

The New Criterion

Poems

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"Eurylochus recalls the Sirens"

by [Daniel Mark Epstein](#)

A new poem.

When we returned from Hell, that sorceress
Who so loved our captain she set him free,
Feasted us with meat and bread and wine,
Praising us for our great-heartedness:
“In going down alive to the House of Hades,
You will have died twice instead of once—
Which is enough for any man to bear.”
Sunset. And we sailors all lay down
To sleep by the stern cables of our ship.
But shapely Circe kept Odysseus up
Making love to him for the last time, again
And again, an infinity of kisses, and then
Warned him of the dangers that lay ahead.

Of Scylla and Charybdis I shall not speak,
For there are horrors memory consumes
With the men who are consumed by them.
Six comrades of my youth were plucked aloft
By that she-monster with six grinding mouths.
No mercy there, except their death was quick.

The Sirens cut the wound that would not heal.
Circe w ...

Daniel Mark Epstein wrote the libretto for the opera *Jefferson and Poe*, with music by Damon Ferrante.

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