



**D**aedalus, as the story goes, fleeing the kingdom of Minos,  
 Entrusted himself with flying wings to the sky,  
 Floating to the cold North through an unprecedented path,  
 And at last stood lightly on the Chalcidian height.  
 Having returned first to these lands, he sacrificed to you, Apollo,  
 The rowing equipment of his wings, establishing a huge temple.  
 On the doors is the death of Androgeos, then the Athenians (wretched!),  
 Commanded to weigh out the penalties annually, seven bodies of  
 their children:

The urn stands, the lots having been drawn.

The opposite side corresponds to the Knossian land, raised from the sea:  
 Here are the cruel love for the bull, Pasiphae placed under it by stealth,  
 And a mingled type, the two-formed offspring—

The Minotaur, memorials of unspeakable love;

Here is that labor imposed on the house, with its endless wrong turns.

But even Daedalus himself, having pitied the great love of the queen,  
 Unravels the schemes and the winding ways of the palace,

Directing blind footsteps with a thread. Icarus, you also should have  
 A large part in this great sculpture, if grief would allow it.

Twice Daedalus had attempted to fashion the misfortunes in gold,  
 Twice the hands of the father failed.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Vergilian account is an *ekphrasis*, a poetic description of a work of art, in this case the sculptures Daedalus carved on the doors of a temple. The passage begins with the flight of Daedalus into exile, continues with his landing in what would now be Italy, and the founding of a temple to Apollo. Vergil's Daedalus is simultaneously a successful artist in his sculptures of the events in Crete concerning Minos, Pasiphae, the Minotaur, and the Labyrinth, and a failed artist in that he cannot depict the death of Icarus.

When Aeneas finally lands in Italy in Vergil's Book 6, the hero goes to seek the Sibyl at Cumae, in order to journey to the Underworld. Finding a sacred temple, he notices the gold sculptures on the doors. While Vergil's *ekphrasis* of works of art in the temple of Juno in *Aeneid* Book 1 and found on the armor of Aeneas in Book 8 are justly famous, the description of the sculptures of Daedalus is less well-known.

**Ovid:**  
**Daedalus and Icarus**

*Translated from Latin by Stephen Rojcewicz*

<p>Daedalus interea Creten longumque perosus exilium tactusque loci natalis amore clausus erat pelago. “terras licet” inquit “et undas obstruat: et caelum certe patet; ibimus illac: omnia possideat, non possidet aera Minos.” dixit et ignotas animum dimittit in artes naturamque novat. nam ponit in ordine pennas a minima coeptas, longam brevior sequenti, ut clivo crevisse putes: sic rustica quondam fistula disparibus paulatim surgit avenis; tum lino medias</p>	<p>185</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">et ceris alligat imas</p> <p>atque ita conpositas parvo curvamine flectit, ut veras imitetur aves. puer Icarus una stabat et, ignarus sua se tractare pericla, ore renidenti modo, quas vaga moverat aura, captabat plumas, flavam modo pollice ceram mollibat lusuque suo mirabile patris impediebat opus.</p>	<p>190</p> <p>195</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">postquam manus ultima coepto</p> <p>inposita est, geminas opifex libravit in alas ipse suum corpus motaque pependit in aura; instruit et natum “medio” que “ut limite curras, Icare,” ait “moneo, ne, si demissior ibis, unda gravet pennas, si celsior, ignis adurat: inter utrumque vola. nec te spectare Booten aut Helicen iubeo strictumque Orionis ense: me duce carpe viam!” pariter praecepta volandi trahit et ignotas umeris accommodat alas.</p>	<p>200</p> <p>205</p>
<p>inter opus monitusque genae maduere seniles, et patriae tremuere manus; dedit oscula nato non iterum repetenda suo pennisque levatus ante volat comitique timet, velut ales, ab alto quae teneram prolem produxit in aera nido, hortaturque sequi damnosasque erudit artes et movet ipse suas et nati respicit alas.</p>	<p>210</p> <p>215</p>



hos aliquis tremula dum captat harundine pisces,  
aut pastor baculo stivave innixus arator  
vidit et obstipuit, quique aethera carpere possent,  
credidit esse deos. et iam lunonia laeva 220  
parte Samos

(fuerant Delosque Parosque relictæ)

dextra Lebinthos erat fecundaque melle Calymne,  
cum puer audaci coepit gaudere volatu  
deseruitque ducem caelique cupidine tractus  
altius egit iter. rapidi vicinia solis 225

mollit odoratas, pennarum vincula, ceras;  
tabuerant cerae: nudos quatit ille lacertos,  
remigioque carens non ullas percipit auras,  
oraeque caerulea patrium clamantia nomen  
excipiuntur aqua, quae nomen traxit ab illo. 230

at pater infelix, nec iam pater, "Icare," dixit,  
"Icare," dixit "ubi es? qua te regione requiram?"  
"Icare" dicebat: pennas aspexit in undis  
devovitque suas artes corpusque sepulcro  
condidit, et tellus a nomine dicta sepulti. 235

Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 8.183-235



demonstrates that the translator certainly knows Latin, but cannot write English. At times, however, a literal translation is needed to bring out significant aspects of the original that would otherwise be missed. Since the Latin verb tenses of *Metamorphoses* 8.183-235, for example, vary among present, imperfect, and perfect, the current translation tries to represent these original forms, even at the expense of occasional awkwardness.

If the translator strives for poetic effects absent in the original, she/he may certainly achieve brilliance, but, if the effect is “too high, the sun scorches” the result (Met. 8.205). Daedalus’ advice to his son in 8.208 points to a possible resolution: *carpe viam* (“seize the way!”). The imperative *carpe viam* echoes one of the most famous lines from Horace, *carpe diem* (“seize the day!”) (Ode 1.11.8; originally published 23 BCE). Ovid writes *me duce carpe viam*, “with me leading, seize the way” or “seize the way I lead.” We can understand Ovid as enjoining the translator to avoid slavish imitation or excessively loose paraphrasing, and, instead, to follow the broad path created by the original.

S. R.