

The Orphic Argonautica

Invocation to Apollo followed by Theogony, Addressed to Musaeus, Disciple of Orpheus

O powerful lord of Pytho, far-thrower, also a seer, whose place is high atop the Parnassus rock, of your power I sing: In turn, may your gift furnish me with glory and send your true voice into my mind so that, by the imposition of the Muse, I may disperse a fine song to the numberless races of men with the help of my well-made cithara. For now to you, O worker of the lyre, singer of pleasing songs, my spirit rouses me to tell of things of which I have never before spoken, when driven by the goad of Kings Bacchus and Apollo, I described their terrible shafts, and likewise I disclosed the cure for feeble mortal bodies and the Great Rites to initiates. Truly, above all I disclosed the stern inevitability of ancient Chaos, and Time, who in his boundless coils, produced Aether, and the twofold, beautiful, and noble Eros, whom the younger men call Phanes, celebrated parent of eternal Night, because he himself first manifested.

Then, I sang, of the race of powerful Brimo, and the destructive acts of the Giants, who spilled their gloomy seed from the sky begetting the men of old, whence came forth mortal stock, which resides throughout the boundless world. And I sang of the service of Zeus, and of the cult of the Mother and how wandering in the mountains of Cybele she conceived the girl Persephone by the unconquerable son of Cronus, and of the renowned tearing of Casmilus [or perhaps Meleus; the text is corrupt] by Heracles, and of the sacred oath of Idaeus, and of the immense oak of the Corybantes, and of the wanderings of Demeter, her great sorrow for Persephone, and her lawgiving. And also I sang of the splendid gift of the Kabeiroi, and the silent oracles of Night about Lord Bacchus, and of the sea of Samothrace and of Cyprus, and of the love of Aphrodite for Adonis. And I sang of the rites of Praxidike and the mountain nights of Athela, and of the lamentations of Egypt, and of the holy offerings to Osiris.

And also you learned the multitudinous ways prophesying: from the motion of wild birds and from the positions of entrails; and whatsoever the souls of men prophesy through the ways of interpreting the dreams that pierce the mind in sleep, and the interpretation of these signs and prophecies; and from the motions of the stars. You learned of atonement, the great happiness for mortals; and of obtaining an accounting of the supplication of the gods, and of offerings to

the dead.

And other things were described to you, that which I gained by sight and thought when on the dark way of entering Hades via Taenaron, relying on my cithara, through the love of my wife. Then I described the sacred test of the Egyptians in Memphis that is used to convey prophesy, and I described the sacred city of Apis, which is surrounded by the river Nile.

All this have you learned truthfully from my soul. Now in truth, when instigated by the burning air I abandon this body and fly away into the ample heavens, you will hear from my voice what at first was hidden.

Jason Entreats Orpheus

Once, in Pieria and the highest peaks of Libethra, Jason, first among the heroes and children of gods, came asking me for my aid on his expedition to fetch the fleece with his sea-faring ship from inhospitable people, the rich and harmful tribe ruled over by Aeëtes, the son of Helios, who supplies light for men. Pelias feared an oracle that a son of Aeson would take the kingly power from his hands, and therefore he devised a trick in his soul so that Jason might die on a fraudulent journey. He ordered that the prince carry back the Golden Fleece to from Colchis to Thessaly. And when Jason heard this unjust call, raising his hands in veneration, he called upon Hera, whom he honored as the most holy among all the gods. In truth, she yielded to this prayer: for she greatly admired and loved the virtuous hero, the celebrated son of Aeson. Summoning Athena Tritogeneia, she ordered the goddess to build the first ship out of wood, the first to pierce the salty deep with its wooden oars, the first to disturb the sea with its passage.

When Jason set out to gather the celebrated lords and heroes in Thessaly, he found me occupied playing my cithara skillfully and singing sweet songs, stroking wild animals and winged serpents. But when he had entered into my unpleasant cave, he returned a gentle voice from his strong chest: “Orpheus, beloved son of Calliope and Oeagrus, ruling the Cicones in cattle-rich Bistonia, I greet thee. I come now to the forest of Haemonius and the river Strymonia and the steep ravines of Rhodopa. I, the son of Aeson, bear the most excellent blood among the chosen Minyans, and I want to be a friend to you: truly, friend, receive me favorably, find my words pleasing to your ears, and give in to my begging. You must go with

me so that when returning from the Black Sea and the fortified Phasis in the ship Argo you can show the ways to the Parthenian Sea, a thing wished for by all the heroes, who for that reason are waiting for your tortoise-shell lyre and your divine voice, hoping for your help and that you will share their labor in the sea. They will not undertake to sail to the barbarian peoples without you. And indeed, because you alone among men ventured to the dark fog, down into the bowels of Hades, and found the way back, I ask you to undertake this and make common cause with the Minyans.”

I responded to him with these words: “Son of Aeson, is this what you ask me with this exhortation, to help the Minyans go to Colchis, sailing the Black Sea in a wooden ship? Enough work for me now, who has had enough of work; I have attended to all the earth and its cities. When in Egypt and Libya, I came forth as an oracle of men and revealed the secret rites, my mother watched over my furious inspirations and led me thence to another home, where I might come upon old age and the finality of death. But it is not permitted to evade what has been decreed by fate. The commands of fate press down, for these invocations do not spurn the supplications of Zeus’ daughters. I will come at once and act as attendant to the younger heroes and demigods. And then I will go to the forsaken cave of my beloved. When the crew sets out I will come to the Minyans on fleet foot through the Pagasetic shore.”

Catalogue of Argonauts

There the leaders of the Minyan crew were gathered on a narrow mound of sand beside the river Anaurus. When they had learned that I would be going forth guiding them, they lifted me in an embrace, and every one to a man felt joy in his soul. Afterward, I spoke with these most excellent men. I saw first the strength of the divine Heracles, whom Alcmene bore by Cronian Zeus, when for three days the sun departed and all over was a long night. Tiphys, son of Hagnias, was the helmsman of the long ship. He left the Thespians to work on the waters of Teumessia near the mountain of poplars. He knew the painstaking art of discerning from the bellowing and flashing of storms when and how to guide the ship.

I became acquainted with Castor, the tamer of horses; and Polydeuces; and Titaresian Mopsus, whom Aregonis the wife of Ampyx gave birth to under a cloak; and Peleus, the illustrious son of Aeacus of Aegina, who ruled over the Dolopes in Phthia. I also saw the noble triple progeny of Hermes: Aethalides, born by the renowned Eupolemeia, daughter of

Myrmonides, on rocky Alope; then Erytus and beautiful Echion, who once were born to the lord of Cyllene by the Nymph Laothoe, daughter of Meretus, bearing the golden wand of the Argus-slayer.

Then came Coronus, the most ravenous of the sons of Actor. A bit later came Iphiclus, son of noble Phylacus and Butes son of Aeneus, resembling golden Phoebus. From Euboea came the son of Abas, Canthus, who was killed in Libya. Phalerus, son of Alcon, came from the river Aesepus. He founded the city of Gyrtion surrounded by the sea. Next I observed Iphitus, son of Naubolus, who ruled over Phocis and the fortified tower of Tanagra. Laodocus, Talaus, and Areius came, the famous sons of Bias by Pero. Iphidamas, son of Aleus, also came. His mighty father felt sorry for him, leaving behind Tegea.

Erginus came also, leaving behind the fruitful land of Branchus and the ramparts of fortified Miletus, where the wandering river Maeander gushes forth. One of the sons of Neleus, Periclymenus, came forth from far off Pallene and well-watered Lapaxus, leaving behind the city of Aphneus and the mountains of Colona. From Calydonia swift Meleager approached. His parents were Oeneus and Althaea of the rose-colored arms. Formerly, Iphiclus had joined with his relative Meleager and had taught him to fight. Asterion also came, the illustrious son of Cometes, who lived where the river Peiros flows into the Enipeus and the pair are mixed by the river god Peneus and sent to the sea. Eurydamas came from the wetlands beside the Boebeis and the charming town of Meliboea.

Then came Polyphemus, son of Elatus, whose courage was the most conspicuous among all the Heroes. There also had come Eneus, son of Caeneus, of whom it is said he joined with the Lapiths and was killed by the Centaurs, beaten and crushed by pine-tree trunks. However, he would not bow down or bend under the strain and went down among the dead under the earth while still alive. Moreover, Admetus came from Pherae, this mortal whom Paeon was bound to serve under the command of Zeus for having killed the Cyclops that had killed his son Asclepius.

There also came Actor from Opus, and with him Idas and Lynceus, the only man able to see through the air, under the deep sea, and down into the infernal abyss of Hades. Then Telamon followed, born to invincible Aeacus by Aegina, celebrated daughter of Asopus, on the shore of Salamis. Now came the illegitimate son of Abas, Idmon, born to Antianeira by Lord Apollo

on the river Amphryssos. Apollo gave him the power of prophecy and divination in order that he could speak the gods' will to men.

There even came Menoetius of Opus, a neighbor of the Minyans, and the surpassingly noble Oileus, and likewise the celebrated Phlias, the born to a Nymph who submitted to Bacchus by the river Aesepus, his body free from all fault and possessed of great judgment. Cepheus also voluntarily came to the Heroes from Arcadia. The elderly father of Ancaeus cast him out from cattle-rich Arcadia to join the expedition. At no time did he wear a woolen tunic; instead he wore the shaggy pelt of a bear across his breast.

After him came Nauplius, son of Amynone, who bore him to the Earth-Shaker. He was of conspicuous virtue and his body was like that of the immortals. Then Euphemus was in attendance leaving behind the valleys and the seas near Therapne. Also there came Ancaeus of Pleuron, who was knowledgeable in the movement of the stars and the heavens and the orbits of the planets and could therefore predict the fate of men. Palaemonius also came, the illegitimate son of Lernus. Because his feet were crippled in a brush fire, everyone called him the son of Hephaestus. And from the Pistad by the river Alpheus came Augeas, son of Helios. In truth, there even came the twin progeny free from blemish, Amphion and Asterius, leaving behind Pellene, their home and fatherland.

I became acquainted with the twin sons of Boreas by Oreithyia, the daughter of Erectheus, whom Boreas seduced by the stream of Hissus and flew up with into the air, causing her to give birth to sons called Zetes and Calais, with bodies like the immortals. In truth, Pelias' son Acastus came from Pherae, for he was rejoicing to go to the inhospitable Caucasus with the heroes in the ship Argo. With him came the friend of the divine Heracles, the beautiful Hylas, who had not yet had any down redden the milky white of his tender cheeks and chin; this boy still gave great pleasure to Heracles.

Launching the Argo and the Election of Jason

And indeed this band of men had been called together to the ship, and each addressed those coming, and spoke to them, and made available to one another the hospitality of the banquet table. But after the group had sated its soul with food and drink and had made camp, each man burned with desire to undertake the great work. When they had all gotten up from the

deep sandy shore, they went to the place above the sea where the ship had been assembled and they were struck dumb by the sight; but soon Argus revealed an inspired plan to move the ship with wooden rollers, and he had bound the stern with rope. He ordered everyone to approach. They obeyed and pulled off their armor. They bound the ropes around their chests like fetters, and each man pressed quickly into the rapid waves in order to drag the talkative Argo. And her weight caused her to get stuck in the sand, entwined in dried seaweed, not yielding to the combined strength of the Heroes' hands.

Jason's soul froze, and he nodded to me to look at this, and rouse the weary men with my robust and lively songs. And I, holding out my lyre in my hands, called up the delectable glory of the songs of my mother, and brought forward a sweet voice from my breast: "The heroic blood is manifest in the Minyae. Come now! Press forward with those ropes tied around your chests. Make an attack together. Stretch out the rope by taking steps forward, and draw the ship forward successfully! And you, Argo, built of pitch-black oak, hear my voice, and indeed you heard me before, when I stroked the trees on the well-wooded peak and you descended for me from the mountain to the sea. Follow now the way to Parthenian Sea. Hurry to travel to Phasis and yield to my cithara and my divine voice."

Then was heard the bellowing of the sacred oak beam of Tomarian Zeus, which Argus had placed before the keel of the ship by order of Pallas, and the Argo slipped so quickly to the sea that she scattered the close-set timbers placed beneath her keel, and only one stretched rope was needed. On both sides, clouds of sand rose up in waves, and Jason rejoiced in his heart. Argus leapt into the ship, and Tiphys followed nearby. Then they assigned fitting and appropriate places. They prepared the mast, and sails, and they barred the steering oars, suspended from the stern and bound with a leather strap. Then, with the oars stretched out on both sides, and the Minyans hastening to advance, Jason addressed the heroes:

"Hear me: it does not please me to give orders to you, O mighty lords. In truth, whosoever stirs your heart and soul, set him up as your leader, who shall be careful for everything and take it upon himself to order us to sail across the sea or to put ashore, or to deal with Colchis or with other men. And indeed, with me you determine on whom you shall fix this honor. There are many among you who boast of being from the race of the offspring of the immortals. You seek the shared glory of labor. I am not considered better or more glorious than Heracles, and him you know well."

All recommended, roaring with a great number of voices, that the leader of the Minyans should be Alcides (Heracles), who was more excellent than any of the crew. But they did not persuade the wise Hero, who now understood by the instigation of Hera that the son of Aeson was to be preferred as the manager of this good and glorious undertaking. And so Heracles announced that the leader of the fifty oarsmen should be Jason on land and sea. And then all gave great praise to what Heracles ordered, and they set up Jason as leader.

Sacrifice and Oath of Allegiance

When the Sun had severed the sky with his swift horses and the dark night stretched out, indecision stirred the breast of Aeson's son about whether he should impose an oath of loyalty upon the Heroes to seal their faith in him. And I say to you, beloved Musaeus, son of Antiopemus, he ordered me to prepare quickly for an appropriate sacrifice. And so I built an altar of excellent oak on the shore, and putting on a robe, I offered service to the gods on behalf of the men. And then I slit the throat of an enormous bull, bending back the heads to the gods, cutting up the fresh meat and pouring the blood around the fire. After I laid the heart on broken cakes, I made a libation of oil and sheep's milk.

I then ordered the Heroes to spread round the victim, thrusting their spears and their swords furnished with handles into the victim, and into the hide and the viscera shining in my hands. And I set up in the middle a vessel containing kykeon, the sacred drink of water and barley, which I carefully mixed, the first nourishing offering to Demeter. Then came the blood of the bull, and salty sea-water. I ordered the crew wreathed with crowns of olive leaves. Then filling up a golden vessel with kykeon by my hands, I divided it by rank so that every man could have a sip of the powerful drink. I asked Jason to order a dry pine torch to be placed beneath, and with swift motion the divine flame ascended. And this I called out while lifting my hands to the seashore and the sea rich in waves:

“O powerful Oceanus, and the sea churning with waves, the abyss holding blessed, and all those who inhabit the rough sandy shores and the rock-strewn sea, and the outer wave of Tethys! I call first upon Nereus, with his fifty beloved girls; Glaucus, full of fish; the vast Amphitrite; Proteus and Phorcyn; the broad power of Triton, and the swift Winds, with the breeze bearing winged sandals of gold. I call upon the Stars shining afar, and the darkness of

murky Night, and Auge, the forerunner of the Sun's swift horses. May the gods of the sea guide the Heroes over the seas, rivers, waves, and shores. And I beseech the son of Cronus, Poseidon himself, the Earth-Shaker, clothed in blue, may a jumping wave come to aid in our oath: so that the companions of Jason may always remain committed helpers in this task and so that we all to a man may return home! In truth, whoever fails to honor this pact and transgresses against it, may Dice bear witness and the Furies destroy him.”

And trembling they agreed to the oath with one soul, and they gave the signal of their assent with their hands.

The Cave of Chiron

And when they had sworn to the oath, they went down into the ship and took their places and took up their oars in their hands. Thereupon Tiphys ordered a long rope to carry the ship from the harbor to the shore. Then Hera the wife of Zeus sent a favorable blowing wind and spurred the Argo on its course. The princes therefore, by their hands and souls, moved the ship with their rowing: The immense sea was cleaved, and foam rose up from the keel. And when the first light appeared newborn from the river Ocean, dawn followed, bringing a pleasant light to mortals and immortals alike. Then the well-wooded, windy mountain of Pelion appeared by the shore. Tiphys adjusted the rudder and ordered the ship to follow the shore for a little while. And thus quickly we put ashore and a wooden ladder was lowered down to the harbor. The Minyan Heroes climbed down the ladder and rested from their labors.

Peleus addressed them: “Do you see, friends, that dark spot on the summit of the mountain? In that cave lives Chiron, the most just of the Centaurs who lived in the cave of Pholus and the high summits of the Pindus range. He gave judgment and treated the sick, and knocked the cithara from the hands of Phoebus with his sweet playing of the tortoise shell phorminx of Hermes. He brought justice to all his neighbors. Therefore, right after giving birth to our child, Thetis of the silver feet bore our boy up leafy Pelion in her arms and handed him to Chiron to rear and educate wisely and well. I wish to see him. Come, friends, let us approach the cave and see my boy.”

He pointed the way, and we followed him into a dark hall. There lay recumbent the great

Centaur, resting against a rock, his hooves and swift horse feet extended. Standing near, the son of Peleus and Thetis played the lyre with his hands, which lifted the spirits of Chiron. When he first caught sight of the famous lords, he stood up to greet them and kissed each and every man. He made food available and furnished amphorae of wine. He spread out a covering of torn leaves and commanded his guests to take a place. He swiftly placed ample deer and boar meat on rough plates; afterward he distributed sweet wine to drink.

When everyone was sated with food and drink, all simultaneously clapped their hands so that Chiron and I would have a song and cithara-playing contest. I did not want to yield to humor, for I was unwilling and ashamed to risk showing up a man born before me. But Chiron himself signaled his wish to vie with me in song. Before he sang, the Centaur took from Achilles the beautiful lyre which he was playing, and Chiron first sang of the battle of the violent-hearted Centaurs whom the Lapiths killed due to their recklessness, how obstinately they fought against Heracles in Pholus when wine roused their spirits.

Then I picked up my tortoise-shell instrument and sent forth a honeyed song from my mouth: First I sang of the obscurity of ancient Chaos, and how the elements were ordered, and the Heavens reduced to bound. I sang then of the creation of the wide-bosomed earth, and the depth of the sea, and Eros, the most ancient, self-perfecting, and of manifold design. I sang of how he generated all things and parted them from one another. And I have sung of Cronus so miserably undone, and how the kingdom of the blessed Immortals descended upon thunder-loving Zeus. I then sang of the younger generation of the blessed ones, of Brimo and Bacchus, and the destructive acts of the Giants. I sang too of the origins of the many scattered races of men.

The sound of my tortoise shell instrument and my sweet voice traveled through the narrow cave and were heard across the peaks and vales of well-wooded Pelion, and my voice entered even the highest oaks. In the deepest roots of Chiron's hall, the very rocks resounded. The wild animals sat outside Chiron's cave listening, and the birds surrounded the Centaur's lair as if their wings had grown tired and they had forgotten their nests. Seeing this, the Centaur was struck dumb and repeatedly struck hand upon hand and his hooves upon the ground.

Tiphys enjoined the Minyans to go forth from the cave and enter the ship; thus I brought my song to an end. They rose quickly and put on their arms. Meanwhile, Peleus hugged his boy,

kissed him on the head and both eyes, tearfully laughing. His mind was soothed by Achilles.

Moreover, the Centaur gave me a leopard skin from his hand, to bear away as a gift. As we rushed from the cave, the old Philyrides (Chiron) beseeched us with upraised hands and called upon all the gods for the return of the Minyans and great glory for the younger princes about to become men.

Leaving Greece

After everyone had gone down to the shore and into the ship, they took their seats, stretched out the oars with their hands, and struck out into the waves, departing from Pelion. Above the great surface of the sea, the churning foam made the water white. The headland of Pissaëum was hidden, and the bank of Sepia. Sciathus appeared. The tomb of Dolops came into sight, and the seaside Homole, and the rushing river Amyrus, which sends its waters thundering across the land and into the sea. The Minyans saw far off Olympus on account of its inaccessibly high rocks, and they passed well-wooded Athos and spacious Pallene and sacred Samothrace. The Heroes eagerly approached this place upon my advice, Samothrace of the sacred rites of the gods that may not be defiled by men, for great is the utility of these rites to sailing men, and indeed to all men.

We brought our swift ship up along the haughty Sintian coast of holy Lemnos. There evil acts had been done by the women. In their wickedness, they had killed their husbands. Renowned Hypsipyle, the most beautiful of the women, now ruled over them according to their wishes. But, in truth, what is the reason for making a long tale of this, Musaeus, how Cypris [Aphrodite] nurse of love, excited the desire of the Lemnian women to have sex with the Minyans, so that by magical enticement Jason possessed Hypsipyle and the other Minyans made love with the other women? They would have forgotten about the expedition had I not called them back to the dark ship with my restraining words and soothing song, making them long for their oars and demand earnestly for resumption of their task.

The Troad, the Battle of Cyzicus

Then early in the morning we entered the Hellespont with a favorable wind sent by the powerful Zephyr. We passed beside narrow Abydos, Dardanian Ilion, and Pitye on the right,

and Abarnis and Percote, the fruitful land which Aesepus washes with silver streams. And jumping, the talkative Argo hastened at once to where we put her ashore. There, the ship's helmsman Tiphys, the famous son of Aeson, and all the other Minyans raised a heavy stone to gray-eyed Athena (where the nymphs made beautiful waters gush forth from the Artacian fountain) because sailing through the wide Hellespont, the fair weather that had occurred receded and forced them to cast anchor on land as the waves beat down with wintery breath.

There, preparing an eating place and dinner on the high shore, we gave a banquet for all. Cyzicus, the son of Aeneus who ruled over all the Doliones, came up and took a place among the Heroes. He had been born to a most noble woman, Aenete, daughter of Eusorus. He honored the Minyans with hospitality, slaughtering colored sheep, curved-footed cows, and ferocious pigs. In addition, he gave red wine and sent copious grain for the trip, bringing also cloaks, woolen cloth, and well-sewn tunics. He was surrounded by the assembled guests, who were of similar age, and he feasted and entertained them through the whole day.

But when the Titan Ocean plunged into disorder and the Moon wrapped the stars in a blanket of darkness, there came men of Ares who lived on mountains in the far north, stupid, like wild savages, strong like the Titans and the Giants. Indeed six hands emerged from their shoulders. Observing the invincible lords, they charged in battle wearing the armor of Ares. The strangers fought partly with pine torches and partly with fir spears, and they made an attack on the Minyans through the dark fog. The strong son of Zeus killed the invaders, sending forth arrows; and likewise he killed Cyzicus, the son of Aeneus, not intentionally but through ignorant confusion. Truly, he was fated to be killed by Heracles.

At once the Minyans within the ship met to prepare for departure, and each man took up his rowing position. Tiphys, shouting from the stern, ordered the ladder dragged up into the ship in order to set sail from the coast. In truth, they were not able to loosen the rope, but they were held back by churning waves and an inexplicable that knot had bound them fast. Tiphys, a strong man, was struck dumb and, losing his speech, dropped the Argo's rudders from his hands, and indeed he hoped the waves would pass away. Certainly Rhea was furious with the Minyans for hewing down her people.

In the middle of the night, when the far off shining stars fell beneath the river Ocean, a deep sleep attacked the eyes of the helmsman. The dread goddess Athena stood near him in sleep,

and gave an order with these words of divine rebuke: "Sleeping son of Hagnias, are your eyelids wrapped in sleep? When you arise, Tiphys, you must order the Heroes to return to the tranquil shore, emerge from the ship, and go to the place where the killing occurred and pay homage to the dead. Rhea, the all-mother, orders you to give honors and offerings to those below the earth, and to pour out the tears of your eyes, honoring the divine law and the hospitality of the table. Heracles killed a guest imprudently in the nighttime mists, thus provoking the rage of Rhea. But when you will have justly honored the dead, then at once climb Dyndimon, the seat of Rhea. There you shall find purification from the daughter of Ge. Then finally, you can sail away from the shore." Thus having spoken, the goddess changed into the form of an arrow and shot into the sky.

Tiphys' stupor dissipated at once, and quickly dismounting from the stern, he roused the men with a shout, shaking the sleeping and resting men on this side and that, and he pointed out to them the course they must take. Rising quickly, they jumped down to the shore.

Funeral Games, and Purification

Meanwhile, Eos of the dawn appeared as a thong of gold born from the darkness, and the dawn sky returned. Then the noble Minyans recognized the corpse of Cyzicus, polluted with dust and blood. There lay all around him the bodies of their enemies, the wild and monstrous beasts, but also among them those of some of their allies. Placing King Cyzicus under a wooden plank, they heaped up a mound atop him, and they built a monument. Then they quickly brought logs and burned offerings of black bulls for the dead. I placated the dead king's soul, pouring out rich liquid as a means of appeasing him, water and honeyed milk, just as one should sprinkle a libation on a corpse. And I sang a hymn of honor.

The son of Aeson himself proposed funeral games, and as prizes for the winner of the funeral games the gifts which Hypsipyle had given them on Lemnos. To Ancaeus he gave the prize for wrestling, a very large, golden two-fold drinking vessel. To Peleus, the victor in the foot race, he gave a purple cloak, a product of Athena's many arts. He bestowed upon Heracles, the winner of the gymnastic contest, a silver krater everywhere encrusted with figures. To Castor, the winner of the equestrian contest, he gave a golden decorative horse collar. To the victorious boxer Polydeuces, he gave a woolen cloth embroidered with flowers. Jason himself seized the pliant bow and arrows. He threw a spear, which flew a long way. Therefore the

crowd of Minyans gave the son of Aeson a crown woven of blooming olive branches. Finally, Jason gave me a prize for my song to the gods, holding out the high boots worn by poets, these bearing golden wings. Thus ended the games.

Meanwhile, a rumor flew within the king's house that Cyzicus was dead: His unfortunate wife, tearing her breast, cried sharply, and tying a rope around her neck killed herself with the noose. But the earth took in the tears, and there emerged from that spot a fountain like unto a basin from the middle of which forever gushed forth water like unto silver. The people of the area called it Cleite [after the wife].

Then Argonauts on account of this, which they had heard during their sleep, proceeded to the top of the mountain of Dyndimon in order by abundant libations of wine to avoid the wrath of the most ancient Rhea and placate the goddess. I followed, holding my tortoise-shell instrument in my hands. And Argus came, leaving behind the famous ship. He cut down with iron the trunk of a fir tree surrounded by dry grape vines, and he fashioned this by his art into the image of the goddess, in order that it should remain for future men. He built a house of rocks for the goddess. Here, the work spurring on the Minyans, most of all the son of Aeson, they joined together to build an altar of stones on which were added libations and a bull sacrifice. The princes obtained omens from the sacrifice that the libations pleased Rhea. But they ordered me to sing to and honor the goddess so that she would grant our prayers to depart.

When we had beseeched the goddess with prayers and incense, we descended back down to the Argo. Tiphys had called to the Heroes from the stern, and they took their seats. Settling in to their seats, they began rowing. And now the rope loosened from the land, and the shore disentangled, and suddenly Rhea sent a favorable wind from high atop Dindymon, dressed with splendid towers. We made sacrifices in honor of our return to the ship, having ordered the construction of an altar of the goddess in the temple on Dindymon among the descendants called the children of Rhea Peismatia, she who loosens the cables.

The Loss of Hylas and Heracles

When the wind had filled the sails of the ship, it ran, cleaving the salty waves of the sea; and it skirted near the boundary of the Mysians' land. Quickly in its course, it crossed the mouth

of Rhyndacos, and entered in the beautiful port and arrived at a sandy shore. Then hurling the rope, the Argonauts fastened together the sails and bound the leather straps. They threw down the ladder to the land, and climbed down, greatly desiring food and drink. Around a hill, there appeared Arganthos and vast rocky peaks.

Heracles hastened to a well-wooded hill, bearing three-pronged arrows so that he might supply food for the crew, such as boar, horned cow, or goat. But Hylas followed him from the ship in secret and wandered off, roaming the woods. He came across a marshy cave belonging to Nymphs. They caught sight of the young man as he went by, and thinking he looked like a god, intercepted him so that he could be immortal with them and be free from old age for all time.

But when the sun drove his swift horses to the middle of the day, suddenly a favorable wind blew from the mountain and cut into the white sails. Tiphys gave the sign to return to the ship and loosen it from the shore. The Argonauts obeyed the exhortation of the helmsman.

Polyphemus, son of Elatus, quickly ascended to the top of the mountain, calling Heracles to hasten back to the ship. But he did not run to meet them, for Heracles had lost all strength for continuing on the journey to the beautiful Phasis.

Amycus, Phineus, and the Clashing Rocks

Near morning, we came to a deadly land where Amycus reigned over the Bebryces. He laid down a law by Zeus Panomphaeus, the source of all oracles, that none should be provided with hospitality until he had challenged him in battle. And so, when the Argonauts came to his house, he sent for someone to put to the test in boxing. The powerful Polydeuces therefore killed him, beating his head (like a thunderbolt) with his boxing glove. The Minyans completely destroyed the crowd of Berbyces with bronze arms.

Weary of rowing, we put ashore at the wide beach of the large city of Bithynios, hurrying through the mouth of the river; and in the snowy woods, we marked off a nighttime camp and prepared dinner. There the unfortunate Phineus, due to the rage of his wife, had blinded his two sons, and enchanted by womanly words, he abandoned them on nearby rocks to become prey to wild beasts. The two sons of Boreas found them unharmed, and, enraged, they in turn brought punishment to Phineus, taking away the splendor of light from his eyes. Afterwards,

violent Boreas threw up a storm full of whirlpools in the dense forest of Bistonia, where through the storm's destructive strength, death overtook Phineus.

Then leaving behind the house of Phineus, son of Agenor, we crossed the surface of the great sea and came to the Cyanaean rocks, which my mother, the farseeing Calliope, had told me about. Truly there was no place of refuge, but impelled by a frothing wind storm, their clashing would destroy us as we went through. The crash sent waves through the sea and the spacious sky and stirred up the waters in such a way that the boiling sea made much noise with its immense waves. I predicted to Tiphys, son of Hagnias, that he should look back at the stern and beware. His soul was struck dumb by what he heard, but he hid from the Heroes in his breast that which would happen.

And gray-eyed Athena by the instigation of Hera sent a heron so that it could be brought up to the highest yardarm. It reluctantly flew toward the danger: It turned around the innermost rocks with its upraised wings, and the shaking rocks rushed into one another and clipped the end of the bird's tail; moreover, in vain did the rocks strike each other in turn. Tiphys, when he saw the heron plunge headlong into danger, urged on the heroes with a silent signal. Realizing they were being sent forth and urged on, they cleaved the waves with their rowing. And I, by my song, charmed the lofty rocks. They receded in turn, and a wave rushed in with a loud sound. The rocks permitted the ship to pass and yielded to my cithara on account of my divine song. While singing my song, we escaped through a narrow channel between the Cyanae, and the rocks took root and stood motionless as though they had always been fixed, for such had it been spun by Parca, the goddess of Fate.

Thus slipping away from bitter death, we avoided ruin on the Rhebas and the black beach. We passed then the long island of Thynias, near which the Tembrius full of fish becomes green and overflows its banks and the river Sangarius gushes waves into the Black Sea.

Lycus and the Back Sea

When we had rowed to the shore, we landed at the river Lycus. The ruler of the people there had the same name as the river, Lycus. He received the Minyan Heroes with a hospitable table, and he kept them in a friendly manner for several days and nights. There, fate brought death to two men: Idmon, son of Ampycus, and Tiphys the helmsman. The latter died of

illness, while the former was killed by a wild boar in the countryside.

When we had built their tombs, we sailed under the trusted guidance of Ancaeus, for all said he was skilled in sailing and the best equipped with knowledge of the same. He took up the rudders in his hand, and steered the ship by the streams of Parthenius, which they call Callichorus. I made mention of this to you, Musaeus, in a lofty conversation. Sailing by the outer headland, we came near the land of the Paphlagonians.

Then the course of the Argo passed over into the great Black Sea. The ship reached Cape Carambis, in which the Thermodon is situated, and the streams of Halys, drawing the salty waves to the wide shore. Sailing lower down from the northern country for a little while, there was situated Themiscyra and Doeas, near which lie the cities of the Amazons. Also situated there, the Chalybes and Tibareni, neighboring peoples living mixed together in the region of the Mossyni.

Then sailing to the left, we put ashore where the Macrones border the Mariandyni. Further down, under Helix a long neck of land was extended. In that place, resplendent ravines were surrounded by jutting ridges above a broad, curving bay. In that place stood the mount of Syme and a huge verdant meadow. There was the stream of Araxes, the loud-sounding river, from which Thermodon, and Phasis, and Tanais flow, where there are the famous tribes of Colchi and Heniochi and Abasgi. We sailed passing through the inmost harbors of the Ouri, Chindaei, Charandaei and Solymi; the nation of the Assyrians and the uneven bends of Sinope; the Philyrae, Napatae, and the crowded towns of the Sapeires; and besides these, the Byzeres and the inhospitable Sigynnae.

Arrival in Colchis

The Argo was carried through early in the morning by a blowing wind filling her sails, carried to the furthest ends of the Black Sea nearby the gentle flowing Phasis. Ancaeus exhorted everyone with his words to gather the sails and drop the yard and with bent mast sail forth by oars. After we entered the mouth of the gently flowing river, Ancaeus pointed out the strong walls of Aeëtes' fortified city, and the grove in which the Golden Fleece was suspended from an oak tree like hail. In his heart and soul, Jason turned over his options, and he eloquently shared his question with the Minyans: whether to go alone to the house of Aeëtes and appease

him by speaking gentle words, or whether to go with the Heroes and consider immediate battle?

It was not pleasing for all the Minyans to go, for the glorious goddess had thrown fear and hesitation into their minds in order that she might meanwhile complete what divine will had ordained. Quickly, she commanded a vision of danger to occur in the house of Aeëtes. The dream quickly struck terrible fear in the heart of the king. He seemed to see on the lovely bosom of the young maiden Medea, whom he was raising in his halls, a glistening star darting across its heavenly path, which she, having taken it up on her robe, brought to water of the fair-flowing Phasis. He saw the star seize the maiden and carry her across the Black Sea. He suddenly woke up from this deceptive vision, and terrible fear dragged around his chest. Jumping up, he ordered his slaves to quickly prepare his horses to be yoked to his chariot to carry him to the beloved stream in order to placate the Nymphs and the souls of the heroes, however many would be wandering to the river.

So that they could be guarded, he called forth his perfumed daughters from their bedrooms: Calliope with the sons of murdered Phrixus, and also tender Medea, gifted with excellent form, a chaste maiden. Absyrtus lived away from the city in a separate dwelling.

Aeëtes got up into a gold chariot with his daughters, whom the horses swiftly carried through the plain and through the river bank full of reeds, to the place where they always made holy offerings and prayers to the river. The Argo came up to this very bank. Aeëtes gazed upon it, and he saw thereafter many seated Heroes resembling the immortals and clad in shining armor. But noble Jason stood out as the most handsome of all. Hera honored him in every way, giving him surpassing beauty, stature, and manliness. But when they gazed into each other's eyes, Aeëtes and the Minyans equally stiffened their chests. Aeëtes in his chariot and lustrous golden robes shone like the sun. Ringing his head was a crown fringed with glowing rays. He swung with his hands a scepter like lightning. At his sides stood his two daughters, by whom he was made happy and triumphant. Thus approaching the ship gazing with terrible eyes, he sent out a roaring voice from his chest, making horrendous threats and resounding loudly:

“Tell me who you are, what need sent you here, and from where. What makes you wish to cross the land of Cytae? Do you not dread my power or the people of Colchis, who bend to

my scepter, well-skilled in battle and impervious even to the spear of Ares himself?”

Thus he spoke, but indeed the Argonauts gaped at him in silent astonishment. Therefore, Hera, the adored goddess, placed courage in the son of Aeson’s breast. He roared back:

“Neither did we come as bandits nor did we undertake to wander from a foreign land to make abusive injury to men for sake of advantage in life. In truth, my uncle Pelias, son of Poseidon, imposed this labor on me, so that unless we take the Golden Fleece, we cannot return to Iolcus. Nor are my beloved companions ignoble. Some are children of gods, others of Heroes, unskilled neither in combat nor battle. But we wish to be guests of your house. For this is better.” Thus he spoke.

The soul of stormy Aeëtes was excited, weaving a dread trick against the heroes. After a long interval, he carried on a great conversation with the Minyans. “If indeed you will enter battle against the warlike Colchis and finish off its army of men, then without controversy the prize will be yours: You can take the fleece and return with it to your homeland. But if you leave even a few phalanxes, then this will be your prize: your death and the destruction of your ship. However, if you obey me, which is much more useful, then choose the most excellent among you and the most deserving of royal power. Him I will test with labors which I will dictate, and should he complete them, he will take away the Golden Fleece. That will be your prize.” Thus speaking, he spurred on his horses, which carried him back.

Truly, grief seized the Minyans’ souls. Then indeed the regret for the loss of Heracles moved over them; for without him they had no hope of defeating the invincible people of Colchis and reckless Ares.

Achievement of the Fleece

Now I will describe to you, O Musaeus, everything the Minyans did and suffered: Argus, one of the bellicose sons of Phrixus whom Chaliope bore (for she had been married to their father), came running back from the house of Aeëtes, announcing to the Minyans that Aeëtes had committed a pernicious crime against them. Then, on the advice of Hera, Medea of the unlucky marriage was conquered by the allure of Jason; for the Cytheran mother of love, Aphrodite, sent desire into her, and the most ancient one [Eros] sent an arrow into her heart.

Then, Jason set two fire-breathing bulls under the yoke, planting four acres with seed that pugnacious Phrixus had brought with him when he came to Aeëtes' house: a dowry of the teeth of the dragon of Ares. Jason killed the crop of hostile Spartoi by causing them to cut each other down, and the son of Aeson brought back splendid glory.

The maiden of the unlucky marriage came secretly from the house, wrapped in a robe as black as night. Her love and womanly need drove her on, so Medea came to the Argo, not worrying about keeping back her father's rage. She was embraced passionately by Jason and kissed furiously across her beautiful face, tears overflowing her cheeks. Nor did she have any of her favorite Hero's shame, and with acts of love she abandoned her maidenhood and her desire for an honest marriage.

Now you will hear of many other things.

When Medea had come from the house of Aeëtes in secret and arrived at our ship, we deliberated in our souls how best to approach and carry back the Golden Fleece from its sacred oak. We hoped this would be easy to do, for none of us knew this undertaking was hopeless. For great was the deed pressing down on all Heroes, and the deepest chasm of our troubles appeared. For before the house of Aeëtes and a rushing river, a fifty-four foot high enclosure stood before us, defended by towers and polished blocks of iron, crowned by seven defensive walls in a circle. Within it were three gigantic gates of bronze, between which ran a wall, and atop this, golden battlements. At one of the gateposts there stood [a statue of] the far-seeing queen, scattering with her motion the radiance of fire, whom the Colchians propitiate as Artemis of the gate, resounding with the chase, terrible for men to see, and terrible to hear, unless one approaches the sacred rites and purification, the rites kept hidden by the priestess who was initiated, Medea, unfortunate in marriage, along with the girls of Cyta. No mortal, whether native or stranger, entered that way, crossing over the threshold, for the terrible Goddess kept them away by all means, breathing madness into her fire-eyed dogs.

In the innermost recess of the enclosure was a sacred grove, shaded by green trees. Therein were many laurels, cornels, tall shoots, and grass, within which grew short plants with powerful roots: asphodel, beautiful maidenhair, rushes, galingale, delicate verbena, sage, hedge-mustard, purple honeysuckle, healing cassidony, flourishing field basil, mandrake,

hulwort; in addition fluffy dittany, fragrant saffron, nose-smart; and also lion-foot, greenbrier, camomile, black poppy, alcu, all-heal, white hellebore, aconite, and other noxious plants which are born from the earth. In the middle, the trunk of a great oak reached high, and the tree's branches overspread the grove. On this, spread over a long branch, hung the Golden Fleece, over which a terrible snake continuously watched, a serpent dangerous to men and indescribable. It was covered in golden scales and wound about the tree trunk with its huge coils, watching over the tomb of Zeus Chamaizelos ["earth-bound" or chthonic Zeus] while guarding the Fleece. Untiring, exempt from sleep, it kept guard over its charges, casting its gray eyes all about.

But when we heard the truth about Mounychian Hecate [Artemis] and the guardian of the snake, for Medea had carefully explained this, we sought an unexpected way to accomplish the wretched undertaking: by placating savage Artemis so that we could appease the wild monster so we could steal the Fleece and return to our homeland. Then Mopsus, who knew of these things by his prophetic art, urged the other Heroes to beseech me and to thrust upon me the job of placating Artemis and soothing the monstrous beast. Thus, standing around me, they begged. I ordered to come with me to the place of the undertaking the son of Aeson; two strong men, Castor the horseman and Polydeuces the boxer; and Mopsus, son of Ampyx. Alone among the others, Medea followed me.

After I came to the enclosures and the sacred place, I dug a three-sided pit in some flat ground. I quickly brought some trunks of juniper, dry cedar, prickly boxthorn and weeping black poplars, and in the pit I made a pyre of them. Skilled Medea brought to me many drugs, taking them from the innermost part of a chest smelling of incense. At once, I fashioned certain images from barley-meal [*the text is corrupt here*]. I threw them onto the pyre, and as a sacrifice to honor the dead, I killed three black puppies. I mixed with their blood copper sulfate, soapwort, a sprig of safflower, and in addition odorless fleawort, red alkanet, and bronze-plant. After this, I filled the bellies of the puppies with this mixture and placed them on the wood. Then I mixed the bowels with water and poured the mixture around the pit. Dressed in a black mantle, I sounded bronze cymbals and made my prayer to the Furies. They heard me quickly, and breaking forth from the caverns of the gloomy abyss, Tisiphone, Allecto, and divine Megaira arrived, brandishing the light of death in their dry pine torches.

Suddenly the pit blazed up, and the deadly fire crackled, and the unclean flame sent high its

smoke. At once, on the far side of the fire, the terrible, fearful, savage goddesses arose. One had a body of iron. The dead call her Pandora. With her came one who takes on various shapes, having three heads, a deadly monster you do not wish to know: Hecate of Tartarus. From her left shoulder leapt a horse with a long mane. On her right shoulder there could be seen a dog with a maddened face. The middle head had the shape of a lion [or snake] of wild form. In her hand she held a well-hilted sword. Pandora and Hecate circled the pit, moving this way and that, and the Furies leapt with them. Suddenly the wooden guardian statue of Artemis dropped its torches from its hands and raised its eyes to heaven. Her canine companions fawned. The bolts of the silver bars were loosened, and the beautiful gates of the thick walls opened; and the sacred grove within came into view.

I crossed the threshold. Then Medea, the daughter of Aeëtes, and the glorious son of Aeson, and the Tyndarids at the same time pressed in, followed by Mopsus. But when we could see nearby the lovely oak and the pedestal and altar base of chthonic Zeus, then the snake lifted his head and fearsome jaws from beneath his broad coils and let out a deadly hiss. The boundless ether roared; the trees resounded, shaking from their tips to their roots. The shaded grove cried out. In truth, trembling seized me and my companions. Alone among us, Medea kept in her breast a fearless soul. For she had pulled up with her hands deadly roots. Then I matched my divine voice with my tortoise-shell lyre, resounding deeply, plucking its lowest-pitched string. I called upon Sleep, king of the gods and all men, to come and beguile the might of the immense snake. Yielding to me at once, he came to the land of Cyta, on his way causing sleep among tribes of men weary from the day's work, powerful blasts of winds, waves of the sea, springs of ever-flowing water, gliding rivers, beasts and birds, and everything living and moving he persuaded to sleep under his golden wings. Thus he came to the blooming land of the harsh Colchians. A deep sleep suddenly settled on the serpent's eyes, the likeness of death. He laid out his long neck, his head weighed down by his scales.

The unfortunate Medea was struck dumb seeing this. Encouraging the glorious son of Aeson, she impelled him to quickly seize the Golden Fleece from the tree. He did not refuse her command, but took away the vast Fleece and came to the ship. The Minyan heroes were exceedingly glad and lifted their hands to the immortals living in the wide heaven. Thus they gazed upon the Fleece.

Murder of Absyrtus; Northward Journey

Soon Aeëtes heard from a slave-girl that Medea had departed. He enjoined Absyrtus to call together the people and to search for the girl, his sister. The swift Absyrtus hurried to the river bank, to the crowd of Heroes, and discovered there the dread maiden. Night had cut a middle path through the star-spangled sky, when, through a hateful fraud, Absyrtus, who was pursuing the wife of Jason, was killed and cut down on account of Medea's deadly love. Therefore, the Argonauts threw down the murdered man onto the banks and into the mouth of the rushing river. By a strong wind pushing a wave across the sterile sea, Absyrtus' body was drawn to a set of islands which are therefore called the Absyrtides. This did not escape the watchful gaze of Zeus, or his divine will.

When they had recovered themselves within the ship, and they had cut themselves free from the shore, spurred on by quick rowing they traversed the river. By no means, however, could we travel to the fish-filled Black Sea by the direct path through the wide mouth of the Phasis, but we were forced to wander much in sailing back.

The cities of the Colchians were left behind by the unsuspecting Minyans. Enveloped by darkness, but pressing on with our oars, we unknowingly hurried up the river, running through the middle of a plain. There men living on both sides were: the Gymni, Buonomae, and the rustic Arkyes; and the Cercetici and the ferocious Sinti, who established their seat in the middle of the surrounding Charandaei, near the headland of the Caucasus by the strait of Erytheia. But when there appeared the newborn dawn, pleasing to men, we landed at a grassy island. There two rivers split their courses: the wide Phasis flowing with unnavigable waves, and the placidly flowing Saranges, which gushes forth with a roar into Lake Maeotis through marshy grasses. Rowing, we sailed a night and a day, and after three quarters of two more [36 hours] we came to the [Cimmerian] Bosphorus between the Marsh [Lake Maeotis] and the Black Sea, where once the cattle-stealing Titan, sitting upon a strong bull, divided the passage from the swampy lake.

Weary from an entire day of rowing, we arrived first at the softly-robed tribe of the Maetoeae, and then the Geloni and the long-haired Bathyagri, and the Getae, and the Gymnaei [or Hylaei] and Cecryphes, and the Arsopes and Arimaspi, peoples rich in cattle, of whom a tribe was living near the lake of Maeotis. For when the immortals threw forth great trouble, we transfixed the outer waters of a raging whirlpool, which carried us away. There the water is

confined by the low banks of the swamp, driven up with a great crashing sound, from where a great forest resounded, at the northern limits of the Ocean. And blown past, the Argo proceeded through the mouth of the river.

Nine nights and as many days working, we left behind here and there countless savage nations: the Pacti, the Arctei, and the proud Lelii; the Scythians armed with arrows, faithfully serving Ares; and the Tauri, who offer gloomy sacrifices to Mounychia (Hecate), their mixing bowl moistened with human blood. We travelled past the Hyperboreans, the Nomads, and the Caspians. But after the tenth birth of Dawn, who brings light to men, we landed at the Rhipaeae hills.

From here, the Argo made advances by leaps and jumps through the narrow strait, and fell into the Ocean, which the Hyperborean men call the Cronian Sea or the Dead Sea. We were not trusting that it would be possible to escape sad ruin, if Ancaeus, pressing hard upon the polished rudders with the greatest fury, had not righted the charging ship so that it would go along the right-hand shore. He pushed the ship forward, driving on the rudders with both hands. But after laborious rowing, the Argonauts' exhausted hands did not remain on duty, but with a sad heart they supported their heads with their hands, wishing for sweat to make them cool. Meanwhile, they burned with hunger.

Ancaeus sprung up and roused all the other Heroes, speaking to them with gentle words. Then coming up to tenacious mud in the sea, they sent their feet over the walls of the ship and at once descended from her on twisted ropes. Ancaeus and Argus threw a long rope from the stern, and catching the end, they gave it to the Heroes, who at once hurried to the shore, straining to drag the seafaring ship. And thus the ship followed where they drew her, along the clear way across the polished pebbles of the shore, for no blowing breeze stirred that low sea, where Helix is and the farthest wave of Tethys.

When six dawns had come, we reached the happy and rich Macrobiai, who live for many healthy years, twelve thousand months corresponding to hundreds of years of the full moon, free from all troubles of age. But after they finish the fated number of months, they take hold of a pleasant end by dying in their sleep. Meanwhile, the life of a man is free from care, thoughts of food, or toil. They graze on pastures with plants sweetened with honey, drinking the powerful dew of divine ambrosia. Tranquility they always experience, a placid serenity

across eyes and brows. Their just temperament resides in both children and parents in their minds and souls, endowing them with eloquent wisdom and just speaking. We traveled through here, pressing the shore with our feet.

Pulling the swift ship, we then came to the Cimmerians, who are without the splendid light of the sun. For the Rhipaean mountains and the Calpius block the rising sun and shut out brightness. Phlegra overshadows the noontime sun, and the sharp-peaked Alps block the evening light. So the Cimmerians are always in darkness. When we once again went forth, pushing the ship with our feet, we came to a rough headland and a river devoid of wind, where a gushing river rushed forth from a deep whirlpool, gold-bearing Acheron, through a cold region, rolling water of glittering silver. A black marsh kept it back, and the green trees next to the river's shores made a loud noise, always weighed down night and day with fruit. Next to this low pasture was found Hermioneia, with defensive walls running around well-built villages. In this there lived the most just tribe of men, for whom transport by a single ship alone suffices after death: for their souls cross over the Acheron from the city by ship immediately. Near this are cities, unconquered gates to Hades, and the land of phantoms.

The Argo Speaks; the Island of Demeter

Afterward, we went over both cities and homes, suffering by our misfortune a grave disaster. Ancaeus entered the ship, and at once he ordered all the crew to take their seats, and he spoke to us with flattering words: "Endure this labor, friends, because I hope no worse will arise for us. For I now see a rising Zephyr bristling up. Not without reason does the water of Ocean make noise against the sands. But quickly raise the mast and loosen the sails from the rope! Bringing the rope, quickly tie together the sails on both sides of the ship!" And each took pains to do so. And from the belly of the ship, a bellow sounded from the oak beam of Zeus Tomarias, which when the Argo was constructed Pallas had built into it. In truth, entering our dumbstruck minds, it said:

"Ah! Woe! If only I had been destroyed by the Cyanae in the Inhospitable Sea, never having to hear of the crime of the good king I carry. Since now the Fury Erinys follows closely behind us, seeking murdered Absyrtus. Disaster and calamity hem us in. She will punish the cause of this deadly and sad crime when I first come near the Isle of Ierne. Pressing me to the Sacred Headland you need to direct the ship within the curve of the earth, or you will run out

into the Atlantic Ocean.” Thus the voice of fate fell silent.

But the inner mind of the Minyans was stupefied. Accordingly, they had cause to fear that due to Jason’s love, death and disaster awaited. And they began to consider with bitter souls whether to kill Medea of the unfortunate marriage and throw her overboard as a prize for the fishes. Would this turn away Erinys? And they would have done so, had not the noble son of Aeson quickly realized what they were about to do and, humbly beseeching them, settled their souls. Moreover, they sat down at their oars after hearing the truthful voice of Argus, and quickly they took hold of the oars. Ancaeus skillfully held the rudders, and sailing by the island of Ierne, a fierce dark storm bellowing behind, the sails billowed out and the ship quickly ran through the clear waves. No one hoped any longer for escape from certain ruin.

The dawn had now come twelve times, and not a single man would have known within his soul where we were, had not Lynceus recognized the tranquil far shore of the river Ocean. For he caught sight from afar of a pine-covered island and the great houses of the Queen Demeter, surrounded by a black cloud. Of this story, intelligent Musaeus, you have heard: how once, Persephone’s sisters led her through a great and wide wood, holding in her hands plucked flowers, and how Plouton approached the girl with his black horses by permission of Zeus and seized her and carried her through the barren waves.

Then I abandoned any hope of sailing along the shore and those gleaming houses, where no man had come by ship. The harbor offers no safety for ships but a tall and precipitous rock encircles all. Nor was the helmsman of the unlucky ship, Ancaeus, without faith in me, but at once he drove to change course backward, bending the helm to the left. Thus doing, he proceeded on the proper path, but the current dragged us toward the right.

Circe and the Pillars of Heracles

On the third day we came to the house of Circe, to the Lycaean shore, and the sea surrounding its residences. We approached the beach, and we bound the ship to the shore with rocks. Jason sent beloved crewmen from the ship to go and inquire as to what kind of men lived in this great land and to learn about their cities and the settlements of their people. But suddenly there arrived the maiden sister of noble Aeëtes, a daughter of Helios (whom they call Circe, whose mother was Asterope and her father far-shining Hyperion [the Sun]). She quickly came

down to the ship. All were struck dumb by this sight. From her head hung hair like rays of light. Her beautiful face shone out, and her breath grew bright with flames. With her eye she caught sight of Medea, wrapped in a garment (as though the veil would cover her pallor and her shame, and the aching of her heart). Feeling pity for her, she spoke to her with these words:

“Oh unfortunate, unfortunate one! What terrible fate has Cypris thrust upon you? It does not escape me that you come to my island polluted with your crime against your old father and your brother, whom I am astounded to adduce you killed. Therefore I adjudge that you shall not return to your native shores until you atone for this crime. You will wash yourself clean of the crime on the shores of Maleia with Orpheus’ knowledge of divine expiation. You may not enter my house by divine law, for you are contaminated by a crime of great magnitude. Meanwhile, I will at once send you gifts from host to guest in a spirit of goodwill: bread, sweet unmixed wine, and also much meat.” Thus speaking, she flew back. Indeed, food and drink were prepared and set in the ship.

A strong favorable wind arose and sent us on our course. Then we loosened the ship from the island, and we came through the mouth of Tartessus, and we approached the Pillars of Heracles, and we completed our circuit around the sacred headland of King Bacchus by night, when our soul was in need of sustenance.

Charybdis and the Sirens

When the dawn had brought light from the east, early in the morning we cleaved the sea with our oars. We came to Sardinia in the sea, and the bay of the Latins, and we were carried to the shores of the Ausonian [Italian] islands. Afterward, we held the sounding sea by Lilybaeum, and we moved along the three-sided island [Sicily], the flames of Mount Etna trying to hold us back. Over the prow dangerous waves boiled up from the deep, and with hissing from the innermost chasm, Charybdis stirred up the greatest evil with churning waves. But the wave, reversing itself in turn, held the ship back in the same place, able to go neither forward nor back, but compelled to circle around the raging abyss. The Argo would surely have been submerged in the depths had not the powerful daughter born to the Old Man of the Sea, Thetis, wanted to see her husband Peleus again. She rose from the depths and freed the Argo from ruin, and guarded her from the churning sea.

Then while sailing along, we saw not very far off a rocky headland. A steep cliff overhung a lofty and projecting rock, eaten into deep caverns within which the dark waves resounded terribly. Here we happened to meet girls who sang with a melodious voice, charming the ears of men so that they would forget returning home. The Minyans listened enraptured to the Sirens' song. They did not want to sail by the dangerous voice, and they dropped the oars from their hands. Ancaeus steered straight for the headland. I grabbed my lyre and sang a glorious song my mother taught. I sang a melodious song with my divine voice while plucking my lyre, a song of how long ago a quarrel arose over the swiftest of horses between Zeus, thundering from on high, and Poseidon, shaking land and sea. The blue god Poseidon, angry at father Zeus, struck the land of Lycaonia with his golden trident and spread its broken pieces across the immense sea, so that it was no longer a mainland but rather three islands surrounded by sea. These are called Euboea, Sardinia, and windy Cyprus. Thus singing with my cithara, upon the snowy rock the Sirens were struck dumb, and they stopped their song. One dropped her flute; another dropped her tortoise-shell lyre from her hands. They groaned deeply since they had come to their sad fate and their destined death. They threw themselves headlong from the heights down to the depths of the unquiet sea, in which their bodies and distinguished forms were changed into rocks.

Alcinous and the Marriage of Jason and Medea

Even after evading this fate, swift Argo finished her passage through wave and bending sea, and the wind, blowing against the forestay and the stern, drove us to divine Corcyra, where lived a race of skilled oarsman and seafarers, the Phaeacians. They were given their laws by the command of their most just king, Alcinous. Therefore, we prepared to land to make sacrifices to All-Seeing Zeus and the Apollo of the shores. But rowing fast, there came innumerable ships, a powerful fleet sent by Aeëtes: Colchians, Erravi, Charandaei, and Solymi. They were looking for the Minyans so that they could lead Medea back to her distinguished father Aeëtes to be punished for the crime of killing her brother. When they had come to the harbor, at once heralds went forth to Alcinous.

Medea trembled with fear, and terror corrupted her noble visage, lest the Phaeacian king send her back unwillingly to her home and they destroy her as an example. The goddess Parca of the Fates had not yet fixed her will, not until the house of Pelias was destroyed and Jason

himself brought an evil death to the king. But when Arete, forearms decorated with roses, and Alcinous, like unto a god, heard the cruel command of King Aeëtes, Alcinous at once allowed the armed ships to lead the girl away so that she could receive her punishment. The famous Queen Arete felt sympathy for Medea, and coaxed her husband, speaking thusly:

“It is not pleasing to break a marriage, to disturb the nuptial bed, to extinguish the torch of love. Aphrodite, daughter of Dionaea, will become violently angry at the man or woman who undertakes such an effort. Indeed, if Medea is a virgin and came here sexually intact, she should depart for her homeland in Colchis. But if she is sexually experienced and lost her virginity in the marital bed, her husband should take her away.” Thus said she.

Alcinous absorbed this speech in his soul, and ordered that everything should be done as the queen had said. And this decision did not escape the Minyans. For at once Hera, making her body look like that of a slave, flew into the ship. She quickly reported what the king and queen had decided, and she indicated what they needed to do. Then Medea prepared a marriage bed on the highest part of the stern. The crew spread a matting of rushes. They spread out the Golden Fleece itself, and then they suspended from spears the hide of a bull and shields. And so they hid for modesty’s sake the act of marriage. Then Medea of the unlucky marriage was deprived of the flower of a girl’s maidenhood, un-praised by wedding hymns.

Afterward, Colchians and Minyans came in view of the king and queen, and they pleaded their cause. The son of Aeson accepted the judgment of Alcinous, and he led away his wife Medea with him. At once the Argonauts loosened the ship’s oars, and rowing with many conversations, the Argo ran ahead, cleaving the Ambracian Gulf.

Crete and the Return Home

Now, Museaus, born of a goddess, I will relate to you all that the Minyans suffered after this: from the winds around Syrtis, and how they were protected on their wandering voyage over the sea. We suffered a great enemy on Crete, when we observed a bronze giant who allowed no one to go into the harbor. And so, driven back into a narrow passage by the low echo of a sea wave, we suddenly feared being covered by a black tempest lest we be dashed upon the gloomy and forbidding rocks. But from nearby, far-throwing Paeon hear our cries. He shot a dart from rocky Delos and revealed himself in the middle of the Sporades on the island which

all the neighboring peoples called Anaphe.

But it was not divine law that the son of Aeson should be prevented from sailing the sea, for he brought his atonement with him. The dangerous Fate, Parca, recoiled. (Not without cause was Hyperion angry.) We rowed to the farthest shore of Maleia, where Circe had advised, to avert the curses of Aeëtes and calm the persecuting fury of Erinys. I made expiatory sacrifices for the Minyans, and I prayed to Poseidon, the god who shakes the earth, that he might permit our safe return, and allow us the sight of our native land, and bless the Minyans with the embraces of their beloved parents.

And indeed the Minyans pressed on, sailing to the well-cultivated Iolcus; and I approached windy Taenaron, making an offering to the celebrated kings who hold the keys to the underworld abyss. Thus quickly departing, I pressed on to snowy Thrace, in the region of Libethra, in my homeland, entering the famous cave where my mother gave birth to me on the bed of the brave Oeagrus.

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