

BOOK III (3)

METAMORPHOSES by OVID

Book III:1-49 Cadmus searches for his sister Europa

And now the god, dispensing with the deceptive image of the bull, confessed who he was, and made for the fields of Crete. Meanwhile Europa's father, in ignorance of this, orders his son Cadmus to search for the stolen girl, and adds that exile is his punishment if he fails to find her, showing himself, by the same action, both pious and impious. Roaming the world (for who can discover whatever Jupiter has taken?) Agenor's son, the fugitive, shuns his native land and his parent's anger and as a suppliant consults Apollo's oracle and asks in what land he might settle. Phoebus replies 'A heifer will find you in the fields, that has never submitted to the yoke and is unaccustomed to the curved plough. Go where she leads, and where she finds rest on the grass build the walls of Thebes, your city, and call the land Boeotia.'

Cadmus had scarcely left the Castalian cave when he saw an unguarded heifer, moving slowly, and showing no mark of the yoke on her neck. He follows close behind and chooses his steps by the traces of her course, and silently thanks Phoebus, his guide to the way. Now he had passed the fords of Cephisus and the fields of Panope: the heifer stopped, and lifting her beautiful head with its noble horns to the sky stirred the air with her lowings. Then looking back, to see her companion following, she sank her hindquarters on the ground and lowered her body onto the tender grass. Cadmus gave thanks, pressing his lips to the foreign soil and welcoming the unknown hills and fields.

Intending to offer a sacrifice to Jupiter, he ordered his attendants to go in search of water from a running stream for a libation. There was an ancient wood there, free from desecration, and, in the centre of it, a chasm thick with bushes and willow branches, framed in effect by stones making a low arch, and rich with copious springs. There was a snake sacred to Mars concealed in this cave, with a prominent golden crest. Fire flickered in its eyes, its whole body was swollen with venom, its three-forked tongue flickered, and its teeth were set in a triple row.

After the people of Tyre, setting out, a fatal step, reached the grove, and let their pitchers down into the water, it gave out a reverberation. The dark green snake thrust his head out of the deep cavern, hissing awesomely. The pitchers fell from their hands, the blood left their bodies, and, terrified, a sudden tremor took possession of their limbs. The snake winds his scaly coils in restless writhings, and, shooting upwards, curves into a huge arc. With half its length raised into thin air, it peers down over the whole wood, its body as great, seen in its entirety, as that Dragon that separates the twin constellations of the

Bear. Without pause he takes the Phoenicians, whether they prepare to fight, run, or are held by fear itself. Some he kills in his deep embraces, others with the corrupting putrefaction of his venomous breath.

Book III:50-94 Cadmus kills the Dragon

The sun had reached the heights of the sky, and driven away the shadows. And now the son of Agenor, wondering what has delayed his friends, searches for the men. He is covered with the pelt stripped from a lion. His sword is tipped with glittering iron. He has a spear, and better still a spirit superior to all. When he enters the wood and sees the dead bodies, and over them the victorious enemy, with its vast body, licking at their sad wounds with a bloody tongue, he cries out ‘Faithful hearts, I shall either be the avenger of your deaths, or become your companion’.

So saying he lifted a massive rock with his right hand and with great effort hurled the huge weight. Steep walls with their high turrets, would have been shattered by the force of the blow, but the snake remained unwounded, protected by its scales like a breastplate, and its dark, hard skin repelled the powerful stroke.

But that same hardness cannot keep out the spear that defeats it, that is fixed in a curve of its pliant back, and sinks its whole iron blade into its entrails. The creature maddened with pain twists its head over its back, sees the wound, and bites at the shaft lodged there. Even when the snake had loosened its hold all round by its powerful efforts, it could scarcely rip it from its flesh and the iron stayed fixed in its spine. Then indeed new purpose was added to its usual wrath: its throat swells, the veins fill, and white spume flecks its baleful jaws. The earth resounds to its scaly scraping and a black breath like that from the mouth of the Styx fouls the corrupted air. At one instant it coils in vast spiraling circles, at another rears up straighter than a high tree. Again it rushes on like a rain-filled river and knocks down all the trees obstructing it in front. The son of Agenor gives way a little withstanding its attacks by means of the lion’s skin and keeps back the ravening jaws by thrusting forward the point of his sword. The snake is maddened and bites uselessly at the hard iron and only drives the sharp point between its teeth.

Now the blood begins to drip from its venomous throat and soak the green grass with its spattering. But the wound is slight, because the serpent draws back from the thrust, pulling its wounded neck away, and, conceding its wound, keeps back the sword, and does not let it sink deeper. But the son of Agenor following it all the time presses the embedded iron into its throat, until an oak-tree blocks its backward course and neck and tree are pinned together. The tree bends under the serpent’s weight and the trunk of the oak groans with the lashing of its tail.

Book III:95-114 Cadmus sows the Dragon's teeth

While the conqueror stares at the vast bulk of his conquered enemy, suddenly a voice is heard. It is not easy to imagine where it comes from, but it is heard. 'Why gaze, son of Agenor, at the serpent you have killed? You too shall be a serpent to be gazed on.' For a long time he stands there quaking, and at the same time loses colour in his face, and his hair stands on end in cold terror. Then, behold, Pallas, the hero's guardian approaches, sinking down through the upper air, and orders him to turn the earth and sow the dragon's teeth, destined to generate a people. He obeys, and opening the furrows with a slice of his plough, sows the teeth in the ground, as human seed. Then, almost beyond belief, the cultivated earth begins to move, and first spear points appear among the furrows, next helmets nodding their painted crests, then chests and shoulders spring up, and arms weighed down with spears, and the field is thick with the round shields of warriors. Just as at festivals in the theatre, when the curtain is lifted at the end, designs rise in the air, first revealing faces and then gradually the rest, until, raised gently and steadily, they are seen whole, and at last their feet rest on the lower border.

Book III:115-137 Cadmus founds Thebes

Alarmed by this new enemy Cadmus was about to take up his weapons: 'Keep away' one of the army, that the earth had produced, cried at him 'and take no part in our internal wars!' So saying he raised his sharp sword against one of his earth-born brothers nearby, then, himself, fell to a spear thrown from far off. But the one who killed him lived no longer than he did and breathed out the air he had just breathed in. This example stirred them all equally, as if at a storm-wind, and, in their warring, these brothers of a moment were felled by mutual wounds. And now these youths, who were allowed such brief lives, were drumming on their mother's breast hot with their blood. Five were still standing, one of whom was Echion. He, at a warning from Pallas, threw his weapons on the ground and sought assurances of peace from his brothers, and gave them in return. The Sidonian wanderer had these men as companions in his task when he founded the city commanded by Apollo's oracle.

Now Thebes stands, and now you might be seen as happy, in your exile, Cadmus. You have Mars and Venus as your bride's parents, and added to this the children of so noble a wife, so many sons and daughters, and dearly loved descendants, your grandchildren, who now are young men. But in truth we should always wait for a man's last day, for that time when he has paid his last debt, and we should call no man's life happy until he is dead.

Book III:138-164 Actaeon returns from the hunt

Actaeon, one of your grandsons, was your first reason for grief, in all your happiness, Cadmus. Strange horns appeared on his forehead, and his hunting dogs sated themselves on the blood of their master. But if you look carefully, you will find that it was the fault of chance and not wickedness: what wickedness is there in error? It happened on a mountain, stained with the blood of many creatures, and midday had contracted every shadow and the sun was equidistant from either end of his journey. Then Actaeon, the young Boeotian, with a quiet expression, spoke to his companions in the hunt as they wandered through the solitary wilds 'Friends, our spears and nets are drenched with the blood of our victims, and the day has been fortunate enough. When Aurora in her golden chariot brings another day we will resume our purpose. Now Phoebus is also between the limits of his task, and is splitting open the earth with his heat. Finish your present task and carry home the netted meshes' The men obeyed his order and left off their labour.

There was a valley there called Gargaphie, dense with pine trees and sharp cypresses, sacred to Diana of the high-girded tunic, where, in the depths, there is a wooded cave, not fashioned by art. But ingenious nature had imitated art. She had made a natural arch out of native pumice and porous tufa. On the right, a spring of bright clear water murmured into a widening pool, enclosed by grassy banks. Here the woodland goddess, weary from the chase, would bathe her virgin limbs in the crystal liquid.

Book III:165-205 Actaeon sees Diana naked and is turned into a stag.

Having reached the place, she gives her spear, quiver and unstrung bow to one of the nymphs, her weapon-bearer. Another takes her robe over her arm, while two unfasten the sandals on her feet. Then, more skilful than the rest, Theban Crocale gathers the hair strewn around her neck into a knot, while her own is still loose. Nephele, Hyale, Rhanis, Psecas and Phiale draw water, and pour it over their mistress out of the deep jars.

While Titania is bathing there, in her accustomed place, Cadmus's grandson, free of his share of the labour, strays with aimless steps through the strange wood, and enters the sacred grove. So the fates would have it. As soon as he reaches the cave mouth dampened by the fountain, the naked nymphs, seeing a man's face, beat at their breasts and filling the whole wood with their sudden outcry, crowd round Diana to hide her with their bodies. But the goddess stood head and shoulders above all the others. Diana's face, seen there, while she herself was naked, was the colour of clouds stained by the opposing shafts of sun, or Aurora's brightness.

However, though her band of nymphs gathered in confusion around her, she stood turning to one side, and looking back, and wishing she had her arrows to hand. She caught up a handful of the water that she did have, and threw it in the man's face. And as she sprinkled his hair with the vengeful drops she added these words, harbingers of his coming ruin, 'Now you may tell, if you can tell that is, of having seen me naked!' Without more threats, she gave the horns of a mature stag to the head she had sprinkled, lengthening his neck, making his ear-tips pointed, changing feet for hands, long legs for arms, and covering his body with a dappled hide. And then she added fear. Autonoe's brave son flies off, marvelling at such swift speed, within himself. But when he sees his head and horns reflected for certain in the water, he tries to say 'Oh, look at me! but no voice follows. He groans: that is his voice, and tears run down his altered face. Only his mind remains unchanged. What can he do? Shall he return to his home and the royal palace, or lie hidden in the woods? Shame prevents the one, and fear the other.

Book III:206-231 Actaeon is pursued by his hounds

While he hesitates his dogs catch sight of him. First 'Black-foot', Melampus, and keen-scented Ichnobates, 'Tracker', signal him with baying, Ichnobates out of Crete, Melampus, Sparta. Then others rush at him swift as the wind, 'Greedy', Pamphagus, Dorceus, 'Gazelle', Oribasos, 'Mountaineer', all out of Arcady: powerful 'Deerslayer', Nebrophonos, savage Theron, 'Whirlwind', and Laelape, 'Hunter'.

Then swift-footed Pterelas, 'Wings', and trail-scenting Agre, 'Chaser', fierce Hylaeus, 'Woody', lately gored by a boar, the wolf-born Nape, 'Valley', Poemenis, the trusty 'Shepherd', and Harpyia, 'Snatcher', with her two pups. There is thin-flanked Sicyonian Ladon, 'Catcher', Dromas, 'Runner', 'Grinder', Canache, Sticte 'Spot', Tigris 'Tigress', Alce, 'Strong', and white-haired Leucon, 'Whitey', and black-haired Asbolus, 'Soot'.

Lacon, 'Spartan', follows them, a dog well known for his strength, and strong-running Aëllō, 'Storm'. Then Thoos, 'Swift', and speedy Lycisce, 'Wolf', with her brother Cyprius 'Cyprian'. Next 'Grasper', Harpalos, with a distinguishing mark of white, in the centre of his black forehead, 'Black', Melaneus, and Lachne, 'Shaggy', with hairy pelt, Labros, 'Fury', and Argiodus, 'White-tooth', born of a Cretan sire and Spartan dam, keen-voiced Hylactor, 'Barker', and others there is no need to name. The pack of them, greedy for the prey follow over cliffs and crags, and inaccessible rocks, where the way is hard or there is no way at all. He runs, over the places where he has often chased, flying, alas, from his own hounds. He longs to shout 'I am Actaeon! Know your own master!' but words fail him, the air echoes to the baying.

Book III:232-252 Actaeon is killed by the dogs

First 'Black-hair', Melanchaetes, wounds his back, then 'Killer', Theridamas, and Oresitrophos, the 'Climber', clings to his shoulder. They had set out late but outflanked the route by a shortcut over the mountains. While they hold their master the whole pack gathers and they sink their teeth in his body till there is no place left to wound him. He groans and makes a noise, not human, but still not one a deer could make, and fills familiar heights with mournful cries. And on his knees, like a suppliant begging, he turns his wordless head from side to side, as if he were stretching arms out towards them.

Now his friends, unknowingly, urge the ravening crowd of dogs on with their usual cries, looking out for Actaeon, and shouting, in emulation, for absent Actaeon (he turning his head at the sound of his name) complaining he is not there, and through his slowness is missing the spectacle offered by their prey. He might wish to be absent it's true, but he is here: he might wish to see and not feel the fierce doings of his own hounds. They surround him on every side, sinking their jaws into his flesh, tearing their master to pieces in the deceptive shape of the deer. They say Diana the Quiver-bearer's anger was not appeased, until his life had ended in innumerable wounds.

Book III:253-272 Juno sets out to punish Semele

The debate is undecided: to some the punishment is more violent than just, merely for seeing the face of a goddess, others approve it and call it fitting because of her strict vow of virginity, and both can make a case. Only Jupiter's wife was saying nothing, neither of praise or blame. She was glad of the disaster that had come down on the house of Agenor, and had transferred her hatred from Europa, to those who were allied to the Tyrian girl by birth. Then there was a fresh wrong added to the first. She was grieved by the fact that Semele was pregnant, with the seed of mighty Jove. Swallowing words of reproach, she said 'What, in truth, have I gained from frequent reproaches? I must attack her. If I am rightly to be called most powerful Juno, if it is right for me to hold the jewelled sceptre in my hand, if I am queen, and sister and wife of Jove, sister at least, then it is her I must destroy. Yet I think she is content with her secret, and the injury to my marriage will be brief. But she has conceived – and that damages me – and makes her crime visible in her swollen belly, and wants, what I have barely achieved, to be confirmed as the mother of Jupiter's child, so great is her faith in her beauty. I will render that faith hollow. I am not Saturnia if she does not plunge into the Stygian waters, overwhelmed by Jove himself.'

Book III:273-315 Semele is consumed by Jupiter's fire.

At this she rose from her seat and cloaked in a dark cloud she came to Semele's

threshold. But before she removed the cloud she disguised herself as an old woman, ageing her hair, ploughing her skin with wrinkles, and walking with bowed legs and tottering steps. She made her voice sound old and was herself Beroë, Semele's Epidaurian nurse. So, when they came to Jupiter's name, in the midst of their lengthy gossiping, she sighed, and said 'I hope, for your sake, that it really is Jupiter, 'but I am suspicious of all that sort of thing. Many men have entered the bedrooms of chaste women in the name of the gods. It's not good enough for him merely to be Jove: he must give a proof of his love if it truly is him. Beg him to assume all his powers before he embraces you, and be just as glorious as when Juno welcomes him on high.

With such words Juno gulled the unsuspecting daughter of Cadmus. Semele asked Jupiter for an unspecified gift. 'Choose!' said the god, 'Nothing will be refused, and, so that you may believe it more firmly, I swear it by the Stygian torrent, that is the divine conscience, the fear, and god, of all the gods.' Pleased by her misfortune, too successful, and doomed to be undone by her lover's indulgence, Semele said 'As Saturnia is used to your embrace, when you enter into the pact of Venus, give yourself to me!' The god would have stopped her lips as she spoke: but her voice had already rushed into the air.

He groans, since she cannot un-wish it or he un-swear it. So, most sorrowfully, he climbs the heights of heaven, and, with a look, gathered the trailing clouds, then added their vapours to lightning mixed with storm-winds, and thunder and fateful lightning bolts. Still, he tries to reduce his power in whatever way he can, and does not arm himself with that lightning with which he deposed hundred-handed Typhoeus: it is too savage in his grasp. There is a lighter dart to which the Cyclops's hands gave a less violent fire, a lesser anger. The gods call these his secondary weapons. Taking these he enters Agenor's house. But still Semele's mortal body could not endure the storm, and she was consumed, by the fire of her nuptial gift.

The infant Bacchus, still unfinished, is torn from the mother's womb, and (if it can be believed) is sewn into his father's thigh to complete his full term. Ino, his mother's sister reared him secretly, in infancy, and then he was given to the nymphs of Mount Nysa who hid him in their cave and fed him on milk.

Book III:316-338 The judgement of Tiresias

While these things were brought about on earth because of that fatal oath, and while twice-born Bacchus's cradle remained safe, they say that Jupiter, expansive with wine, set aside his onerous duties, and relaxing, exchanging pleasantries, with Juno, said ' You gain more than we do from the pleasures of love.' She denied it. They agreed to ask learned Tiresias for his opinion. He had known Venus in both ways.

Once, with a blow of his stick, he had disturbed two large snakes mating in the green forest, and, marvellous to tell, he was changed from a man to a woman, and lived as such for seven years. In the eighth year he saw the same snakes again and said ‘Since there is such power in plaguing you that it changes the giver of a blow to the opposite sex, I will strike you again, now.’ He struck the snakes and regained his former shape, and returned to the sex he was born with.

As the arbiter of the light-hearted dispute he confirmed Jupiter’s words. Saturnia, it is said, was more deeply upset than was justified and than the dispute warranted, and damned the one who had made the judgement to eternal night. But, since no god has the right to void what another god has done, the all-powerful father of the gods gave Tiresias knowledge of the future, in exchange for his lost sight, and lightened the punishment with honour.

Book III:339-358 Echo sees Narcissus

Famous throughout all the Aonian cities, Tiresias gave faultless answers to people who consulted him. Dusky Liriope, the Naiad, was the first to test the truth and the accuracy of his words, whom once the river-god Cephisus clasped in his winding streams, and took by force under the waves. This loveliest of nymphs gave birth at full term to a child whom, even then, one could fall in love with, called Narcissus. Being consulted as to whether the child would live a long life, to a ripe old age, the seer with prophetic vision replied ‘If he does not discover himself’.

For a long time the augur’s pronouncement appeared empty words. But in the end it proved true: the outcome, and the cause of his death, and the strangeness of his passion. One year the son of Cephisus had reached sixteen and might seem both boy and youth. Many youths, and many young girls desired him. But there was such intense pride in that delicate form that none of the youths or young girls affected him. One day the nymph Echo saw him, driving frightened deer into his nets, she of the echoing voice, who cannot be silent when others have spoken, nor learn how to speak first herself.

Book III:359-401 How Juno altered Echo’s speech

Echo still had a body then and was not merely a voice. But though she was garrulous, she had no other trick of speech than she has now: she can repeat the last words out of many. Juno made her like that, because often when she might have caught the nymphs lying beneath her Jupiter, on the mountain slopes, Echo knowingly held her in long conversations, while the nymphs fled. When Saturnia realised this she said ‘I shall give

you less power over that tongue by which I have been deluded, and the briefest ability to speak' and what she threatened she did. Echo only repeats the last of what is spoken and returns the words she hears.

Now when she saw Narcissus wandering through the remote fields, she was inflamed, following him secretly, and the more she followed the closer she burned with fire, no differently than inflammable sulphur, pasted round the tops of torches, catches fire, when a flame is brought near it. O how often she wants to get close to him with seductive words, and call him with soft entreaties! Her nature denies it, and will not let her begin, but she is ready for what it will allow her to do, to wait for sounds, to which she can return words.

By chance, the boy, separated from his faithful band of followers, had called out 'Is anyone here?' and 'Here' Echo replied. He is astonished, and glances everywhere, and shouts in a loud voice 'Come to me!' She calls as he calls. He looks back, and no one appearing behind, asks 'Why do you run from me?' and receives the same words as he speaks. He stands still, and deceived by the likeness to an answering voice, says 'Here, let us meet together'. And, never answering to another sound more gladly, Echo replies 'Together', and to assist her words comes out of the woods to put her arms around his neck, in longing. He runs from her, and running cries 'Away with these encircling hands! May I die before what's mine is yours. She answers, only 'What's mine is yours!'

Scorned, she wanders in the woods and hides her face in shame among the leaves, and from that time on lives in lonely caves. But still her love endures, increased by the sadness of rejection. Her sleepless thoughts waste her sad form, and her body's strength vanishes into the air. Only her bones and the sound of her voice are left. Her voice remains, her bones, they say, were changed to shapes of stone. She hides in the woods, no longer to be seen on the hills, but to be heard by everyone. It is sound that lives in her.

Book III:402-436 Narcissus sees himself and falls in love

As Narcissus had scorned her, so he had scorned the other nymphs of the rivers and mountains, so he had scorned the companies of young men. Then one of those who had been mocked, lifting hands to the skies, said 'So may he himself love, and so may he fail to command what he loves!' Rhamnusia, who is the goddess Nemesis, heard this just request.

There was an unclouded fountain, with silver-bright water, which neither shepherds nor goats grazing the hills, nor other flocks, touched, that no animal or bird disturbed not

even a branch falling from a tree. Grass was around it, fed by the moisture nearby, and a grove of trees that prevented the sun from warming the place. Here, the boy, tired by the heat and his enthusiasm for the chase, lies down, drawn to it by its look and by the fountain. While he desires to quench his thirst, a different thirst is created. While he drinks he is seized by the vision of his reflected form. He loves a bodiless dream. He thinks that a body, that is only a shadow. He is astonished by himself, and hangs there motionless, with a fixed expression, like a statue carved from Parian marble.

Flat on the ground, he contemplates two stars, his eyes, and his hair, fit for Bacchus, fit for Apollo, his youthful cheeks and ivory neck, the beauty of his face, the rose-flush mingled in the whiteness of snow, admiring everything for which he is himself admired. Unknowingly he desires himself, and the one who praises is himself praised, and, while he courts, is courted, so that, equally, he inflames and burns. How often he gave his lips in vain to the deceptive pool, how often, trying to embrace the neck he could see, he plunged his arms into the water, but could not catch himself within them! What he has seen he does not understand, but what he sees he is on fire for, and the same error both seduces and deceives his eyes.

Fool, why try to catch a fleeting image, in vain? What you search for is nowhere: turning away, what you love is lost! What you perceive is the shadow of reflected form: nothing of you is in it. It comes and stays with you, and leaves with you, if you can leave!

Book III:437-473 Narcissus laments the pain of unrequited love

No care for Ceres's gift of bread, or for rest, can draw him away. Stretched on the shadowed grass he gazes at that false image with unsated eyes, and loses himself in his own vision. Raising himself a little way and holding his arms out to the woods, he asks, 'Has anyone ever loved more cruelly than I? You must know, since you have been a chance hiding place for many people. Do you remember in your life that lasts so many centuries, in all the long ages past, anyone who pined away like this? I am enchanted and I see, but I cannot reach what I see and what enchants me' – so deep in error is this lover – 'and it increases my pain the more, that no wide sea separates us, no road, no mountains, no walls with locked doors.

We are only kept apart by a little water! Whenever I extend my lips to the clear liquid, he tries to raise his lips to me. He desires to be held. You would think he could be touched: it is such a small thing that prevents our love. Whoever you are come out to me! Why do you disappoint me, you extraordinary boy? Where do you vanish when I reach for you? Surely my form and years are not what you flee from, and I am one that the nymphs have loved! You offer me some unknown hope with your friendly look, and

when I stretch my arms out to you, you stretch out yours. When I smile, you smile back. And I have often seen your tears when I weep tears. You return the gesture of my head with a nod, and, from the movements of your lovely mouth, I guess that you reply with words that do not reach my ears!

I am he. I sense it and I am not deceived by my own image. I am burning with love for myself. I move and bear the flames. What shall I do? Surely not court and be courted? Why court then? What I want I have. My riches make me poor. O I wish I could leave my own body! Strange prayer for a lover, I desire what I love to be distant from me. Now sadness takes away my strength, not much time is left for me to live, and I am cut off in the prime of youth. Nor is dying painful to me, laying down my sadness in death. I wish that him I love might live on, but now we shall die united, two in one spirit.'

Book III:474-510 Narcissus is changed into a flower

He spoke, and returned madly to the same reflection, and his tears stirred the water, and the image became obscured in the rippling pool. As he saw it vanishing, he cried out 'Where do you fly to? Stay, cruel one, do not abandon one who loves you! I am allowed to gaze at what I cannot touch, and so provide food for my miserable passion!' While he weeps, he tears at the top of his clothes: then strikes his naked chest with hands of marble. His chest flushes red when they strike it, as apples are often pale in part, part red, or as grapes in their different bunches are stained with purple when they are not yet ripe.

As he sees all this reflected in the dissolving waves, he can bear it no longer, but as yellow wax melts in a light flame, as morning frost thaws in the sun, so he is weakened and melted by love, and worn away little by little by the hidden fire. He no longer retains his colour, the white mingled with red, no longer has life and strength, and that form so pleasing to look at, nor has he that body which Echo loved. Still, when she saw this, though angered and remembering, she pitied him, and as often as the poor boy said 'Alas!' she repeated with her echoing voice 'Alas!' and when his hands strike at his shoulders, she returns the same sounds of pain. His last words as he looked into the familiar pool were 'Alas, in vain, beloved boy!' and the place echoed every word, and when he said 'Goodbye!' Echo also said 'Goodbye!'

He laid down his weary head in the green grass, death closing those eyes that had marvelled at their lord's beauty.

And even when he had been received into the house of shadows, he gazed into the Stygian waters. His sisters the Naiads lamented, and let down their hair for their brother,

and the Dryads lamented. Echo returned their laments. And now they were preparing the funeral pyre, the quivering torches and the bier, but there was no body. They came upon a flower, instead of his body, with white petals surrounding a yellow heart.

Book III:511-527 Tiresias prophesies Pentheus's fate

When all this became known it spread the prophet's fame throughout the cities of Achaia, and his reputation was high. Still, Pentheus, the son of Echion, in scorn of the gods, alone amongst all of them, rejected the seer, laughed at the old man's words of augury, and taunted him with the darkness, and the ruin of his lost sight. He, shaking his white head in warning, said 'How happy you would be if these dispossessed orbs were yours, so as not to see the sacred rites of Bacchus! Now the day approaches, and I see it is not far off, when the new god, Liber, son of Semele will come, and unless you think him worthy to be done honour in your sanctuaries, you will be scattered, torn, in a thousand pieces, and stain your mother, and her sisters and the woods themselves with your blood. It will be! You will not think the god worthy of being honoured, and you will lament of me, that in my darkness I have seen too far.' Even as he speaks, Echion's son thrusts him away. The truth of his words followed, the oracles of the prophet were performed.

Book III:528-571 Pentheus rejects the worship of Bacchus

Liber has come, and the festive fields echo with cries. The crowd all run, fathers, mothers, young girls, princes and people, mixed together, swept towards the unknown rites. Pentheus shouts 'What madness has stupefied your minds, children of the serpent, people of Mars? Can the clash of brazen cymbals, pipes of curved horn, and magical tricks be so powerful that men, who were not terrified by drawn swords or blaring trumpets or ranks of sharp spears, are overcome by the shrieks of women, men mad with wine, crowds of obscenities, and empty drumming? Should I admire you, elders, who, sailing the deep seas, sited your Tyre here, your exiled Penates, and now let them be taken without a fight? Or you younger men, of fresher age, nearer my own, for whom it was fitting to carry weapons and not the thyrsus, your heads covered with helmets not crowns of leaves? Remember, I beg you, from what roots you were created, and show the spirit of the serpent, who, though one alone, killed many. He died for his spring and pool, but you should conquer for your own glory! He put brave men to death, but you should make craven men run, and maintain the honour of your country! If it is Thebe's fate to stand for only a short time, I wish her walls might be destroyed by men and siege engines, that fire and iron might sound against her! Then we would be miserable but not sinful, we would lament our fate not try to hide it, our tears would be free from shame. But now Thebes will be taken by an unarmed boy, who takes no pleasure in fighting, or

weapons, or the use of horses, but in myrrh-drenched hair, soft wreathes of leaves, and embroidered robes woven with gold. But, if you stand aside, I will quickly force him to confess that his pretended parentage and religion are inventions. Should Pentheus and the rest of Thebes be terrified of his arrival, when Acrisius had courage enough to defy a false god, and shut the gates of Argos at his coming? ‘Go quickly’, he ordered his attendants ‘bind him and drag him here, this conqueror! Don’t be slow in carrying out your orders!’

His grandfather, Cadmus, his uncle, Athamas, and the rest of his advisors reprove his words, and try in vain to restrain him. He is only made more eager by their warning, and his rage is maddened and grows with restraint, and he is provoked by their objections. So I have seen a river, where nothing obstructs its passage, flow calmly and with little noise, but rage and foam wherever trees and obstacles of stone held it back, fiercer for the obstruction.

Book III:572-596 Acoetes is captured and interrogated

See now, they return, stained with blood, and when their lord queries where Bacchus is, they deny having seen Bacchus, but reply, ‘We have captured this companion of his, a priest of his sacred rites’ and they hand over a man of Tyrrhenian stock, with his hands bound behind his back, a follower of the worship of the god. Pentheus looks at him, with eyes made terrible by anger, and although he can scarcely wait for the moment of punishment, he says ‘O you who are about to die, and, by your death, teach the others a lesson, tell me your name, your parents’ name and your country, and why you follow the customs of this new religion!’

Without fear, he answers ‘My name is Acoetes, and Maeonia is my country, my parents humble ordinary people. My father did not leave me fields for sturdy oxen to work, no flocks of sheep, nor any cattle. I am poor as he himself was, and he used to catch fish in the streams with a rod and line and a hook to snare them. His skill was his wealth, and when he bequeathed it to me, he said ‘Take what I have. Apply yourself to the work as my successor and heir.’ Dying, he left me nothing but water. The only thing I can call my inheritance.

Soon, so that I was not stuck for ever to the same rocks, I learned how to guide boats, steering oar in hand, and to observe Capella and the rainy stars of the Olenian Goat, Taygete among the Pleiades, the Hyades, and the Arctic Bears, the houses of the winds, and the havens for ships.

Book III:597-637 Acoetes’s story – the beautiful boy

Heading for Delos, and being driven by chance onto the coast of the island of Chios, making shore by skilful use of the oars, giving a gentle leap, and landing on the wet sand, there we passed the night. As soon as the dawn began to redden, I ordered the getting in of fresh water, and showed the path that lead to a spring. I myself commanded the view from a high hill to find what wind promised, called my comrades and went back to the boat. 'See, we are here' said Opheltes, the foremost of my friends, and led a boy, with the beauty of a virgin girl, along the shore, a prize, or so he thought, that he had found in a deserted field. The boy seemed to stumble, heavy with wine and sleep, and could scarcely follow. I examined his clothing, appearance and rank, and I saw nothing that made me think him mortal. And I felt this and said it to my companions 'I do not know what god is in that body, but there is a god within! Whoever you are, O favour and assist our efforts, and forgive these men!' 'Don't pray for us' said Dictys, who was the quickest at climbing to the highest yard and sliding down grasping the rigging. So said Libys, and yellow-haired Melanthus, the forward look-out, and Alcimedon agreed, and Epopeus, who with his voice gave the measure and the pauses for the oarsmen to urge on their purpose. All the others said the same, so blind was their greed for gain.

'I still will not allow this ship to be cursed by a sacred victim to whom violence has been done' I said. 'Here I have the greatest authority'. And I prevented them boarding. Then Lycabas the most audacious of them all began to rage at me, he who had been thrown out of Tuscany, and was suffering the punishment of exile from his city for a terrible murder. While I held him off, he punched me in the throat with his strong young fists, and would have thrown me semi-conscious into the sea, if I had not clung on, almost stunned, held back by the rigging. The impious crew cheered on the doer of it. Then, at last, Bacchus (for it was indeed Bacchus) was freed from sleep, as if by the clamour, and the sense returned to his drunken mind. 'What are you doing? Why this shouting?' he said. 'Tell me, you seamen, how I came here? Where do you intend to take me?' 'Have no fear', said Proreus, 'and, whatever port you wish to touch at, you will be set down in the country you demand!' 'Naxos' said Liber, 'set your course for there! That is my home: it will be a friendly land to you!

Book III:638-691 Acoetes's ship and crew are transformed

The treacherous men swore, by the sea and all the gods, it would be so, and told me to get the painted vessel under sail. Naxos was to starboard, but as I trimmed the sails on a starboard tack, they, each one, asked me 'What are you doing, O madman? Acoetes, what craziness has got into you? Take the port tack!' most of them letting me know what they intended with a nod of the head, the others in a whisper. I was horrified. 'Someone

else can steer' I said, and distanced myself from the wickedness and deception. There were cries against me from all sides, the whole crew murmured against me. And one of them, Aethalion, cried 'You seem to think that all our lives depend on you alone! Then he took my place himself, discharged my office, and abandoning Naxos took the opposite course.

Then the god, playfully, as though he had just realised their deceit, looked at the sea over the curve of the stern, and as though he were weeping said 'Sailors, these are not the shores you promised me, and this is not the land I chose for myself? What have I done to merit punishment? Where's the glory in men cheating a boy, or many cheating just one?' I was already weeping, but the impious crew laughed at my tears, and drove the ship quickly through the water.

Now I swear by the god himself (since there is no god more certainly present than he is) that what I say to you is the truth, though that truth beggars belief. The ship stands still in the waves, just as if it were held in dry dock. Amazed, the crew keep flogging away at the oars, and unfurling the sails, try to run on with double power. But ivy impedes the oars, creeping upwards, with binding tendrils, and drapes the sails with heavy clusters. The god himself waves a rod twined with vine leaves, his forehead wreathed with bunches of grapes. Around him lie insubstantial phantom lynxes, tigers, and the savage bodies of spotted panthers. The men leap overboard, driven to it either by madness or by fear. And Medon is the first to darken all over his body, and his spine to be bent into an arched curve.

Lycabas cries out to him 'What monster are you turning into?' And in speaking his jaws widen, his nose becomes hooked, and his skin becomes hard and scaly. But Libys hampered when he wishes to turn the oars sees his hands shrink suddenly in size, and now they are not hands, but can only be called fins. Another, eager to grasp at the tangled ropes, no longer has arms, and goes arching backwards limbless into the sea. His newest feature is a scythe-shaped tail, like the curved horns of a fragmentary moon. The dolphins leap everywhere drenched with spray. They emerge once more, only to return again to the depths, playing together as if they were in a troupe, throwing their bodies around wantonly, and blowing out the seawater drawn in through their broad nostrils.

Of a group of twenty (that was how many the ship carried) I alone was left. The god roused me with difficulty, my body shaking with cold and terror, and barely myself, saying 'Free your heart from fear, and hold off for Naxos! And consigned to that island, I have adopted its religion, and celebrate the Bacchic rites.

Book III:692-733 Pentheus is killed by the Maenads

‘We have only listened to this winding tale’, said Pentheus, ‘so that our anger might spend its strength in delay. ‘You, attendants, remove this man, quickly, and let his body be tortured in greatest anguish, and send him down to Stygian night!’ Acoetes, the Tyrrhenian, was dragged out, straightaway, and shut in a deep dungeon. But while the instruments of cruelty, the irons and the fire, were being prepared to kill him as had been ordered, the doors flew open by themselves, the chains loosening without any effort, so tradition holds.

The son of Echion persisted in his purpose, not ordering others to go, but now going himself, to where Mount Cithaeron, chosen for performing the rites, was sounding with the chants and shrill cries of the Bacchantes. As a brave horse snorts and shows his love for the fight, when the trumpeter’s brass gives the signal for attack, so the heavens pulsating from the long drawn-out cries stirred Pentheus, and, hearing the clamour, his anger flared again.

Near the middle of the mountainside, was a clearing surrounded with remote woods, free of trees, and visible from all sides. Here as he watched the mysteries, with profane eyes, his mother was the first to see Pentheus, the first roused to run at him madly, the first to wound him, hurling her thyrsus. She shouted ‘O you two, sisters, come! That huge boar, who is straying in our fields, that boar is my sacrifice.’ They all rush on him in one maddened crowd: they converge together pursuing the frightened man, frightened now, speaking words free of violence now, cursing himself now, realising his own offence. Stricken, he still shouts ‘Help me, aunt Autoonoe! Let Actaeon’s shade move your spirit!

She, not remembering Actaeon, tears away the suppliant’s right arm. Ino, in frenzy, rips off the other. Now the unhappy man has no limbs to hold out to his mother, but, showing his wounded trunk shorn of its members, he cries ‘Mother, see!’. Agave howls, and twists her neck about, and thrashes her hair in the air, and tearing off his head, holding it in her bloody hands, shouts ‘Behold, sisters, this act marks our victory!’

The wind does not strip the leaves clinging there, from the high tree touched by an autumn frost, more quickly than this man’s limbs are torn by those terrible hands. Warned by such an example, the Theban women throng to the new religion, burn incense, and worship at the sacred altars.