

Ovid's *Metamorphoses* VIII.616-724

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Book 8, lines 616-724 of *Metamorphoses*: Baucis and Philemon. A nice story about hospitality. Things start slightly in medias res here. The context is that Pirithous, king of the Lapiths, has scorned the gods. Lelex recounts this encounter in response. I'm only doing up to line 696 because I'm busy with school.

As always, this is an attempt at a literal translation with slightly clunky wording and lots of "having been"s. Text and vocab from Geoffrey Steadman's "Selections from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*." Document typeset with L^AT_EX.

Obstipuere omnēs nec tālia dicta probārun,¹

ante omnēque Lelex animō mātūrus et aevō,
sīc ait: "immēnsa est finemque potentia caelī
nōn habet, et quicquid superī voluere, perāctum est.

Quōque² minus dubitēs, tiliae contermina quercus

620

collibus est Phrygiīs modicō circumdata mūrō;
ipse locum vīdī; nam mē Pelopēia Pitthēus

All were astounded, nor did they approve such things
having been said

and before all Lelex, having matured in spirit and age,
thus said: "the power of the sky is immense and has no end,
and whatever the gods wished, it was carried out.

and so that you may doubt less, the oak tree bordering upon
the linden

was surrounded on the Phrygian hills by a long wall;
I myself saw the place, for Pittheus sent me into the
Peloponnesian fields

¹Others don't approve of what Pirithous has said

²Works like "ut"

mīsit in arva suō quondam rēgnāta parentī.
 haud procul hinc stāgnum ³ est, tellūs habitābilis ōlim,
 nunc celebrēs mergīs fulicīsque palūstribus undae; 625
 Iuppiter hūc speciē mortālī cumque parente
 vēnit Atlantiadēs ⁴ positīs cādūcifer ālīs ⁵.
 mīlle domōs adiēre locum requiemque ⁶ petentēs,
 mīlle domōs clausēre serae; tamen ūna recēpit,
 parva quidem, stipulīs et cannā tēcta palūstrī, 630
 sed pia Baucis anūs parilīque aetāte Philēmōn
 illā sunt annīs iūctī iuvenālibus, illā
 cōsensuēre casā paupertātemque fatendō
 effecēre levem nec inīquā mente ferendō;
nec rēfert ⁷, dominōs illic famulōsne requīrās: 635

once having been ruled by his parent.
 the stagnant pool is not far from here, the once habitable
 land,
 now waves crowded with marshy waterfowl and coots;
 to here Jupiter came with mortal form, and with his parent
 Mercury the caduceus-bearer, with wings having been
 placed.
 a thousand homes they approached, seeking a place of rest,
 a thousand doors locks closed; however one received,
 indeed a small one, having been covered by stalks and
 marshy reeds,
 but the pious woman Baucis and Philemon, equal in age,
 were joined in that [home] since youthful years,
 grew old in that house and made their poverty light
 by accepting [it] nor by bearing [it] with a wicked mind;
 nor does it matter, whether you seek masters [and] their
 servants:

³Neuter nominative (looks quite accusative, doesn't it?)

⁴"Born of Atlas," i.e. Mercury

⁵Mercury's caduceus and winged sandals

⁶Hendiadys. Literally "place and rest," but "place of rest" might make more sense here.

⁷"It does not matter"—common idiom

tōta domus duo sunt ⁸, īdem pārentque iubentque.
ergō ubi caelicolae parvōs tetigēre penātēs ⁹
summissōque humilēs intrārunt vertice postēs ¹⁰,

membra senex positō iussit relevāre sedilī;

cui superiniēcit textum rude sēdula Baucis 640
inque focō tepidum cinerem dimōvit et ignēs
suscitat hesternōs foliūsque et cortice siccō

nūtrit et ad flammās animā prōdūcit anīlī
multifidāsque facēs rāmāliaque ārida tēctō

dētulit et minuit parvōque admōvit aēnō, 645
quodque suus coniūnx riguō collēgerat hortō,

truncat holus foliīs; furca levat ille ¹¹ bicornī

two are the entire household, the same both obey and order.
Thus when the sky-dwellers touched the small penates
and entered the humble doorposts with head having been
lowered
the old man ordered their limbs to lift up the seats having
been placed;
to which the attentive Baucis threw fabric
and in the hearth separated warm ash
and she stirs and nourishes with leaves and dry bark the
fires of yesterday
and leads forth flames with an old woman's breath
and carries down the torches divided into many parts and
dry twigs from the roof
and diminished and moved [them] to the small pot,
and what her husband had gathered from the well-watered
garden,
she cuts the vegetable from leaves; he raises with his
two-horned fork

⁸Basically, there's no servants or such in the house. Baucis and Philemon share duties equally.

⁹Meaning household gods. Also a slight metonymy: the penates stand in for the house.

¹⁰Golden synchysis: ABAB pattern with main verb in middle.

¹¹Indicates a change of subject

sordida terga suis nigrō pendentia tignō
servātōque diū resecat dē tergore partem

exiguam sectamque domat ferventibus undīs. 650

intereā mediās fallunt sermōnibus hōrās¹²

concutiuntque torum dē mollī flūminis ulvā
impositum lectō spondā pedibusque salignīs.

vestibus hunc vėlant, quās nōn nisi tempore fēstō
sternere cōsuērant, sed et haec vīlisque vetusque 655

vestis erat, lectō nōn indignanda salignō.
adcubūere deī. mēnsam succīncta tremēnsque
pōnit anus, mēnsae sed erat pēs tertius impār:
testa parem fēcit; quae postquam subdita clīvum
sustulit, aequātam mentae tersēre virentēs. 660

pōnitur hīc bicolor sincērae bāca Minervae¹³

the dirty backs of the pig hanging from the dark log
and for a long time she cuts a small part from the backs
having been preserved

and softens the parts in boiling waves.

Meanwhile they deceive the hours with conversations
and shake the cushion of soft river sedge
having been placed on the bed with the bedframe and
willow legs.

They veil this with cloths, which, except on a festive day,
they had not been accustomed to lay, but even this was both
cheap and old,

not to be deemed unworthy of the willow bed.

The gods lay down. The old woman having gathered up,
sets the table, but the third foot of the table was imbalanced:
the pitcher made it so; afterwards, having been placed under,
this lifted the slope, green mints wiped it, having been made
equal, away.

Here the two-colored berry of pure Minerva is placed

¹²An interesting thing to look at is the Ancient Greek concept of Xenia: a set rules for guests and hosts. The rough idea is "don't be a jerk," but the specifics are nice to know while reading this story in particular.

¹³Black and green olives, I guess.

conditaque in liquidā corna autumnālia faece
intibaque et rādīx et lactis massa coāctī
ōvaque nōn ācrī leviter versāta favillā,
omnia fictilibus, post haec caelātus eōdem 665
sistitur argentō crātēr fabricātaque fāgō

pōcula, quā cava sunt, flāventibus illita cērīs; ¹⁴
parva mora est, epulāsque focī mīsere calentēs,
nec longae rūrsus referuntur ¹⁵ vīna senectae
dantque locum mēnsīs paulum sēducta secundīs: ¹⁶ 670

hīc nux, hīc mixta est rūgōsīs cārica palmīs
prūnaque et in patulīs redolentia mālā canistrīs
et dē purpureīs collēctae vītibus ūvae,
candidus in mediō favus est; super omnia vultūs
accessēre bonī nec iners pauperque voluntās. 675
Intereā totiēns haustum crātēra replērī

sponte suā per sēque vident succrēscere vīna:

and the cherries of autumn stored in liquid brine
and an endive and a root and a mass of gathered milk
and eggs having been turned lightly in not-bitter ash,
all in clay plates. After these the wine-mixing bowl
carved from the same silver is placed and the cupts
fashioned from the beech tree,
where they are hollow, smeared with yellow waxes
There is a little pause, and the hearths send warm feasts,
nor are the wines of long old age carried back again
and [the wines] having been led aside a little gives a place
for second tables:

Here a nut, here is the dried fig mixed with wrinkled dates
and plums and fragrant apples in open baskets
and grapes collected from purple vines,
The honeycomb is white in the middle; above all the faces
of good approached nor were [their] spirits inert and poor.
Meanwhile as often as they see the wine-mixing bowl
drained is filled up
by its own will and by itself the wines spring up:

¹⁴Another sign of poorness — they can't afford to replace the cups.

¹⁵i.e. They drink all the wine, and don't have to take them back to the kitchen.

¹⁶"Second tables" — basically more food, they're having "seconds."

attonitī novitāte pavent manibusque supīnīs
 concipiunt Baucisque precēs timidusque Philēmōn
 et veniam dapibus nūllisque parātibus ōrant. 680
 ūnicus ānser erat, minimae cūstōdia villae:
 quem dīs hospitibus dominī mactāre parābant;
 ille celer pennā tardōs aetāte fatīgat
 ēlūditque diū tandemque est vīsus ad ipsōs
 cōnfūgissee deōs: superī vetuēre necārī 685
 ‘dī’ que ‘sumus, meritāsque luet vīcīnia poenās
 inpiā’ dīxērunt; ‘vōbīs immūnibus huius
 esse malī dabitur; modo vestra relinquite tēcta
 ac nostrōs comitāte gradūs et in ardua montis
 īte simul!’ pārent ambō baculisque levātī 690
 nītuntur longō vestīgia pōnere clīvō.
 tantum aberant summō, quantum semel īre sagitta
 missa potest: flexēre oculōs et mersa palūde¹⁷...

The astonished are struck with fear by novelty, and with
 uplifted hands
 both Baucis and timid Philemon take up prayers
 and ask for forgiveness for the feast and for nothing shown.
 There was one goose, a guardian of the very small farm:
 which the hosts were preparing to sacrifice to the divine
 guests;
 it, quick with feather, tires out those slow with age
 and escapes for a long time, finally it was seen to have fled
 to the gods themselves: those above forbade it to be killed
 and said "we are gods, and the wicked town will atone for
 deserved punishments,
 it shall be given to to you to be exempt from
 this evil; now leave your home
 and follow our steps and into the steep parts of the mountain
 go together!" Both obey, and lifted by staffs,
 they strive to put their footprints on the long slope.
 So much as they were away on the summit, just as an arrow
 sent once
 is able to go: they turned their eyes and look out...

¹⁷Stopping here because I'm busy with a lot of other stuff. You know how it goes — floods, temples, turning into trees.