

# Ovid Metamorphoses III 511-733

Black = Latin text

Red = English translation

Green = literary points

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morte,' ait, 'ede tuum nomen nomenque parentum 580

by your death; speak then and reveal your name and the name of your parents,

et patriam, morisque novi cur sacra frequentes!'

tell me where were you born and why you celebrate the rites of this new cult.'

The two uses of the future participles in the vocative at either end of the line and the intensive use of 'o' are marks of the king's haughty and grandiose way of speaking. Note also the separation of 'tua' from 'morte' and the eloquent use of 'documenta' (from doceo: teach) and the emphatic position of 'morta' in the beginning of the following line after the enjambment followed by a solemn pause after the end of the king's words. 'moris novi' is something of a contradiction in terms, since 'mos' usually refers to an established ancestral custom and here we have a new custom, where 'novus' means dangerously new-fangled as in the phrase 'res novae' for revolution or sedition in terms of religious innovation.

ille metu vacuus 'nomen mihi' dixit 'Acoetes,

The other was quite unperturbed. He replied, 'My name is Acoetes,

patria Maeonia est, humili de plebe parentes.

I was born in Lydia and my parents were of humble stock.

non mihi quae duri colerent patris aiva iuveni,

My father did not leave me any fields for sturdy bullocks to till

lanigerosque zreges, non ullam armentum reliquit; 585

or any woolly flocks or herds.

A tricolon of things that his father didn't leave him.

pauper et ipse fuit linoque solebat et hamis

He was a poor man as I am and used to catch fish with hook and line.

decipere et calamo salientis ducere pisces.

With his rod he drew them, leaping from the stream.

Another tricolon of equipment.

ars illi sua census erat; cum traderet artem,

His fisherman's skill was all his wealth and when to me he gave his trade he said:

'artem' at the end of the line leaves the focus on fishing.

"accipe, quas habeo, studii successor et heres,"

"Take such riches as I have, be my successor and heir to my craft."

There is an irony here: 'successor et heres' are two formal and legal terms but the legacy is so small.

dixit "opes," moriensque mihi nihil ille reliquit                    590  
So he died leaving me nothing but the waters.

The word 'nihil' here emphasises the smallness of Acoetes' legacy.

praeter aquas: unum hoc possum adpellare paternum.  
These alone can I claim my inheritance.

mox ego, ne scopulis haererem semper in isdem,  
But soon as I did not want to spend my life on the self-same rocks

'semper in isdem' suggests monotony.

addidici regimen dextra moderante carinae  
so I learned how to put my hand on a ship's rudder,

flectere et Oleniae sidus pluviale capellae  
and I marked well the rainy constellation of the Olenian goat

The Goat star Capella was said to be Amalthea transported to the heavens after her death. Amalthea was from Olenus, so the star is called Olenian. That star rises at the start of the rainy season in Greece, and so is named here the rainy star.

Taygetenque Hyadaeque oculis Arctosque notavi                    595  
Taygete and the Hyades, and the Bears, and made myself familiar

Taygetes is one of the Pleiades while the Hyades are a group of five stars in Taurus, whose name in Greek means 'the rainy ones' and marked the start and end of the rainy season. The original Hyades had been the nurses of Bacchus. Arctos is the Great Bear. All these stars denote rainy and stormy weather and show Acoetes looking after his own welfare by avoiding potentially dangerous storms. He did this himself ('notavi', 1<sup>st</sup> person) and from observation (oculis)

ventorumque domos et portus puppibus aptos.  
with the homes of the winds and harbours fit for ships.

forte petens Delum Chiaie telluris ad oras  
It happened that as I was making for Delos, I put in the shores of Chios

adplicor et dextris adducor litora remis  
there I steered, by rowing easily to the beach.

sic fore meque iubent pictae dare vela carinae.

that so it would be and they told me to hoist sail in the painted ship.

'pictae dare vela carinae' is synecdoche.

dextera Naxos erat: dextra mihi lintea danti 640

Naxos was on the right hand: but as I set my sail towards the right

Repetition here of 'dextera'.

"quid facis, o demens? quis te furor," inquit "Acoete,"

Opheltes shouted, 'You fool, what are you doing? What madness has possessed you, Acoetes?'

What is ironic here of course is that the crew are mad, not Acoetes.

pro se quisque, "tenet? laevam pete!" maxima nutu  
and every man joined in, crying, 'Make for the left!'

'pro se quisque': literally each man cried on his own behalf

pars mihi significat, pars quid velit ore susurro.

Some indicated their purpose with a nod, but others whispered in my ear what they meant to do.

obstipui "capiat" que "aliquis moderamina" mihi  
I was horrified. 'But someone else can take the rudder!' I cried

Acoetes' instant reaction is well brought out by a rapid dactylic line. 'obstipuli' is a strong verb: 'I was struck dumb'. Acoetes cannot fight against the rest of the crew, but he refuses to be the instrument of their folly and tells them to let someone else take the helm. 'aliquis' is purposefully vague; it means 'anyone else but me'.

meque ministerio scelerisque artisque removi. 645

and refused to have any share in their wickedness on the sailing of the ship.

'sceleris artisque' is a hendiadys. It means that he refused to allow them to use his 'ars' in pursuit of their 'scelus'.

inrepor a cunctis, totumque inmurmurat agmen;  
They all cursed me; my whole crew muttered angrily.

The juxtaposition of 'cunctis' and 'totumque' shows the unanimity of the condemnation of Acoetes and then incessant clamour is stressed by the repetition of similar ideas in the verbs (inrepor, inmurmurat) and the threatening force of their anger is conveyed in the heavy spondees 'cunctis', 'totumque inm.-inrepor a cunctis' here constitutes the theme, and 'totumque inmurmurat agmen' constitutes the variation (variation).

velaque deducunt geminaque ope currere temptant:  
and spread their sails trying to run on with the help of both

'currere' is the sailors' wishful thinking: they would be lucky to move at all, let alone run.

inpediunt hederæ remos nexuque recurvo  
but their oars were hampered by ivy which tined up the blades in curling tendrils

'inpediunt' is stressed in the start of the line and the sentence, balanced and amplified by 'serpunt' in the same position in the next line, its force being further enhanced by the enjambment. The entwining movement of the plan is well conveyed by the phrase 'nexu recurve serpunt' (they creep with twisting coil).

serpunt et gravidis distinguunt vela corymbis. 665  
and adorned the sails with heavy clusters.

The verb 'distinguunt' expresses the decoration of the ship with the sudden growths.

ipse racemiferis frontem circumdatus uvis  
The god himself wreathed his head with bunches of grapes

Bacchus himself now transforms from a boy to the god he really is. 'racemiferis' is as an impressive and grandiose as the god himself.

pampineis agitat rotas in frondibus hastant,  
while in his hand he flourishes the wheel draped with vine-leaves.

quem circa tigres simulacraque inania lyncum  
Around him lay phantom shapes of wide beasts, tigers and lynxes and

The terrifying sight is well brought out by the spondaic rhythm of the start of the line 668. The tigers, lynxes and panthers are all unreal images (simulacra inania – the term that Lucretius uses for dreams). They are another aspect of the theatricality of the god and his ability to conjure images out of nowhere. The three sorts of animals are described in tricolon crescendo with tigers (one word) followed by lynxes (three words), and then the panthers are given a whole line to themselves. The Greek word 'parthenarum' unusually for Ovid takes the whole of the final two feet of line 669, giving a fifth foot spondee and having a very Alexandrian feel. The device is usually reserved for Greek loan words, as in here.

pictarumque iacent fera corpora pantherarum.  
panthers with dappled skins.

This line is separated by hyperbaton.