

Bacchus in Ovid: some main passages, with translations by A. S. Kline
Metamorphoses 3, 528-4,30; Fasti 3.459-516; 713-808; Tristia 5, 3.

Met. 3

Liber adest, festisque fremunt ululatibus agri:
turba ruit, mixtaeque viris matresque nurusque
vulgusque proceresque ignota ad sacra
feruntur. 530
'Quis furor, anguigenae, proles Mavortia, vestras
attonuit mentes?' Pentheus ait; 'aerane tantum
aere repulsa valent et adunco tibia cornu
et magicae fraudes, ut, quos non bellicus ensis,
non tuba terruerit, non strictis agmina telis, 535
femineae voces et mota insania vino
obsenique greges et inania tympana vincant?
vosne, senes, mirer, qui longa per aequora vecti
hac Tyron, hac profugos posuistis sede penates,
nunc sinitis sine Marte capi? vosne, acrior
aetas, 540
o iuvenes, propiorque meae, quos arma tenere,
non thyrsos, galeaque tegi, non fronde decebat?
este, precor, memores, qua sitis stirpe creati,
illiusque animos, qui multos perdidit unus, 545
sumite serpentis! pro fontibus ille lacuque
interiit: at vos pro fama vincite vestra!
ille dedit leto fortes: vos pellite molles
et patrium retinete decus! si fata vetabant
stare diu Thebas, utinam tormenta virique
moenia diruerent, ferrumque ignisque
sonarent! 550
essemus miseri sine crimine, sorsque querenda,
non celanda foret, lacrimaeque pudore carerent;
at nunc a puero Thebae capientur inermi,
quem neque bella iuvant nec tela nec usus equorum,
sed madidus murra crinis mollesque coronae 555
purpuraque et pictis intextum vestibibus aurum,
quem quidem ego actutum (modo vos absistite) cogam
adsumptumque patrem commentaque sacra fateri.
an satis Acrisio est animi, contemnere vanum
numen et Argolicas venienti claudere portas: 560

Pentheas terrebit cum totis advena Thebis?
ite citi' (famulis hoc imperat), 'ite ducemque
attrahite huc vinctum! iussis mora segnibus abesto!'

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 wreaths 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!'

hunc avus, hunc Athamas, hunc cetera turba suorum
corripiunt dictis frustraue inhibere laborant. 565

acrior admonitu est inritaturque retenta
et crescit rabies remoraminaque ipsa nocebant:
sic ego torrentem, qua nil obstabat eunti,
lenius et modico strepitu decurrere vidi;
at quacumque trabes obstructaque saxa
tenebant, 570

spumeus et fervens et ab obice saevior ibat.
Ecce cruentati redeunt et, Bacchus ubi esset,
quaerenti domino Bacchum vidisse negarunt;
'hunc' dixere 'tamen comitem famulumque sacrorum
cepimus' et tradunt manibus post terga ligatis 575
sacra dei quendam Tyrrhena gente secutum.
adspicit hunc Pentheus oculis, quos ira tremendos
fecerat, et quamquam poenae vix tempora differt,
'o periture tuaque aliis documenta dature
morte,' ait, 'ede tuum nomen nomenque
parentum 580

et patriam, morisque novi cur sacra frequentes!
ille metu vacuus 'nomen mihi' dixit 'Acoetes,
patria Maeonia est, humili de plebe parentes.
non mihi quae duri colerent pater arva iuveni,
lanigerosve greges, non ulla armenta reliquit; 585
pauper et ipse fuit linoque solebat et hamis
decipere et calamo salientis ducere pisces.
ars illi sua census erat; cum traderet artem,
"accipe, quas habeo, studii successor et heres,"
dixit "opes," moriensque mihi nihil ille
reliquit 590

praeter aquas: unum hoc possum adpellare paternum.
mox ego, ne scopulis haererem semper in isdem,
addidici regimen dextra moderante carinae
flectere et Oleniae sidus pluviale capellae
Taygetenque Hyadasque oculis Arctonque

notavi 595
ventorumque domos et portus puppibus aptos.

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.

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 [Olenia](#) Goat, [Taygete](#) among the [Pleiades](#), the [Hyades](#), and the [Arctic Bears](#), the houses of the winds, and the havens for ships.

forte petens Delum Chiae telluris ad oras
 adplicor et dextris adducor litora remis
 doque levis saltus udaeque inmittor harenae:
 nox ibi consumpta est; aurora rubescere
 primo 600
 coeperat: exsurgo laticesque inferre recentis
 admoneo monstroque viam, quae ducat ad undas;
 ipse quid aura mihi tumulto promittat ab alto
 prospicio comitesque voco repetoque carinam.
 "adsumus en" inquit sociorum primus
 Opheltes, 605
 utque putat, praedam deserto nactus in agro,
 virginea puerum ducit per litora forma.
 ille mero somnoque gravis titubare videtur
 vixque sequi; specto cultum faciemque gradumque:
 nil ibi, quod credi posset mortale, videbam. 610
 et sensi et dixi sociis: "quod numen in isto
 corpore sit, dubito; sed corpore numen in isto est!
 quisquis es, o faveas nostrisque laboribus adsis;
 his quoque des veniam!" "pro nobis mitte precari!"
 Dictys ait, quo non alius conscendere
 summas 615
 ocior antemnas prenoque rudente relabi.
 hoc Libys, hoc flavus, prorae tutela, Melanthus,
 hoc probat Alcimedon et, qui requiemque modumque
 voce dabat remis, animorum hortator, Epopeus,
 hoc omnes alii: praedae tam caeca cupido
 est. 620
 "non tamen hanc sacro violari pondere pinum
 perpetiar" dixi: "pars hic mihi maxima iuris"
 inque aditu obsisto: furi audacissimus omni
 de numero Lycabas, qui Tusca pulsus ab urbe
 exilium dira poenam pro caede luebat; 625
 is mihi, dum resto, iuvenali guttura pugno
 rupit et excussum misisset in aequora, si non
 haesissem, quamvis amens, in fune retentus.
 in pia turba probat factum; tum denique Bacchus
 (Bacchus enim fuerat), veluti clamore
 solutus 630
 sit sopor aque mero redeant in pectora sensus,
 "quid facitis? quis clamor?" ait "qua, dicite, nautae,
 huc ope perveni? quo me deferre paratis?"
 "pone metum" Proreus, "et quos contingere portus
 ede velis!" dixit; "terra sistere petita." 635

"Naxon" ait Liber "cursus advertite vestros!
 illa mihi domus est, vobis erit hospita tellus."

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!'

per mare fallaces perque omnia numina iurant
 sic fore meque iubent pictae dare vela carinae.
 dextera Naxos erat: dextra mihi linthea danti 640
 "quid facis, o demens? quis te furor," inquit "Acoete,"
 pro se quisque, "tenet? laevam pete!" maxima nutu
 pars mihi significat, pars quid velit ore susurro.
 obstipui "capiat" que "aliquis moderamina!" dixi
 meque ministerio scelerisque artisque
 removi. 645
 increpor a cunctis, totumque inmurmurat agmen;
 e quibus Aethalion "te scilicet omnis in uno
 nostra salus posita est!" ait et subit ipse meumque
 explet opus Naxoque petit diversa relicta.
 tum deus inludens, tamquam modo denique
 fraudem 650
 senserit, e puppi pontum prospectat adunca
 et flenti similis "non haec mihi litora, nautae,
 promisistis" ait, "non haec mihi terra rogata est!
 quo merui poenam facto? quae gloria vestra est,
 si puerum iuvenes, si multi fallitis unum?" 655
 iamdudum flebam: lacrimas manus in pia nostras
 ridet et inpellit properantibus aequora remis.
 per tibi nunc ipsum (nec enim praesentior illo
 est deus) adiuro, tam me tibi vera referre
 quam veri maiora fide: stetit aequore puppis 660
 haud aliter, quam si siccam navale teneret.
 illi admirantes remorum in verberere perstant
 velaque deducunt geminaque ope currere temptant:
 inpediunt hederæ remos nexuque recurvo
 serpunt et gravidis distinguunt vela
 corymbis. 665
 ipse racemiferis frontem circumdatus uvis
 pampineis agitat velatam frondibus hastam;
 quem circa tigres simulacraque inania lyncum
 pictarumque iacent fera corpora pantherarum.
 exsiluere viri, sive hoc insania fecit 670
 sive timor, primusque Medon nigrescere toto
 corpore et expresso spinae curvamine flecti
 incipit. huic Lycabas "in quae miracula" dixit
 "verteris?" et lati rictus et panda loquenti 675
 naris erat, squamamque cutis durata trahebat.
 at Libys obstantis dum vult obvertere remos,
 in spatium resilire manus breve vidit et illas
 iam non esse manus, iam pinnas posse vocari.
 alter ad intortos cupiens dare bracchia funes
 bracchia non habuit truncoque repandus in
 undas 680
 corpore desiluit: falcata novissima cauda est,
 qualia dividuae sinuantur cornua lunae.

undique dant saltus multaue adspergine rorant
 emerguntque iterum redeuntque sub aequora rursus
 inque chori ludunt speciem lascivaque
 iactant 685
 corpora et acceptum patulis mare naribus efflant.

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.

de modo viginti (tot enim ratis illa ferebat)
restabam solus: pavidum gelidumque trementi
corpore vixque meum firmat deus "excute" dicens
"corde metum Diamque tene!" delatus in
illam 690

accessi sacris Baccheaque sacra frequento.'

'Praebuimus longis' Pentheus 'ambagibus aures,'
inquit 'ut ira mora vires absumere posset.
praecipitem, famuli, rapite hunc cruciataque diris
corpora tormentis Stygiae demittite nocti!' 695
protinus abstractus solidis Tyrrhenus Acoetes
clauditur in tectis; et dum crudelia iussae
instrumenta necis ferrumque ignesque parantur,
sponte sua patuisse fores lapsasque lacertis
sponte sua fama est nullo solvente catenas. 700

Perstat Echionides, nec iam iubet ire, sed ipse
vadit, ubi electus facienda ad sacra Cithaeron
cantibus et clara bacchantum voce sonabat.
ut fremit acer equus, cum bellicus aere canoro
signa dedit tubicen pugnaeque adsumit
amorem, 705

Pentheas sic ictus longis ululatus aether
movit, et audito clamore recanduit ira.

Monte fere medio est, cingentibus ultima silvis,
purus ab arboribus, spectabilis undique, campus:
hic oculis illum cernentem sacra profanis 710
prima videt, prima est insano concita cursu,
prima suum misso violavit Pentheas thyrsos
mater et 'o geminae' clamavit 'adeste sorores!
ille aper, in nostris errat qui maximus agris,
ille mihi feriendus aper.' ruit omnis in unum 715
turba furens; cunctae coeunt trepidumque sequuntur,
iam trepidum, iam verba minus violenta loquentem,
iam se damnantem, iam se peccasse fatentem.
saucius ille tamen 'fer opem, matertera' dixit
'Autonoë! moveant animos Actaeonis
umbræ!' 720

illa, quis Actaeon, nescit dextramque precanti
abstulit, Inoo lacerata est altera raptu.
non habet infelix quae matri bracchia tendat,
trunca sed ostendens dereptis vulnera membris
'adspice, mater!' ait. visis ululavit Agaue 725
collaque iactavit movitque per aera crinem
avulsumque caput digitis complexa cruentis
clamat: 'io comites, opus hoc victoria nostra est!'
non citius frondes autumnum frigore tactas
iamque male haerentes alta rapit arbore
ventus, 730
quam sunt membra viri manibus direpta nefandis.

talibus exemplis monitae nova sacra frequentant
turaque dant sanctasque colunt Ismenides aras.

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.

'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 [Autonoë](#)! 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.

Met. 4

At non Alcithoe Minyeias orgia censet
accipienda dei, sed adhuc temeraria Bacchum
progeniem negat esse Iovis sociasque sorores
inpietatis habet. festum celebrare sacerdos
inmunesque operum famulas dominasque
suorum 5
pectora pelle tegi, crinales solvere vittas,
serta coma, manibus frondentis sumere thyrsos
iusserat et saevam laesi fore numinis iram
vaticinatus erat: parent matresque nurusque
telasque calathosque infectaque pensa
reponunt 10
turaque dant Bacchumque vocant Bromiumque
Lyaemumque
ignigenamque satumque iterum solumque bimatrem;
additur his Nyseus indetonsusque Thyoneus
et cum Lenaeo genialis consitor uvae
Nycteliusque Eleleusque parens et Iacchus et
Euhan, 15
et quae praeterea per Graias plurima gentes
nomina, Liber, habes. tibi enim inconsumpta iuventa est,
tu puer aeternus, tu formosissimus alto
conspiceris caelo; tibi, cum sine cornibus adstas,
virgineum caput est; Oriens tibi victus,
adusque 20
decolor extremo qua tinguitur India Gange.
Pentheia tu, venerande, bipenniferumque Lycurgum
sacrilegos mactas, Tyrrhenaque mittis in aequor
corpora, tu biiugum pictis insignia frenis
colla premis lyncum. bacchae satyrique
sequuntur, 25
quique senex ferula titubantis ebrius artus
sustinet et pando non fortiter haeret asello.
quacumque ingrederis, clamor iuvenalis et una
femineae voces impulsaque tympana palmis

concavaque aera sonant longoque foramine
buxus. 30

But [Alcithoë](#), daughter of [Minyas](#), will not celebrate the Bacchic rites, in acceptance of the god. She is rash enough to deny that [Bacchus](#) is the son of [Jupiter](#), and her sisters share in her impiety.

The priest had ordered the observation of the festival, asking for all female servants to be released from work, they and their mistresses to drape animal skins across their breasts, free their headbands, wreath their hair, and carry an ivy-twined [thyrsus](#) in their hand. And he prophesied that the god's rage would be fierce if he was angered. The young women and mothers obey, leaving their baskets and looms, and their unfinished tasks, and burn incense, calling on Bacchus, on [Bromius](#), 'the noisy one', [Lyaeus](#), 'deliverer from care', on the child of the lightning, the twice-born, the son of two mothers, and adding to these calls [Nyseus](#), 'he of [Heliconian Nysa](#)', [Thyoneus](#), 'the unshorn' who is [Semele's](#) son, [Lenaeus](#), the planter of joy-giving vines, [Nyctelius](#), 'the nightcomer', father [Eleleus](#), of the howls, [Iacchus](#), of the shouts, and [Euhan](#), of the cries, and all of the other names you have, [Liber](#), among the peoples of Greece.

Unfading youth is yours, you boy eternal, you, [the most beautiful sight](#) in the depths of the morning and evening sky, your face like a virgin's when you stand before us without your horns. The Orient calls you its conqueror, as far as darkest India, dipped in the remote [Ganges](#). You, the revered one, punished [Pentheus](#), and [Lycurgus](#), king of [Thrace](#), who carried the double-headed axe, and you sent the [Tyrrhenians](#) into the waves. You yoke together two lynxes with bright reins decorating their necks, [Bacchantes](#) and [Satyrs](#) follow you, and that drunken old man, [Silenus](#), who supports his stumbling body with his staff, and clings precariously to his bent-backed mule. Wherever you go the shouts of youths ring out, and the chorus of female voices, hands beating on tambourines, the clash of cymbals, and the shrill piping of the flute.

quid facis? amplexus inquinat illa tuos.

Fasti III

Protinus aspicias venienti nocte Coronam
 Cnosida: Theseo crimine facta dea est.
 iam bene periuro mutarat coniuge Bacchum
 quae dedit ingrato fila legenda viro;
 sorte tori gaudens 'quid flebam rustica?' dixit;
 'utiliter nobis perfidus ille fuit.'
 interea Liber depexos crinibus Indos 465
 vicit, et Eoo dives ab orbe redit.
 inter captivas facie praestante puellas
 grata nimis Baccho filia regis erat.
 flebat amans coniunx, spatiaque litore curvo
 edidit incultis talia verba comis: 470
 'en iterum, fluctus, similes audite querellas.
 en iterum lacrimas accipe, harena, meas.
 dicebam, memini, "periure et perfide Theseu!"
 ille abiit, eadem crimina Bacchus habet.
 nunc quoque "nulla viro" clamabo "femina
 credat"; 475
 nomine mutato causa relata mea est.
 o utinam mea sors qua primum coeperat isset,
 iamque ego praesenti tempore nulla forem.
 quid me desertis morituram, Liber, harenis
 servabas? potui dedoluisse semel. 480
 Bacche levis leviorque tuis, quae tempora cingunt,
 frondibus, in lacrimas cognite Bacche meas,
 ausus es ante oculos adducta paelice nostros
 tam bene compositum sollicitare torum?
 heu ubi pacta fides? ubi quae iurare solebas?
 me miseram, quotiens haec ego verba loquar? 485
 Thesea culpabas fallacemque ipse vocabas:
 iudicio peccas turpius ipse tuo.
 ne sciat haec quisquam tacitisque doloribus urar,
 ne totiens falli digna fuisse puter. 490
 praecipue cupiam celari Thesea, ne te
 consortem culpae gaudeat esse suae.
 at, puto, praeposita est fuscae mihi candida paelex!
 eveniat nostris hostibus ille color.
 quid tamen hoc refert? vitio tibi gratior ipso

As soon as night falls you will see the [Cretan Crown](#):
 Through [Theseus](#)' crime [Ariadne](#) was made a goddess.
 She'd already happily exchanged that faithless spouse for
[Bacchus](#),
 She who'd given the ungrateful man the thread to follow.
 Delighting in her wedded fate, she said: 'Why did I weep
 Like a country-girl, his faithlessness has been my gain?'
 Meanwhile [Bacchus](#) had conquered the straight-haired
 Indians,
 And returned with his riches from the Eastern world.
 Among the captive girls, of outstanding beauty,
 One, the daughter of a king, pleased Bacchus intensely.
 His loving wife wept, and treading the curving shore
 With dishevelled hair, she spoke these words:
 'Behold, again, you waves, how you hear my complaint!
 Behold again you sands, how you receive my tears!
 I remember I used to say: "Perjured, faithless Theseus!"
 He abandoned me: now Bacchus commits the same crime.
 Now once more I'll cry: "Woman, never trust in man!"
 My fate's repeated, only his name has changed.
 O that my life had ended where it first began.
 So that I'd not have existed for this moment!
 Why did you save me, Liber, to die on these lonely sands?
 I might have ceased grieving at that moment.
 Bacchus, fickle, lighter than the leaves that wreath
 Your brow, Bacchus known to me in my weeping,
 How have you dared to trouble our harmonious bed
 By bringing another lover before my eyes?
 Alas, where is sworn faith? Where the pledges you once
 gave?
 Wretched me, how many times must I speak those words?
 You blamed Theseus and called him a deceiver:
 According to that judgement your own sin is worse.
 Let no one know of this, let me burn with silent pain,
 Lest they think I deserved to be cheated so!
 Above all I wish it to be hid from Theseus,
 So he may not joy in you as a partner in crime.
 I suppose your fair lover is preferred to a dark,
 May fair be the colouring of my enemies!
 Yet what does that signify? She is dearer to you for that.
 What are you doing? She contaminates your embrace.

Bacche, fidem praesta, nec praefer amoribus ullam
 coniugis: adsuevi semper amare virum.
 ceperunt matrem formosi cornua tauri,
 me tua; at hic laudi est, ille pudendus
 amor. 500
 ne noceat quod amo: neque enim tibi, Bacche, nocebat
 quod flammis nobis fassus es ipse tuas.
 nec, quod nos uris, mirum facis: ortus in igne
 diceris, et patria raptus ab igne manu. 505
 illa ego sum cui tu solitus promittere caelum.
 ei mihi, pro caelo qualia dona fero!
 dixerat; audibat iam dudum verba querentis
 Liber, ut a tergo forte secutus erat.
 occupat amplexu lacrimasque per oscula siccant,
 et 'pariter caeli summa petamus' ait: 510
 'tu mihi iuncta toro mihi iuncta vocabula sumes,
 nam tibi mutatae Libera nomen erit,
 sintque tuae tecum faciam monimenta coronae,
 Vulcanus Veneri quam dedit, illa tibi.'
 dicta facit, gemmasque novem transformat in
 ignes: 515
 aurea per stellas nunc micat illa novem.

Bacchus, be true, and do not prefer her to a wife's love.

I am one who would love my husband for ever.

The horns of a gleaming bull captivated my [mother](#).
 Yours, me: but this is a love to be praised, hers shameful.
 Let me not suffer, for loving: you yourself, Bacchus,
 Never suffered for confessing your desire to me.
 No wonder you make me burn: they say you were born
 In fire, and were snatched from the flames by your [father](#).
 I am she to whom you used to promise the heavens.
 Ah me, what a reward I suffer instead of heaven!
 She spoke: Liber had been listening a long while
 To her complaint, since he chanced to follow closely.
 He embraced her, and dried her tears with kisses,
 And said: 'Together, let us seek the depths of the sky!
 You'll share my name just as you've shared my bed,
 Since, transmuted, you will be called [Libera](#):
 And there'll be a memory of your crown beside you,
 The crown [Vulcan](#) gave to [Venus](#), and she to you.'
 He did as he said, and changed the nine jewels to fire:
 Now the golden crown glitters with nine stars.

Tertia post Idus lux est celeberrima Baccho:
 Bacche, fave vati, dum tua festa cano.
 nec referam Semelen, ad quam nisi fulmina
 secum 715
 Iuppiter adferret, ~parvus inermis eras~;
 nec, puer ut posses maturo tempore nasci,
 expletum patrio corpore matris opus.
 Sithonas et Scythicos longum narrare triumphos
 et domitas gentes, turifer Inde, tuas. 720
 tu quoque Thebanae mala praeda tacebere matris,
 inque tuum furiis acte Lycurge genus.
 ecce libet subitos pisces Tyrrhenaque monstra
 dicere; sed non est carminis huius opus.
 carminis huius opus causas exponere quare 725
 vitisator populos ad sua liba vocet.
 ante tuos ortus arae sine honore fuerunt,
 Liber, et in gelidis herba reperta focis.
 te memorant, Gange totoque Oriente subacto,
 primitias magno seposuisse Iovi: 730
 cinnama tu primus captivaque tura dedisti
 deque triumphato viscera tosta bove.
 nomine ab auctoris ducunt libamina nomen
 libaque, quod sanctis pars datur inde focis;
 liba deo fiunt, sucis quia dulcibus idem 735
 gaudet, et a Baccho mella reperta ferunt.
 ibat harenoso satyris comitatus ab Hebro
 (non habet ingratos fabula nostra iocos);
 iamque erat ad Rhodopen Pangaeaue florida ventum:
 aeriferae comitum concrepuere manus. 740

There's a popular festival of [Bacchus](#), on the third day
 After the Ides: Bacchus, favour the poet who sings your
 feast.

I'll not speak about [Semele](#): you'd have been born
 defenceless,
 If it hadn't been that [Jupiter](#) brought her his lightning too.
 Nor will I tell how the mother's labour was fulfilled
 In a father's body, so you might duly be born their son.
 It would take long to tell of the conquered Sithonians,
 And the Scythians, and the races of incense-bearing India.
 I'll be silent about you too, [Pentheus](#), sad prey to your
 own mother,
 And you [Lycurgus](#), who killed your own son in madness.
 Lo, I'd like to speak of the monstrous Tyrrhenians, who
 Suddenly became dolphins, but that's not the task of this
 verse.
 The task of *this* verse is to set out the reasons,
 Why a vine-planter sells his cakes to the crowd.
[Liber](#), before your birth the altars were without offerings,
 And grass appeared on the stone-cold hearths.
 They tell how you set aside the first fruits for Jupiter,
 After subduing the Ganges region, and the whole of the
 East.
 You were the first to offer up cinnamon and incense
 From conquered lands, and the roast entrails of triumphal
 oxen.
 Libations derive their name from their originator,
 And cake (*liba*) since a part is offered on the sacred hearth.
 Honey-cakes are baked for the god, because he delights in
 sweet
 Substances, and they say that [Bacchus](#) discovered honey.
 He was travelling from sandy [Hebrus](#), accompanied
 By [Satyrs](#), (my tale contains a not-unpleasant jest)
 And he'd come to Mount Rhodope, and flowering
 Pangaeus:
 With the cymbals clashing in his companions' hands.

ecce novae coeunt volucres tinnitibus actae,
 quosque movent sonitus aera, sequuntur apes;
 colligit errantes et in arbore claudit inani
 Liber, et inventi praemia mellis habet.
 ut satyri levisque senex tetigere saporem 745
 quaerebant flavos per nemus omne favos.
 audit in exesa stridorem examinis ulmo,
 aspicit et ceras dissimulatque senex;
 utque piger pandi tergo residebat aselli,
 adplicat hunc ulmo corticibusque cavis. 750
 constitit ipse super ramoso stipite nixus,
 atque avide trunco condita mella petit:
 milia crabronum coeunt, et vertice nudo
 spicula defigunt oraque sima notant.
 ille cadit praeceps et calce feritur aselli, 755
 inclamatque suos auxiliumque rogat.
 concurrunt satyri turgentiaque ora parentis
 rident: percusso claudicat ille genu.
 ridet et ipse deus, limumque inducere monstrat;
 hic paret monitis et linit ora luto. 760
 melle pater fruitur, liboque infusa calenti
 iure repertori splendida mella damus.
 femina cur praesit, non est rationis opertae:
 femineos thyrsos concitat ille choros.
 cur anus hoc faciat, quaeris? vinosior aetas 765
 ~haec erat et~ gravidae munera vitis amat.
 cur hederam cincta est? hederam est gratissima Baccho;
 hoc quoque cur ita sit, discere nulla mora est.
 Nysiadas nymphas puerum quaerente noverca
 hanc frondem cunis opposuisse ferunt. 770

Behold unknown winged things gather to the jangling,
 Bees, that follow after the echoing bronze.
 Liber gathered the swarm and shut it in a hollow tree,
 And was rewarded with the prize of discovering honey.
 Once the Satyrs, and old bald-headed [Silenus](#), had tasted
 it,
 They searched for the yellow combs in every tree.
 The old fellow heard a swarm humming in a hollow elm,
 Saw the honeycombs, but pretended otherwise:
 And sitting lazily on his hollow-backed ass,
 He rode it up to the elm where the trunk was hollow.
 He stood and leant on the stump of a branch,
 And greedily reached for the honey hidden inside.
 But thousands of hornets gathered, thrusting their stings
 Into his bald head, leaving their mark on his snub-nosed
 face.
 He fell headlong, and received a kick from the ass,
 As he shouted to his friends and called for help.
 The Satyrs ran up, and laughed at their father's face,
 While he limped about on his damaged knee.
 Bacchus himself laughed and showed him the use of mud:
 Silenus took his advice, and smeared his face with clay.
 Father Liber loves honey: its right to offer its discoverer
 Glittering honey diffused through oven-warm cakes.
 The reason why a woman presides isn't obscure:
[Bacchus](#) stirs crowds of women with his *thyrsus*.
 Why an old woman, you ask? That age drinks more,
 And loves the gifts of the teeming vine.
 Why is she wreathed with ivy? Ivy's dearest to Bacchus:
 And why that's so doesn't take long to tell.
 They say that when [Juno](#) his stepmother was searching
 For the boy, the nymphs of [Nysa](#) hid the cradle in ivy
 leaves.

Restat ut inveniam quare toga libera detur
 Lucifero pueris, candide Bacche, tuo:
 sive quod ipse puer semper iuvenisque videris,
 et media est aetas inter utrumque tibi;
 seu quia tu pater es, patres sua pignora,
 natos, 775
 commendant curae numinibusque tuis:
 sive, quod es Liber, vestis quoque libera per te
 sumitur et vitae liberioris iter:
 an quia, cum colerent prisca studiosius agros,
 et faceret patrio rure senator opus, 780
 et caperet fasces a curvo consul aratro,
 nec crimen duras esset habere manus,
 rusticus ad ludos populus veniebat in Urbem—
 sed dis, non studiis ille dabatur honor:
 luce sua ludos uvae commentor habebat, 785
 quos cum taedifera nunc habet ille dea—
 ergo ut tironem celebrare frequentia possit,
 visa dies dandae non aliena togae?
 mite caput, pater, huc placataque cornua vertas,
 et des ingenio vela secunda meo. 790
 Itur ad Argeos (qui sint, sua pagina dicet)
 hac, si commemorari, praeteritaque die.
 stella Lycaoniam vergit declinis ad Arcton
 Miluus: haec illa nocte videnda venit.
 quid dederit volucris, si vis cognoscere,
 caelum, 795
 Saturnus regnis a Iove pulsus erat;
 concitat iratus validos Titanas in arma,
 quaeque fuit fati debita temptat opem.
 matre satus Terra, monstrum mirabile, taurus
 parte sui serpens posteriore fuit: 800
 hunc triplici muro lucis incluserat atris
 Parcarum monitu Styx violenta trium.
 viscera qui tauri flammis adolenda dedisset,
 sors erat aeternos vincere posse deos.
 immolat hunc Briareus facta ex adamante
 securi, 805
 et iamiam flammis exta daturus erat:

Iuppiter alitibus rapere imperat: attulit illi
 miluus, et meritis venit in astra suis.

It remains for me to reveal why the *toga virilis*, the gown
 Of manhood, is given to boys on your day, [Bacchus](#):
 Whether it's because you seem to be ever boy or youth,
 And your age is somewhere between the two:
 Or because you're a father, fathers commend their sons,
 Their pledges of love, to your care and divinity:
 Or because you're Liber, the gown of liberty
 And a more liberated life are adopted, for you:
 Or is it because, in the days when the ancients tilled the
 fields
 More vigorously, and Senators worked their fathers' land,
 And 'rods and axes' took Consuls from the curving
 plough,
 And it wasn't a crime to have work-worn hands,
 The farmers came to the City for the games,
 (Though that was an honour paid to the gods, and not
 Their inclination: and the grape's discoverer held [his
 games](#)
 This day, while now he shares that of torch-bearing [Ceres](#)):
 And the day seemed not unfitting for granting the *toga*,
 So that a crowd could celebrate the fresh novice?
 Father turn your mild head here, and gentle horns,
 And spread the sails of my art to a favourable breeze.
 If I remember rightly, on this, and the preceding day,
 Crowds go to the [Argei](#) (their own page will tell who they
 are).
 The Kite star turns downwards near
 The [Lycaonian Bear](#): on this night it's first visible.
 If you wish to know who raised that falcon to heaven,
 It was when [Saturn](#) had been dethroned by [Jupiter](#):
 Angered, he stirred the mighty Titans to battle,
 And sought whatever help the Fates could grant him.
 There was a bull, a marvellous monster, born of Mother
 Earth, the hind part of which was of serpent-form:
 Warned by the three Fates, grim [Styx](#) had imprisoned him
 In dark woods, surrounded by triple walls.
 There was a prophecy that whoever burnt the entrails
 Of the bull, in the flames, would defeat the eternal gods.
[Briareus](#) sacrificed it with an adamant axe,
 And was about to set the innards on the flames:
 But Jupiter ordered the birds to snatch them: and the Kite
 Brought them, and his service set him among the stars.

Tristia V, 3

Illa dies haec est, qua te celebrare poetae,
si modo non fallunt tempora, Bacche, solent,
festaque odoratis innectunt tempora sertis,
et dicunt laudes ad tua uina tuas.
Inter quos, memini, dum me mea fata sinebant,
non inuisa tibi pars ego saepe fui,
quem nunc suppositum stellis Cynosuridos Vrsae
iuncta tenet crudis Sarmatis ora Getis.
Quique prius mollem uacuaque laboribus egi
in studiis uitam Pieridumque choro,
nunc procul a patria Geticis circumsonor armis,
multa prius pelago multaue passus humo.
Sive mihi casus sive hoc dedit ira deorum,
nubila nascenti seu mihi Parca fuit,
tu tamen e sacris hederæ cultoribus unum
numine debueras sustinuisse tuo.
An dominae fati quicquid cecinere sorores,
omne sub arbitrio desinit esse dei?
Ipse quoque aetherias meritis inuectus es arces,
quo non exiguo facta labore uia est.
Nec patria est habitata tibi, sed adusque niuosum
Strymona uenisti Marticolamque Geten,
Persidaque et lato spatiantem flumine Gangen,
et quascumque bibit decolor Indus aquas.
Scilicet hanc legem nentes fatalia Parcae
stamina bis genito bis cecinere tibi.
Me quoque, si fas est exemplis ire deorum,
ferrea sors uitae difficilisque premit.
Illo nec leuius cecidi, quem magna locutum
reppulit a Thebis Iuppiter igne suo.
ut tamen audisti percussum fulmine uatem,
admonitu matris condoluisse potes,
et potes aspiciens circum tua sacra poetas
"nescioquis nostri" dicere "cultor abest."
This is [the day](#), [Bacchus](#), that the poets are accustomed
to celebrate you, if only I've not got the date wrong,
wreathing scented garlands round their foreheads,

and singing your praises to the wine you gave us.

I remember how, while my fortunes still allowed it,
I often took part, among them, and didn't displease you,
I who am now subjected to the stars of the [Little Bear](#),
held fast to the [Sarmatian](#) shore of the savage [Getae](#).
I, who led a life of ease, free of labour,
in my studies, among the [Pierian](#) choir,
after many sufferings on sea and land, I'm surrounded
by the noise of Getic weapons, and far from home.
Whether chance or the anger of the gods caused it,
or whether a dark [Fate](#) attended my birth,
you, at least, with divine power, should have aided
one of the worshippers of your sacred ivy.
Or is it that what the Sisters, the Mistresses of Fate,
ordain is no longer wholly in the god's power?
You yourself were admitted to the heavens, on merit,
to which one makes one's way with no little toil.
You did not live in your native land, but went
all the way to snowy [Strymon](#), and the warlike Getae,
to Persia, and the wide-flowing River [Ganges](#),
and all the waters the dusky Indian drinks.
This was the destiny for sure that the Parcae, who spun
the fatal thread, twice ordained for you, at your double
birth.
I too, if it's right to take the gods as examples,
am crushed by a difficult, an iron fate in life.
I've fallen no less heavily than [Capaneus](#), whom [Jupiter](#)
drove, for his pride, from [Thebes'](#) walls, with lightning.
And when you heard a poet had been struck by fire,
you might have remembered your mother, [Semele](#),
and had sympathy, and gazing at the bards round your
altar,
have said: 'One of my worshippers is missing.'

Fer, bone Liber, opem: sic altera degraue ulmum
uitis et incluso plena sit uua mero,
sic tibi cum Bacchis Satyrorum gnaua iuuentus
adsit, et attonito non taceare sono,
ossa bipenniferi sic sint male pressa Lycurgi,
impia nec poena Pentheos umbra uacet,
sic micet aeternum uicinaque sidera uincat
coniugis in caelo clara corona tuae:
huc ades et casus releues, pulcherrime, nostros,
unum de numero me memor esse tuo.
Sunt dis inter se commercia. Flectere tempta
Caesareum numen numine, Bacche, tuo.
Vos quoque, consortes studii, pia turba, poetae,
haec eadem sumpto quisque rogare mero.
Atque aliquis uestrum, Nasonis nomine dicto,
opponat lacrimis pocula mixta suis,
admonitusque mei, cum circumspexerit omnes,
dicat "ubi est nostri pars modo Naso chori?"
Idque ita, si uestrum merui candore fauorem,
nullaque iudicio littera laesa meo est,
si, ueterum digne ueneror cum scripta uirorum,
proxima non illis esse minora reor.
Sic igitur dextro faciatis Apolline carmen:
quod licet, inter uos nomen habete meum.

Help me, good [Liber](#): and may another vine burden the
elm,
and the grapes be filled with the imprisoned juice,
may the [Bacchae](#) and the vigorous young [Satyrs](#)
be here, and their cries of inspiration not be silent,
may the bones of [Lycurgus](#) the axe-bearer be crushed,
and [Pentheus](#)' impious shade never free of torment,
may your [Ariadne](#)'s crown glitter brightly in the sky,
and shine more brilliantly than the neighbouring stars:
be here, and ease my fate, loveliest of the gods,
remembering that I am one of your own.
The gods traffic between themselves. Bacchus,
try to influence Caesar's power with your own.
You too, loyal crowd of poets who share my studies,
drink the neat wine, and make the same request.
And one of you, mentioning Ovid's name,
pledge him in a cup mixed with your own tears,
and when you've gazed around you, say in memory
of me: 'Where's Ovid, who was lately one of our choir?'
This only if I've earned your approval by my honesty,
and never a book's been wounded by my criticism:
if, though I revere the noble writings of ancient men,
I still think the recent ones to be worth no less.
So, as you may make songs empowered by [Apollo](#),
keep my name fresh among you, as is right.