

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
 Ancaeus 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 Ankaeus,
 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 Idmon's 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 980
 With many gifts (by now he'd told them each
 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 1000
 In idleness had Heracles not harried
 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 Bosphorus 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'us' 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 Calais, 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
 (For it is right) secure from injury! 810
 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 things 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
 Of the Bebrycians, Phineus' prophecy 880
 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 Aeëtes' 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 Trikkean Deimachus -
That is Deileon, Autolycus
And Phlogius – 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. 1250
 A day and night of rowing brought them near
 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 Aieêtes,
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. Chalciope,
 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,
Wooded 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 Cytanian 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 Chalcioppe,
 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. Chalcioppe
 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 Chalcioppe. 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 Chalciopé 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 Chalciopie
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.
Chalciopie 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: "Chalciopie, 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 Chalcioppe, 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; Chalciope,
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 910
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 920
 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, 930
 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, 940
 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 950
 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 960
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 970
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 980
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 990
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 1000
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. 1010
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 1020
Whatever sailor dropped his anchor there
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 1030
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, 1040
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 1050
 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 1060
 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, 1070
 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, 1080
 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 1090
 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 1100
 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 1110
 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 1120
 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 1130
 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 1140
 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 1150
 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 1160
 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. 1170
 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 1180
 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, 1190
 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 1200
 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 1210
 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 1220
 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 1230
 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 1240
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, 1250
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 1260
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. 1270
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. 1330
 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 1340
 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 1350
 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 1360
 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 1370
 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 1380
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 1390
To an opposing isle, whence they were fated
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 1400
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 1410
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 1420
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, 1430
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,
Hurled 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, 1440
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 1450
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 1460
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 1470
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 1480
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 1490
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, 1500
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 1510
 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 1520
 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 1530
 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 1540
 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 1550
 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 1560
 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, 1570
 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 1580
 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 1590
 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 1600
 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 1610
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 1620
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 Hesperie
Became, Aegle a sacred willow-tree, 1630
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, 1640
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 1650
 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, 1660
 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 1670
 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 1680
 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 1690
 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 - 1700
 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 1710
 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 1720
 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 1730
 (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 1740
 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 1750
 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 1760
 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, 1770
 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 1780
 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
 “Eurypylus”, born in the Libyan lands,
 That yield wild beasts.” He spoke. With both his hands 1790
 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, 1800
 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 1810
 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. 1820
 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 1830
 Or Triton, that sea-marvel, from the maids

Born of the sea, be gracious, be our aides
And grant to us the pigrimage 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 1840
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 1850
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. 1860
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 1870
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 1880
 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, 1890
 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, 1900
 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 1910
 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 1920
 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 1930
 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 1940
 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 1950
 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 1960
 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 1970
 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 1980
 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. 1990
 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 2000
 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 2010
 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 2020
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. 2030
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. 2040

The End of the Argonautica