

Bk I:438-472 Phoebus kills the Python and sees Daphne

Indeed, though she would not have desired to, she then gave birth to you, great [Python](#), covering so great an area of the mountain slopes, a snake not known before, a terror to the new race of men. The archer god, with lethal shafts that he had only used before on fleeing red deer and roe deer, with a thousand arrows, almost emptying his quiver, destroyed the creature, the venom running out from its black wounds. Then he founded the sacred [Pythian](#) games, celebrated by contests, named from the serpent he had conquered. There the young winners in boxing, in foot and chariot racing, were honoured with oak wreaths. There was no laurel as yet, so [Phoebus](#) crowned his temples, his handsome curling hair, with leaves of any tree.

Phoebus's first love was [Daphne](#), daughter of [Peneus](#), and not through chance but because of [Cupid](#)'s fierce anger. Recently the [Delian](#) god, exulting at his victory over the serpent, had seen him bending his tightly strung bow and said 'Impudent boy, what are you doing with a man's weapons? That one is suited to my shoulders, since I can hit wild beasts of a certainty, and wound my enemies, and not long ago destroyed with countless arrows the swollen Python that covered many acres with its plague-ridden belly. You should be intent on stirring the concealed fires of love with your burning brand, not laying claim to my glories!' [Venus](#)'s son replied 'You may hit every other thing [Phoebus](#), but my bow will strike you: to the degree that all living creatures are less than gods, by that degree is your glory less than mine.' He spoke, and striking the air fiercely with beating wings, he landed on the shady peak of [Parnassus](#), and took two arrows with opposite effects from his full quiver: one kindles love, the other dispels it. The one that kindles is golden with a sharp glistening point, the one that dispels is blunt with lead beneath its shaft. With the second he transfixed [Peneus](#)'s daughter, but with the first he wounded [Apollo](#) piercing him to the marrow of his bones.

Bk I: 473-503 Phoebus pursues Daphne

Now the one loved, and the other fled from love's name, taking delight in the depths of the woods, and the skins of the wild beasts she caught, emulating virgin [Phoebe](#), a careless ribbon holding back her hair. Many courted her, but she, averse to being wooed, free from men and unable to endure them, roamed the pathless woods, careless of [Hymen](#) or [Amor](#), or whatever marriage might be. Her father often said 'Girl you owe me a son-in-law', and again often 'Daughter, you owe me grandsons.' But, hating the wedding torch as if it smacked of crime she would blush red with shame all over her beautiful face, and clinging to her father's neck with coaxing arms, she would say 'Dearest father, let me be a virgin for ever! [Diana](#)'s father granted it to her.' He yields to that plea, but your beauty itself, [Daphne](#), prevents your wish, and your loveliness opposes your prayer.

[Phoebus](#) loves her at first sight, and desires to wed her, and hopes for what he desires, but his own oracular powers fail him. As the light stubble of an empty cornfield blazes; as sparks fire a hedge when a traveller, by

mischance, lets them get too close, or forgets them in the morning; so the god was altered by the flames, and all his heart burned, feeding his useless desire with hope. He sees her disordered hair hanging about her neck and sighs ‘What if it were properly dressed?’ He gazes at her eyes sparkling with the brightness of starlight. He gazes on her lips, where mere gazing does not satisfy. He praises her wrists and hands and fingers, and her arms bare to the shoulder: whatever is hidden, he imagines more beautiful. But she flees swifter than the lightest breath of air, and resists his words calling her back again.

Bk I:504-524 Phoebus begs Daphne to yield to him

‘Wait nymph, daughter of [Peneus](#), I beg you! I who am chasing you am not your enemy. Nymph, Wait! This is the way a sheep runs from the wolf, a deer from the mountain lion, and a dove with fluttering wings flies from the eagle: everything flies from its foes, but it is love that is driving me to follow you! Pity me! I am afraid you might fall headlong or thorns undeservedly scar your legs and I be a cause of grief to you! These are rough places you run through. Slow down, I ask you, check your flight, and I too will slow. At least enquire whom it is you have charmed. I am no mountain man, no shepherd, no rough guardian of the herds and flocks. Rash girl, you do not know, you cannot realise, who you run from, and so you run. [Delphi](#)’s lands are mine, [Claros](#) and [Tenedos](#), and [Patara](#) acknowledges me king. [Jupiter](#) is my father. Through me what was, what is, and what will be, are revealed. Through me strings sound in harmony, to song. My aim is certain, but an arrow truer than mine, has wounded my free heart! The whole world calls me the bringer of aid; medicine is my invention; my power is in herbs. But love cannot be healed by any herb, nor can the arts that cure others cure their lord!’

Bk I:525-552 Daphne becomes the laurel bough

He would have said more as timid [Peneis](#) ran, still lovely to see, leaving him with his words unfinished. The winds bared her body, the opposing breezes in her way fluttered her clothes, and the light airs threw her streaming hair behind her, her beauty enhanced by flight. But the young god could no longer waste time on further blandishments, urged on by [Amor](#), he ran on at full speed. Like a hound of [Gaul](#) starting a hare in an empty field, that heads for its prey, she for safety: he, seeming about to clutch her, thinks now, or now, he has her fast, grazing her heels with his outstretched jaws, while she uncertain whether she is already caught, escaping his bite, spurts from the muzzle touching her. So the virgin and the god: he driven by desire, she by fear. He ran faster, Amor giving him wings, and allowed her no rest, hung on her fleeing shoulders, breathed on the hair flying round her neck. Her strength was gone, she grew pale, overcome by the effort of her rapid flight, and seeing Peneus’ waters near cried out ‘Help me father! If your streams have divine powers change me, destroy this beauty that pleases too well!’ Her prayer was scarcely done when a heavy numbness seized her limbs, thin bark closed over her breast, her hair turned into leaves, her arms into branches, her feet so swift a moment ago stuck fast in slow-growing roots, her face was lost

in the canopy. Only her shining beauty was left.

Bk I:553-567 Phoebus honours Daphne

Even like this [Phoebus](#) loved her and, placing his hand against the trunk, he felt her heart still quivering under the new bark. He clasped the branches as if they were parts of human arms, and kissed the wood. But even the wood shrank from his kisses, and the god said ‘Since you cannot be my bride, you must be my tree! Laurel, with you my hair will be wreathed, with you my lyre, with you my quiver. You will go with the Roman generals when joyful voices acclaim their triumph, and the Capitol witnesses their long processions. You will stand outside Augustus’s doorposts, a faithful guardian, and keep watch over the crown of oak between them. And just as my head with its un-cropped hair is always young, so you also will wear the beauty of undying leaves.’ [Paeon](#) had done: the laurel bowed her newly made branches, and seemed to shake her leafy crown like a head giving consent.

http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/Metamorph.htm#_Toc64105469

Bk IV:55-92 Arsippe tells the story of Pyramus and Thisbe

‘[Pyramus](#) and [Thisbe](#), he the loveliest youth, and she the most sought after girl, the East held, lived in neighbouring houses, in the towering city of [Babylon](#), that [Semiramis](#) is said to have enclosed with walls of brick. Their nearness and their first childhood steps made them acquainted and in time love appeared. They would have agreed to swear the marriage oath as well, but their parents prevented it. They were both on fire, with hearts equally captivated, something no parent can prevent. They had no one to confide all this to: nods and signs were their speech, and the more they kept the fire hidden, the more it burned.

There was a fissure, a thin split, in the shared wall between their houses, which traced back to when it was built. No one had discovered the flaw in all those years – but what can love not detect? – You lovers saw it first, and made it a path for your voices. Your endearments passed that way, in safety, in the gentlest of murmurs. Often, when they were in place, Thisbe here, and Pyramus there, and they had each caught the sound of the other’s breath, they said “Unfriendly wall, why do you hinder lovers? How hard would it be for you to let our whole bodies meet, or if that is too much perhaps, to open to the kisses we give each other? Not that we are not grateful. We confess that we owe it to you that words are allowed to pass to loving ears.” So they talked, hopelessly, sitting opposite, saying, as night fell, “Farewell”, each touching the wall with kisses that could not reach the other side.

One morning when Aurora had quenched the fires of night, and the sun’s rays had thawed the frosty grass, they came to their usual places. Then they decided, first with a little murmur of their great sorrows, to try, in the silence of night, to deceive the guards, and vanish outside. Once out of the house they would leave the city as well, and they agreed, in case they went astray crossing the open country, to meet by the grave of Ninus, and hide in

the shelter of a tree. There was a tall mulberry tree there, dense with white berries, bordering a cool fountain. They were satisfied with their plan, and the light, slow to lose its strength, was drowned in the waters, and out of the same waters the night emerged.’

Bk IV:93-127 The death of Pyramus

‘Carefully opening the door, Thisbe, slipped out, deceiving her people, and came to the tomb, her face veiled, and seated herself under the tree they had agreed on. Love made her brave. But a lioness fresh from the kill, her jaws foaming, smeared with the blood of cattle, came to slake her thirst at the nearby spring. In the moonlight, [Babylonian](#) Thisbe sees her some way off, and flees in fear to a dark cave, and as she flees, she leaves behind her fallen veil. When the fierce lioness has drunk deeply, returning towards the trees, she chances to find the flimsy fabric, without its owner, and rips it in her bloodstained jaws. Leaving the city a little later, [Pyramus](#) sees the creature’s tracks in the thick dust, and his face is drained of colour. When he also discovers the veil stained with blood, he cries, “Two lovers will be lost in one night. She was the more deserving of a long life. I am the guilty spirit. I have killed you, poor girl, who told you to come by night to this place filled with danger, and did not reach it first. O, all you lions, that live amongst these rocks, tear my body to pieces, and devour my sinful flesh in your fierce jaws! Though it is cowardly to ask for death”

He picks up Thisbe’s veil, and carries it with him to the shadow of the tree they had chosen. Kissing the token, and wetting it with tears, he cries, “Now, be soaked in my blood too.” Having spoken he drove the sword he had been wearing into his side, and, dying, pulled it, warm, from the wound. As he lay back again on the ground, the blood spurted out, like a pipe fracturing at a weak spot in the lead, and sending long bursts of water hissing through the split, cutting through the air, beat by beat. Sprinkled with blood, the tree’s fruit turned a deep blackish-red, and the roots, soaked through, also imbued the same overhanging mulberries with the dark purplish colour.’

Bk IV:128-166 The death of Thisbe

‘Now [Thisbe](#) returns, not yet free of fear, lest she disappoint her lover, and she calls for him with her eyes and in her mind, eager to tell him about the great danger she has escaped. Though she recognises the place and the shape of the familiar tree, the colour of the berries puzzles her. She waits there: perhaps this is it. Hesitating, she sees quivering limbs writhing on the bloodstained earth, and starts back, terrified, like the sea, that trembles when the slightest breeze touches its surface, her face showing whiter than boxwood. But when, staying a moment longer, she recognises her lover, she cries out loud with grief, striking at her innocent arms, and tearing at her hair. Cradling the beloved body, she bathes his wounds with tears, mingling their drops with blood. Planting kisses on his cold face, she cries out ‘Pyramus, what misfortune has robbed me of you? Pyramus, answer me! Your dearest Thisbe calls to you: obey me, lift your fallen head!’ At Thisbe’s name, Pyramus raised his eyes, darkening with death, and having looked at her, buried them again in darkness.’

‘When she recognised her veil and saw the ivory scabbard without its sword, she said, “Unhappy boy, your own hand, and your love, have destroyed you! I too have a firm enough hand for once, and I, too, love. It will give me strength in my misfortune. I will follow you to destruction, and they will say I was a most pitiful friend and companion to you. He, who could only be removed from me by death, death cannot remove. Nevertheless I ask this for both of us, in uttering these words, O our poor parents, mine and his, do not deny us the right to be laid in one tomb, we whom certain love, and the strangest hour have joined. And you, the tree, that now covers the one poor body with your branches, and soon will cover two, retain the emblems of our death, and always carry your fruit darkened in mourning, a remembrance of the blood of us both.”

Saying this, and placing the point under her heart, she fell forward onto the blade, still warm with his blood. Then her prayer moved the gods, and stirred her parents’ feelings, for the colour of the berry is blackish-red, when fully ripened, and what was left from the funeral pyres rests in a single urn.’

http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/Metamorph4.htm#_Toc64106253

Bk V:332-384 Calliope sings: Cupid makes Dis fall in love

‘This much she played on her lute, with singing voice. Then called on us, - but perhaps you are not at leisure, or free to listen to a repetition of our music?’ ‘Do not stop’ said [Pallas](#), ‘but sing your song again as you arranged it!’ and she sat amongst the light shadows of the grove. The Muse renewed her tale ‘We gave our best singer to the contest. [Calliope](#), who rose, with her loose hair bound with ivy, tried out the plaintive strings with her fingers, then accompanied the wandering notes with this song.

“[Ceres](#) first turned the soil with curving plough, first ripened the crops and produce of the earth, first gave us laws: all things are Ceres’s gift. My song is of her. If only I could create a song in any way worthy of the goddess! This goddess is truly a worthy subject for my song.

[Trinacris](#), the vast isle of [Sicily](#), had been heaped over the giant’s limbs, and with its great mass oppressed buried [Typhoeus](#), he who had dared to aspire to a place in heaven. He struggles it’s true and often tries to rise, but his right hand is held by the promontory of [Ausonian Pelorus](#), and his left hand by you, [Pachynus](#). [Lilybaeum](#) presses on his legs, [Etna](#) weighs down his head, supine beneath it, Typhoeus throws ash from his mouth, and spits out flame. Often, a wrestler, he throws back the weight of earth, and tries to roll the high mountains and the cities from his body, and then the ground trembles, and even the lord of the silent kingdom is afraid lest he be exposed, and the soil split open in wide fissures, and the light admitted to scare the anxious dead.

Fearing this disaster, the king of the dark had left his shadowy realm, and, drawn in his chariot by black horses, carefully circled the foundations of the Sicilian land. When he had checked and was satisfied that nothing was collapsing, he relinquished his fears. Then [Venus, at Eryx](#), saw him moving,

as she sat on the hillside, and embraced her winged son, [Cupid](#), and said ‘My child, my hands and weapons, my power, seize those arrows, that overcome all, and devise a path for your swift arrows, to the heart of that god to whom the final share of the triple kingdom fell. You conquer the gods and [Jupiter](#) himself, the lords of the sea, and their very king, who controls the lords of the sea. Why is [Tartarus](#) excepted? Why not extend your mother’s kingdom and your own? We are talking of a third part of the world. And yet, as is evident to me, I am scorned in heaven, and [Love](#)’s power diminishes with mine.

Don’t you see how [Pallas](#), and the huntress [Diana](#), forsake me? And [Ceres’s daughter](#) too, Proserpine, will be a virgin if we allow it, since she hopes to be like them. But you, if you delight in our shared kingdom, can mate the goddess to her uncle.’ So Venus spoke: he undid his quiver, and at his mother’s bidding took an arrow, one from a thousand, and none was sharper, more certain, or better obeyed the bow. Then he bent the pliant tips against his knee, and with his barbed arrow struck [Dis](#) in the heart.”

Bk V:385-424 Calliope sings: Dis and the rape of Proserpine

“Not far from the walls of [Enna](#), there is a deep pool. [Pergus](#) is its name. [Cayster](#) does not hear more songs than rise from the swans on its gliding waves. A wood encircles the waters, surrounds them on every side, and its leaves act as a veil, dispelling [Phoebus](#)’s shafts. The branches give it coolness, and the moist soil, [Tyrian](#) purple flowers: there, it is everlasting Spring. While [Proserpine](#) was playing in this glade, and gathering violets or radiant lilies, while with girlish fondness she filled the folds of her gown, and her basket, trying to outdo her companions in her picking, [Dis](#), almost in a moment, saw her, prized her, took her: so swift as this, is love. The frightened goddess cries out to her mother, to her friends, most of all to her mother, with piteous mouth. Since she had torn her dress at the opening, the flowers she had collected fell from her loosened tunic, and even their scattering caused her virgin tears. The ravisher whipped up his chariot, and urged on the horses, calling them by name, shaking out the shadowy, dark-dyed, reins, over their necks and manes, through deep pools, they say, and the sulphurous reeking swamps of the [Palici](#), vented from a crevice of the earth, to Syracuse where the [Bacchiadae](#), a people born of [Corinth](#) between two seas, laid out their city between unequal harbours.

Between [Cyane](#) and [Pisaeon Arethusa](#), there is a bay enclosed by narrow arms. Here lived [Cyane](#), best known of the Sicilian nymphs, from whom the name of the spring was also taken. She showed herself from the pool as far as her waist, and recognising the goddess, cried out to Dis, ‘No’, and ‘Go no further!’ ‘You cannot be [Ceres](#)’s son against her will: the girl should have been asked, and not abused. If it is right for me to compare small things with great, [Anapis](#) prized me and I wedded him, but I was persuaded by talk and not by terror.’ Speaking, she stretched her arms out at her sides, obstructing him. The [son of Saturn](#) could scarcely contain his wrath, and urging on the dread horses, he turned his royal sceptre with powerful arm,

and plunged it through the bottom of the pool. The earth, pierced, made a road to [Tartarus](#), and swallowed the headlong chariot, into the midst of the abyss.”

Bk V:425-486 Calliope sings: Ceres searches for Proserpine

“[Cyane](#), mourning the rape of the goddess, and the contempt for the sanctities of her fountain, nursed an inconsolable grief in her silent heart, and pined away wholly with sorrow. She melted into those waters whose great goddess she had previously been. You might see her limbs becoming softened, her bones seeming pliant, her nails losing their hardness. First of all the slenderest parts dissolve: her dusky hair, her fingers and toes, her feet and ankles (since it is no great transformation from fragile limbs to cool waters). Next her breast and back, shoulders and flanks slip away, vanishing into tenuous streams. At last the water runs in her ruined veins, and nothing remains that you could touch.

Meanwhile [the mother](#), fearing, searches in vain for the maid, through all the earth and sea. Neither the coming of dewy-haired [Aurora](#), nor [Hesperus](#), finds her resting. Lighting pine torches with both hands at [Etna](#)’s fires, she wanders, unquiet, through the bitter darkness, and when the kindly light has dimmed the stars, she still seeks her child, from the rising of the sun till the setting of the sun.

She found herself thirsty and weary from her efforts, and had not moistened her lips at any of the springs, when by chance she saw a hut with a roof of straw, and she knocked on its humble door. At that sound, an old woman emerged, and saw the goddess, and, when she asked for water, gave her something sweet made with malted barley. While she drank what she had been given a rash, foul-mouthed boy stood watching, and taunted her, and called her greedy. The goddess was offended, and threw the liquid she had not yet drunk, mixed with the grains of barley, in his face. His skin, absorbing it, became spotted, and where he had once had arms, he now had legs. A tail was added to his altered limbs, and he shrank to a little shape, so that he has no great power to harm. He is like a lesser lizard, a newt, of tiny size. The old woman wondered and wept, and, trying to touch the creature, it ran from her and searched out a place to hide. It has a name fitting for its offence, *stellio*, its body starred with various spots.

It would take too long to tell through what lands and seas the goddess wandered. Searching the whole earth, she failed to find her daughter: she returned to Sicily, and while crossing it from end to end, she came to [Cyane](#), who if she had not been changed would have told all. But though she wished to, she had neither mouth nor tongue, nor anything with which to speak. Still she revealed clear evidence, known to the mother, and showed [Persephone](#)’s ribbon, fallen, by chance, into the sacred pool. As soon as she recognised it, the goddess tore her dishevelled hair, and beat her breast again and again with her hands, as if she at last comprehended the rape. She did not know yet where Persephone was, but condemned all the lands, and called them thankless and unworthy of her gift of corn, Sicily, that [Trinacria](#), above all,

where she had discovered the traces of her loss.

So, in that place, with cruel hands, she broke the ploughs that turned up the soil, and, in her anger, dealt destruction to farmers, and the cattle in their fields, alike, and ordered the ever-faithful land to fail, and spoiled the sowing. The fertility of that country, acclaimed throughout the world, was spoken of as a fiction: the crops died as young shoots, destroyed by too much sun, and then by too much rain. Wind and weather harmed them, and hungry birds gathered the scattered seed. Thistles and dandelion and stubborn grasses ruined the wheat harvest.”

Bk V:487-532 Calliope sings: Ceres asks Jupiter’s help

“Then [Arethusa](#), once of [Elis](#), whom [Alpheus](#) loved, lifted her head from her pool, and brushed the wet hair from her forehead, saying ‘O great goddess of the crops, mother of that virgin sought through all the earth, end your fruitless efforts, and do not anger yourself so deeply against the faithful land. The land does not deserve it: it opened to the rape against its will. It is not my country, I pray for: I came here as a stranger. [Pisa](#) is my country, and [Elis](#) is my source. I am a foreigner in [Sicily](#), but its soil is more to me than other lands. Here is my home: here are my [household gods](#). Most gentle one, preserve it. A fitting time will come for me to tell you, how I moved from my country, and came to [Ortygia](#), over such a great expanse of sea, when you are free of care, and of happier countenance. The fissured earth showed me a way, and slipping below the deepest caverns, here, I lifted up my head, and saw the unfamiliar stars.

So, while I glided underground down there, among [Stygian](#) streams, with these very eyes, I saw your Proserpine. She was sad indeed, but, though her face was fearful still, she was nevertheless a queen, the greatest one among the world of shadows, the powerful consort, nevertheless, of the king of hell!’ [The mother](#) was stunned to hear these words, as if petrified, and was, for a long time, like someone thunderstruck, until the blow of deep amazement became deep indignation. She rose, in her chariot, to the realms of heaven. There, her whole face clouded with hate, she appeared before [Jove](#) with dishevelled hair.

‘Jupiter I have come to you in entreaty for my child and for your own’ she cried. ‘If the mother finds no favour with you, let the daughter move you, and do not let your concern for her be less, I beg you, because I gave her birth. See, the daughter I have searched for so long, has been found, if you call it finding to lose her more surely, if you call it finding merely to know where she is. I can bear the fact that she has been raped, if he will only return her! A spoiler is not worthy to be the husband of your daughter, even if she is no longer my daughter.’ Jupiter replied ‘Our child is a pledge and a charge, between us, you and I. But if only we are willing to give things their right names, the thing is not an insult in itself: the truth is it is love. He would not be a shameful son-in-law for us, if only you would wish it, goddess. How great a thing it is to be Jupiter’s brother, even if all the rest is lacking! Why, what if there is nothing lacking at all, except what he yielded to me by lot? But if you have such a great desire to separate them, [Proserpine](#) shall return to

heaven, but on only one condition, that no food has touched her lips, since that is the law, decreed by the [Fates](#).’ ”

Bk V:533-571 Calliope sings: Persephone’s fate

“He spoke, and [Ceres](#) felt sure of regaining her daughter. But the Fates would not allow it, for the girl had broken her fast, and wandering, innocently, in a well-tended garden, she had pulled down a reddish-purple pomegranate fruit, hanging from a tree, and, taking seven seeds from its yellow rind, squeezed them in her mouth. [Ascalaphus](#) was the only one to see it, whom, it is said, [Orphne](#) bore, to her [Acheron](#), in the dark woods, she not the least known of the nymphs of [Avernus](#). He saw, and by his cruel disclosure, prevented Proserpine’s return. Then the queen of [Erebus](#) grieved, and changed the informant into a bird of ill omen: she sprinkled his head with water from the [Phlegethon](#), and changed him to a beak, plumage, and a pair of huge eyes. Losing his own form he is covered by his tawny wings, and looks like a head, and long, curving claws. He scarcely stirs the feathers growing on his idle wings. He has become an odious bird, a messenger of future disaster, the screech owl, torpid by day, a fearful omen to mortal creatures.

He indeed can be seen to have deserved his punishment, because of his disclosure and his words. But why have you, [Sirens](#), skilled in song, [daughters of Acheloüs](#), the feathers and claws of birds, while still bearing human faces? Is it because you were numbered among the companions, when [Proserpine](#) gathered the flowers of Spring? When you had searched in vain for her on land, you wanted, then, to cross the waves on beating wings, so that the waters would also know of your trouble. The gods were willing, and suddenly you saw your limbs covered with golden plumage. But, so that your song, born, sweetly, in our ears, and your rich vocal gift, might not be lost with your tongues, each virgin face and human voice remained.

Now [Jupiter](#), intervening, between his brother and grieving sister, divides the turning year, equally. And now the goddess, Persephone, shared divinity of the two kingdoms, spends so many months with her mother, so many months with her husband. The aspect of her face and mind alters in a moment. Now the goddess’s looks are glad that even [Dis](#) could see were sad, a moment ago. Just as the sun, hidden, before, by clouds of rain, wins through and leaves the clouds.”

Bk V:572-641 Calliope sings: Arethusa’s story

“[Ceres](#), kindly now, happy in the return of her daughter, asks what the cause of your flight was, [Arethusa](#), and why you are now a sacred fountain. The waters fall silent while their goddess lifts her head from the deep pool, and wringing the water from her sea-green tresses, she tells of the former love of that river of [Elis](#).

‘I was one of the nymphs, that lived in [Achaia](#),’ she said ‘none of them keener to travel the woodland, none of them keener to set out the nets. But, though I never sought fame for my beauty, though I was wiry, my name was, the beautiful. Nor did my looks, praised too often, give me delight. I blushed like a simpleton at the gifts of my body, those things that other girls

used to rejoice in. I thought it was sinful to please.

Tired (I remember), I was returning, from the [Stymphalian](#) woods. It was hot, and my efforts had doubled the heat. I came to a river, without a ripple, hurrying on without a murmur, clear to its bed, in whose depths you could count every pebble: you would scarce think it moving. Silvery willows and poplars, fed by the waters, gave a natural shade to the sloping banks. Approaching I dipped my toes in, then as far as my knees, and not content with that I undressed, and draped my light clothes on a hanging willow, and plunged, naked, into the stream. While I gathered the water to me and splashed, gliding around in a thousand ways, and stretching out my arms to shake the water from them, I thought I heard a murmur under the surface, and, in fear, I leapt for the nearest bank of the flood.

‘What are you rushing for, Arethusa?’ [Alpheus](#) called from the waves. ‘Why are you rushing?’ He called again to me, in a strident voice. Just as I was, I fled, without my clothes (I had left my clothes on the other bank): so much the more fiercely he pursued and burned, and being naked, I seemed readier for him. So I ran, and so he wildly followed, as doves fly from a hawk on flickering wings, as a hawk is used to chasing frightened doves. Even beyond [Orchemenus](#), I still ran, by [Psophis](#), and [Cyllene](#), and the ridges of [Maenalus](#), by chill [Erymanthus](#), [Elis](#), he no quicker than I. But I could not stay the course, being unequal in strength: he was fitted for unremitting effort. Still, across the plains, over tree-covered mountains, through rocks and crags, and where there was no path, I ran. The sun was at my back. I saw a long shadow stretching before my feet, unless it was my fear that saw it, but certainly I feared the sound of feet, and the deep breaths from his mouth stirred the ribbons in my hair. Weary with the effort to escape him, I cried out ‘Help me: I will be taken. [Diana](#), help the one who bore your weapons for you, whom you often gave your bow to carry, and your quiver with all its arrows!’ The goddess was moved, and raising an impenetrable cloud, threw it over me.

The river-god circled the concealing fog, and in ignorance searched about the hollow mist. Twice, without understanding, he rounded the place, where the goddess had concealed me, and twice called out ‘[Arethusa](#), O Arethusa!’ What wretched feelings were mine, then? Perhaps those the lamb has when it hears the wolves, howling round the high fold, or the hare, that, hidden in the briars, sees the dogs hostile muzzles, and does not dare to make a movement of its body? He did not go far: he could see no signs of my tracks further on: he observed the cloud and the place. Cold sweat poured down my imprisoned limbs, and dark drops trickled from my whole body. Wherever I moved my foot, a pool gathered, and moisture dripped from my hair, and faster than I can now tell the tale I turned to liquid. And indeed the river-god saw his love in the water, and putting off the shape of a man he had assumed, he changed back to his own watery form, and mingled with mine. The [Delian](#) goddess split the earth, and plunging down into secret caverns, I was brought here to [Ortygia](#), dear to me, because it has the same name as my goddess, the ancient name, for Delos, where she was born, and this was the first place to receive me, into the clear air.’ ”

http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/Metamorph5.htm#_Toc64106320
Bk X:243-297 Orpheus sings: Pygmalion and the statue

[Pygmalion](#) had seen them, spending their lives in wickedness, and, offended by the failings that nature gave the female heart, he lived as a bachelor, without a wife or partner for his bed. But, with wonderful skill, he carved a figure, brilliantly, out of snow-white ivory, no mortal woman, and fell in love with his own creation. The features are those of a real girl, who, you might think, lived, and wished to move, if modesty did not forbid it. Indeed, art hides his art. He marvels: and passion, for this bodily image, consumes his heart. Often, he runs his hands over the work, tempted as to whether it is flesh or ivory, not admitting it to be ivory. He kisses it and thinks his kisses are returned; and speaks to it; and holds it, and imagines that his fingers press into the limbs, and is afraid lest bruises appear from the pressure. Now he addresses it with compliments, now brings it gifts that please girls, shells and polished pebbles, little birds, and many-coloured flowers, lilies and tinted beads, and the [Heliades](#)'s amber tears, that drip from the trees. He dresses the body, also, in clothing; places rings on the fingers; places a long necklace round its neck; pearls hang from the ears, and cinctures round the breasts. All are fitting: but it appears no less lovely, naked. He arranges the statue on a bed on which cloths dyed with [Tyrian](#) murex are spread, and calls it his bedfellow, and rests its neck against soft down, as if it could feel.

The day of [Venus](#)'s festival came, celebrated throughout [Cyprus](#), and heifers, their curved horns gilded, fell, to the blow on their snowy neck. The incense was smoking, when Pygmalion, having made his offering, stood by the altar, and said, shyly: "If you can grant all things, you gods, I wish as a bride to have..." and not daring to say "the girl of ivory" he said "one like my ivory girl." Golden Venus, for she herself was present at the festival, knew what the prayer meant, and as a sign of the gods' fondness for him, the flame flared three times, and shook its crown in the air. When he returned, he sought out the image of his girl, and leaning over the couch, kissed her. She felt warm: he pressed his lips to her again, and also touched her breast with his hand. The ivory yielded to his touch, and lost its hardness, altering under his fingers, as the bees' wax of [Hymettus](#) softens in the sun, and is moulded, under the thumb, into many forms, made usable by use. The lover is stupefied, and joyful, but uncertain, and afraid he is wrong, reaffirms the fulfilment of his wishes, with his hand, again, and again.

It was flesh! The pulse throbbed under his thumb. Then the hero, of [Paphos](#), was indeed overfull of words with which to thank Venus, and still pressed his mouth against a mouth that was not merely a likeness. The girl felt the kisses he gave, blushed, and, raising her bashful eyes to the light, saw both her lover and the sky. The goddess attended the marriage that she had brought about, and when the moon's horns had nine times met at the full, the woman bore a son, [Paphos](#), from whom the island takes its name.'

http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/Metamorph10.htm#_Toc64105570