

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

The Transformation of Acis

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

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

The Story of Glaucus

So ended

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

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

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

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

BOOK XIV

The Story of Glaucus Continued

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

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

The Pilgrimage of Aeneas Resumed

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

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