

## The Lotus-Eaters

- 70 Now Zeus the lord of cloud roused in the north  
a storm against the ships, and driving veils  
of squall moved down like night on land and sea.  
The bows went plunging at the gust; sails  
cracked and lashed out strips in the big wind.
- 75 We saw death in that fury, dropped the yards,  
unshipped the oars, and pulled for the nearest lee:<sup>14</sup>  
then two long days and nights we lay offshore  
worn out and sick at heart, tasting our grief,  
until a third Dawn came with ringlets shining.
- 80 Then we put up our masts, hauled sail, and rested,  
letting the steersmen and the breeze take over.
- I might have made it safely home, that time,  
but as I came round Malea the current  
took me out to sea, and from the north
- 85 a fresh gale drove me on, past Cythera.  
Nine days I drifted on the teeming sea  
before dangerous high winds. Upon the tenth  
we came to the coastline of the Lotus-Eaters,  
who live upon that flower. We landed there
- 90 to take on water. All ships' companies

14. **lee** *n.* area sheltered from the wind.

NOTES

mustered alongside for the mid-day meal.  
Then I sent out two picked men and a runner  
to learn what race of men that land sustained.  
They fell in, soon enough, with Lotus-Eaters,  
95 who showed no will to do us harm, only  
offering the sweet Lotus to our friends—  
but those who ate this honeyed plant, the Lotus,  
never cared to report, nor to return:  
they longed to stay forever, browsing on  
100 that native bloom, forgetful of their homeland.  
I drove them, all three wailing, to the ships,  
tied them down under their rowing benches,  
and called the rest: 'All hands aboard;  
come, clear the beach and no one taste  
105 the Lotus, or you lose your hope of home.'  
Filing in to their places by the rowlocks  
my oarsmen dipped their long oars in the surf,  
and we moved out again on our sea faring.