran 1390  
 To Calauria, or the promontory  
 Of Harmonia, or Garaistus’ grove – thus he,  
 Lord of Colchis, appeared. Jason submerged  
 The charm in water, as Medea urged,  
 Then both his shield and heavy spear he sprayed  
 With it, and then his sword. His friends displayed  
 Great strength in trying out his arms, but they  
 Could not contort even a little way  
 That spear: in their robust hands quite intact  
 And firm it stayed. Now it was wildly whacked 1400  
 By Idas with his mighty sword, for he  
 Was angry at them, and its apogee,  
 Like a hammer on an anvil, was repelled  
 And leapt back. Now the heroes happily yelled,  
 Their hopes enlarged, and then each body part  
 Did Jason spray, whereon into his heart  
 A terrible strength, dauntless, unspeakable.  
 Entered. On both sides were his hands filled full  
 Of vigour. As a war horse, hankering  
 For battle, beats the ground while whinnying 1410  
 And leaping, ears pricked up in haughtiness,  
 So Aeson’s son was filled with happiness  
 At his own strength; often high-leaping here  
 And there, he brandished in his hands his spear  
 Of ash and shield. You’d say a wintry glare  
 Kept scintillating through the gloomy air  
 Out of the clouds, when they bring on the rain  
 In blackest storm. His men would soon refrain  
 From the contest, but, on benches row on row,

They swiftly reached the Arian plains and lo! 1420  
 It stood beyond the town, as far away  
 As the turning-point is from the starting-bay  
 In chariot-races, when the family  
 Of some dead lord holds games for soldiery  
 And knights. They found Aeëtes and the rest  
 Of the Colchians – they had settled on the crest  
 Of Caucasus, he on the winding lip  
 Of the river. When the crew had moored the ship  
 With hawsers, Jason leapt down, on the way,  
 With both his spear and buckler, to the fray. 1430  
 At once he took his shining helmet, made  
 Of bronze, filled with sharp teeth, his bow displayed  
 Around his shoulders, stripped, now like the bold  
 Ares, now Phoebus with his sword of gold.  
 He looked across the grassland and espied  
 The bulls' bronze yokes and, lying by their side,  
 The plough, unsectioned, rock-hard. He came near,  
 Then through the butt he fixed his mighty spear  
 And, doffing his helmet, this he reclined  
 Against it, then , with just his shield, to find 1440  
 The countless bull-tracks, he advanced. From some  
 Dark recess in the earth he saw them come,  
 Leaving their staunch, smoke-filled abode, and flame  
 Shot out of all four nostrils as they came.  
 The heroes quailed at this, but he withstood  
 Their onrush as a rocky sea-reef would  
 Withstand the waves by countless squalls propelled.  
 His shield before his body Jason held.  
 Both roaring bulls with mighty horns attacked  
 The man but made upon him no impact 1450  
 At all. As when the armourer's bellows glow  
 All through the furnace and thereby bestow  
 Strength to the ravening flame, then blows no more,  
 And from it emanates a dreadful roar  
 As up it leaps, so, fiercely breathing flame,  
 The deadly heat like lightning as they came,  
 Those bulls roared out. The maid's charms, though, protected  
 The man, who now with all his strength connected  
 With the horn of the right-hand bull and then he tugged  
 It nearer to the bronze-cast yoke and lugged 1460  
 The bull down to the ground. Then straightaway  
 He kicked the bronze foot. In the self-same way,  
 With just one blow, the other bull he downed.  
 His ample shield he threw down on the ground,  
 Then grasped their foreknees, striding here and there,

From side to side, and swiftly through the glare  
 Of flame he rushed. The king was startled by  
 The hero's strength. Now the Tyndaridae –  
 For it had been predicted long ago –  
 Took up the yoke and gave it him to throw 1470  
 About them. Then a bronze-made pole he placed  
 Between them both and to the yoke he laced  
 It by its point. Leaving the fire, those two  
 Returned then to the ship. But Jason drew  
 His shield onto his back; he now put on  
 His sharp-toothed helm and took his spear, which none  
 Could shun, and, like a worker of the earth  
 With an Argive goad, he struck the bulls' wide girth  
 And pricked them, well directing the plough's blade  
 Of adamant. The animals now made 1480  
 A raging din and breathed fierce fire, their breath  
 Like howling winds which men, in fear of death  
 While sailing on the sea, shrink from, thereat  
 Their great sail furling. Not long after that  
 They yielded to the spear, the rugged land  
 Now broken up, cleft by the ploughshare and  
 The vigorous bulls. The clods groaned dreadfully,  
 Rent by the furrows, each a misery  
 To man, while he, far from him, cast the teeth  
 Incessantly among the clods beneath, 1490  
 And often turning round lest that the yield  
 Of earth-born men should rise up in the field  
 Against him, while the beasts, bronze-hoofed, went on  
 In toil. The third part of the day still shone  
 When weary workers call out for that sweet  
 Ox-loosing hour – now ploughing was complete,  
 The tireless ploughman finishing the field,  
 Though four plough-gates were measured in the yield.  
 He then unyoked the bulls which, at his shout,  
 Fled to the plain in fright. He turned about, 1500  
 Returning to the ship, while he could see  
 The earth-born men. His comrades heartily  
 Encouraged him. He then drew from the rill  
 His helmet and with water drank his fill,  
 Then bent his nimble knees, replenishing  
 His mighty heart with courage, quivering  
 With ardour, like a boar who hones his teeth  
 On hunters, while upon the ground beneath  
 Much foam flows from his angry mouth. Around  
 The entire field the earth-born men were found 1510  
 Already rising. Many a stout shield,

Two-pronged spear, shining helmet caused the field  
Of dread Ares to bristle. Through the air  
From earth up to Olympus flashed the glare.  
As when the wintry clouds are put to flight  
By hurricanes beneath the murky night  
After a mighty snowfall, and a mass  
Of shining stars throughout the gloom can pass,  
So did they shine as they began to spring  
Above the earth. But the wise counselling 1520  
Of sly Medea Jason once again  
Recalled: he seized a boulder from the plain,  
Huge, round, the quoit of Ares, God of War:  
This quoit could not be lifted up by four  
Stalwart young men one inch. Then instantly  
He cast it in their midst and secretly  
Crouched, confident, beneath his shield. As when  
The sea roars over jagged rocks, just then  
The Colchians cried aloud; meanwhile the king  
Was speechless at that hard rock's hurtling. 1530  
The Earthborn, like swift hounds with gnashing teeth,  
Fell on and killed each other and, beneath  
Their spears, like pines or oaks which by a squall  
Are devastated, now began to fall.  
Just as a fiery star leaps from the sky,  
Blazing, a sign to mortals who descry  
Throughout the gloomy air its vividness,  
So did the son of Jason start to press  
In on the earthborn men, his weapon free  
Of its sheath, and, smiting indiscriminately, 1540  
Mowed them all down, many face to the ground  
Or on their side – there were some that were found  
Upright up to their shoulders, others quite  
Erect, while others en route to the fight  
Were caught. As in a war for property,  
A husbandman fears that his fields might be  
Mowed down, he grasps his sickle in his hands  
New-honed and curved, then darts across his lands  
And cuts the unripe crops, with no delay  
Until the sun should parch them, in this way 1550  
He slashed the earthborn crop. Their blood was spilled  
Upon those rows, as fountains' grooves are filled  
With water. So, some biting on the land  
Headlong, some backward, some on side or hand,  
They fell, seeming like monsters of the sea.  
Many were hit before their feet were free  
From the earth; as far as they rose in the air,

They bent towards the ground, reclining there  
With sopping brows. When heavy rain is sent  
By Zeus, thus new-grown orchard-shoots are bent, 1560  
I think, down to the ground, pulled clean apart  
From their roots, the toil of gardening men. Then heart-  
Onerousness and deadly misery  
Comes to the landlord/planter, similarly  
A heavy misery assailed the king.  
To the Colchians he went back, pondering  
How swiftly he might strike them. Now the sun  
Had set and Jason's trials were all done.



## BOOK IV

Muse, goddess, daughter of Lord Zeus, now sing  
Of Colchian Medea's suffering  
And counsels. As I ponder her, my mind  
Is wavering: for was it grief love-blind,  
Or shameful flight that caused her to depart  
From Colchis? With great anger in his heart  
About the hateful contest, Aeëtes  
Throughout the night with all his dignitaries  
Within his halls devised sheer treachery  
But thought without his daughters' knowledge he 10  
Would not accomplish it. But Hera laid  
Great fear upon the girl: she was afraid,  
Just like a nimble deer spooked by the sounds,  
Deep in a copse's thicket, of the hounds.  
She was convinced her succour did not go  
Unmarked by him and now her cup of woe  
Would be filled up. The facts her handmaids shared  
She feared as well. Her eyes with fire flared,  
Her ears rang dreadfully and often she 20  
Would clutch her throat and in deep misery  
Would tear her tresses from their roots. The maid  
Would have beguiled her destiny and paid  
The final price, tasting the charms, and brought  
The strategies of Hera all to nought  
Had not that goddess forced her then to flee,  
With Phrixus' sons, though with perplexity  
She had been struck, and this consoled anew  
Her fluttering soul. Then all her charms she threw  
Into the casket; on the bed she placed  
A kiss and on the double-doors which faced 30  
Each other, stroked the walls, tore her long hair  
And for her mother in the chamber there  
Left it behind a maiden's memory.  
Then in a tone of utter misery  
She said: 'These lengthy tresses, mother dear,  
I leave you as I go; as far from here  
I sail, take this farewell; Chalciopé,  
Farewell, farewell, my home; would that the sea  
Had crushed you, stranger, utterly before

You ventured here and reached the Colchian shore.” 40  
She spoke and wept huge tears. As from a house  
Of wealth a slave-girl creeps just like a mouse,  
New-disadvantaged of her home, unused  
As yet to grievous toil nor yet abused  
With woe, and fearing slavish drudgery,  
And suffered a harsh mistress, similarly  
The fair maid fled her home. The bolts gave way  
And at the magic strains of her swift lay  
Leapt back. Barefoot through narrow paths she sped,  
With her left hand her robe brought to her head 50  
To hide her lovely cheeks, while with her right  
She raised her tunic’s hem, fleeing in fright  
Away from the wide town’s fortifications  
Along the dark track; watchmen at their stations  
Missed her as on she hurried, out of view.  
She planned to reach the temple – well she knew  
The way, for she would many times there roam,  
Looking for corpses or some foul rhizome,  
As sorceresses do. Her heart with dread  
Was quivering. As she, distraught, now fled 60  
The Moon, the goddess of the Titans, marked  
The maid with fierce enjoyment and remarked  
To her own self: “I’m not the only one  
To burn with love for fair Endymion  
Or stray to the Latmian cave, often expelled  
By your sly spells, with thoughts of passion held,  
So that you may practise your darkest art  
At night, a practice pleasing to your heart.  
You too are going through a similar woe:  
Some god of torment makes you undergo 70  
Great pain by loving Jason. Go, and steel  
Yourself, though you are erudite, to feel  
A myriad of grief.” When this was said,  
The maiden’s feet conveyed her as she sped.  
With joy she reached the river-banks, in sight  
Of gleaming light beyond them, which all night  
The heroes burned, glad at the victory.  
Then, through the gloom, across the river she  
Called out to Frontis, Phrixus’ youngest son,  
Who, both with Jason and with every one 80  
Of his brothers, knew her voice. Then silently  
His comrades wondered at her presence. She  
Called out three times, three times, urged by the men,  
He called back to her. All the heroes then  
Rowed swiftly out to find her. On that shore

They had not yet tied off the ropes before,  
 From high up on the scaffold, rapidly  
 Had Jason leapt to land. Two progeny  
 Of Phrixus, Phrontis and Argos, then leapt  
 As well; she then addressed them while she kept 90  
 Her hands about their knees: "Friends, in my plight  
 Save me, and save yourselves too, from the might  
 Of Aeëtes – everything is evident,  
 Nor is there remedy. It's time we went  
 Back to the ship before he goes aboard  
 His speedy chariot. I will afford  
 You with the golden fleece once I to sleep  
 Have lulled the guardian snake; of the vows you keep,  
 However, stranger, now the gods must know  
 From you, and do not, now that I must go 100  
 Far from this place, apportion any blame  
 To me for lack of kinsmen or bring shame  
 Upon me." Thus she spoke in agony,  
 But Jason's heart was blithe, and speedily  
 He raised her up from clinging to his knees,  
 Embraced her and then put her at her ease:  
 "Let Zeus himself, and Hera, royal pair,  
 Be witness to me, lady: hear I swear  
 That I'll make you my wife when to the land  
 Of Greece we make return." With this, his hand 110  
 He placed in hers, commanding all the men  
 To sail to the sacred grove nearby and then  
 To seize and take the golden fleece, in spite  
 Of King Aeëtes' preference, at night.  
 The men in their impetuosity  
 Made word and deed as one. Immediately,  
 Once back on board, the heroes pushed from shore;  
 There were great shouts as each man thrust his oar  
 In haste. But, rushing back towards the land,  
 Medea helplessly held out each hand. 120  
 But Jason, speaking comfort, held her tight  
 And curbed her grief. Now when the sleep that night  
 Affords them huntsmen banish from their eyes  
 (They always wake before the darkness dies,  
 Trusting their hounds while shunning morning's light  
 Lest it should with its radiant whiteness smite  
 And thus erase the quarry's tracks and scent),  
 The son of Aeson and the maiden went  
 From *Argo* to a grassy spot whose name  
 Is *Ram's Couch* (bending weary knees it came 130  
 With Phrixus on its back). Near to this place

There stood, all smeared with soot, the altar's base –  
Phrixus set up that all-gold prodigy  
And to Lord Zeus, the god of sanctuary,  
He sacrificed it at the wise behest  
Of Hermes, who had met him there. The rest  
Of the heroes put the two of them on land,  
Who on the path went to the sacred stand  
Of trees in search of that immense oak-tree  
Where hung the fleece, whose luminosity 140  
Was like a cloud at sunset. But, with keen  
Unsleeping eyes, that serpent now had seen  
Them coming, hissing loudly. All around  
The reptile could be heard, an echoing sound  
From the long banks and endless grove, which they  
Who lived in the land of Colchis far away  
From Aia heard (here Lycus meets the sea:  
With the Phasis its sacred tributary  
It blends when parting from the thundering  
Araxes, and, together tumbling, 150  
They pour into the Caspian Sea). In fright  
Young mothers wake, holding their young ones tight,  
Which howl and tremble at that hiss, and then  
Hold out their hands in agony. As when  
Above a smouldering woodpile there may whirl  
Large, sooty wreaths of smoke, a rising swirl,  
Which, one by one, ascend into the air  
In wavering loops, that monster then and there  
Rolled out his endless coils which were inlaid  
With hard and horny scales. Then came the maid 160  
Before his eyes, invoking mighty Sleep,  
The highest god, with honeyed voice to keep  
The monster charmed, and to the Queen of Night  
Beneath the earth cried out that now she might  
Grant her success. Then Jason, too, was there,  
Afraid: the serpent, though, by her sweet air  
Enraptured, was already loosening  
His huge spine's lengthy ridge and lengthening  
Those endless coils, as in a sluggish sea  
A dark and silent wave revolves. But he 170  
Still raised his grisly head and would have gripped  
Them in his fatal jaws, but now she dipped  
Pure charms from her concoction with a spray  
Of juniper, new-cut, and sang a lay  
While sprinkling his eyes. The potent scent  
Of the charm put him to sleep, and down he went,  
His jaw upon the ground, and far behind

Through the dense wood those massive coils untwined.  
 Then from the oak-tree, as the maiden bid,  
 He seized the golden fleece and, as he did, 180  
 She, standing firm, now rubbed the monster's crown  
 With the charm till Jason bid her to go down  
 To *Argo*: Ares' dusky stand of trees  
 She left. Just as a maiden, when she sees  
 The glorious moon up in the sky, full-grown,  
 Which in her lofty bedchamber is shown  
 Upon her slender robe, and pure delight  
 Invades her heart at this enchanting sight,  
 So Jason swelled with happiness when he  
 Raised up the fleece, and with the radiancy 190  
 Of woolly flocks a redness like a flame  
 Upon his auburn cheeks and visage came.  
 The golden fleece upon its outward side  
 Possessed the large dimensions of the hide  
 Of a yearling ox or stag, which rustics call  
 A brocket. It was thick with wool. And all  
 Around him, as he walked, the ground would glow.  
 From neck to foot at one time would it flow  
 From his left shoulder, then again he'd take  
 It in his hands, lest god or man should make 200  
 A theft of it. Dawn spread across the land  
 As they approached the crew of heroes, and  
 The youths gasped at the mighty fleece which flashed  
 Like Zeus's lightning: each of them now dashed  
 To touch and hold it. Jason checked them all,  
 However, and upon it cast a shawl,  
 New-woven, took and led the maiden to  
 The stern and seated her, then to the crew  
 He said: "My friends, you must no more suspend  
 Your going home. Our task has reached its end 210  
 So lightly by the maiden's counselling –  
 The task for which with grievous travelling  
 We suffered misery. I'll take her back  
 With me to be my wife (I do not lack  
 Her sanction). Keep her safe – she has set free  
 All Greece and you, for it's my theory  
 The king will come downstream to try to block  
 Our way. Then, side by side at each oarlock,  
 Row on by turns while half of you hold out  
 Your oxhide shields, which are a sure redoubt 220  
 Against the weapons of an enemy,  
 And guard our journey. In our hands have we  
 Our children's and our aged parents' end.

For all the Grecian citizens depend  
 Upon our venture, should egregious fame  
 Be that which we achieve or lasting shame.”  
 He spoke and donned his armour. Eagerly  
 They shouted loudly. From its scabbard he  
 Drew out his sword and at the *Argo*'s stern  
 He slashed the cables, then, armed, stood his turn 230  
 By the side of Ancaeos, the helmsman, near  
 The maid; the ship sped as they strove to clear  
 The river ceaselessly. Medea's act  
 And adoration were a well-known fact  
 By now to Colchis and the lordly king.  
 They thronged in armour to the gathering  
 Like waves that rise up from a wintry sea  
 Or leaves that drop in some dense forestry  
 In autumn – who could count them all? – just thus  
 They streamed nonstop with shouts, tumultuous, 240  
 Along the banks, while over everything  
 In his fine chariot shone out the king,  
 His steeds a gift from Helios, so fast  
 Each bore resemblance to a rapid blast  
 Of wind, a curving shield in his left hand  
 And in his right a huge pine-firebrand;  
 Near, facing him his massive spear was set.  
 Apsyrtus held the reins. The ship now met  
 The waves, the sturdy oarsmen hastening  
 Her on, the mighty river tumbling 250  
 Along. The king, in grievous agony,  
 Invoked both Zeus and Helios to see  
 Such evil, holding up his hands, and tossed  
 Foul threats at all his folk that at the cost  
 Of their own lives his rage and vengeance they'd  
 Find out if they did not arrest the maid  
 On land or swelling sea and thus appease  
 His eager soul. These things did Aeëtes  
 Pronounce. That day the Colchians unmoored  
 Their ships, got all their tackle safe aboard 260  
 And that same day set sail. You'd not have said  
 This was a mighty fleet of ships – instead  
 It seemed that in great droves an endless host  
 Of birds was screaming as it left the coast.  
 A swift wind blew, as Hera always planned,  
 So that Medea the Pelasgian land,  
 A bane to Pelias' house, might reach. Daylight  
 On the third day would see them binding tight  
 The cables on the ship's stern to the beach

Of Paphlagonia at the outreach 270  
Of River Halys. Now she bade them land  
And, once on shore, together form a band  
And in appeasement make to Hecate  
A sacrifice. But everything that she  
Prepared for this no man may know, nor may  
My soul encourage me to sing a lay  
About it. Reverence bids me say no more.  
That altar that they built upon the shore  
Still stands for our descendants all to see.  
And once then Jason and his company 280  
Thought about Phineus who had said that they,  
When leaving there, would go a different way.  
This was so unexpected; Argos, though,  
Addressed that eager throng: "We must now go  
To Orchomenus, for he you met before,  
That faultless seer, foretold you of it. For  
There is another route which priests made known –  
The priests who from Tritonian Thebes were grown.  
All the stars that whirl round heaven were not set,  
Nor were the holy Danaids known yet. 290  
The Apidanean men of Arcady  
Were yet the only people known to be  
Living upon the earth – they lived, it's said,  
Even before the moon did, and they fed  
On acorns in the hills. The progeny  
Of Deucalion, that glorious family,  
Did not then rule Pelasgis, when the land  
Of Egypt, mother of a vigorous band  
Of ancestors, was called a flowering  
Land of the Morn, and the broad-rippling 300  
River Triton fed all of it. No rain  
From Zeus bedewed it. Many fields of grain  
Sprang up through flooding and, they say, from thence  
A king would travel, placing confidence  
In his own subjects' might and bravery,  
Through Europe and Asia; wherever he  
Would roam, so many cities he would raise,  
Some still extant, some not, for countless days  
Have passed since then. But Aia stands there yet –  
Her settlers' sons preserve their writings set 310  
On pillars – every road and boundary  
On sea and land are there for all to see.  
There is a river, Ocean's furthest strait,  
Which trading vessels may negotiate,  
Both wide and deep; it's marked as far away

And labelled Ister, and it makes its way  
 For just a while through boundless fields alone –  
 One stream – its springs beyond the North Wind’s moan  
 Cascade out from the mountains of Rhipae  
 And roar aloud. But when it comes nearby 320  
 The Scythian and the Thracian hills, it flows  
 In part into the Ionian Sea but goes  
 Through a deep bay in equal quantity  
 Which here retracts into the Trinacrian Sea,  
 The sea which lies along your native-land –  
 That is, if we may truly understand  
 The Achelous flows from thence.” Thus he  
 Addressed them. Then a happy augury  
 Was sent by Hera – that this was indeed  
 The route. On hearing this, they all agreed 330  
 With shouts. A heavenly shaft of light appeared  
 And indicated where to pass. Thus cheered,  
 They left the son of Lykos; after they  
 Had spread their sails, they pulled out of the bay,  
 The Paphlagonian hills within their sight.  
 They did not round Carambis for the light  
 Of fire from the sky and winds remained  
 Until the mighty Ister they had gained.  
 Some Colchians now were searching fruitlessly  
 Past the Cyanean Rocks and Pontic Sea, 340  
 While other went, under Apsyrtus’ sway,  
 To the river, where their leader turned away  
 And entered Fair Mouth and outstripped his foe  
 By traversing a neck of land and so  
 Came to the furthest gulf of the Pontic Sea.  
 On Ister stood Pine Island, which had three  
 Sides to it, with its base along the strand  
 While sharply angled to a river and  
 Two outfalls cleft in two; the one they call  
*Narex*, the lower *Fair Mouth*. Through this all 350  
 The Colchians and Apsyrtus sped. The crew,  
 However, ventured far away, straight to  
 The island’s top. In terror of the fleet,  
 The rustic shepherds beat a swift retreat  
 From all their pastured sheep, conjecturing  
 They were sea-dwelling monsters surfacing.  
 For they had not yet seen a ship before,  
 Not those who dwelt beyond the Scythian shore  
 Nor the Graucenians nor Sigynnians  
 Nor Sindians, who now are Laurians 360  
 And dwell upon the great desert flatland.



When the Angouran mountains they had spanned  
And the Cauasiatic rock-face far away,  
Round which the River Ister pours this way  
And that in two-fold streams into the sea  
And the Laurian plain, to stop the enemy  
From slipping off, the Colchians then went  
Into the Cronian Sea thus to prevent  
Their passage, and then the heroic band  
Came from behind and passed by, close at hand, 370  
The twin islands of Brygia, the care  
Of Artemis - a sacred altar there  
Had been set up on one: the other, though,  
Was where they landed, bypassing the foe  
Led by Apsyrtus, for their adoration  
Of Zeus's child had caused the Colchian nation  
To leave these out of many just as they  
Then stood. The rest obstructed every way  
As far as the Salangon and the Nestian land.  
The Minyae, a few against a band 380  
Of many, would have yielded in grim fight  
But that they made a truce so that they might  
Avoid a mighty feud; it was agreed  
The golden fleece was theirs, as was decreed  
By Aeëtes should they in the affray  
Prevail, whether they carried it away  
By guile or openly and in despite  
Of Aeëtes, but that Medea might  
Be ward to Leto's child (for it was she  
Who caused the strife) far from the company 390  
Till a law-dispensing monarch may decide  
She should within her father's home abide  
Or with the chieftains sail to Greece. She weighed  
Up all of this while knife-like anguish swayed  
Her heart incessantly, then swiftly she  
Called Jason out of all his company  
To go alone with her, then, far apart  
From them, with sobs she poured out all her heart:  
"What are you planning, Jason, now for me?  
And was amnesia gained through victory? 400  
Do you think nothing of the things you said  
When up against it? Where have your oaths sped,  
The ones you swore by Zeus, your guarantee  
With honeyed words? Quite inappropriately  
I left my glorious home in shame, my land,  
My parents - all that's dearest to me - and  
Alone with mournful seabirds travel far

Because of your afflictions and debar  
 Your death and save you from that company  
 Of Earthborns and those oxen. Finally 410  
 It was my folly caused you then to win  
 The fleece, once it was known of, and my sin  
 Is placing on all women foul disgrace.  
 I go to Greece – I say this to your face –  
 Your child, wife, sister. Stand by me in all,  
 Don't leave me quite forgotten when you call  
 Upon the kings. Save me, let honesty  
 And justice triumph – thus did we agree –  
 Or else pierce through my throat, thus rendering  
 Me payment for my recklessness. Poor thing, 420  
 If that crowned head with whom you both avow  
 Your vicious covenant resolves that now  
 I'll be owned by my brother! Will I face  
 My father nobly? Due to all my base  
 Actions, what woe shan't I in agony  
 Endure, what heavy doom? Can you now see  
 The safe return you long for? No! I pray  
 That Hera, queen in whom you glory, may  
 Not bring that day to pass. Remember me  
 When you are wearied with calamity; 430  
 And may the fleece just like a dream recede  
 In vain to Hell, and may my Furies speed  
 You from your land at once because of all  
 Your cruelty brought me. These things must not fall  
 To earth unsatisfied. A mighty vow  
 You've broken ruthlessly. Not long from now  
 You'll fail to mock me, sitting unconcerned,  
 Despite your pacts." Her vicious anger burned  
 Within her as she spoke. To set on fire  
 The ship and shatter it was her desire, 440  
 And then herself to sink and disappear  
 Into the greedy flames. Then half in fear,  
 Jason said gently: "Lady, pray you, cease:  
 This does not please me either. No, a peace  
 Is what we seek: for we, because of you,  
 Are ringed by enemies. For all those who  
 Live here would aid Apsyrtus so that they  
 Could take you to your father, like some prey,  
 Back to your home and, faced with hateful might,  
 We'd perish, having closed in deadly fight. 450  
 More bitter still the pain if thus we leave  
 You as their booty. This pact, though, will weave  
 A web of guile to break him. Nor will we

Have hostile locals holding loyalty  
 To the Colchians because of you – their prince,  
 Your champion, and your brother too, has since  
 Gone from them. To the Colchians I'll not yield:  
 Should they prevent my journey, in the field  
 I'll meet them." Thus he spoke appeasingly.  
 With deadly words she said: "Listen to me: 460  
 Take heed. Base needs need base scenarios:  
 My error pained me as I fulfilled those  
 God-sent and vile desires. But you must  
 Shield me from Colchian spears amid the dust  
 Of battle. I will with duplicity  
 Send him to you. In hospitality  
 Receive him with fine gifts. If I should then  
 Persuade his heralds that without his men  
 He should arrive to heed my words, so long  
 As you approve, kill him or rouse the throng 470  
 Of Colchians to war – for I care not!"  
 Thus they agreed to frame a mighty plot  
 For Apsyrtus – they offer great largess,  
 Hypsipyle's dark-purple sacred dress  
 Included, which in sea-girt Dia was sewed  
 For Bacchus by the Graces: he bestowed  
 It later to Thoas, his son, and he  
 Left it to her. With much more trumpery  
 She gave this fine guest-gift to Aeson's son  
 To drape his frame. You never would be done 480  
 Gazing upon it or having your fill  
 Of touching it. There lingered on it still  
 A holy fragrance, since the Nysian king  
 Lay on it, wine and nectar rendering  
 Him tipsy, while the lovely progeny  
 Of Minos he in sensuality  
 Embraced and stroked her breast (her love had taken  
 Her from Cnossos to Theseus who'd forsaken  
 Her on the Isle of Dia). Then she made  
 Progress upon the heralds to persuade 490  
 Her brother to come and, as they had agreed,  
 She reached the goddess' temple that a deed  
 Of guile be planned (it now was darkest night)  
 To take the mighty golden fleece in flight  
 Back to Aeëtes – Phrixus' progeny  
 Had given to the *Argo's* company  
 Medea by duress to take from there.  
 With suchlike guile she scattered to the air  
 Her witching charms, which, from a distant site,

Would still have lured out of the mountain's height 500  
 The savage beast. O ruthless Love, great woe,  
 Great curse to man, what lamentations grow  
 From you, what groans, what deadly strife! Much more  
 Affliction troubles man out of your store  
 Of anguish! Arm yourself, o god, and rise  
 Against your foe's issue in similar wise  
 As in Medea a base infatuation  
 You placed. For how in evil ruination,  
 When he had come to her, did the maid slay  
 Apsyrtus? That's the next song in my lay. 510  
 When on the Isle of Artemis by pact  
 They'd left the maid, each side's ensuing act  
 Was mooring separately upon the land.  
 To wait for Apsyrtus and then his band  
 Of men was Jason's aim. But he, beguiled  
 By dire promises, across the wild  
 And swelling sea sailed on, in darkest night  
 Reaching the sacred island that he might  
 Approach his sister, whom he then assessed  
 In chat, just as a tender child will test 520  
 A raging torrent even burly men  
 Cannot traverse, to see if she could then  
 Plan for the strangers some devise. So they  
 Agreed on everything. Then straightaway  
 From the thick trap the son of Aeson leapt,  
 Clutching his naked sword. Medea kept  
 Her veil across her face and turned away  
 Her eyes lest, when her lover came to slay  
 Her brother, she'd not see the blood. Then he,  
 Just like a butcher in his butchery  
 Of a strong-horned bull, first picked him out, then slew  
 The man hard by the temple which those who 530  
 Lived on the facing mainland, the Brygi,  
 Had built, and down he fell precipitately  
 Upon his knees inside the porch. At last  
 The hero, gasping out his life, now passed  
 While holding up the black blood which was shed  
 Out of the gaping wound and turning red  
 His sister's silvery veil and robe as she  
 Shrank back. The cruel and potent deity  
 Of vengeance, swiftly sidelong-glancing, marked  
 Their treacherous murder. Jason now embarked 540  
 On cutting the dead man's extremities,  
 The blood thrice licking, the impurities  
 Between his teeth thrice spitting out (that way

A treacherous killer recompense must pay).  
The clammy corpse he buried in the ground,  
Where even now the empty bones around  
The Apsyrtians lie. Seeing the torch's flame  
The maid had raised as signal when they came,  
The heroes moored the *Argo* alongside  
The Colchian ship, committing homicide 550  
Upon the Colchian host, as hawks will slay  
A host of doves, as savage lions prey  
Upon a great encompassed flock of sheep  
And drive them close together as they leap  
Into the fold. None of them could eschew  
The slaughter, for upon the entire crew  
They rushed and, flame-like, slew them. Jason then  
Approached them, eager to assist his men,  
Who did not need assistance. But their care  
Was for their leader. Therefore then and there 560  
They held great counsel as to how they might  
Return to Greece. The maid into their sight  
Appeared as thus they pondered. Peleus, though,  
Was first to speak: "I order you to go  
Aboard while it's still night and row away  
From where the foe keeps guard. Once it is day  
They'll see their plight and nothing will prevail  
Upon them to pursue us: they'll turn tail  
And scatter in dissension grievously,  
Like folk who've lost their king." Then easily 570  
Shall we proceed." He spoke, and their consent  
The youths then gave to him. Swiftly they went  
Into their ship and rowed without a rest  
Till they had reached an island that was blessed,  
Electris, highest of them all, close to  
The Eridanus. When the Colchians knew  
Apsyrtos' death, the entire Cronian Sea  
They longed to troll to make discovery  
Of *Argo* and the Minyans. But they  
Were checked by Hera and the fearful ray 580  
Of her sky-lightnings. They came finally  
To hate their own Cytaean territory  
And trembled at Aeëtes' fearful rage,  
And so, when they had put in anchorage,  
They put down roots, dispersing here and there.  
Some settled on the very islands where  
The heroes had sojourned, taking their name  
From Apsyrtus, others to a deep, dark river came,  
The Illyrian, where they built a citadel

(Harmonia's and Cadmos' tomb was there) and dwell 590  
 Among the Echeleians, Others set  
 Up home in Thunder Mountains, which all get  
 Their name from when the bolts of Cronos' son,  
 Lord Zeus, one time prevented anyone  
 From crossing to an island opposite.  
 The heroes, when it seemed to them that it  
 Was easy to return, went further and  
 Tied off their hawsers on the Hylleans' land.  
 For countless islands lay there, that could bring  
 Great danger to a sailor travelling 600  
 Between. The Hylleans, just as before,  
 Bore them no grudge but furthered, furthermore,  
 Their passage and were given, as their pay,  
 A large tripod of Phoebus, who one day  
 Have given Jason two tripods to take  
 Upon the journey that he had to make,  
 When he had gone to make enquiry  
 Of holy Pytho for that odyssey.  
 It was ordained, wherever they would stay,  
 No foe should ravage them and to this day 610  
 In pleasant Hyllus in that selfsame land  
 It's buried deep that it may not be scanned  
 By men. They did not find His Majesty  
 Hyllus alive, whom lovely Melite  
 Had borne to Heracles, Phaiacia's king.  
 For he went to Nausithous' dwelling  
 And Makris, Bacchus' nurse, in compensation  
 For foul infanticide. But adoration  
 Of the River Aigaeus' daughter, Melite,  
 The naiad, caused his wooing victory 620  
 Of her. The mighty Hyllus then she bore.  
 But, grown, he would not stay there anymore  
 Under Nausithous' rule. To the Cronian Sea  
 With some Phaiacians then he went, for he  
 Was aided by the king. He settled there.  
 The Mentores, when he was taking care  
 Of his oxen in the field, killed him. Now say,  
 Goddesses, how clear songs even today  
 Are sung of *Argo's* mighty tracks that spanned,  
 Beyond this sea, both the Ausonian land 630  
 And the Ligystian Isles, called Stoichades.  
 What were the great constraints, what needfulness  
 That took them such a distance? What winds blew  
 Them on? Now Zeus's anger grew and grew  
 At Apsyrtus' murder, so he then decreed,

At Aiaian Circe's words, that they had need  
To wash away the fatal gore and stand  
Much woe before returning to their land.  
None of the chiefs knew this. But far they pressed  
From Hyllus as they left behind the rest 640  
Of all the islands that had once been manned  
By Colchians – the whole Liburnian land,  
Issa, Dysceladus, the ravishing  
Pityeia. Next in their wandering  
They came to Corfu Island (it was there  
Poseidon settled her of the lovely hair,  
Asopus' child, Cercyra, far away  
From Phlius, for it was beneath love's sway  
He took her). Sailors, gazing from the sea  
At her black form, her gloomy forestry, 650  
Called it Black Cercyra. Then they went by  
Melite, which basked in warm winds, then the high  
And steep Cerossos and, some way away,  
Nymphaea, where Calypso made her stay,  
Atlas's child. Though they were dubious,  
They thought they might have seen the nebulous  
Mountains of Thunder. Hera then was keen  
To weigh the counsels and the mighty spleen  
Of Zeus about them. She contrived to end  
Their voyage and before their ship to send 660  
Storm-winds that forced the *Argo* to go back  
To rocky Electra. Then, while on this tack,  
There sounded from the beam of the *Argo*  
A human voice (Athena in the bow  
Had shaped it of Dodonan oak). A fear  
Most dreadful overwhelmed them all to hear  
It tell of Zeus's wrath and enmity.  
It said they'd not escape the angry sea  
Should holy compensation not be made  
By Circe for foul murder. Then it bade 670  
Both Polydeuces and Castor to pray  
That the immortals might show them a way  
Through the Ausonian Sea, where they should see  
Circe, Perses' and Helios' progeny.  
Such statements in that dark the *Argo* made.  
The brothers leapt up, arms outstretched, and prayed  
For every boon. The other heroes, though,  
Were sad. Now onward speeded the *Argo*.  
Deep in the Eridanus now she pressed,  
Where Phaëthon once was wounded in the breast, 680  
Struck by a fiery bolt, and, half-burned, sank

In that deep lake, and even now the dank  
And heavy mists gush forth (Helios's car  
Had tipped him out). An eagle, spreading far  
His airy wings, would have no chance to fly  
Across that stream but it would surely die,  
Aflutter in the flames. Long poplars hem  
Helios's daughters: pouring out of them  
Are pitiful groans; bright amber from their eyes  
Drops, which the sun upon the ground then dries, 690  
But when the waters of the dark lake splash  
Against the shore, wind-driven, then they clash,  
A mass of swelling tide, into the flow  
Of Eridanus' waters. The Celts, though,  
Have taken up the tale – that they indeed  
Are Phoebus' tears, borne onward by the speed  
Of eddies, which he shed abundantly  
Before, when he had reached the progeny  
Of sacred Hyperborea, exiting 700  
From shining heaven at the lecturing  
Of his father, angry at his son whom he  
On Holy Coronis begat, and she  
Gave birth to him at Amyrus' gateway  
In sunny Lacereia, so they say  
About these parts. The heroes did not yearn  
For food or drink, nor did their fancies turn  
To joy, fatigued to fainting all day long  
With the foul smell that stream poured out among  
Them all of burning Phaëthon, then they 710  
At night-time heard the shrill cries of dismay  
The Heliads gave. Their tears of sorrow swirled  
Like drops of oil, then after that they whirled  
Into the River Rhodanus which pours  
Into the Eridanus: mighty roars  
Accompany their mingling. From the far  
Extremes of earth arising, where there are  
The gates and homes of Night, it on one side  
Spews onto Ocean's strands, another tide  
Emitting into the Ionian Sea.  
Elsewhere again there flows a tributary 720  
Through seven mouths into the boundless bay  
Of the Sardinian Sea. It drives its way  
Through wintry lakes, which spread through endless ground  
In Celtic country. Here they would have found  
Shameful disaster. Into Ocean's bay  
A branch of the stream was taking them away  
(They weren't aware of this), and tribulation



Would have engulfed them. But an ululation  
Rang out from Hera out of heaven, who leapt  
From the Hercynian Rock. A shudder swept 730  
Through all of them, however, one of fright,  
For dreadful was the noise in heaven's height.  
She turned them back and then they all discerned  
Their homeward route. At last they were returned  
By Hera to the shore through raging seas,  
Past countless Celt and Ligyan territories,  
Unharm'd. She cast a dreadful mist all day  
As on they sailed, and so, out of harm's way,  
Through Zeus's progeny they came straight through  
The mid mouth of the three and so came to 740  
The Stoichades Isles, where many a liturgy  
And shrine was kept in perpetuity;  
These weren't the only sailors who obtained  
Their help – no, ships in later years attained  
Zeus' aid. Aethalia Island next was seen,  
Where wearily they wiped away the sheen  
Of sweat with pebbles strewn along the strand,  
Skin-coloured; there their wondrous armour and  
Their quoits are seen. That harbour gets its name –  
Argoan – from their ship. They quickly came 750  
Upon the swell to the Tyrrhenian coast  
Of Ausonia and then Aeaëa's boast,  
Her port, casting their cables close to where  
They landed on the beach, and it was there  
That they found Circe washing with salt sea  
Her head, unsettled with anxiety  
About the visions of the night. It seemed  
Her chamber and the palace walls all streamed  
With blood, and all the charms consumed by flame,  
The charms she'd used on any man who came 760  
From foreign lands, and she with her own hand  
Suppressed the flame with murderous life-blood and  
Then drew it up and ceased her deadly fear.  
She roused herself just as the dawn drew near  
And washed her hair and garments. Wild beasts then,  
Unlike wild beasts yet not resembling men,  
With limbs all mingled, went in one great throng  
Like sheep that from the fold amble along  
Behind the shepherd. From primeval clay  
The earth produced them, limbs a mixed array, 770  
Before she'd been, beneath a rainless sky,  
Compressed or from the scorching sun on high  
Received a drop of moisture. But, combined

And placed in ranks by time, they went behind  
Her, shapeless. Great amazement seized the crew:  
Each gazed upon her shape and stared into  
Her eyes and swiftly guessed the maid to be  
Aeëtes' sister. From her memory  
Erasing fears of visions in the night,  
She bade them follow with a subtle sleight 780  
Of hand. At Jason's bidding, the whole crew  
Stood firm. The Colchian maid, though, Jason drew  
To him and on the self-same path they went  
Till reaching Circe's house. Bewilderment  
Seized her at their approach; to them she said  
To sit on the brightly-burnished seats. They sped  
Straight to the hearth and sat there quietly,  
The wont of wretched suppliants. Then she  
Over her countenance her two hands laid.  
But in the earth he fixed the mighty blade 790  
With which he slew Apsyrtus, while their eyes  
Weren't raised; Circe was swift to recognize  
The guilt of blood and doom of deportation:  
So, holding Zeus' decree in veneration  
(Though great in anger, he applies great might  
To ailing killers), she began the rite  
Of sacrifice which ruthless slayers make  
To wash away their guilt when they betake  
Them to the altar. First, as compensation  
That must be made for foul assassination, 800  
She held aloft the piglet of a sow  
Whose teats were swollen still from birthing; now  
She cut its neck and on their hands she sprayed  
Its blood, then more propitiation made  
With offerings of drink, then called on Lord  
Zeus, Cleanser and all suppliant slayers' Ward.  
Her naiad maids, who handled everything,  
Brought from the palace, each outscouring.  
The cakes and other offerings she'd burn  
In sober prayerfulness that she might turn 810  
The Erinyes' dreadful spleen away  
And that the both of them the Lord Zeus may  
Be kindly and propitious, should they be  
With foreign blood besmirched in infamy  
Or else, as kinsmen, crave his grace. But when  
All of the tasks were done, she raised the men  
And sat them on the polished seats, while she  
Sat just across from them. Immediately  
She asked about their needs and where they'd sailed

In detail, and, before they had availed 820  
Themselves of her hearth as suppliants, what home  
Had they come from to reach across the foam  
Her land and palace. Some vile memory  
Of dreams assailed her in her reverie.  
She longed to hear her kinswoman give sound  
To all her thoughts as soon as from the ground  
She raised her eyes. For all the Helian race  
Are recognizable, as from each face  
They flash afar a gleam of gold. Then she  
Replied to all her questions placidly 830  
And in the Colchian tongue, Medea who  
Was grim Aeëtes' daughter – where the crew  
Had travelled, how they'd toiled in each swift test,  
How through her sorrowing sister she'd transgressed,  
How with the sons of Phrixus she had fled  
Afar from him who'd caused appalling dread,  
Her father. But she shrank from telling, too,  
The murder of Apsyrtus. Circe knew,  
However, pitying the weeping maid  
Even so. She said: "Poor wretch, the plans you've laid 840  
Involve a journey terrible and base,  
For soon, I reckon, you will have to face  
Aeëtes' heavy wrath, for speedily,  
To gain, for murder of his progeny,  
Revenge, he'll go to Greece, for he can't bear  
The deeds that you have done. But since you share  
My blood and stand as suppliant to me.  
I'll not harm you. But in the company  
Of this stranger you've chosen in despite  
Of your father, quit my halls. Out of my sight! 850  
Do not beseech me – your base exodus  
And counsels I shall never favour." Thus  
She spoke. In boundless pain, her robe she cast  
About her eyes and groaned until at last  
The hero took her by the hand and led  
Her from the palace quivering with dread.  
And so they left. But they were not unmarked  
By Hera: Iris, as they had embarked  
Upon their exit, saw them and thus told  
That goddess, who had bid her to unfold 860  
To her when they should reach the ship. And so  
She urged her: "Flying on your light wings, go,  
Dear Iris (if you ever have complied  
With my behests), raise Thetis from the tide  
And bid her hither. I have need of her.

Then to the beaches bid her to bestir  
 Herself – Hephaestus’ bronze anvils there stand,  
 Beaten by sturdy hammers. Give command  
 To him that he must subdue every blast  
 Of fire till the *Argo* has gone past. 870  
 Call Aeolus, who holds the government  
 Of the winds, born of a clear-blue firmament.  
 Tell him my mind and bid him to frustrate  
 All winds and let no breezes agitate  
 The sea, and let the West Wind blow till they  
 Have to the Phaeacian island made their way  
 (Alcinous rules there).” That’s what she said.  
 That minute Iris from Olympus sped,  
 Leaping, light wings outspread, and cleft her way.  
 She plunged in the Aegean Sea, whose sway 880  
 Belonged to Nereus. First of all she went  
 To Thetis, telling her Hera’s intent  
 That she should go to her, then, secondly,  
 On to Hephaestus whom she speedily  
 Made cease his iron hammering. The blast  
 The smoky bellows made was stopped. Then, last,  
 She came to Aeolus, the famous son  
 Of Hippotas; when her report was done,  
 She rested her swift knees. Then from the sea  
 Came Thetis, seeking out the company 890  
 Of goddess Hera in Olympus, though  
 Both Nereus and her sisters did not go  
 With her. Queen Hera sat her by her side  
 And said: “To what I’m eager to confide  
 To you now listen, Lady Thetis. You  
 Know how I honour Jason, honour, too,  
 His helpers in the contests and how they  
 Were saved by me as they sailed on their way  
 Beside the Wandering Rocks, where cyclones crash 900  
 With a most dreadful sound while rollers smash  
 Around the rugged reefs. Their route they see  
 Beyond Charybdis, belching horribly,  
 And the great rock of Scylla. You, however,  
 I reared from babyhood myself and ever  
 Have loved beyond all others who abide  
 In the salt sea because you have denied  
 To share a bed with lusty Zeus. For he  
 Has always cherished deeds like that – to be  
 The lover of a goddess or a maid.  
 But your respect and fear of me has stayed 1000  
 Your going to him. Mightily he vowed

Because of this that you'd not be allowed  
 A husband from Olympus. Yet he still  
 Spied on her, though it was against her will,  
 Till Lady Thetis told him everything –  
 That it had been foretold that you should bring  
 Into the world a greater man than he  
 Who fathered him. Despite his lechery,  
 Therefore, he let you go, fearing someone  
 Would rival him and hold dominion 1010  
 Over the gods, so that his power should rest  
 Always with him. But I gave you the best  
 Of all the husbands dwelling upon the earth,  
 That wedded bliss would bring about the birth  
 Of babes. The gods I summoned, one and all,  
 To dinner, with the wedding-torch held tall  
 Within my hand, for all the kindness you  
 Have shown to me. I'll tell you something true:  
 When your son comes to the Elysian plain, although  
 At Chiron's house the Nereids help him grow, 1020  
 Still needing mother's milk, it is his fate  
 To have Aeëtes' daughter for his mate;  
 So said your daughter-in-law, as you should do  
 Since you're her mother-in-law; aid Peleus, too.  
 Why this deep anger? Folly made him blind.  
 Even the gods have folly. You will find,  
 I think, Hephaestus will, at my behest,  
 Temper his fury's might and let it rest,  
 And Aeolus will check his swift winds' speed  
 But keep the steady West Wind, which they need, 1030  
 Until they reach Pheacia's port. Devise  
 A carefree voyage home. The mighty rise  
 Of waves, the rocks are now my only fear,  
 From which with all your sisters you may steer  
 Them safely. Let them not haplessly fall  
 Into Charybdis lest she gulp them all,  
 Nor travel in the foul vicinity  
 Of cruel Scylla, she whom Hecate,  
 Night-wanderer, whom they Crataïs name,  
 To Phorcys bore, lest those of chiefest fame 1040  
 Among the crew she swoops upon to kill  
 With her abhorrent jaws. But keep them still  
 Upon their course that they may just squeak through.”  
 She spoke and Thetis answered: “If it's true  
 The ravening flame and vicious storms will end,  
 I shall, I guarantee, the ship defend  
 From crashing waves, while the West Wind blows clear.

It's time my long and measureless path from here  
 Should start. I'll see my sisters who'll provide  
 Support, then go to where the ship is tied 1050  
 That they may plan their journey at first light."  
 She spoke and, dashing on her airy flight,  
 Fell on the dark-blue eddies of the sea,  
 Then to her sister Nereids made a plea  
 For help and, hearing her, they congregated.  
 Then Hera's bidding was communicated  
 By Thetis, when immediately she sent  
 Them to the Ausonian Sea before she went,  
 More swiftly than the flashing of an eye  
 Or the sun's shafts when he uprises high 1060  
 Above a distant land, across the sea  
 Until Tyrrhenian nationality  
 Was reached upon the Aeaeon sea-strand.  
 At archery and quoits she found them and,  
 Approaching close, she reached out to extend  
 Her hand that she might brush the fingers' end  
 Of Peleus, son of Aeacus, for she  
 Belonged to him by marriage. None could see  
 Her plain – to him alone she was descried.  
 She said: "On the Tyrrhenian shore abide 1070  
 No longer: loose your swift ship at daybreak;  
 Trust in your helper Hera: for her sake  
 The Nereids have met to pull away  
 The *Argo*, now lashed to the Rocks That Stray.  
 That is your destined path. Do not show me  
 To any while I'm in their company,  
 But keep it secret lest you vex me more  
 Than recklessly you vexed me once before."  
 She spoke and vanished in the depths of the sea,  
 But great pain struck the man, for previously 1080  
 He'd never seen her come to him from when  
 She left her bed and chamber, angry then  
 Because of great Achilles, still a tot.  
 For nightly she encompassed him with hot  
 Flame, while his tender flesh she would by day  
 Anoint to keep repugnant age away,  
 Thus making him immortal. Peleus leapt,  
 However, from his bed as fire crept  
 About his precious son who panted so,  
 And, seeing this, he vented all his woe 1090  
 With a cry, the fool. She snatched the child and threw  
 Him to the ground, then, like a breeze, withdrew,  
 Dreamlike, and quickly left the palace, then

Plunged hotly in the sea. Never again  
 Did she return. Then he with helplessness  
 Was seized; he told his comrades, nonetheless,  
 All Thetis' bidding. Then they broke away  
 And swiftly terminated all their play  
 To make their beds and cook their food, then, fed,  
 They, as beforehand, slept the sleep of the dead. 1100  
 The dawn on heaven's edge now cast her glare  
 And when the West Wind fluttered through the air,  
 They sought their benches, then the anchor drew  
 With joy out of the deep, in order due  
 Preparing all the tackle, spreading taut  
 The yardarm's sails; the *Argo* now was caught  
 Beneath a gentle breeze. Then suddenly  
 Fair Anthemoesse Island could they see,  
 Where Achelous' daughters would ensnare  
 Whatever sailor dropped his anchor there 1110  
 With honeyed songs and kill them viciously.  
 These clear-voiced Sirens fair Terpsichore,  
 One of the Nine, to Achelous bore.  
 Demeter's noble daughter once before  
 They'd tended while she her virginity  
 Still kept, and sang to her in harmony,  
 Sometimes like birds, sometimes like maids, yet they  
 Were ever watchful from their lovely bay  
 And often robbed folk of a sweet return,  
 Consuming many with the wasting burn 1120  
 Of yearning. Then they sent, out of the blue,  
 A voice like lilies to the heroes, too,  
 Who would have cast their ropes upon the land  
 But that, Bistonian lyre in his hand,  
 Orpheus, Oiagrus' Thracian son, now strung  
 The instrument and out of it was wrung  
 A hasty tune so that from all around  
 Their ears would fill up with the twanging sound,  
 The lyre stifling the maidens' air;  
 And now the ship was hurried on from there, 1130  
 The wind and sounding rollers hastening  
 Across her stern, those maids continuing  
 Their endless song. Butes, Teleon's fine son,  
 Of all his comrades was the only one  
 To leap ahead of them into the sea  
 From the smooth bench, the Sirens' melody  
 Melting his heart. He swam through the dark foam,  
 Poor wretch, until he reached the Sirens' home.  
 They would have robbed him, in their usual fashion,

Of reaching Greece right there, but in compassion 1140  
 Cypris, Eryx's ruler, from the swell  
 Now snatched him up, allowing him to dwell  
 In Lilybea's heights. In agonies  
 They left the Sirens, but where the two seas  
 Converge yet further perils they'd sustain,  
 Which shatter ships. On one side in the main  
 Smooth Scylla stood, while on the other side  
 Charybdis roared and spewed; in that great tide  
 Elsewhere the Wandering Rocks were crashing, where  
 Before from rocky heights a blazing flare 1150  
 Had shot beneath the glowing rock on high;  
 The air was thick with smoke; none could descry  
 The sun's rays. Though Hephaestus had concluded  
 His toil for now, yet still the sea exuded  
 A warming vapour. Then from everywhere  
 The Nereids met them. Thetis laid foursquare  
 Her hand upon the rudder-blade that she  
 Might through the Wandering Rocks be company  
 As guide. As dolphins round a speeding craft  
 In sunshine sport, now sighted fore, now aft, 1160  
 Now at the side, the sailors revelling,  
 So round the Argive ship a compact ring  
 Of Nereids darted; meanwhile Thetis steered.  
 Now when the Wandering Rocks the *Argo* neared,  
 Above their white knees raising their garments' hem,  
 They ran about as the waves broke over them,  
 Upon the very rocks hither and yon,  
 Apart from one another; then upon  
 The ship the current crashed and side to side  
 She swayed; the furious roller, high and wide, 1170  
 Broke on the rocks, now way up in the air  
 Like beetling crags, now in the deepest lair  
 Of the sea embedded; the fierce undulation  
 Rushed on them in a massive inundation.  
 As maids when they are near a sandy bay  
 Roll to their waists their clothes out of the way  
 So they may play at ball, tossing it high  
 Among them, never suffering it to lie  
 Upon the ground, so they sent her in turn,  
 One to another, over the rollers' churn 1180  
 As from the Wandering Rocks she ever soared  
 While vicious waves in floods over them poured.  
 Now Lord Hephaestus on a smooth rock's crest  
 Was standing, burly shoulder now at rest  
 Upon his hammer-handle; Zeus's mate



From glittering heaven saw him contemplate  
 The scene; Athene with both hands she grasped  
 And with great dread at what she witnessed gasped.  
 A spring-day's span they laboured as they sent  
 The ship from the echoing rocks, then forward went 1190  
 The heroes once again once they had caught  
 The wind. Thrinacia's meadow soon was brought  
 Within their view, where Helios's cattle fed,  
 And there the nymphs down to the ocean-bed,  
 Like water-hens, plunged once they'd satisfied  
 The wife of Zeus. And now from every side  
 The noise of bleating sheep filled up the sky,  
 Their ears assailed by lowing sounds close by.  
 Phaethousa, Helios's youngest, in her hand  
 A silver staff, watched over, in that land 1200  
 Of dewy leas, her flock, while, with the crook  
 Of gleaming copper ore, Lampetia took  
 Care of her herd. Those beasts the company  
 Saw grazing over plain and watery lea  
 Beside the river. Not one of their ilk  
 Was dark in colour, all as white as milk,  
 Exulting in their golden horns. By day  
 They passed them, while, when night was on her way,  
 They cleft a mighty sea-gulf in delight;  
 Then as they journeyed early Dawn cast light 1210  
 Upon them. Fronting the Ionian bay  
 There is an island, well-equipped with clay,  
 Having two ports, in the Ceraunian Sea,  
 Beneath which – or so goes the history –  
 (O Muses, grant me grace – for I impart  
 This ancient story with a willing heart) –  
 There lies a sickle with which, so they say,  
 His father's manhood Cronus cut away  
 Inhumanly, though others hold the view  
 That it's Demeter's reaping-hook, she who 1220  
 Rules Hades. She once dwelt there, educating  
 The Titans in harvesting, adulating  
 Macris. Since then Drepane was its name,  
 The sacred nurse of Phaeacians, who became  
 Thus from Uranus' blood his progeny.  
 Now *Argo* came through the Trinacrian Sea  
 (And many toils!), wind-driven; at their advent  
 Alcinous and his folk with glad consent  
 And kindly sacrifice received them; they  
 All whooped for happiness; you might just say 1230  
 The crew were their own sons. Those men also

Revelled among the crowd: it was as though  
 They'd stepped into Haemonia. But nigh  
 Approached the time to make the battle-cry  
 And arm themselves, for now close by appeared  
 A mighty host of Colchians who had steered  
 Between the Wandering Rocks through the gateway  
 Of Pontus, seeking out the chiefs that they  
 Might take Medea unexpectedly  
 Back to her father's, or most cruelly 1240  
 They'd raise the dreaded war-cry both then and  
 When Aeëtes embarked upon that land.  
 But Lord Alcinous their eagerness  
 For war restrained. For he longed to repress  
 The lawless strife of both sides and evade  
 Warfare. Now often in great fear the maid  
 Begged Jason's crew and often clasped the knees  
 Of Arete, Alcinous's bride: "Queen, please,  
 I beg, be gracious, don't deliver me  
 To the Colchians and my father, if you be 1250  
 One of the race of men whose hearts careered  
 To ruin for light sins. My wisdom veered  
 Away, not out of wantonness. Pure light  
 Of Helios, witness, wanderer of the night,  
 Daughter of Perseus, witness, too – that I  
 With strangers from my home resolved to fly  
 Unwillingly. Dread fear forced me to flee  
 For how I've sinned. No other remedy  
 Exists. Even now my girdle I retain,  
 As in my father's halls – it bears no stain. 1260  
 Have pity, queen; beseech your spouse also,  
 And may the gods a perfect life bestow  
 Upon you, and delight and progeny  
 And an unravaged city's majesty."  
 She wept and clasped Arete's knees and then  
 She did the same to each one of the men  
 In turn. "O mighty chiefs, I am afraid  
 On your account and through my efforts made  
 On your behalf. I helped you in the field  
 To yoke the bulls and reap a deadly yield 1270  
 Of the earthborn men. To Haemonia you sailed  
 To fetch the golden fleece, and I availed  
 In that as well. I've lost my family,  
 My home, my country, life's felicity;  
 Your home and country I've restored to you;  
 Your parents will into your happy view  
 Be brought again; some harsh divinity,

However, of all joy has cheated me;  
 With strangers an accursed thing I stray.

Both covenants and pacts hold in dismay, 1280  
 And the requiting Fury, should I be  
 Aeëtes' captive and unspeakably  
 Destroyed. I throw myself down at your feet –  
 No shrine, no bulwark, no other retreat  
 I seek. You're cruel, harsh and pitiless,  
 With no respect for my unhappiness  
 As you behold me clasp a foreign queen  
 About the knees. When you were oh-so-keen  
 To take the fleece, your spears would then have met  
 That proud king and the Colchians. You forget 1290  
 Your valour now they're cut off and apart.”  
 This was her prayer. Each man bade her take heart  
 When she beseeched him, trying to subdue  
 Her grief. They shook their pointed spears and drew  
 Their swords. They swore to help if there should be  
 A wicked judgment. A shared lethargy  
 Assailed the host when Night, that halts all men  
 From labour, came upon them. So she then  
 Lulled all the earth. No sleep assuaged the girl,  
 However, for her heart was in a whirl 1300  
 Of woe. Just as a woman all night long  
 Works at her spindle while her children throng  
 Around her, moaning, fatherless (for she  
 Is widowed), and her dreary destiny  
 She ponders as she weeps, thus did she steep  
 Her cheeks. Sharp stabs of torment pierced her deep.  
 Alcinous and his queen were in their room,  
 Just as before, and pondered in the gloom  
 About the maid, and thus did Arete  
 Fiercely address her mate: “My dear, set free 1310  
 The maid from the Colchians, displaying grace  
 To the Minyans. Nearby is the Argive race  
 And Haemonians. Aeëtes is not near:  
 We do not know him, just his name we hear.  
 The pain-plagued maid, when she entreated me,  
 Quite broke my heart. O lord, this is my plea –  
 Don't give him to the Colchians to send  
 Back to her home. She was at her wit's end  
 When she gave him the medicine to beguile  
 The bulls. As in transgressing many a while 1320  
 Do we, with ill she cured ill when she fled  
 Her haughty father's heavy wrath. It's said,  
 However, that he strongly vowed that he

Would wed her in his halls. My dear, don't be  
 The means of his forswearing. And if you  
 Can help her, do not let her father do  
 Him dreadful harm. Too often parents show  
 Their jealousy against their children. Lo,  
 How Nycteus planned against Antiope  
 The Beautiful! See, too, how Danaë 1330  
 Suffered at sea because of her distract  
 And raging father. Look, too, at the act  
 Of Echetus, nearby and recently,  
 Who transfixed spikes of bronze most cruelly  
 Into his daughter's eyes. Day after day  
 Her grievous destiny's to waste away  
 Within a barn's dim gloom while grinding grains  
 Of bronze." Thus she beseeched him and her pains  
 Were recompensed, for his heart was allayed.  
 He said: "Arete, I, with arms arrayed, 1340  
 Could drive away the Colchians for her  
 And bring the heroes grace. Misgivings stir  
 Within me, though, for caring not a whit  
 For Zeus's righteous judgment, nor is it,  
 As you say, any better to neglect  
 Aeëtes: no-one merits more respect  
 Than he. Though far away, he could bring war  
 To Greece if he so wished it, and therefore  
 It's right to take a stand that seems most wise  
 To all of you, so I will not disguise 1350  
 My verdict. Thus: if she remains a maid  
 She should back to her father be conveyed  
 But if she shares a husband's bed, I'll not  
 Estrange the two of them. If he's begot  
 A child within her womb, no enemy  
 Shall have her." Thus he spoke and instantly  
 Sleep stilled him, and within her heart she kept  
 His words of wisdom. Then at once she leapt  
 Up from her couch and through the halls she strayed;  
 To tend her mistress came each servant maid. 1360  
 And now she called her herald secretly,  
 Prudently urging her matrimony  
 With Jason, telling him he should not plead  
 With King Alcinous for he indeed,  
 She said, would go to the Colchians to say,  
 If she were pure, he'd carry her away  
 Back to her father, but that if a bed  
 They shared he would, since now they had been wed,  
 Not part them from their bliss. He spoke. His feet



Chanted the wedding-song. His wedding-day  
 Jason did not intend to celebrate  
 In Alcinous' halls. That sacred date  
 He meant to be observed, when he the foam  
 Had crossed to Iolcus, in his father's home. 1420  
 That was Medea's mind also. But need  
 Urged marriage at that time. For we indeed,  
 We woeful mortals, never go the way  
 Of joy on fearless feet. But every day  
 Some bitter pill keeps pace with our delight.  
 Though melting with sweet love, they still took fright  
 Lest Alcinous should fulfil his decree.  
 Dawn came up with ambrosial lambency,  
 Scattering through the sky the pitchy night.  
 The island's beaches laughed out with delight 1430  
 As did the dewy pathways of the plain  
 Far off; a din rose up in every lane  
 As people in the city were astir,  
 While on Macris's bounds the Colchians were  
 Moving about. Alcinous then went,  
 By reason of his treaty, to give vent  
 To his intentions concerning the maid.  
 The golden staff of office he had laid  
 Within his hand, through which righteous decrees  
 Were made throughout the city. The grandees 1440  
 Of Colchis now in order, in a throng  
 And armed for war, began marching along.  
 En masse the women left the walls to see  
 The heroes. At the news the peasantry  
 Flocked there to meet them, for Hera had sent  
 A true report. With one of them there went  
 A chosen ram, a calf that never paced  
 The furrows with another. Others placed  
 Some mixing-jars nearby. From far away  
 The sacrificial smoke rose. In the way 1450  
 Of women, so the women thither bore  
 Fine robes, stitched with much toil, and many more  
 Gold gifts and other things a new-wed bride  
 Receives as presents. They were stupefied  
 When they beheld the men, shapely and fair,  
 Those celebrated heroes gathered there,  
 Among them Orpheus, son of Oiagrus,  
 Who to his lyre, most mellifluous,  
 Sang out a song while beating on the ground  
 With shining foot. The nymphs all gathered round 1460  
 And, when he sang of marriage, they let ring

The lovely wedding-song, though, circling,  
They sometimes chanted individually,  
Hera, for you, who cautioned Arete  
To speak Alcinous' wise words. Once he'd stated  
His just decree and it was indicated  
The marriage was completed, he made clear  
That it be ever firm. No deadly fear  
Assailed him, nor was he intimidated  
By Aeëtes' deep wrath: he consolidated 1470  
His faultless oath. Now when the Colchians heard  
They'd begged in vain and he urged that his word  
Be honoured or they keep their ships away,  
Far from his harbours, then it was that they,  
Fearing their own king's threats, begged that he may  
Take them as comrades. Now for many a day  
They'd lived with the Phaeacians there till when  
The Bacchiadae, a race of Ephyrian men,  
Settled among them. Then they emigrated  
To an opposing isle, whence they were fated 1480  
To reach the Ceraunian hills that nestled where  
The Abantes abided, and from there  
The Nestaeans and Oricum. All this, though,  
Occurred across a wealth of years. Even so,  
The altars there that have been consecrated  
To Phoebus, Shepherd-God, and those created  
By Medea for the Fates are blessed today  
With yearly offerings. When they went away  
The Minyans were given much largess 1490  
From Alcinous as proof of friendliness,  
And from Arete, who subsequently  
Gave to the maid, to bear her company,  
Twelve handmaids from Phaeacia. They set sail  
Upon the seventh day. To their avail  
Zeus sent at dawn a powerful breeze, and they,  
Relying on its breath, sped on their way.  
However, they had not yet been ordained  
To reach their homeland until they had strained  
Their limbs in furthest Libya. Now they  
Had left behind them the Ambracian bay 1500  
And the Curetes' land, their sails outswelled,  
And then the narrow islands that were held  
By the Echinades; now they could see  
The land of Pelops, when relentlessly  
A deadly tempest from the north now bore  
Them to the Libyan Sea, a squall which wore  
Out nine full nights and days, until they sailed

Well into Syrtis (every ship had failed  
 To extricate itself once driven there).  
 For in that gulf are sandbanks everywhere 1510  
 And much seaweed, while on them light foam blows,  
 And dimly-seen sand lies there. Nothing goes  
 Upon the ground or flies. The flood then bore  
 Them suddenly upon the inmost shore –  
 For many times the tide ebbs from the land,  
 Then, roaring, surges back onto the strand –  
 And little of the keel was left below  
 The waterline. They leapt ashore and lo!  
 Grief seized them when they saw the mist where there  
 Were vast stretches of country everywhere, 1520  
 Extending far. No place for watering,  
 No path, no farm they saw, and everything  
 Was deadly calm. Each to another said:  
 “What land is this? Whither have we been led,  
 Hurlled by the storm? Would that with bravery  
 And disregarding dreadful horror, we  
 Had sailed straight through the rocks. Better the will  
 Of Zeus to spurn and go on to fulfil  
 A worthy goal, though dying. Now what may  
 We do, hemmed in by winds and forced to stay, 1530  
 Though it be brief? There looms on every hand  
 The furthest part of this relentless land.”  
 That’s what was said. At their adversity  
 The helmsman Ancaeus was grieved and he  
 Addressed them: “We are doomed to dreadful fate –  
 There’s no escape. We’ll have to tolerate  
 The cruellest woes since we have landed so  
 Upon this desolate spot, though breezes blow  
 From it. Looking around, on every side  
 I see sea-shoals; this place is well-supplied 1540  
 With water, though it’s fretted into spray,  
 Running along the white sands of the bay.  
 Long past, our holy ship most terribly  
 Would have been pulverized far out at sea  
 But that the very flood threw her to land.  
 Now, rushing back, the foam she can’t withstand,  
 Just covering the ground, whirls all about;  
 I think, then, that, cut off, we are without  
 All hope of sailing and returning. Let  
 Another show his skill – he must be set 1550  
 Beside the tiller who desires that we  
 Be saved. Yet Zeus does not wish us to be  
 Sent home despite your toils.” That’s what he said



While weeping. With him those who were well-read  
 In ships agreed. Hearts froze within them all  
 And over every cheek was cast a pall,  
 And as like lifeless spectres men will stray  
 About the city, waiting for the day  
 When war or else some pestilence takes place,  
 Or some huge squall that bears away the face                   1560  
 Of hard-worked furrows, or spontaneously  
 Statues both sweat and bleed, and there can be  
 Discerned a bellowing in the shrines, or, say,  
 The sun brings night from heaven at midday  
 Through all the mist, the stars shine on the land,  
 So did the chiefs along the endless strand  
 Go creeping. Then dark evening suddenly  
 Appeared, and they, all weeping piteously,  
 Embraced each other, planning then to fall  
 Upon the sand, apart, and die; they all                         1570  
 Sought out a resting-place. About his head  
 Each wrapped his cloak and then lay down, unfed,  
 All night and through the day in readiness  
 For piteous death. The maids in their distress  
 All thronged around the daughter of the king,  
 Aeëtes elsewhere, greatly sorrowing.  
 In the same way as, falling from a cleft  
 Within a rock-face, fledglings, all bereft,  
 Cry shrilly, or as swans upon the edge  
 Of fair Pactolus sing, the dewy sedge                             1580  
 And pretty streams re-echoing, just so  
 All through the night they wailed their song of woe,  
 Their golden tresses trailing in the dust.  
 The bravest of those men would have been thrust  
 From life, unnamed, unsung by mortal men,  
 Their labour unfulfilled, but that, right then,  
 As they were languishing in misery,  
 The heroine-nymphs, Libya's security,  
 Who found Athena once when from the head  
 Of her father, armour glistening, she sped,                         1590  
 And by the River Triton washed her clean,  
 Took pity. The sun's rays, extremely keen,  
 Were now at midday scorching all the land  
 Of Libya, and now they came to stand  
 By Aeson's son, removing gingerly  
 The cloak from off his head. In piety  
 Towards them, Jason turned his head, and they  
 Addressed him gently as alone he lay,  
 Bewildered: "Hapless one, why are you struck

With such despair? We know you aimed to pluck 1600  
 The golden fleece; your labours, every one,  
 We know, the mighty deeds that you have done  
 On land and sea. Lone heroines are we,  
 Libya's daughters and security,  
 Divinities of the land. Don't wallow, then,  
 In misery. Rise up and rouse your men  
 And when Poseidon's well-wheeled car's set free  
 By Amphitrite, pay indemnity  
 To your mother who had suffered long travail  
 With you within her womb, and you shall sail 1610  
 Back home to holy Greece." With this, from where  
 They stood, they vanished with their voice, but there  
 Sat Jason on the ground, looking about.  
 "Be gracious, desert goddesses. I doubt,"  
 He said, "if I incontrovertibly  
 Have grasped your meaning when you said that we  
 Shall get back home. I'll gather all the men  
 And, should we see a chance for this, why, then  
 I'll tell them. Counsel's better when there are  
 More minds." He spoke, then rose and called afar 1620  
 To them as in the dust they lay prostrate,  
 Begrimed, just as a lion seeks his mate  
 With roars within a wood, and this deep sound  
 Causes the glens to tremble all around  
 Up in the mountains, while the beasts in fear,  
 And herdsmen too, shudder at what they hear.  
 This sound, though, of a friend awakening  
 His comrades did not cause a shuddering  
 Of fright. With downcast looks they gathered there  
 But Jason made them, in their grief, sit where 1630  
 The ship was moored, the women too. Then he  
 Told everything: "My friends, listen to me:  
 Three goddesses, while I lay there, distressed,  
 Stood at my head: in goatskins they were dressed  
 From neck to back and waist, like maids. They drew  
 My cloak gently away and urged me to  
 Get up and call you, paying compensation  
 To my mother who had borne long tribulation  
 When she within her womb had carried me,  
 After Poseidon's fair car was set free 1640  
 By Amphitrite. I can't comprehend  
 Fully this holy message that they send.  
 They say they're heroines, the daughters and  
 The guardians of all the Libyan land.  
 They boast that all our labours, every one,

They know, and all the mighty deeds we've done  
 On land and sea. No longer did I see  
 Them then – some mist or cloud hid them from me.”  
 He spoke, and what he said would stupefy  
 Them all. Thereafter to the Minyae 1650  
 Appeared the strangest sight. A monstrous horse  
 Out of the sea to shore with bursting force  
 Now leapt, his golden mane held high. He shook  
 The ample foam away, then off he took,  
 Fast as the wind. At once Peleus rejoiced  
 And to his comrades gathered there he voiced  
 His thoughts: “Poseidon's car has been set free,  
 I think, by his dear wife, and I can see  
 Our very ship's our mother, for indeed  
 She bears within her womb our crew, her seed, 1660  
 And labours long. We'll raise the *Argo* and,  
 With firm and brawny shoulders, cross the sand  
 That cloaks this place, where that swift horse has just  
 Now sped. He'll not sink through the earth. I trust  
 His tracks will lead us to some bay located  
 Above the sea. “ He spoke. All were elated  
 At this fit strategy. This is a tale  
 About the Muses. I, bidding all hail  
 To the Pierides, now sing, for I  
 Have heard it truly. O, you sons most high 1670  
 Of kings, with strength and pluck over the shore  
 Of desert Libya, with all her store,  
 Bore *Argo* for twelve days and nights. O, who  
 Could tell the pain and sorrow that the crew  
 Then suffered? Surely they were of the race  
 Of gods, such labours did they all embrace,  
 Forced by necessity. How far did they  
 So gladly to Lake Triton's streams convey  
 The ship! How they strode on and staunchly brought  
 Her to the water! Then a spring they sought 1680  
 Like raging hounds because, with their distress  
 And pain, they felt a parching thirstiness.  
 Nor did they roam in vain. The blessed plateau  
 They found, where till one day ago  
 Ladon, the serpent that resided there,  
 Of all the golden apples took great care  
 In Atlas' garden; busy all around  
 Were the Hesperides, a lovely sound  
 Of song upon their lips. The serpent, though,  
 Was struck by Heracles and languished low 1690  
 By the trunk of an apple-tree. The tail alone,

Just at the tip, yet moved, his dark backbone  
Up to his head now lifeless. Dessicated  
Flies in the festering wounds could be located,  
Where the Lernaean hydra's bitter gall  
Out of the arrows lay. Night's Daughters all,  
White hands above their golden heads, wailed high  
And shrilly. All the men at once drew nigh  
But, at their quick approaching, straightaway  
These maids transformed themselves to dust and clay 1700  
Right where they stood. This holy augury  
Orpheus discerned and for the crew made plea  
To them: "Divine, fair, kind ones, lend your grace,  
O queens, whether in heaven you take your place  
Or on the earth or else prefer to go  
By "Solitary Nymphs", appear and show  
To our impatient eyes some rock-face spring  
Or yet some sacred current issuing  
Out of the earth, goddesses, to allay  
Our constant burning thirst, and if we may 1710  
Sail back to Greece, we'll willingly bestow  
On you (among the first to whom we owe  
Devotion) countless gifts, libations, too,  
And banquets." This he prayed in sonorous rue.  
As they stood near, they pitied all their pain  
And, first of all, produced upon the plain  
A crop of grass, above which now there grew  
Tall shoots, then blooming saplings flourished, too,  
To a great height. A polar Hespere  
Became, Aegle a sacred willow-tree, 1720  
Eretheis an elm. Just as before, each shape  
Stood out from them, a sight to make one gape.  
Aegle spoke gently, for they longed to hear:  
"A mighty succour to your toils came near,  
That dreadful man who robbed the guardian-snake  
Of life, withdrawing, making bold to take  
The goddess' golden apples, though dismay  
Was left for us. There came just yesterday  
A ruthless man, and terrible to see,  
His sullen eyes flashing relentlessly, 1730  
A vicious soul. Around his frame we saw  
A monstrous lion's hide, untanned and raw;  
He bore a branch of olive and the bow  
With which he shot and killed his monstrous foe.  
He came like one who travels overland,  
Parched; lightning-fast, this area he spanned  
For water, nor would it be seen. Now here

There stood a rock near the Tritonian mere:  
 On purpose or urged by a god, down low  
 He kicked against it and in copious flow 1740  
 Water gushed out. His hands and chest he rested  
 Upon the ground and from the cleft ingested  
 A massive draught till, bowing down his head,  
 Beast-like, his mighty maw he'd surfeited."  
 She spoke. They gladly hastened to the spring  
 She showed them and, like ants earth-burrowing  
 In swarms will round a narrow cleft convene,  
 Or else as flies, intemperately keen,  
 May find a tiny honey-drop, just so  
 The Minyae collected, row on row, 1750  
 Around the rock-bound spring. Each happily  
 On moistened lips said: "What an oddity!  
 To think that Heracles, though far away from here,  
 Has saved us as we were extremely near  
 To death from thirst. O would that we could meet  
 Him on his way as we make our retreat  
 Over this land." They spoke and those prepared  
 To do this task replied. Then they repaired  
 Upon their separate ways and off they raced  
 To find him, for the night winds had effaced 1760  
 His tracks upon the whirling sand. Relying  
 On their wings, the sons of Boreas went flying,  
 Speedy Euphemus, Lynceus with his sight  
 So keen, and Canthus with them. His own might  
 And holy destiny had sent him out  
 That he might ascertain without a doubt  
 From Heracles where he had left the son  
 Of Eilatus, for every single one  
 Of all the points about his friend he meant  
 To ask. Craving a safe return, he went 1770  
 In search of *Argo* after settling  
 In Mysia a city dazzling  
 In glory. Then he fetched up on the land  
 Of the sea-girt Chalybes. On that strand  
 Fate conquered him. His grave, facing the bay,  
 A lofty poplar marks. But on that day  
 Lynceus imagined he saw Heracles  
 Far over the endless land, as one who sees,  
 Or thinks he does, the moon beneath a cloud  
 On a new day. He ran back to the crowd 1780  
 Of men to tell them that they would not see  
 Another seeking him. Subsequently  
 They too came back, the speedy Euphemus

And Boreas' twin sons, all profitless  
 For all their toil. Canthus, in Libya's land  
 The Fates of Death possessed you. You a band  
 Of grazing sheep encountered. Following,  
 A shepherd went; while you were conveying  
 Yours to your needy friends, he, for *his* flock  
 Concerned, slew you through casting of a rock - 1790  
 No weakling, this Gaphaurus, the grandson  
 Of Lycorean Phoebus and of one  
 Acacallis, chaste maid, who once was brought  
 To Libya, after the god had wrought  
 His heavy load within her, by him who  
 Had fathered her, Minos. She had borne to  
 That god a glorious son called Garamas  
 And Amphithemis, and it came to pass  
 That he wed a Tritonian nymph, and she  
 Bore him Nasamon and Caphaurus, he 1800  
 Who slew Canthus as he tended his sheep.  
 But from the chieftains' hands he could not keep  
 Secure, when they learned what he'd done. The men,  
 Those Minyans, heard of the deed and then  
 Raised up his body, deeply sorrowing,  
 And buried him, determining to bring  
 His flock with them. A pitiless fate that day  
 Took Mopsus, son of Ampycus: no way  
 Could he avoid a bitter doom, despite  
 His prophecies, for there are none who might 1810  
 Avert their deaths. A dreadful snake lay prone  
 Upon the sand so that the torrid zone  
 Of midday would not reach him, not inclined  
 Through his own sluggishness to have a mind  
 To strike an exposed foe or full-face dart  
 At one who would shrink back. Into that part  
 Of men that fecund earth sustains once he  
 Has shot his dark-black venom there will be  
 A path to Hades but a cubit's span,  
 Yes, even if Paeëon tends the man 1820  
 (If I may say this) or he's merely brushed  
 The skin. When over Libya there rushed  
 God-like Perseus Eurymedon in flight  
 (His mother named him thus) so that he might  
 Give to the king the Gorgon's head which he  
 Had newly lopped, there grew a progeny  
 Of snakes from where the dark-blue blood had dripped  
 Upon the earth. Now Mopsus merely tripped  
 With his left foot on the extremity

Of the snake's spine; it writhed in agony 1830  
 And through the leg and muscles there it rent  
 The flesh. Running in fear, Medea went  
 Away with all her maids. He placed his hand  
 Upon the fatal wound, for he could stand  
 Excessive pain. Poor man, upon his frame  
 Even now a limb-unloosing numbness came  
 While a thick mist over his eyes there spread.  
 Helplessly he fell, his limbs like lead.  
 His friends and Jason flocked around him. He  
 Would not, though dead, be laid out publicly 1840  
 Beneath the sun for long. For, deep inside,  
 His flesh was starting to be putrefied  
 By the poison and his hair fell in decay  
 From his body. A deep tomb without delay  
 They dug with bronze pick-axes hastily.  
 Both men and maidens tore their hair, then he  
 Was mourned for all his suffering, and when  
 He had received due funeral honours, then  
 The tomb they circled thrice, in armour clad,  
 Then heaped the earth upon it. When they had 1850  
 Boarded the ship, as on the sea there blew  
 The South Wind, they now sought a passage through  
 Lake Triton: for long no clear plan had they  
 But merely wandered aimlessly all day,  
 And as upon its crooked way a snake  
 Will slither while the sun's sharp rays all make  
 Him shrivel as from side to side he'll turn  
 His head, while hissing, and his two eyes burn  
 In rage like sparks of fire until when  
 He sidles through a cleft into his den, 1860  
 Just so the *Argo*, seeking navigation  
 Out of Lake Triton, for a long duration  
 Wandered. Orpheus at once told them to bring  
 Phoebus' large tripod as an offering  
 To that land's gods that they may, safe and sound,  
 Sail home. They left and placed upon the ground  
 Apollo's gift. Mighty Triton came nigh,  
 In stature like a youth, and lifted high,  
 As guest-gift for the chiefs, a clod of earth  
 And said: "Since I have nothing of great worth 1870  
 To give you here, take this, my friends. If you  
 Now seek a route across this sea, as do  
 Men often in a strange land, I will tell  
 You of it, for I have been tutored well  
 About this sea by him who fathered me,

Poseidon, and I have supremacy  
 Over the shore – far in your distant nation  
 Perhaps you have heard of the appellation  
 “Eurypylos”, born in the Libyan lands,  
 That yield wild beasts.” He spoke. With both his hands      1880  
 Euphemus took the clod most readily,  
 Replying, “If you know the Minoan Sea  
 And Apis, tell it us, heroic sir.  
 We’re here against our will; plagued by the stir  
 Of heavy storms, we touched the boundary  
 That hems this land and, burdened grievously,  
 We raised the *Argo* high and carried it  
 Across the mainland hither. Not a whit  
 About the passage home to Pelops’ land  
 We know. “ He spoke and, stretching out his hand,      1890  
 Triton disclosed the sea and deep gateway  
 Of the lake and said: “That mouth is where you may  
 Sail on – it’s deep, unmoving, ebony;  
 On either side white breakers will you see,  
 Rolling with shining crests, and in between  
 These rollers will your narrow path be seen.  
 To Pelops’ holy land the misty main  
 Stretches past Crete. When from the lake you gain  
 The swelling sea keep to the right and steer  
 Close to the shore as long as you still veer      1900  
 Northward, but when the land starts to decline  
 The other way, your journey will be fine  
 If from the jutting cape you sail on straight.  
 Gladly go on and do not contemplate  
 Distress that youthful, vigorous limbs should be  
 In pain.” Thus he addressed them cordially.  
 Then they embarked, anxious to row away  
 Out of the lake; then they sped on their way  
 In eagerness. They all saw Triton take  
 The great tripod and pass into the lake.      1910  
 Yet no-one saw him as he disappeared  
 Nearby with that tripod. But they were cheered  
 To think a god had met them favourably.  
 Thus they exhorted Aeson’s son that he  
 Should sacrifice the choicest sheep and sing  
 A hymn of praise, so, quickly settling  
 Upon his choice, over the stern he slew  
 The beast and, praying, said: “Divine one, you  
 Who showed yourself to us upon this lake,  
 Whether the name of Phorcys you should take      1920  
 Or Triton, that sea-marvel, from the maids



Born of the sea, be gracious, be our aides  
 And grant to us the pilgrimage that we  
 So crave." He spoke and, with a litany,  
 Slaughtered the beast over the lake and then  
 From stern into the water cast it, when  
 The god, just as he was, came from the deep.  
 And as a man a speedy steed will keep  
 To train for racing, while the shaggy hair  
 He grasps and makes him docile, in the air 1930  
 Rearing his proud neck, and the bright bit rings  
 While, biting on it, side to side he flings  
 His head, just so the god led to the sea  
 The hollow *Argo's* keel. He seemed to be  
 A blessed one from head to waist and round  
 His back, although below his sides they found  
 A long sea-serpent's forked tail, with whose spines,  
 Which split below into two curving tines  
 Just like the horns of a moon, he beat the sea.  
 He led the *Argo* on its course, then he 1940  
 Sank swiftly through the great abyss, and then,  
 As they saw this dread portent, all the men  
 Shouted. There's evidence of *Argo's* stay  
 Within her harbour even to this day  
 And altars to Poseidon and Triton  
 Because that day they lingered. They sped on  
 At dawn with sails outspread, the desert land  
 Kept to their right, blown westward. The headland  
 And inner sea they sighted at cockcrow,  
 The cape projecting with the sea below. 1950  
 At once the West Wind ceased. A breeze blew clear  
 Now to the south. The men rejoiced to hear  
 The sound it made. The sun set and there rose  
 The star that gives fatigued shepherds repose  
 And rules the fold; then when the wind had passed  
 In darkest night, they took down the tall mast  
 And furled the sails, all night and through the day  
 Plying their polished oars, and on their way  
 Continued through the next night, and were met  
 By rugged Carpathos, though it was yet 1960  
 Far off. They were to cross to Crete which rose  
 Above the other islands. Now Talos,  
 A man of bronze, breaking the rocks away  
 From the hard cliff, persuaded them to stay  
 Their hand from mooring *Argo* when they'd rowed  
 To Dicte's port. The name of bronze he owed  
 To his ancestors who from ash-trees came:

He was the last one to receive the name  
 Of demigod. By Father Zeus was he  
 Entrusted to Europa that he be 1970  
 The island's guardian, striding over Crete  
 Three times a day upon his bronze-clad feet;  
 Bronze and invulnerable he was elsewhere;  
 Beneath the sinew by his ankle there  
 Was a blood-red vessel, which a thin tissue  
 Covered. Every life and death issue  
 Was its concern. Though weary, they in fright  
 Rowed slowly from the land, and now they might  
 Have travelled far from Crete in wretchedness,  
 Afflicted with both thirst and dire distress, 1980  
 Had not Medea, as they turned away,  
 Addressed them all: "Listen to me, I pray.  
 It's I alone, I think, who can defeat  
 This man, whoever he is, though bronze complete  
 Holds him, unless he has the destiny  
 Of everlasting life. He'll yield to me  
 If you will hold the ship far from the scope  
 Of his stones." She spoke. They kept the ship, in hope  
 Of what she'd planned, far from the missiles' aim  
 And rested on their oars. On deck she came, 1990  
 On either side her cheeks holding the fold  
 Of her purple robe. Now Jason moved to hold  
 Her hand and guide her through the benches, where  
 She then propitiated with sweet air  
 The goddesses of ruin who devour  
 The soul, swift hounds of Hades, with the power  
 To wander through the air and unawares  
 Pounce on the living. Three times now with prayers,  
 Three times with songs, she called, while genuflecting  
 Upon the goddesses and then, injecting 2000  
 Her soul with wicked thoughts, bewitched the sight  
 Of bronze-clad Talos, with the bitter bite  
 Of wrath within her mouth, and then she sent  
 Dread phantoms at him, wild and vehement  
 With rage. O Father Zeus, there now arose  
 Great wonder in my mind that not by blows  
 And plague alone dreadful destruction may  
 Attack us but that yet from far away  
 We're tortured. Though of bronze, he abdicated  
 His might to her who was accommodated 2010  
 With many poisons. While great rocks he threw  
 That he might hinder them from sailing to  
 Their port, he grazed his ankle on a bit

Of pointed rock and now there poured from it  
Ichor like molten lead. The beetling  
Projection kept him upright, towering,  
Not for much longer – now he seemed to be  
An imitation of a tall pine-tree  
Up in the mountains, which is left half-hewn  
By forest woodsmen with sharp axes. Soon 2020  
It sways in the night breeze, then at the stump  
It snaps and falls down with a mighty thump.  
He hovered for a while on tireless feet,  
Then, losing all his strength, the ground he beat  
With a resounding thud. The heroes lay  
That night in Crete and at the break of day  
They built a shrine to Athene of Minos,  
Drew water, then embarked to row and cross  
Past Cape Salmone. But at once that night  
They call the Pall of Darkness caused them fright 2030  
As they rowed the unfathomable deep  
Of Crete. No star, no moon would even peep  
Through that dread night. All was black emptiness  
In heaven, or some other duskiness  
Rose from its hidden depths. They could not tell  
If they rowed on the waters or in Hell,  
Entrusting their return home to the sea,  
In ignorance of their own destiny.  
To Phoebus Jason gave a mighty shout,  
His hands stretched out, that he might let them out 2040  
Of their predicament. His grief was so  
He wept. He often promised to Pytho,  
Ortygia, Amyclae, that he'd send  
Abundant gifts. Leto's son, swift to lend  
An ear, from heaven you came immediately  
To the Melantian Rocks that in the sea  
Are set. To one twin peak you leapt, your bow  
Of gold in your right hand; a dazzling glow  
Beamed from that bow. There came into their view  
A small isle of the Sporades, close to 2050  
Tiny Hippouris. Anchoring, there the night  
They spent. The rising dawn soon gave them light;  
To Phoebus then, among dark greenery,  
A dusky shrine and glorious sanctuary  
They built and called it, for the gleam that they  
Saw far off, Gleamer, and the sobriquet  
They gave that bare isle The Appearing One,  
Since Phoebus made it rise for those fordome  
With fright. Whatever things that could be got

For sacrifice in such a desert spot 2060  
They sacrificed. Medea's maids, who came  
From Phaeacia, now beheld the torches' flame  
Quenched by the water rendered for libation,  
Unable to restrain their cacchination  
For in Alcinous' halls they'd see  
A wealth of oxen slaughtered. Jokingly  
The heroes crudely taunted them: an air  
Of merry railing and contention there  
Was tossed about. Out of the heroes' lay  
Folks wrangle thus as in appeasement they 2070  
Burn offerings to Apollo, Gleaming One,  
The warder of Anaphe. When they'd done,  
Under a sky of calm tranquillity,  
Loosing the ropes, Euphemus' memory  
Recalled a dream which granted true devotion  
To Maia's famous son. He had the notion  
That on the holy clod which he had gripped  
Within his palm close to his breast there'd dripped  
White streams of milk; from it, though it was slight,  
A woman like a maid rose in his sight. 2080  
He lay with her, held by strong lustfulness;  
United with her, then a tenderness  
Swept over him for her as though she were  
A maid and with *his* milk he suckled her.  
Consoling him, she said: "I, my good friend,  
Am Triton's daughter and it's I who tend  
Your children. I'm no maid. My family,  
Are Libya and Triton, who made me.  
Take me to Nereus' daughters – on the main  
I'll dwell near Anaphe and shall come again 2090  
To the sun's light a dwelling to afford  
Your progeny." This memory he stored  
And told it Jason, who a prophecy  
Of the Far-Darter pondered, so that he  
Took in a mighty breath and said: "A great  
And glorious renown shall be your fate,  
My friend: into the sea this clod you'll cast,  
Which the gods will make an island that will last  
To house your children. This guest-gift Triton  
Gave you from Libya, yes, he alone 2100  
Of all the gods." He spoke, nor profitless  
Was Jason's answer. Now in happiness  
At this prediction, deep into the sea  
He threw the clod and up rose Calliste,  
Euphemus' children's holy nurse (though they

Had lived in Sintian Lemnos); cast away  
By the Tyrrhenians, they landed then  
As suppliants on Sparta's shores, and when  
They left, they were led by the excellent  
Thoas, the son of Authemion, and went 2110  
To Calliste, but Theras changed the name  
Into the one he went by. All this came  
To pass after Euphemius. The wide  
And endless sea they swiftly left to abide  
Upon Aegina's shores, and promptly they  
Vied in retrieving water, but in play,  
Spurred on by both the constant winds and need.  
Even today the Myrmidon youths will speed  
To lift full-brimming jars in rivalry,  
At shoulder-height, to earn the victory. 2120  
Be gracious, blessed chiefs! From year to year  
May all these songs be sweeter yet to hear!  
I've reached the glorious end of all your pain,  
For from Aegina, traversing the main  
No incidents befell you. No, on you  
No hurricanes or raging tempests blew.  
Past the Cecropian and Aulian land,  
You calmly skirted the Euboean strand;  
All the Opuntian cities you sailed by  
And gladly reached the beach of Pagasae. 2130

### **The End of the Argonautica**